

COPING WITH IMPRISONMENT ON THE OUTSIDE:  
THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE CHILDREN AND THEIR MOTHERS

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned primarily with the children's perception of the father's imprisonment and how they cope with this experience. In particular, the study has focused on the meaning children give to the father's imprisonment, the strategies they adopt to cope with the change to his moral status, and on the possible association between this type of separation and children's moral development and self-esteem. The mother's perception of the event, and the nature of the relationship between family members have also been investigated to determine the extent to which these factors influence the development of the children's strategies, and their adjustment to the father's absence.

Twenty-three children, 13 boys and 10 girls between 8 and 15 years of age, together with their mothers from 19 households were interviewed twice, one year apart, in the family home. The data have been analysed by using the constant comparative method, whereby the recordings of the interviews, informal observations and diary notes have been transcribed and coded according to a series of general themes and categories. Characteristic illustrations from the data are used to facilitate the understanding of concepts and themes presented.

Results indicate that children attempt to cope with the change to the father's moral status by developing mechanisms that dissociate the notion of culpability from

his action, without denying the wrongfulness of the act itself, thereby maintaining the father's moral integrity, and by extension, their own self-esteem.

The results also reveal that children's moral reasoning is a significant factor in the maintenance of self-esteem. In this process, developmental stage, gender, the mother's perception of the event, and the quality of the father/child relationship are important mediating factors. Also suggested is that the experience of moral reasoning about the father's punishment has an influence on children's moral reasoning in general.

Finally, a broad framework has been proposed for investigating children's experience of the imprisonment process. This includes the phases of imprisonment, within which are located a series of tasks that children are confronted.

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE

This thesis is concerned with the child's perception of the father's separation from the family as a result of his imprisonment, and the various factors that may facilitate or disrupt his/her adjustment to this experience.

I became interested in this topic whilst assessing children with special needs in Brazil. It soon became apparent from the number of children interviewed who had fathers in prison that many of their problems were related to this experience. However, the search for information on this type of separation revealed that virtually no research had been published.

At the international level, a concern for children of offenders was expressed by the United Nations Division for Social Defence and from UNICEF at a meeting held in Geneva in 1968. Following the meeting an inquiry was set up to discover the main problems these children faced and a report was subsequently presented by Jan Van Nuland (1970). The report showed that from the replies to a questionnaire distributed worldwide, a general pattern emerges in which the authorities responsible for offenders often have incomplete, or no knowledge of those in their care and no legal provision which takes into account the situation of prisoners' families when sentence is passed.

The report concludes that:

a) it is rare to find legislation and special provision prescribed specifically for this problem; therefore, much depends on those involved in social work, juvenile courts and the police, who in general are limited by their organization and lack of personnel;

b) it is important to address the problem of children of offenders for it "concerns social development, the protection of youth in general (social integration and delinquency), mental health and community education, and it is of the greatest importance for social defence, crime prevention and the treatment of delinquents" (p.18);

c) the problem cannot be left to private organizations, for apart from the social and psychological effects of paternal imprisonment, there are juridical problems at the time of the arrest, conviction and during the execution of the sentence;

d) many points have not been touched, and there is a need to study this matter in great depth.

In regard to the psychological effects paternal imprisonment has on children, the report highlights the following: deterioration or idealisation of the father's image, traumatic experiences resulting from prison visits,

rebellion, humiliation, need for vengeance, and an awakening of a sense of responsibility. The author of the report emphasises that it is very difficult to separate the determinant factors of these psychological effects at his level of enquiry, and also because imprisonment has severe consequences for children. For these reasons, Van Nuland calls for more research.

Since this conference, it appears that little progress has been made in resolving the problems the report identifies. In Britain, at the present time, no valid statistical data on children of offenders exists. No information is available concerning the numbers of children involved, the effects father's imprisonment has on children, what their needs are, or how they should be met. This is in contrast to the information available and the schemes developed for separation due to divorce, death, abuse and neglect (Shaw, 1987).

Children of offenders have been defined appropriately as the "hidden victims" (Bakker *et al*, 1978 p.143), and "Forgotten Victims" (Matthews, 1983). And as Roger Shaw (1987 p. 64) rather poignantly points out: "the pain and harm inflicted unintentionally on children by the sentencer of their father could be described as institutionalised child abuse".

As far back as 1965, Pauline Morris surveyed 837 prisoner's



families in England and Wales, and noted that the long-term effects and additional stresses and strains associated with separation due to imprisonment are likely to have detrimental effects on the children and emphasised the pressing need for further research in this field.

In an attempt to explain the almost universal lack of attention given to the plight of children of offenders, Roger Shaw (1987) argues that the politics of criminal justice, with its emphasis on retribution for the crime rather than reparation of its consequence, gives little attention to the victims of crime, and none at all to children of offenders. Shaw questions whether this may be due (as argued by Davis, 1983) to the maintenance of the established system of criminal justice, which is based on the concept of individual punishment for individual law breaking and the notions of justice, innocence and guilt. For, to repeatedly identify children of offenders suffering more than their father's victims undermines the very basis of punishment and justice.

An alternative explanation for the neglect of prisoners' children refers to society's general perception of social problems such as crime, delinquency and poverty. These problems are often explained in terms of individual deficiencies, rather than societal deficiencies (Ryan, 1971). By explaining these problems in terms of individual

pathology, or failure, rather than problems associated with living, attention is diverted from the origins of these problems, thereby absolving society as a whole from any responsibility. At the societal level this type of explanation conveniently legitimises intervention strategies designed to change the individual rather than dysfunctional aspects of society.

Students and academics have generally avoided studying children of offenders, which according to Shaw (1987), may be due to the difficulty in obtaining information about this subject. Despite the general lack of attention given to the problem of children of offenders, the fact remains that somewhere "in excess of half a million children" (Shaw, 1987) experience imprisonment of the father during their childhood. For these children, the experience engenders deep uncertainties about their futures (Fishman, 1983), changing and sometimes damaging caretaking (Mitchel, 1982), the stigma attached to the father and family (Lowenstein, 1986), the mockery of peers and the risk of psychological trauma (Van Nuland, 1970).

#### Significance of the study of father-child separation due to imprisonment

Based on the discussion so far, five major reasons can be posited to study this area:

1 - Perhaps the most compelling reason to examine the issue

concerns the human costs of imprisonment and its implications for the quality of life of the children, their mothers and for society in general.

2 - The hitherto neglect of this important area of research, compared to separation due to divorce, death, war, mental illness or work of the father. The author expects to describe the circumstances of children of offenders, their mothers, and to identify the problems they encounter and the coping mechanisms applied to this situation. The focus will be on the child's perception of the situation as the author believes that the outcome of this experience is in part a function of the meaning the child apportions to the event.

3 - To sensitise the relevant authorities to the problems faced by children of offenders and to the possible consequences for society.

4 - The collection of reliable data is essential to inform public welfare and judicial policy making. Knowledge of what happens to children of offenders and how they attempt to cope with this situation is also central for innovative design and implementation of a broad range of programs for mothers and children, as well as for acquiring adequate operating budgets.

5 - To add to the existing body of knowledge in the area of father-child separation by describing the effects of an enforced separation due to incarceration.

## THEORETICAL FORMULATIONS

The incarceration of the father involves a complex interaction of factors which must be taken into consideration to provide a comprehensive perspective on the child's perception of the event and subsequent coping strategies used to deal with this involuntary form of separation. The child's experience of his/her father's incarceration cannot be understood in isolation from other ecological problems that affect families and the psychological meaning of situations for the children and mothers.

Given the multiplicity of factors that interact in the experience of father-child separation due to imprisonment, the study will be guided by an interactionist orientation. For the purpose of the current study we will draw on the work of Magnusson (1988) and Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1985; Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983). Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach provides a complementary conceptualisation of variables which operate at various levels of abstraction. That is, he conceptualises relationships and environments in terms of interacting systems at different levels of analysis.

### The Interactionist perspective

The interactionist approach integrates at a metatheoretical

level three traditional approaches to the explanation of individual functioning: mental, biological, and environmental, and views the person as a psychological and biological being in constant interaction with his/her environment.

This approach emphasises the individual as an organized whole, functioning as a totality and characterized by the partially specific patterning of relevant aspects of behaviour. The interactionist approach propose a "person" approach to the study of psychological phenomena. For Magnusson (1988), there is no contradiction between a person approach to developmental research and the theoretical analysis and empirical investigation of specific aspects of structures and processes involved, or the specific mechanisms operating in the process. What is important are: a) the choice and theoretical analyses of specific aspects of investigation and the measurement models used for the collection and treatment of data should take place within the frame of the individual functioning as a totality; b) the results of empirical investigation of single aspects should be interpreted within a larger frame of reference, and integrated with results from other studies using the same frame.

Proponents of the interactional framework propose that the individual develops and functions in a dynamic, continuous

and reciprocal process of interaction with his/her environment. This proposition is based on the following series of assumptions: a) contextuality of the person-environment interaction; b) current perspective; c) developmental perspective; d) reciprocity in person-environment interaction; e) self-perception; f) the person as an active purposeful agent.

#### Contextuality in person-environment interaction:

According to the interactional perspective behaviour cannot be understood in isolation from the environmental conditions in which it occurs. Individuals come into contact with the environment directly in specific situations. A situation is defined by Magnusson (1988) as "that part of the environment that is accessible for sensory perception at a certain occasion" (p.27). In each situation, stimuli and events that influence individual's behaviour and that are influenced by the individual change constantly. Within each situation, stimuli and events are interpreted by the individual, who then assigns meaning to the total situation, which in turn provides the basis for the interaction with the environment. However, the influence of the environment on the individual is not limited to the immediate situation, for the latter is embedded in the physical, social and cultural properties of the larger environment, which operate both directly and indirectly at all levels of specificity/generality in the

person-environment interaction.

In order to understand the way an individual interacts with the environment at various levels of complexity, Magnusson posits that the environment serves primarily as a source of information, and not simply as a source of stimulation. The assumption that the environment functions as a source of stimulation implies that behaviour is a result of the response to stimuli which is interpreted in the same way by all subjects. That is, the physical environment acts upon the individual in important ways that can be reacted to without a mediating process of interpretation, as in classical learning theory's S-R models.

The environment as a source of information is based on the assumption that the environment is perceived and subjectively interpreted by the individual. The central feature of considering the environment as a source of information is that stimuli are subordinated to representational cognitions. Within this perspective, the environment provides information that enables the individual to understand the world and him/herself in relation to it. The result of the cognitive process provides the effective stimulus for goal-directed behaviour, this being the prerequisite for adaptative behaviour. For effective purposive action and the experience of meaningfulness, it is essential to be able to

predict and control the environment. To this end, ideally the environment should be consistently patterned and influenceable for individual development.

Magnusson makes the distinction between the physical and social environment. The former functions in a rather consistent and stable manner and is more easily interpreted by the individual than the social environment. In the case of the latter, the environment is less consistently patterned; therefore, how it is patterned (systems of values, norms and roles) and meaningfully structured is essential for the child's conception of the external world and his/her role in it. It is the patterning and consistency of other people's behaviour, such as their demands, rewards and punishments, that help the child assign meaning to the environment and to make predictions about situations and behavioural outcomes of the external world. Therefore, the persons who make up the child's proximal environment, such as parents, siblings, teachers and peers play a fundamental role in the socialisation process.

### Current perspective

The interactionist view that behaviour cannot be understood in isolation from the environment in which it occurs, has to be qualified by the distinctions between general and differential effects. If only general effects are



considered, cross-situational responses will only contain one source of variance, the main variance due to persons. However, in addition to the general situational effects, there are also differential effects that are specific to individuals or group of individuals (Lewin, 1931), which are dependent on the individuals' partially specific interpretations of events in the environment. Thus, if both effects are considered, an individual's profile for a certain type of behaviour in different situations will have two sources of variance, one main variance due to persons, and the variance composed of the individually specific part of the cross-situational profiles. This is clearly expressed by Lewin's formula  $B = f(P, E)$ , which, according to the interactional perspective, has to be applied to psychological research if it is to have any meaning at all.

With regard to the study of the absence of the father, if only the general effects of his imprisonment are considered and the possible differential situational effects reflected in such variables as age, sex, and so on, neglected, the variations due to them are not revealed.

#### Developmental perspective

The interactional perspective emphasises social processes, rather than states, and views behaviour as the product of the ongoing interplay between society and self. The

developmental perspective posits that development is a process which is dependent on an individual's past experiences of physical, social and cultural aspects of the environment. The environment functions as both source of information and the provider of the feedback necessary for an individual to construct conceptions of the world that are required for interaction. It is through the continuous interaction with the environment that individuals develop a total, integrated system of mental structures and contents that shape and constrain their methods of functioning. As Magnusson (1988) states: "on the basis of and within the limits of inherited dispositions, affective tones become attached to specific contents and actions, and strategies are developed for coping with various kinds of environments and situations" (p. 26).

#### Reciprocity in person-environment interaction

Reciprocity implies that the individual is both influenced by and influences the environment at each stage of development. The individual is viewed as an active and intentional agent who interprets information from the environment, and acts according to his/her own systems of thoughts, goals, values and emotions, thereby influencing the environment. However, the individual does not act upon a passive environment for the environment also acts upon the individual. For example, the parents' behaviour influence the child's behaviour, whose behaviour in turn

will affect the reactions and actions taken by the parents, and so on. Thus the "child is both the creation and creator of his/her environment" (Magnusson, 1988).

### Self-perception

The individual's conception of the external world is filtered through his/her self-perception and self-evaluation. Both play an important role in the selection and interpretation of information from the environment, in the individual's sense of control over his/her future, in his/her behaviour in current situations and in the way s/he relates to other people.

### The person as an active and purposeful agent

As mentioned above, a person's interaction with the external world is mediated by his/her conception of it, his/her ways of processing information, emotions, goals and values and physiological processes. The main implication of this assumption for research is that the person and environment cannot be treated as two separated entities of equal importance, but rather how individuals function in relation to the environment, through their perceptions, thoughts and feelings. Thus, to understand how subsystems of perceptions, cognitions, goals, values and emotions functions in interaction with each other, and as an

integrated total system in current situations, and how these subsystems develop during the process of development is of central importance for theorising and research.

The understanding and explanation of meaningful behaviour from the interactional perspective is to be found in the self; the understanding and explanation of variations in the self are to be found in the forms and content of social interaction; and to understand and explain interaction, one has to examine the contextual constraints within which interaction occurs.

#### Bronfenbrenner's ecological system framework

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system approach is based on the premise that the interactional process takes place at various levels of the person-environment system. That is, from the interaction between a cell and its environment in the early stage of development of the fetus, up to the interaction between a person and the macro-environment and between generations and their environment. Therefore, the character of the interactional process will vary according to the level of complexity at which it is approached in the hierarchy of the total system.

Drawing on the work of Brim (1975), Lewin (1951), and Piaget (1954), Bronfenbrenner locates the individual within a network of environmental systems, which he conceives as

"a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (1974, p.3). He conceptualizes these structures: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

The microsystem refers to the actual setting, such as home or school, in which the child develops, experiences and creates reality. Microsystems are composed of those who care for and participate in interaction with the child. As the child matures and is exposed to more people in a variety of contexts, the interaction becomes more complex. Enduring reciprocal relationships and larger microsystems with increasing complexity, appropriate for the age of the child, enhance development.

The structure one level above the microsystem Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983) defines as the mesosystem. This refers to the interrelationships between the settings or contexts in which the child is socialised. These interrelationships are conceived of as links between microsystems, and include the links between the home, the school, and the church. For Bronfenbrenner stronger and more diverse links between microsystems create more powerful mesosystem, which in turn enhance development.

Exosystem refers to those social structures which transcend the mesosystems, but in which the child does not actually

participate. These are the institutional structures that operate at the community level, such as the parent's place of work and or educational and social welfare authorities, whose decisions have a direct influence on the child's development (Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983).

The most remote level from the developing individual is the macrosystem. Macrosystems are defined by Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1983) as the broad ideological and institutional patterns of the culture or subculture that are manifest in the economic, social educational, legal and political systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1983). These ideological and institutional patterns are the form and content of micro, meso, and exosystems and reflect what exists or could exist at the national or subcultural level. For example, the ideology of the retributive system of justice as practiced in Great Britain results in Government policies (form) which focus on punishment (content) rather than reparation (Shaw, 1987). Consequently, public funding is largely directed to the punishment of the offender with very little being allocated to the victims of crime, including the hidden victims, children of offenders.

By focusing on environmental interconnections, the ecological perspective provides a framework for examining what Bronfenbrenner calls ecological transitions. That is, changes in role and/or settings such as marriage, birth of

a child, divorce, loss of a job, illness, death, and of course, imprisonment of a father.

A further important aspect of the ecological approach is the notion of cross-contextual dyads, which refers to interpersonal relationships that exist and operate across environmental contexts, as when an adult is both a father and a worker or a child is a son and a student. The ecological approach assumes that development is enhanced through the strengthening of the parent/child relationship, which is brought about by shared experiences in various settings, such as the home, school, church, etc. However, impoverished social networks, such as father absence, weak father/child relationship, emotional rejections and poverty, can limit important aspects of child development (Garbarino and Gilliam, 1980).

Proponents of the ecological perspective assert that many of the most significant aspects of human behaviour and development are the product of transactions that are shaped and mostly controlled by ecological forces that are not in direct contact with the individuals as the transactions occur. Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1983) called these indirect causal forces second-order effects, to indicate that something beyond the two individuals involved is affecting their interaction and sets the agenda for their transactions. For example what happens in the courts affects both the parent and the child even though the child

never physically enters this environment.

### THE ROLE OF THE FATHER

In order to understand the impact father absence has on children, it is important to examine the role the father plays, and the contribution he makes to the growth and development of the child.

Much of the literature concerning the father's influence on children remains inconclusive. One possible reason for this inconsistency of the findings may be related to the failure of researchers to view individual characteristics in context (Lamb, 1981a), and the lack of studies that address the nature of the father's psychological roles (Lewis, 1986). A further reason may be due to the reliance on mothers' reports, ignoring what characteristics of the father are relevant for the child.

In recent years, some long established assumptions concerning child rearing appear to have changed. Increasing numbers of men now play an active and important role in this process, and a growing number of social scientists recognise that it is important to investigate the salience of the father figure from the child's point of view (Bumpass and Rindfuss, 1979; Hetherington, 1979; Pedersen, 1980; Klaff, 1985).



### Direct and indirect paternal influence

Within Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework (1979, 1983, 1985) a child is viewed as a system in a world of systems. Information about the immediate systems in which the child is a member, as well as larger systems of which the child is not a member, are both important in understanding the factors influencing the role of the father in the child's development.

Paternal influence may be exerted directly and indirectly. Fathers influence directly through their interactions with the child as agents of socialisation by using reward or punishment to modify behaviour, expressing expectations, providing instructions and training, and using cognitive modification strategies such as reasoning and rationale persuasion (Radin and Russell, 1983). Father's indirect influence can be exerted through the mother's behaviour and related to the father's indirect role of providing physical, material settings and emotional support to the mother (Switsky *et al*, 1979; Price, 1977; Pedersen, 1975; Hetherington, 1979).

### Direct paternal influence

Several authors have recognized the importance of the father from the infant's first days of life (Abelin, 1975;

Pedersen *et al.*, 1979; Lamb, 1981a, 1982), and research findings have shown that fathers can be quite as competent and responsive as mothers (Parke, 1979) and that they are an important object of attachment (Lamb, 1982). Young infants clearly develop attachments to both parents, although most babies preferentially seek comfort from their mothers when they are distressed (Lamb, 1978; Cohen and Campos, 1974). The father however, provides distinctive experiences (Lamb and Lamb, 1976) as well as reinforcing experiences similar to those provided by the mother (Lamb, 1976). The father is thought to play an important role in the development of the child's exploratory attitudes during the practising subphase of the separation-individuation process and leading the child out of the symbiotic stage of his/her life in the subsequent rapprochement subphase (Mahler *et al.*, 1975). Furthermore, the father with his image of greater power and authority may be more effective in controlling children's behaviour and in serving to reinforce the mother's discipline (Tschann *et al.*, 1989).

The empirical evidence is consistent with the theoretical predictions that fathers and mothers appear to be psychologically salient to the children from the time they are infants, and adopt differential roles towards them. Although, infants become attached to both parents at about the same time, during the second year of life, boys start to show strong preferences for their fathers on attachment

behaviour measures (Lamb, 1977). These preferences appear to be related to the father's greater interest in sons than in daughters. Fathers and mothers represent different types of interactions and experiences from early in children's lives (Lewis, 1986). From infancy fathers engage in physically stimulating and playful interaction, whereas mothers engage in conventional play and are primarily responsible for caretaking (Lamb, 1976; Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lewis, 1986). According to Lynn and Cross (1974) girls shift their preferences from fathers to mothers between the ages of 2 and 4 years.

Few attempts have been made to distinguish empirically between maternal and paternal styles of interaction with older children (Lamb, 1981a). However, findings from studies reveal that mothers retain their association with caretaking and nurturance whereas fathers, although associated with play and adventure, are perceived as more threatening, rigid and demanding (Lamb, 1981b). These results are consistent in studies using different measures such as laboratory observation of parent-child interaction (Osofsky and O'Connell, 1972), parents' reports of their behaviour in various situations (Marcus, 1975), children's reports about their mother's and father's roles (Nadelman, 1976) and both parents' and children's reports (Devereux et al., 1974).

Several authors have reported an interaction between sex of

the child and sex of the parent. It appears that parents are more lenient towards children of the opposite sex (Langlois and Downs, 1980; Noller, 1980), and fathers are more directly involved in the rearing of sons than daughters (Kemper and Reichler, 1976).

Although studies have found differences in the father-child and mother-child relationships and the distinctive effects these have on child development, one must not lose sight of the similarities nor exaggerate the differences. For example, even if fathers are more concerned than mothers about adherence to conventional sex roles or mores (Kohn, 1979; Fagot, 1974), both parents obviously affect the sex-role and moral development of their children (Lamb, 1981).

#### Indirect paternal influences

Father's behaviour towards the child may be influenced by his other roles as husband and wage earner (Pedersen *et al.*, 1981). These role behaviours do not occur in a vacuum but rather are influenced by the preferences, expectations and sanctioning behaviour of the wife/mother. Similarly the mother-child relationship may be influenced by the behaviour, values, and attitudes of the husband/father (Pedersen *et al.*, 1981).

A variety of studies provide evidence that emotional

support from the husband and a satisfying marital relationship have an enhancing effect on the mother's competence and sense of well-being. The husband's emotional support is most crucial at periods of role transition, such as the transition from wife to mother (Grossman et al, 1980; Switzky et al, 1979; Barnard, 1980), or from a two to a single-parent family, due to separation (Hetherington et al, 1978; Hess and Camara, 1979). The latter studies indicate that, in the period following separation of the parents, an intensely conflicted relationship between mother and father is strongly associated with disrupted parent-child functioning (Pedersen et al, 1981). The psychological relationship between parents is more important than how much the father participates in childcare in determining the mother's responsiveness, involvement, or sense of competence (Barnard, 1980). Pedersen's suggestion that marital conflict produces unsatisfactory parent-child relations is consistent with Rutter's (1979) findings on the psychological effects of parent-child separation, which indicate that marital conflict has a more harmful impact on socioemotional development than does parent-child separation or father absence. He has demonstrated the ways in which the child-parent and parent-parent subsystems mutually influence each other, by finding a high interrelationship in the families of boys between the father-infant play and the effect of father's esteem for the mother as a mother, as well as the amount of tension and conflict in marriage.

### The role of the father in moral internalization

The importance of the role of the father in the internalisation of moral norms and values of society is emphasised in both children's moral development and in their learning of role-appropriate behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1960; Kohlberg, 1971), even though the role of the father varies in significance within theories of moral development. For example, the father is viewed as punitive and threatening in Freudian theory; as the primary consumer of resources in status-envy theory; as rewarding and affectionate in learning theory; as the principal rewarding and punitive agent in role-theory; as the primary controller of the resources in social power theory and as a source of role definitions, which promote cognitive-structural developmental changes, in cognitive developmental theory.

According to Hoffman (1981), the role of the father in the child's internalisation of society's norms and values has at least four dimensions, any of which can contribute to his/her moral development. First, the father serves as a model for the child through his words and actions; second, the father disciplines the child by encouraging certain behaviours, discouraging others, and providing explanations; third, the father provides for much of the child's affectional needs; and fourth, the father serves as

the connecting link between the child and the larger society, conveying society's demands and expectations and making them real to the child, and conferring a certain status on the child based on his position in the larger society.

Although several studies have focused on how society's moral norms and values are internalised, Hoffman's (1981) synthesis suggests four mechanisms of moral internalisation that explain this process. These are: a) arousal of deviation anxiety; b) arousal of empathy and guilt; c) identification d) cognitive moral conflict and equilibrium.

Arousal of deviation anxiety refers to the mechanism suggested by some social learning theories, in which the inhibition of a deviant action, even when no one else is present, is based on avoiding painful anxiety states associated with punishment for deviant acts during the socialisation process. In this case the individual may seem to behave in an internalised manner, although s/he is acting out of fear of external sanctions. Over time, this anxiety may become detached from any conscious fear of detection and punishment, in which case the inhibition of the deviant act is viewed by Hoffman as a primitive form of internalisation.

Arousal of empathy and guilt is a mechanism suggested by

Hoffman (1981), in which the consideration of others' welfare resulting from guilt and sympathetic distress (combination of empathy and cognitive awareness of how others are affected by one's behaviour) is the motive to adhere to moral norms and values. This motive, unlike deviation anxiety, stems directly from the individual's own internal resources rather than from external concerns about detection and punishment.

The third mechanism of moral internalisation is identification, the concept introduced by Freud (1973) as the psychological mechanism of cultural transmission. This occurs when the child identifies with the parent and internalises the parent's cultural standards. It is by adopting the parent's evaluative orientation with respect to his/her own behaviour, that the child eventually controls his/her antisocial impulses. However, various authors have questioned the scientific utility of the concept of identification (Hoffman, 1971b, 1981; Kohlberg, 1971; Damon, 1983).

Damon (1983) argues that the notion of identification derived from Freud implies a holistic transformation in personality. That is, by the age of five, the child has introjected his/her parents' beliefs, attitudes and rules of conduct. Although this moral system may be modified during later periods of development, the major part of its shape and substance is formed during the period of initial



parental identification. Damon (1983) doubts that a child's moral character can be permanently shaped by a "cataclysmic conflict resolution" at age five and points to the lack of empirical evidence for Freud's identification theory (Sears et al, 1965; Hoffman, 1981). Rather, Damon argues that the acquisition of complex cognitive systems like morality is a constructive process in which the child plays an active role, which the passive notion of internalisation does not consider.

Hoffman's (1971b) does not deny that identification plays a role in moral development, since the parent is the main model of social norms to which the child is exposed in the early formative years. However, this does not mean the child adopts all of the parents' attributes.

In a study of identification and conscience development, Hoffman (1971b) found that father identification was related to internal moral judgement but was not related to guilt, confession and acceptance of blame. Hoffman argues that the identificatory process is more apt to occur in nondisciplinary interactions in which the parent gives information about his/her personal characteristics including his moral orientation, which the child may adopt to judge the moral action of others, but not to examine his/her own behaviour. He suggests that the evaluation of one's own behaviour, may be fostered in the discipline

encounter, in which the synthesis between motivation and cognition necessary for internalisation can take place, as it is under this condition that the father's criticisms are directed to the child's action.

However, Hoffman (1971b) recognises that the measures used in his study only dealt with conscious motives to identify, and does not deny that unconscious form of identification may contribute significantly to moral internalisation. In addition, he points to the fact that although parents represent the moral norms of society, variations exist among them, therefore, analysis of the relation between identification and moral development requires information on the parents' actual moral attributes, and how these are communicated to the child.

The cognitive moral conflict and equilibration mechanism of moral internalisation is assumed by Kohlberg's (1969) cognitive developmental theory of moral development. The individual may cognitively process information that is at variance with his/her pre-existing moral conceptions and construct new views that resolve the contradiction.

Furthermore, this contradiction is between structural elements of the person's moral schema, which results in new perspectives that fit into an invariant sequence. The assimilation of the norms outside the self system into the boundaries of it depends upon the structural reorganisation

of the external norm and upon structural reorganization of the self assimilating the norm. For Hoffman (1981), however, the cognitive process involved is instigated not by structural conflict, but by conflict between the person's moral belief and the newly perceived social reality. Several writers support Hoffman's view that the conflict between morality and reality provides the trigger for moral growth in adolescence (Hoffman, 1980).

Kohlberg's (1966) suggests that the child's active attempts to make sense of the world, and his/her place in it, precedes the process of identification with others. Thus, the child does not imitate most new behaviour from other persons, but rather actively acquires it. Only after having established gender and its associated sex-appropriate values, does the process of identification with the same sex person begin. For example, a boy is most likely to select his father as a model with whom to identify as he first recognises that he shares the same gender as the father. This is also the view of Piaget (1962), who claimed that children imitate behaviour already in their own repertoire before imitating genuinely novel behaviour.

Kohlberg's (1966) basic assumptions are: young children judge things to be "good" if they are associated with the self; b) emotional attachment to the model must take place before real identification proceeds; and c) the child's

attachment to the model usually involves the child's desire to be near this model and to obtain his/her approval. Imitation and identification cannot proceed from an initial desire to acquire attributes foreign to the self, but only after the self has taken on the model's attributes.

According to cognitive developmental theory, the development of morally relevant identifications is a relatively advanced phase of development of the imitative process: as a consequence, a theory of identification with parents must be part of a much broader account of the development of imitative processes in general. Although distinctions are made in developmental theory between identification and imitation, it is one of developmental structure, rather than a dichotomous process as in psychoanalytic theory. The latter presupposes a sharp distinction between identification as a process of structural changes in the personality and ordinary imitation, whereas the latter posits that development of morally relevant identifications is a relatively advanced phase of the imitative process. For the developmentalists (Baldwin, 1902; Kohlberg, 1971; Mead, 1934) the tendency to model constitutes one component of a larger set of attitudes called "satellization" (Ausubel, 1957). This constellation includes: tendencies to imitate the parent or other model; emotional dependency and attachment to the parent; tendency to conform to the parent's normative

expectations; perceived similarity to the parent; idealization of the parent or of his/her competence and virtue; vicarious self-esteem derived from the parent's competence or status; ability to derive self-esteem from the parent's approval and so to forego other sources of prestige or competence, with associated security of self-esteem (Kohlberg, 1969 p.426).

These attitudes are thought to develop gradually in the "latency" years (4-10) in most "normal" children and to decline as independence develops during adolescence. The implication of satellising identification for moral development, is that it leads to a "semi-internalised" conformity to expectations and concern with disapproval based on a sense of sharing these expectations, not to an internalised self-critical and self-punitive superego. From this perspective, moral development cannot be directly caused by identification, as too many developmental and cultural forces serve to influence morality. It is rather the case that identification develops parallel to moral internalisation and helps to support moral and sex-role attitudes. Cognitive developmental changes in the child's conceptions of moral rules and social roles are seen to be just as likely, if not more so, to stimulate parent identification than the reverse.

Therefore, according to Kohlberg's identification theory,

children do not completely internalise their same-sex behaviour, but rather begin by recognising behavioural similarities that already exist and the resulting identification represents more a cognitive and emotional bond than the quest for a total reproduction of the model. Thus, for Kohlberg strong parent-child identifications will not necessarily lead to a consistent pattern of moral or sex-role behaviour in the child.

Kohlberg's theory of identification has been criticised for its limiting emphasis on gender similarity of models (Damon, 1983). For to enable the theory to be generalized, beyond gender similarities need to be posited. Furthermore, Kohlberg does not address the question of the role played by identification in children's social development. For example, the extent, limits and contribution identificatory learning makes to child development generally.

Cognitive developmentalists emphasise that conceptual growth is imperative if the child's social and moral attitudes are to change permanently. And they agree with Hoffman that the influence of parental communication can only be effective if the child is able to understand it. But, in contrast to Hoffman and other psychologists (Kagan, 1958; Sears *et al*, 1965), cognitive developmentalists have generally concluded that even well-understood parental communication is only partially

responsible for children's socialisation. They argue that many of the concepts and values central to a child's social development are acquired during social encounters with peers rather than adults.

The origins of this view can be found in Piaget (1968) who argues that the parents' influence on the child takes place in a constraining relationship, in which parents introduce the notion of obligation. However, notions of cooperation and justice are developed in a relationship among equals characterized by mutual respect, rather than unilateral respect, where legitimately different perspectives between the self and others are recognised and reconciled. This experience provides the child with a basis for future democratic social relations.

The child-adult interaction may change over time to resemble a peer relation as children grow older and become less dependent on their parents' protection, and the necessity to enforce rules and sanctions declines. However, until this occurs, adult-child interactions have their own particular strengths and limitations that enable them to serve an essential, but not all-encompassing function in the child's moral development.

#### The instrumental role of the father

During middle childhood, the father plays an important role

in helping the child to attain new skills with which to explore and experiment in the development of competence (Sarnoff, 1982). Although there is no necessary connection between tasks such as breadwinner, disciplinarian and decision-maker and the sexual biological assignment of the parent, as women have assumed these roles as well as men, typically they are assigned to the father (Sarnoff, 1982). Therefore the father contributes in shaping the development of cognition by emphasising the pragmatic imperatives related to his work life.

According to Erikson (1968), during this time, children are thrust toward industry. That is, they are impelled to discover skills that will enable them to move freely within and occasionally act on their surroundings to build a sense of competence as workers. As skills are developed, children begin to assess whether or not they will be able to make a contribution to the social community (Newman and Newman, 1975). It is in middle childhood that children make their first commitment to a social unit that is larger than the family (Damon, 1983).

The emphasis on skill building during middle childhood suggests that the child will be preoccupied with the process of self-evaluation (Erikson, 1950). As the child strives actively to match some internalised goals about levels of attainment s/he hopes to achieve (Damon, 1983)



and receives feedback from various persons about the quality of his performance, the process of self-evaluation may develop within a framework of self-confidence or self-doubt. This process of self-evaluation is further complicated as the peer group joins the adult world as a source of criticism as well as approval (Piaget, 1962). That is, the larger world begins to define self-esteem, making the attitudes of the parent toward the child less important. However, parental expectations encourage this change, as does the child's desire to avoid passivity at the hands of the parents.

The tendency to conform to the parent's normative expectations, and the idealisation of the parent or of his competence and virtue (Kohlberg, 1969), indicate the importance of the parent to support the child's exploration of the outside world, where the behaviour and symbols that indicate success become elements to strive for. The ability to succeed in these pursuits becomes a measure of one's worth.

The role of the father in the self-esteem and the self-image of the child is in providing the symbols of success in society as tools to use in overcoming feelings of unimportance felt by small children in a world controlled by adults. That is, the primary-school child derives vicarious self-esteem from parent's competence and status. For example, children invoke parents' big cars, large size,

physical strength and so on, to demonstrate their competence and boost their self-esteem vis-a-vis their peers.

There is wide agreement that the father is viewed by the child as an idealised figure during middle childhood (Esman, 1982; Sarnoff, 1982). It is only in early adolescence, when the child becomes physically mature enough to enter the adult world, that a process of disenchantment with the father begins, as intuitive responses to situations are replaced with realistic interpretations of events as the result of cognitive gains. Fortunately, it occurs when overvaluation of the father is not needed. The idealisation of the father declines as cognitions become increasingly sophisticated and tied to realistic symbolic elements and the father is then seen in a truer perspective. One of the tasks for the adolescent is the gradual transmutation of this idealised image by means of reality assessment and internalisation.

#### THE ABSENCE OF THE FATHER

Given the multidimensional role of the father, undoubtedly the experience of children in father absent families differ from those in which both parents are present. In most studies of father absence, it is generally agreed that, despite the fact that not all the fathers when present give

their children love, guidance and security, his absence can affect various aspects of the child's development. However, as Shinn (1978) and Herzog and Sudia (1973), in reviewing the literature, point out, methodological problems, contradictory findings and competing interpretations of available data make these findings about the nature and the extent of the effects of father absence inconclusive.

Typically, studies of paternal absence have divided children into two groups, those from father-present families and those from father-absent families (Friedman and Esselstyn, 1965; Svanum *et al.*, 1982; Daum and Bieliauskas, 1983). The characteristics of each group are then compared, and the resulting differences attributed to either the presence or absence of the father. While not denying that these families may share certain characteristics, assumptions about single-parent families as a single structural type have diverted interest from exploring both the complexity and diversity that exists among these families (Pilling and Pringle, 1978). Furthermore, the assumption that the two-parent family is the norm, with the resulting notion that the one-parent family is deviant from the norm and therefore problematic for children's development, has also prevented the growth of comprehensive knowledge about single-parent families (Gongla, 1982). It must also be remembered that when comparisons are made between two-parent and one-parent

families, many of the so-called father-absent children have access to their fathers (Earl and Lohmann, 1978), while some children in two-parent families, may have physically present fathers who are "psychologically" absent (Fleck et al., 1980). The major limitation of this approach is that it fails to consider the various factors that can influence children's experience of the absence of the father, such as reasons for the absence, age and sex of the child, and the quality of the relationships between family members.

Although we argue that various factors need to be considered to account for the complex and diverse nature of father separation, this is not to say that separation per se has no effects on children. For example, an "acute distress syndrome" has been commonly found in children who have separated from a parent (Rutter, 1971). Moreover, if the father, by being another distinctive nurturant and stimulating figure, plays an important (Pedersen et al., 1979) yet different role (Fagot, 1974; Lamb, 1981a) in male and female infants' subsequent development toward individuation, autonomy and their growing capacity to explore and confront the outside world, then clearly his absence is likely to be detrimental to the children. What we do argue, however is that to explore and explain the complex phenomena of father absence, a theoretical and methodological approach has to be developed which can accommodate the child's perception of separation, as well

as the contextual variations in which this perception takes place.

Recent studies of paternal absence have, in fact, considered a more diverse range of independent and control variables in the quest for greater explanatory power. These include: temperament (Hetherington, 1979; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein, 1984), age and gender (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Hetherington et al, 1989) demographic variables such as parent's occupation, education and income (Woody et al, 1984); marital conflict, before and after separation ( Emery, 1982; Peterson and Zill, 1986) parent-child relationships (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980) and the mother's ways of coping with the event (Tschann et al, 1989). Although some studies find marital separation to produce generally negative effects (Hess and Camara, 1979; Wallerstein, 1983; Peterson and Zill, 1986), the weight of the evidence suggests that a warm family environment and positive parent-child relationships are more important than structure (one-parent vs. two-parent) in producing positive outcomes for the child (Jacobson, 1978; Hetherington, 1982; Wallerstein, 1984).

The father's absence cannot be conceptualised as just an unfilled gap in family relationships, for it also involves a change in relationships within the family microsystem and between the family and friends and neighbours. Moreover,

an adequate approach to father absence has to include what most of the above studies have failed to consider: how the individual and/or family interacts with, and is affected by the wider social environment. For example, in the case of paternal separation due to imprisonment, the new link formed with the prison system is of importance in the child's response to separation from the father.

The complex nature of paternal absence is well expressed by Hetherington (1989) in her response to the question of what enduring effects divorce has on children:

"When I began to study children in divorced families, I had a pathogenic model of divorce. However, after more than two decades of research on marital transitions, I would have to respond: depending on the characteristics of the child, particularly the age and gender, available resources, subsequent life experiences, and especially interpersonal relationship, children in the long run may be survivors, losers, or winners of their parents' divorce" (p.12).

The following sections describe the main findings of research into the consequences for the child of growing up in a fatherless home. These findings include literature on absence due to divorce and imprisonment. The inclusion of separation resulting from divorce will help us to identify various problems that are relevant to separation arising

from imprisonment, where systematic information regarding the extent to which children are affected is notably lacking. What research does exist in this area tends to focus on the effects that imprisonment has on inmates and their spouses (Anderson, 1966; Bachmann et al, 1974 Struckoff, 1977; Baker, 1980; Douglas, 1983; Thomasson, 1984; Smith, 1986; ), or to the procedures the family must execute with the different agencies with which it comes into contact (Baker, 1980; Matthews, 1983; Fishman and Cassin, 1981). Although a great deal of unco-ordinated materials must be known to individual doctors, social workers and health visitors (Morris, 1967; Shaw, 1987), few attempts have been made at a thorough examination of the special problems experienced by children of offenders (Sack et al, 1976; Verrijdt, 1975; Fishman, 1981).

## ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTION

### Macrosystems

At the macro level of interaction, society's large scale political, economic and social institutions generally view single-parent families to be doubly deviant: deviant from the norm of the two parent family, and deviant as generally they are headed by women, since traditionally women are not head of the household. This is expressed in the lower social status granted to women in general, the consequence

of which is a lack of child care options, occupational opportunities, flexible business and social service provision, social prestige and power (Ross and Sawhill, 1975; Schorr and Moen, 1979) .

Women suffer loss of income relative to family needs after becoming single parents (Hoffman, 1977). This lowered economic status has been related to factors such as low and irregular levels of public assistance and of child support payments, lower salaries and fewer employment opportunities than are available to men (Espenshade, 1979). Low economic status undoubtedly has effects on child development as it is related to a low sense of personal fate control and ability to plan for the family's future (Bould, 1977), although this factor is rarely controlled for adequately (Herzog and Sudia, 1973).

When separation due to imprisonment occurs, it is usually in families at the lowest socio-economic strata of society (Fishman, 1983), therefore, the enforced departure of the husband only serves to exacerbate their already severe financial situation (Morris, 1965; Schwartz and Weintraub, 1974; Sack, 1977; Daniel and Barret, 1981; Fishman, 1981, 1983;).

#### Intrasystem dynamics-the family microsystem

In general, paternal separation cannot be conceptualised as



a single, circumscribed crisis from which recovery may be expected within a period of weeks or months. Rather, it involves a dynamic long-term, multistage process during which family relationships and environment change, re-form, and change again (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Hetherington and Camara, 1984). What is particular about father separation due to imprisonment is that usually it is a "temporary", enforced, multifaceted, extended process that alters but may not end the relationships existing among family members. Initially it involves the sudden loss of the father to the family system, which leads to severe disruption (Fishman, 1983) and the release of powerful emotions such as anger, sadness and anxiety. This can be followed by several months or years of instability, during which the attention and support children receive from their parents, particularly the mother, can decrease greatly (Lowenstein, 1986). In some cases the extended family can compensate for this lack of attention and support, but in others, where geographical relocation follows the father's imprisonment, the ties with the extended family can be weakened.

Studies on the micro environment of father absent families have usually relied on the mother's report to gather information on the relationship she and the child have with family, friends and other informal contacts (Morris, 1965; Fishman, 1983; Thomasson, 1984). Rarely have studies sought

the child's point of view. Many parents and teachers assume that stressors in a child's life can be easily identified (Honig, 1986a). Yet differences in the cognitive appraisal of stressors lead to marked individual differences in children's reactions to the same stressor, depending on the evaluative process that gives meaning to a situational encounter (Rutter, 1983; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The same event, such as separation from a father, may be perceived by different individuals as irrelevant, benign and positive, or threatening, challenging and a loss (McCrae, 1984). An important factor that mediates cognitive appraisal, coping, and adaptational outcome of a stressful event is the situational belief in the control a person has over the particular event. In some situations, personal control may be beneficial and lack of personal control detrimental, because it reflects on the person's self-image (Thompson, 1981). However, in other situations, the belief that one has control over an outcome can heighten rather than reduce threat (Folkman, 1984). For example, when control is in the hands of another person it can minimise future danger, as in the case of a professional administering drugs or injections, less personal control may be preferred.

There are also situations where a person does have the necessary skills to exercise control over an aversive condition, but to do so may increase stress. In a study of coping efforts of low income mothers, Dill *et al* (1980)

describe how a woman was reluctant to intervene in her child's behavioural problems as she thought to do so would invoke humiliating intrusions from the school, health authorities or social workers. Smith (1986) found that the mothers in her study were reluctant to seek help from statutory agencies for their numerous problems, as they believe they see them as "failed" wives and by extension "failed" mothers, even though, in her sample, the mothers were "good and caring". She emphasises that the influence of society's traditional expectations of the woman's role in the family to care, give support, and keep the relationships intact, is so strong that it sometimes leads to an "almost paranoid" fear of the consequences of seeking help. Such was the case of wives who would not ask for help "even in such innocuous matters as needing a baby sitter".

Ideally, an adaptative appraisal of an event should fit reality reasonably well, and be based on a balanced estimate between objective and subjective controllability, even though under some circumstances a little distortion may be of value (Mischel, 1979).

Given that a distinguishing feature of the father's imprisonment is his involuntary separation from the family, over which neither the mother nor the child have any control, it may be expected that mother and child will

resort to some form of situational redefinition to cope with this particular form of stress. The redefinition of the situation has been shown by Holmes and Houston (1974) to be effective in coping with stress in uncontrollable situations. Although their study adopts an experimental design, for which external validity may be limited, the results indicate that when individuals face a stressful situation, the coping strategy of redefinition reduces stress.

The emotional disturbance suffered by children of prisoners has been documented by several authors (Friedman and Esselstyn, 1965; Morris, 1965, 1966; Sack *et al.*, 1976; Sack, 1977; Fishman, 1983; Lowenstein, 1986; Shaw, 1987).

Shaw (1987) interviewed the mothers of 22 prisoners' families with a total of 60 children for whom the prisoner had responsibility. In addition he gathered information from teachers, health visitors and "others", all viewed imprisonment of a father as being detrimental to children, even though each family's personal and social circumstances differed and there were variations in the way children coped with this event. Some mothers report that youngsters became hysterical, depressive or delinquent, while others report consequences such as failure to thrive, ill health, disturbed behaviour, truancy and lowered school performance, regardless of the social class or economic group of the family. Bed-wetting and

reduced concentration were the more common of the minor symptoms.

Father's absence due to imprisonment was also found to be related to a decline in the school work of children and related characteristics such as achievement, sociability, attendance and participation in the school and self-concept in a study by Friedman and Esselstyn (1965). The differences between children of prisoners and non-prisoners' families in this study were investigated by applying a measure of adjustment to three groups of children (one experimental group and two control groups). Teachers rated blindly on a five-step continuum from below-average to above-average. They found that children whose fathers were in prison are rated below average in the school environment and on the above social and psychological characteristics more frequently than are comparable controls, even though some rated above-average. However, in this type of study, neither the adjustment problems children experience as a result of their separation from the father, nor the variables affecting successful adjustment, could be identified.

In a study by Moerk (1973) that investigated the psychological adjustment of children to father's imprisonment, no difference was found between prisoners' and divorced children in the way they perceive their

parents or the parents' attitude toward themselves. The suggestions given by the authors for this lack of difference between the two groups are: a) the tests may not have been sensitive enough to record the effects of the independent variables; and b) the two groups came from very low socioeconomic background; therefore the imprisonment of the father did not exert any additional effects to the group of prisoners' children. It must be pointed out that antisocial and aggressive reactions are not unique to children of prisoners. They have been identified in other forms of parent-child separation, such as divorce (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Hetherington et al, 1982; Parish and Wigle, 1985;), as well as among two-parent children (Tschann et al, 1989). Children with divorced parents may identify with and act out negative descriptions of the absent father provided by the mother. However, Moerk's (1973) findings reflect the importance of considering the influence of variables related to the personal and social development of children, which could illuminate the differential effects the imprisonment of the father has on these children.

Sack et al (1976) assessed the effects of paternal incarceration on children by administering the same interview schedule to both the prisoner and his wife. According to the parents, the child's main reactions were: sadness, fear, aggression and antisocial acts. However, the above studies have gathered the data mainly from the

parents without investigating the child's perception of the event. Neither have they considered the differential effects in children's adjustment due to variation in personal and familial resources, and variables related to the criminal event that led to the father's incarceration. The accuracy with which parents can answer questions concerning the behaviour of their children may be influenced by various situational factors. Information obtained from parents may be unreliable as the mother's perception of the child's behaviours or symptoms may suffer from the results of selective perception. In addition, the parent may infer their children's internal states from their behaviour, rather than having had direct reports of their children's perceptions.

The examination of the child's appraisal of the event is particularly necessary in the case of father-absence due to imprisonment as this type of separation is unique in its effects on the family, especially the children, because of the demoralization and stigma attached to it (Morris, 1965, 1966; Struckhoff, 1977; Thomasson, 1984; Fishman, 1988).

For example, Klaff (1985) shows, in a study of children's adjustment to divorce and their relationship with parents, that neither the mother's nor the teacher's ratings of children's adjustment were related to two dimensions of children's perceptions of their parents. She investigated

children's perceptions of their parents in relation to psychological autonomy versus psychological control measured by the Children's Report of Parental Behaviour Inventory. Hingst's (1982) findings are consistent with the above study. She compared the perception of 84 children and their mothers regarding the divorce event, using the same questionnaire for both, and found that the views differed markedly on several issues, such as atmosphere in the home prior to the divorce and intensity of the child's feelings before and after divorce. Mothers generally tended to minimise both the negative effects of the divorce on the children, and the importance of the relationship with the (usually non-custodial) father.

Similar results have been reported in studies of children's reactions to the imprisonment of the father. According to Morris (1966), apart from money, the main problem reported by wives during the husband's imprisonment is managing the children. More than one-third of the wives reported difficulties such as truanting, enuresis, eating (refusal or incessant eating) and sleeping problems, fretting, clinging and general behavioural problems, and yet they denied that any connection existed between the physical symptoms or behaviour problems that children exhibited, and the absence of their fathers. The failure of mothers to see the children's problems from their point of view, or that they could be related to the absence of the father, clearly indicates the limitations of relying on mothers'



reports. They can tell as very little about how children actually perceive and feel about their experience, particularly if the mother and child do not share their feelings about the event.

The conclusions drawn from the premises underlying studies of father-absent children relating to the effects of the father have been seriously questioned by Weisel (1976) and Hamilton (1977). According to Weisel, in her comprehensive review of the father-absence literature, there are major critical flaws resulting from the dependency on an oversimplified model, which does not take into account the varied set of possible effects acting upon and within the family. Rarely, for example, do the studies take into account micro-system, exo-system and macrosystem variables.

This is supported by Lowenstein's (1986) investigation into the problems of children's adjustment to parental loss arising from incarceration, in which she identified marital and familial factors that may account for differential adjustment outcomes. The information was gathered through semistructured interviews with 118 inmates and their spouses, and factor analysed to obtain the dimensions, and to identify the various factors that influence children's adjustment to father's imprisonment. The variables providing possible explanations for the variability in children's adjustment are: mother's age and level of

education, mother's definition of the situation, degree of family solidarity prior to imprisonment, quality of the marriage, family strength, patterns of role sharing, and type of crime committed by the father. Lowenstein concludes that children's reactions to their father's incarceration are more fully revealed by a strategy which examines families within a socio-psychological framework.

A more comprehensive study into the effects of father's imprisonment on children has been undertaken by Hounslow et al. (1982). The methodology adopted in this research included questionnaires distributed to 10 prisons, from which were received 244 usable responses. This was followed by interviews and group discussions with 105 prisoners who had children to gather information on such factors as: personal profile of prisoner, degree and nature of contact between prisoner and children before and after incarceration, current care situation of children and perceived problems and plans and expectations of parental relationship on release. Interviews were also conducted with 33 adults and children who had direct experience with the prison system. Further questionnaires were distributed to all new prisoners starting a sentence in New South Wales during October 1981, to determine parental status and some basic facts about the care of children. This survey produced 85 usable responses.

The study reveals that children are affected by their

parents' ability to cope and by the material changes in their lives. As an example, Hounslow cites the case of one mother who reported taking out her frustration on the child and not wanting to know about the problems he was having at school, and two others who reported how they had the courage to tell the teachers and other children the reasons for their children's difficulties, and in doing so earned their respect and support which helped to overcome their schooling problems. Prisoners' families were often found to be isolated from relatives and alienated from their neighbours. Evidence that children suffered from this alienation and isolation was provided by children truanting for the first time in their school careers, by their resistance to all efforts to persuade them to leave their mothers, and by embarrassment when policemen visited the school to give lectures on road safety. Older children, however, were found to mature quickly, perhaps because of their involvement with the imprisonment process, and often became a major support to mothers, particularly in cases where the family is socially isolated.

The authors argue that children with limited conceptual and linguistic skills have few defences against the stigma of having a father in prison. They cite one wife of a long-term prisoner who reported that none of her children wanted their friends to know, and one even told people he was dead.

A major emphasis of the study centres on the maintenance of the parent-child relationship during incarceration. This is largely determined by the classification of prisoners and local prison rules, for they dictate the visiting facilities available, the movement of prisoners from one jail to another, and the associated financial, transport and emotional problems faced by the mother. In short, they determine the quantity and quality of contact prisoners may have with their children. Contact between father and child is particularly important for the process of reintegration of the father into the family system. Children's attitudes toward the father on his return were found to range from punishment of the "deserter", through rejection of the "intruder", to unambivalent "welcome". The authors suggest that a major factor determining what the response will be is the degree to which actual parenting has been maintained by the imprisoned person during the enforced absence.

Although the study constitutes a major contribution to father/child separation due to imprisonment, the greater bulk of the study consists of the problems faced by the incarcerated parent and the associated prison rules, legal proceedings and welfare provisions, which although undoubtedly have effects on the child, again does not tell us much about how these effects are experienced by the child. More importantly, however, the study relies heavily on the father's information about the problems faced by children after his imprisonment, which, as demonstrated by

various authors (Morris, 1965; Bachmann et al, 1974), is unreliable. Wives are reluctant to inform the husband of the many problems they face as this would upset him, or they consider it to be not worthwhile as he is unable to help anyway. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that this study was conducted in Australia, therefore cultural differences must be considered when applying these results.

A similar study which relies on the prisoner's reports has been carried out by Bachmann et al (1974) in Switzerland. Their findings, based on interviews with 17 prisoners and five wives, reveals that the main problems relating to father's imprisonment on children are eating problems, bouts of fever, behavioural problems, enuresis, speech problems and nocturnal anxiety. They also point to the disorganisation of the family, and to the necessity of the wife substituting the husband as a breadwinner, as major problems. Contrary to their expectations, this does not cause the children to be removed from the home, as 12 out of the 17 families investigated kept the children. Out of the five children who did not remain in the mother's care, one was looked after by the sister-in-law, two by the grandparents, and two were placed in institutions.

The findings also reveal the importance of family contact, particularly the children with the father to prevent the deterioration of the family bond, and that the father-child

relationship prior to imprisonment determines the relationship after imprisonment. They argue that the father-child bond deteriorates to the extent that this possibility is already latent prior to separation. Out of 14 cases that had good relationships, nine remained unchanged, two became difficult and three had no further contact.

Concerning the visiting pattern to the prison, only one out of the 12 prisoners who answered the question if they receive visits from their children responded in the affirmative. The explanations given by the remaining eleven as to why they do not receive visits from their children include: five prefer to see their children during their home leave, five said that their children do not know they are in prison, and one that the distance from his home to the prison is too great. The findings of this study can only be taken tentatively for the sample is atypical compared to samples used in other studies, to the extent that the majority of prisoners were either in open prisons or in the undefined category of "semi-freedom" (seven prisoners were in enclosed prisons, six in open prisons, and four come under the category of "semi-freedom").

In Backmann's study, more so than in Hounslow's study, the findings on the effects of the father's imprisonment are based exclusively on the prisoner's information. This is

not to say that the information gathered is not worthwhile, but rather it is incomplete and selective, and therefore gives a partial account of the problems faced by children of offenders. As the authors emphasise, the perception of the prisoners about the family situation both in the financial and social aspects is very superficial due to their isolation from any interaction with the family in its wider social context.

As mentioned above, a major worldwide survey was undertaken in order to identify the problems children face when their fathers are in prison. The study carried out by Verrijdt (1975), identified 335 different effects on children resulting from the father's imprisonment. These are in order of frequency: deterioration of the parental image (N=70); humiliation (N=51); traumatic experiences resulting from prison visits (N=42); rebellion (N=40); awakening of a sense of responsibility (N=31); break-down (N=25); idealisation of the father image (N=25); need for vengeance (N=16); exploitation (N=9); and pride (N=6). As in the case of Hounslow's and Bachmann's studies, one must be cautious in applying the results of this study directly to imprisonment in England, as cultural variables may affect the prisoner's reports.

The deterioration of the parental image is the most frequent response given by respondents in the various countries surveyed. In addition, the author reports that a

commission of European experts found that the deterioration of the parental image is further worsened when the arrest of the father takes place in the presence of the children and is carried out without any consideration of the children's sensitivity to the situation. He also emphasises that the attitude of the community and the partner's aggression toward the prisoner often contribute to this deterioration. Moreover, feelings of humiliation felt by the children are a consequence of environments where public opinion condemns families of prisoners. These feelings are mostly expressed vis-a-vis school friends, but, like breakdown and pride, are found in different degrees within the environment.

Rebellion is more frequently found among older children, who sever all interaction with the guilty parent and become entrenched in a state of opposition and hostility. However, the author points out that some children also resign stoically to the situation. In cases where children develop a sense of responsibility, which lead some to take on the role of the absent father, although enhancing maturity, may create problems on the father's release. It may also create problems for children who are forced into adult roles before they are developmentally ready for them (Weiss, 1979).

The author concludes that the degree of disturbance the



children suffer depends on various factors such as age, the child's personality, the relationship with the father prior to incarceration, the mother's reactions to the imprisonment of the husband, the support offered by the extended family and the duration of the sentence.

### Mother-child interaction

Several authors suggest that how the mother copes with the separation from the husband is of crucial importance for the child's adaptation to the changes resulting from separation (Copeland, 1985; Hetherington, 1989). There is consistent evidence that the mother can minimise or emphasise the problems resulting from the father's absence. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that the greatest disruption in the children's lives after divorce are those that stem from pervasive changes in parental mood, attitudes, and behaviour. The significance of these psychological, emotional, and physical changes is that children are encountering an altered parent at a time when they need stability in a rapidly changing life situation (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Hetherington *et al.*, 1989).

Divorced parents have been found to be less affectionate, especially with sons (Hoffman, 1971a), make fewer maturity demands of their children, communicate less well with them, and show marked inconsistency in discipline and lack of control over their children compared to parents that are

still married (Hetherington et al., 1982; Copeland et al., 1984).

The mother's perception of her husband's imprisonment and ability to cope with his absence can influence the children's adjustment to the situation (Lowenstein, 1986). The extent to which a child suffers from the father's incarceration has been found to be related to the effect the separation has on the mother (Morris, 1967). In Morris' study, children who are able to adjust belong to families where the mother enables them to cope more adequately with the changing situation, and where the nature of the father's crime has less stigmatizing effects on the family. The stigma of the husband's crime is a major additional factor affecting women's ability to cope, apart from a range of conflicting emotions, changes in their financial status and assuming new roles as single parents and single head of households (Fishman, 1983).

Role redistribution in the reorganization of prisoners' families (wives and children taking on the husband's former roles) is particularly difficult, as the situation is ambiguous and uncertain, for, in most cases although the father is physically absent, he is psychologically present and still considered to be part of the family. The reorganisation of the family system is extremely difficult for the dependent wife, who may have always turned

exclusively to her husband for help and support (Morris, 1965). During her husband's imprisonment, she may experience feelings of paralysis and be unable to assume the responsibilities of a head of a household, such as managing finances, and disciplining the children. In some cases this may be alleviated by the support and help of the extended family, friends and neighbours.

There is evidence to suggest that, at least in divorce situations, there may be power struggles and a power redistribution after the father leaves, with mothers often not gaining in power (Hunt and Hunt, 1977; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). With the mother having no adult ally to help assert authority, a blurring of distinction between the mother's and child's levels of authority may occur, leading to new rights and authority being granted to children (Weiss, 1979). Because there are so many tasks, yet only one parent, the responsibility for tasks normally performed by parents in an intact family may begin to be shared with the children in a one-parent household, particularly if the children are adolescents (Weiss, 1979). Mothers may also attempt to use children to meet the emotional needs formerly supplied by the husband or she may work out unresolved conflicts with her husband by displacing these conflicts on the children (Grossberg and Crandall, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

When the father is incarcerated, one of the first tasks for

the mother is to provide an explanation of his absence to the children. This is an extremely important task for the mother, as her definition of the situation largely determines the extent to which the children are prepared for the father's imprisonment. Whether, when and how they are told about it is of crucial importance to the children's adjustment to the event (Lowenstein, 1986). This can be a most difficult moment for mothers, particularly for wives whose husbands are incarcerated for the first time. Thomasson (1984), studying the reactions of prisoner's wives found that the "first timers", tend to feel more uncertain about the kinds of explanations to give to the children than the "old-timers". The latter more or less assumed that their children were aware of their father's criminal behaviour and had already organised their own accounts. The "first-timers", however, due to their feelings of shock and bewilderment, are likely to disclose some information but are anxious about the adequacy of these explanations and uncertain how to deal effectively with the issue of the husband's stigmatisation. It may be more difficult for wives to consider the needs of their children, and the best way to discuss with them, when they themselves are in emotional turmoil and severely stressed.

It was found that the type of crime committed by the husband influences the mother's decision as to the amount

of information she discloses to her children. In the case of crimes of property mothers are more likely to tell their children the circumstances of the father's offence and to answer their questions about the matter, than they are in cases of sexual offences. By contrast, wives who have been criminally abused by their husbands are not in the least reluctant to provide details of his offence to the children. These women tended to describe the husband's behaviour as socially unacceptable, as "unredeemable", "bad", "no-good bastards", "sickies" or "turkies".

In many cases, mothers chose to deceive their children by claiming that the father is "in hospital", "at sea", "at work" and so on (Morris, 1967; Hounslow *et al*, 1982). Forty per cent of prisoner's children in Morris' sample were unaware that their fathers were in prison. Similar findings are reported by Hounslow *et al* (1982). Twenty five per cent of the women said that their children were not told of their father's whereabouts, while thirteen per cent were unsure whether their children knew. Based on the survey of the "Reception Committee" at the beginning of the imprisonment, the percentage of children who did not know about their father's imprisonment was even higher. However, Hounslow *et al* point out that, conversation with some children indicates that they often know more than they are told by their parents. For example, an eight-year-old boy stated that his father could not be in the army as he knew very well that the army do not lock people up, and fathers

come home on leave sometimes.

Children within the same family can be given different explanations about the father's absence. Shaw's (1987) study shows that in some cases mothers told teenage children the truth about the father's whereabouts, whilst their younger brother or sister were told a lie or nothing at all, thus placing a considerable burden on the older child. However, the mother's decision to deceive the child about the father's whereabouts does not restrict her from discussing the situation freely with various persons in the presence of the child. As a consequence one might suspect that children know more about the event than mothers realise.

There is evidence to suggest that it may be ill conceived on the part of the mother not to tell the children the true facts about the father's absence. In some instances, children may collude with the mother's pattern of deception to hide the father's situation, which makes it difficult for the mother to assist with any certainty the absence of the father with the various problems observed in the children. But, more importantly, the mother's decision to withhold information to children denies to them the opportunity to express and share feelings of sadness, anger and fear, which may undermine the child's trust in the mother and in turn, their relationship.

According to Hounslow et al (1982), all the children interviewed who were subsequently told the truth indicated that they wished they had been told from the beginning. Likewise, all the parents who changed their minds stated that their children's favourable response showed they had been mistaken not to tell them in the first place. The authors point out that at the present time, there is no way for this experiential knowledge to be passed on to others faced with the same dilemma, other than by accidental connections.

#### Intersystems dynamics

The imprisonment of the father interrupts but does not usually end the relationship with the wife and children, and many partners remain in contact throughout the incarceration period and preserve, in some form, the marital bond. Whether or not the marriage remains intact, however, may have an impact on children's coping processes. For some families, the incarceration of the father is another in a long series of family crisis (Sack et al, 1976), which offers the mother a convenient time to terminate a failing marriage. The mother's decision to divorce may exacerbate the effects paternal imprisonment has on the children. For example, children are dependent on their mothers to take them to the prison; therefore the frequency, and consequently the quality of their

relationship with the father is largely determined by the mother's relationship with the husband.

The new link formed with the prison system governs to a great extent the relationship between father and child. Although prison visits, as a major form of contact between prisoners and their wives, has received great attention, the majority of studies focus on the beneficial effects of the family social bond in the rehabilitation of the prisoner (Mustin, 1984; Hairston, 1988) and on parole success (Homer, 1979). Despite the obvious benefits of the interaction between the prisoner and family members, many families of offenders face problems in attempting to maintain a relationship within the restrictions of the prison systems (Matthews, 1983), and overcoming the many difficulties related to the prison's location and the family's financial situation. Many prisons are located far from the family home (Matthews, 1983), which places severe restrictions in the father/child contact.

#### Father-child interaction

The quality of father-child relationship after separation has been found to have a significant effect on the child's coping and adjustment (Hess and Camara, 1979; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Hughes, 1982; Hetherington *et al.*, 1982; Fishman, 1983). Most children wish to maintain contact with the father (Hetherington, 1979) and frequent availability



of the father is associated with positive adjustment and social relations, especially in boys (Hess and Camara, 1979). According to Hess and Camara, the threat of divorce lies in disruption of relationships with the parents, and disruption in these primary bonds interfere with the child's developmental progress, and presents both cognitive and emotional problems that may persist long after adjustments have been made in the routine of daily life. Hetherington (1979) supports this view, and emphasises that a continued mutually supportive relationship and involvement of the father with the child is the most effective support system for divorced women in their parenting role and for the children.

Studies regarding father separation due to imprisonment have also found that it is crucial for the child to maintain interaction with the father as frequently as possible (Hounslow *et al.*, 1982; Shaw, 1989). The extent to which a child suffers from the effects of separation depends upon the father-child relationship prior to and during incarceration. That is, the experience of father incarceration appears to be related to the degree to which children perceive similarities between themselves and their fathers and the strength of the bond developed with him (Sack, 1977). Children interviewed by Sack demonstrated a positive attachment to the father, while frequently expressing ambivalence and shame about what he had done. He

goes on to say that it is doubtful whether the separation from the father would have the significance it did for these children without the opportunity to form a strong attachment prior to the separation. Bachmann et al (1974) also found that the relationship between child and father prior to imprisonment greatly determine the relationship during incarceration. He argues that the ties between father and child are likely to deteriorate according to the latent problems existing before the father's incarceration.

One of the few ways for children to maintain contact with the father is through visiting, which has been found to be especially helpful for children as it allays their fears about the father's health and welfare as well as their concerns about his feelings for them (Weintraub, 1976; Sack, 1977). Children often develop their own ideas about what prisons are like from television or movies and can be very frightened or conversely impressed, before they actually see the institution (Fishman, 1983). However, visits can be a mixture of enjoyment and trauma (Monger and Pendleton, 1977). Children may feel bored during visits and cry at the end of the visit as they do not understand why their father cannot come home. Unfortunately, even though the first experience can calm a child's initial fears, ongoing visiting conditions are not conducive to emotionally satisfying visits and do not promote regular visiting patterns (Fishman and Cassin, 1981). As Hounslow

et al (1982) emphasise, the visiting room can severely inhibit the visit, as a more sterile and boring environment from a child's point of view is difficult to imagine.

Generally, the environment where visiting takes place is totally devoid of anything attractive to children and there is normally nothing for them to do. Visiting areas are generally crowded, and visits take place under the supervision of correctional officers, thus there is usually a lack of privacy or intimacy.

Hounslow et al (1982) identify two aspects of imprisonment which make effective parenting an almost impossible task: 1) the emotional context where parenting takes place is characterized by objective powerlessness, which generates and sustains various obstacles that render the maintenance of the father-child relationship enormously difficult, artificial and disheartening. This powerlessness extends not just to the rights of parenthood, but also to its responsibilities; 2) the essential feature of the father-child relationship is that it is particularly vulnerable either to breakdown, or to a desintegration into fantasy. The lack of contact with the daily reality of a relationship increases the fantasy level of that relationship. The fantasies cannot be challenged while there is no opportunity for fathers to relate to their

children alone, or to be useful in any constructive way in the family situation. The structured unreality which surrounds the relationship between children and fathers in prison deprives those relationships of essential emotional content. Prisoners are rendered unable to mediate or interpret their children's world in any constructive way. The unrealistic expectations resulting from the nature of the father-child interaction during imprisonment may make the reintegration of the father in the family at his release problematic.

Hounslow *et al's* (1982) study shows that difficulties in visiting seem to originate mainly in the prison system or the material conditions of the parents. For example, 22 per cent of prisoners who received visits did not see their children solely because they are refused entry by prison officers at the gate, the commonest reason being that the prisoner had the permitted quota of visits. The time limit on visiting also may place a great deal of pressure on the family. Most institutions have very limited visiting hours and may be located far away from the family home. As a result, transportation to the institution and scheduling can be an overwhelming problem for the family involved (Schafer, 1978). It is easy to understand how parents could become extremely frustrated under these conditions, and decide not to include the children during visits. Many wives may choose to visit the husband during the week when it is less likely that visiting areas will be crowded and

when public transport is more frequent. Given that visiting hours are also school hours, school-aged children cannot accompany the mother. Therefore many children only see their fathers during school holidays or at monthly or two-monthly intervals, for they do not want to miss classes or sporting and recreational events (Hounslow *et al.*, 1982). The result for the children involved can mean that they experience great feelings of loneliness for their father in prison (Fishman, 1983).

#### Developmental factors and the absence of the father

Various authors have noted the importance of considering developmental factors in their studies of stress on children and adolescents (Kelly and Wallerstein, 1976; Wallerstein, 1980; Rutter, 1983; Honig, 1986; Compas, 1987). Despite significant differences in the child, the family, and in parent-child relationships, the child's age and developmental periods appear to be important factors governing the initial response to the marital rupture (Wallerstein, 1984). The child's capacity to perceive and understand family events, his/her dominant needs, central psychological preoccupations and conflict, together with the dominant patterning of relationships and expectations, and their available repertoire of defense and coping strategies, all are associated with the child's age and developmental stage. It must be emphasised, however, that

age is not an explanatory factor but rather a sorting variable used as a shorthand way to describe cognitive sophistication, level of moral development, emotional reactions, coping strategies, and experience.

Although the effects of separation and the coping strategies adopted by children and adolescents may vary according to the category of the event, Rutter (1983) found that age is a relevant variable in the study of separation due to hospital admission, birth of sibling or bereavement. Kurdek *et al* (1981), who explored the association between developmental factors and children's adjustment to divorce support this view. Using an interpersonal reasoning task, they found that a child's adjustment to divorce is positively related to the his/her developmental level of social cognition. According to Wallerstein and Kelly (1976), in contrast with younger children, latency children feel ashamed of the divorce and disruption in their family. They are ashamed of their parents and their behaviour and lie to conceal them. While enabling some of them to temper the impact, their more sophisticated and mature grasp of time and reality increased the comprehension of the meanings and consequences of the divorce.

Some authors maintain that the earlier the parental separation occurs in the child's life, the more profound its impact (Hetherington, 1972; Santrock, 1970). Others (McDermott, 1968; Westman, 1972), hold the view that

children are particularly vulnerable to the impact of separation when it occurs between the ages of five and seven years. However, Kalter and Rembar (1981), investigating the significance of a child's age at the time of parental divorce, found that there is no systematic association between time of separation due to divorce and overall level of adjustment. The general findings indicate that there are qualitative differences in how children at various developmental levels respond to divorce (McDermott, 1970; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1976, 1980; Lamb, 1977; Hetherington, 1988). It is difficult to know whether there is a "critical period" for much depends on what is assessed and when it is assessed. For example, research on daughters in father-absent homes finds few effects until adolescence, even when the separation occurred early in the girls lives (Hetherington, 1972).

Brady *et al* (1986), support the view that children from separated families differ in type and degree of problems presented when compared to children of intact families, and that these differences are related to the age of the child. The youngest age group, in this study, are found to have the most severe problems with sleep disturbances, immature behaviour, and bowel disorders; the school-age group manifest more problems with hyperactive behaviour when compared to the younger and older age groups; and the eldest group have more difficulty handling anxiety and are

more likely to steal, manifest somatic complaints, difficulties in sibling relationships, and learning problems.

According to Wallerstein *et al* (1988), the immediate effects of divorce on preschool children create profound anxieties because of their cognitive immaturity. They are unable to appraise accurately their parents' motives and feelings and are prone to develop fantasies of abandonment. However, she argues that, in contrast to adolescents who are capable of retaining memories of the conflict and the stress associate with the divorce, the younger children's cognitive immaturity may be beneficial in the longer term as they are likely to retain fewer memories of the event.

Studies which have focused specifically on the effects of divorce on children between six and twelve years of age have found common responses to divorce. These include depression, withdrawal and school related difficulties (Brady *et al*, 1986). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that elementary-school children, particularly those in the six to eight age group, seem to have the most difficult time, as they are old enough to realise what is happening but lack adequate skills to deal with the disruption. They frequently feel a sense of responsibility, experience tremendous grief, and have a pervasive sadness and yearning for the departed parent. At the same time, they experience



recurring fantasies of reconciliation and often believe that they possess the power to make it happen.

As mentioned above, children at this age are primarily engaged in developing their competency in the outside world (Erikson, 1968). The disruption at home may endanger the child's effort to move forward. School work can be severely affected by day-dreaming or acting-out behaviours and problems with peers (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980).

Concerning adolescence, this stage is filled with many normative changes as adolescents begin the process of leaving home and forming an identity separate from their parents (Erikson, 1968). Parents are no longer the complete authority, yet the children still need parenting and the stability that the family represents. When separation between the parents occurs, the parent leaves the family not the child. The process is further complicated because of the convergence of many similar issues for adolescents and parents, such as dating, dealing with one's own sexuality, and learning to be independent. As a consequence, some adolescents, especially those already having difficulties, may engage in self-destructive behaviour such as truancy, substance abuse, and sexual acting-out (Peck, 1989). However, adolescents are better able to cope with the resulting stresses that accompany divorce, such as those associated with new role

redefinition, changes in economic circumstances, resolve loyalty conflicts and comprehend the reasons why the parents separated (Hetherington, 1989). Adolescents are also more likely to become disengaged from their families, which can have a positive outcome if they join prosocial peer groups, or a "disastrous course" if they become involved in anti-social groups (Hetherington and Anderson, 1987).

Older children are likely to be required to make a greater contribution to the functioning of the family, to be more actively involved in family decision making and take more mature roles and may become more responsible and independent (Weiss, 1979). These new responsibilities may on the one hand enhance their self-esteem and develop a sense of competence, but on the other, they may lead to feelings of regret and envy of children who have less responsibility.

These findings suggest that children of different age levels have characteristically different ways of expressing or responding to stress that are consistent with well established norms of development that are ascendent at the time of the separation process. A relationship between the timing of parental divorce and the nature of a youngster's difficulties (Kalter and Rembar, 1981) may be anticipated. It may be fruitful to consider how the types of behavioural problems children experience and the coping mechanisms they

use differ for children of different developmental stages.

## MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-ESTEEM

### Paternal absence and moral development

There are several reasons for expecting the absence of the father to affect adversely the child's moral development. As we outlined above (pp. 25-26) the father can influence the child's moral development by serving as a model, enforcing discipline, providing explanations, affection and linking society's demands to the home.

At the theoretical level, authors with diverse theoretical perspectives generally agree that the father contributes to the child's moral development, albeit that differences exists among them as to the role the father plays in this process and to the mechanisms by which moral internalisation occurs (pp. 26-27). Freud (Bronfenbrenner, 1960) and Parsons (Hoffman, 1981) accorded a prominent role to the father, whereas social learning theorists have attributed greater importance to mothers, as a model from whom the child's habits of self-control are acquired (Hoffman, 1981), since mother and child have more opportunities to interact.

The multiplicity of theoretical approaches within the moral

development literature has resulted in the adoption of various methods which investigate different dimensions of moral development. Studies on moral development have either focused on behaviours associated with morality: cheating, stealing and lying (Eisen, 1972); the internal emotional aspects: guilt, confession and acceptance of blame (Hoffman, 1971b; Aronfreed, 1976); or reasoning about moral issues as an index of moral development (Kohlberg *et al.*, 1983; Piaget, 1968).

Studies by Hoffman (1971a) and Santrock (1975), however have incorporated the three dimensions of moral development, cognitive, affective and behavioural. Hoffman (1971a) found that the absence of the father has adverse effects on the boy's conscience development. He used several moral indices to examine the different aspects of the child's moral structure: the degree of moral internalization was measured by intensity of guilt following transgression (responses to story completion), internal moral judgments (modified Kohlberg-type moral dilemmas) and consideration for others (peer ratings). Conformity to rules and overt aggression were assessed by teacher's reports. Hoffman found that father absent boys obtain lower scores on all the moral indices, significantly lower on internal moral judgement, guilt, acceptance of blame, prosocial moral values, and conformity to rules. Teachers also rate the father-absent boys as more aggressive than the boys who have fathers present. No

difference was found between father-absent and father-present girls.

The study by Santrock (1975) however, revealed no difference between father-present and father-absent boys on the behavioural measures, the moral judgement items, or the measure of moral affect. In this study the only measure which produced significant differences was the one based on the teacher's ratings; boys without fathers are rated higher on measures of social deviation than are boys with fathers. Santrock suggests that the discrepancy between his findings and Hoffman's (1971a) study can be assigned to the cultural differences of the samples, inasmuch as there are no clear-cut differences in the methods used in the two studies. Santrock's sample was drawn from a small West Virginia town and Hoffman's from an urban Michigan town. Hoffman (1981) suggests another reason for these different findings. He points out that Santrock's definition of father-present boys is inadequate to the extent that it is less stringent than father-absent boys. Santrock defines father-present boys as not being "absent from the home more than six months at any time". From this definition Hoffman assumes that "many of these fathers 'were' absent a good deal of the time" (Hoffman, 1981 p.365), contrary to the fathers in his study who always lived at home.

A further factor which could explain the lack of

consistency between the findings of the two studies refers to the nature of father absence in their respective samples. In Hoffman's study the reasons for the absence of the father were not controlled, whereas in Santrock's study they were. One third of children were from homes where the father had died and two thirds from divorced homes. It has been found that boys whose father died do not differ with respect to moral judgement from boys whose fathers are present (Parish and Kappes, 1980). When the reason for the father's absence is considered, an association between depressed level of moral judgement and father's absence is found only when absence is due to divorce (Rosenberg, 1972). Felner (1977) also found differences in behavioural outcomes following separation due to divorce and death. Children from divorced homes were found to have greater difficulty following rules, more aggression and acting out behaviour, than their matched control children whose father had died.

Furthermore, Herzog and Sudia's (1973) review of the literature on fatherless homes concluded that the more fatherlessness is seen with social disfavour by the community in which the child lives, the stronger the adverse effects on the children. It is to be expected therefore, that socially sanctioned father-absence such as separation due to death, military service, or overseas work, has different effects on the child than socially disapproved father-absence, such as separation due to

divorce or imprisonment. Therefore, the reason for the absence of the father is a significant factor that influence the child's experience of the separation.

#### Effects of father absence on mother's behaviour

In the analysis of the effects father absence has on children's moral development, it is important to distinguish between the direct effects of father absence per se, and the indirect effects such as the influence the separation from a husband has on the mother regarding her attitudes toward him and the children.

In the studies of Hoffman (1971a) and Santrock (1975) mentioned above, differences in the type of discipline used by the mother, as reported by their sons, were found between the groups in the Santrock study, but not in Hoffman's. Santrock found that mothers used significantly more power assertion discipline on father absent boys compared with father present boys, and divorced mothers administered more power assertion discipline than widows. This finding is supported by Hetherington et al (1982) who observed that divorced mothers try to control their children by being more restrictive and giving more commands, which the child ignores or resists. Therefore, the findings of low moral internalisation in boys who have no fathers may reflect stress or conflict in the home

rather than the direct effects of the separation from a father.

It seems plausible to assume that a mother without a husband is likely to be busier and feel harassed due to the additional tasks she has to perform, and hence may become impatient in her interaction with the children. In the first year following divorce, mothers are found to feel more anxious, depressed, angry, rejected and incompetent (Hetherington *et al*, 1982). The effects are more sustained for divorced mothers of boys, who at the end of two years are still feeling less competent, more anxious, more angry and more externally controlled than divorced mothers with girls. The mother's negative feelings are most likely to occur in episodes involving interaction with their sons, which may lead them to express affection less frequently (Hoffman, 1981). This would suggest therefore, that the absence of the father may affect the child's moral internalization adversely in part through its effects on the mother's pattern of discipline and affection. Furthermore, in the case of divorce, unlike other forms of separation, the mother may present the father to the children in a negative manner (Hoffman, 1981).

### Father-child relationships

Moral development may also be influenced by the nature of the father-child relationship. Aggressive antisocial



behaviour may result, not only from the absence of the father, but also from a poor relationship with the father, for the father's attitudes and behaviour, along with childrens' perception of them, seem to affect moral development. The literature consistently indicates that a less satisfactory affective role of the father (Andry, 1971); lack of close paternal supervision (Biller, 1971); poor parent-child relationship (Gove and Crutchfield, 1982); or ineffectual parental behaviour (Deykin, 1972), can also be observed in delinquents whose fathers are present at home. Children who have a warm relationship with a competent father who can constructively set limits are much more likely to develop a realistic internal locus of control (Lamb, 1976). Research indicates that moral internalization and relatively high guilt are most likely to be fostered by the frequent use of inductive discipline and the frequent expression of affection outside the discipline encounter (Hoffman, 1981).

Gove and Crutchfield's (1982) investigation of the interaction between family variables and juvenile delinquency found that boys from single-parent households are much more likely to be delinquent than boys from intact families. He argues that the degree to which parents feel aggrieved by their children emerges as the strongest predictor of juvenile delinquency. This is explained in terms of the reciprocal process in which parents who

experience the child in a negative manner, that is, those who tend not to get on with their children and/or are dissatisfied with their behaviour, probably act in ways which promote misbehaviour, which in turn tends to promote negative feelings and actions on the part of the parent. According to Gove, this negative spiral applies to boys and girls, although boys appear to be more reactive to poor or absent role models, whereas girls appear to be more reactive to the nature of parent-child interaction.

The problem with Gove and Crutchfield's study is that the data were collected only from interviews with parents, and thus excludes the children's views. It is difficult, therefore, to ascertain whether the strong relationship between parental feelings and delinquency indicates an a priori influence of the characteristics of the children on the parents, which in turn elicits negative attitudes from the parents toward the children, or if the negative attitudes of the parents influence the delinquent behaviour of the children.

Differences in parental roles between delinquents and non delinquents have been measured in terms of the boys' perception of the roles played by their parents, and also in terms of the parents' perception of their roles (Andry, 1971). The same questions were asked to the boys and both parents with the aim of cross-checking the boys' views. Compared with non delinquents, delinquent boys receive less

strong and open love, and experience less adequate environmental and psychological communication with their parents, and in all cases, it was the father of delinquents who performed the most defective roles.

As the studies use a cross-sectional design, the relationships reported are those that exist after the juvenile has established a pattern of delinquency; therefore, no definitive conclusions can be drawn from these studies. The boys' delinquent behaviour could be the result of the parental reaction to their troublesome behaviour, as Gove suggests, or as Andry proposes, it could be the lack of paternal limits and involvement in the child's behaviour and its emotional expression that leaves the child vulnerable to his/her own impulses and feelings. However, it does appear to be the case that temperamentally difficult children are likely to be the target of their parents' aversive responses (Rutter, 1987).

There are relatively few studies that have described the effects of paternal deprivation on the moral development of girls; consequently, knowledge in this area is limited, and only tentative conclusions can be drawn. Hoffman (1971a) did not find any discernible effects of father-absence on the conscience development of girls, even though he finds a significant relationship between rule conformity and father identification in middle-class girls. There is evidence, however, that the impact of father's absence due

to divorce on social and emotional development is less pervasive and enduring for girls than for boys (Biller, 1974; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Hetherington, 1982). Furthermore, Hoffman (1981) found that girls without fathers reported that their mothers express affection more frequently and resort to less power assertion discipline than do mothers of boys, although the findings are not statistically significant. He suggests that boys, unlike girls, may be more abrasive and help less with household chores. In the case of separation due to divorce, the mother may also feel resentment toward the father, which she may express toward the sons.

In general, the inconsistency and the low significant relationships found in studies on the effects father absence has on the moral development of children suggests that other factors must be taken into account. These findings may stem in part from psychometric shortcomings of the instruments used, along with imprecise methods for controlling a variety of factors that influence moral reasoning. A simplistic statistical approach has dominated the fathering literature with most studies drawing conclusions from simple correlational techniques. The implication of this approach has been to obscure the possible mediating variables that can influence the child's moral development, such as the mother's behaviour and perception of the husband, father-child relationship, and developmental factors. The discrepancy in the findings also

points to the necessity for adopting a developmental design which can reveal changes over time in the children's experience of the separation from the father.

Although we agree with the latter arguments, to understand the interaction between father-absence and moral development it is essential to investigate the child's perception and appraisal of the event. As already emphasised above, how children make sense of this experience greatly influences their responses and changes over time. This is particularly relevant to the absence of the father due to imprisonment, where the child's appraisal of the father's action involves a moral issue, which in turn, may influence moral development.

In the attempt to understand the effects the moral issue underlying the father's offence may have on the children's moral development, their moral reasoning of his action will be examined within Kohlberg's cognitive theory of moral development.

#### Kohlberg's theory of moral development

Kohlberg (1969) proposed a six-stage theory of moral development, recently revised (Kohlberg *et al.*, 1983) to five stages. He sought to identify age trends in moral judgement that would prove to be general and uniform across

social class, culture, race, and gender, through the structural analysis of children's justifications and evaluations as to the right action to take in hypothetical moral dilemmas. He expanded Piaget's two-stage framework of morality into a typological schema that has three distinct levels of moral reasoning with each level encompassing two related stages (Kohlberg, 1964).

Kohlberg (1963, 1964, 1969, 1976), terms the first level pre-conventional or pre-moral, in which the child interprets behaviour as good or bad in terms of the physical consequences and/or the power of those that represent the rules. In stage one at this level, right is defined by literal obedience to authority. Stage two of the pre-conventional level is characterised by a reciprocity which is based on a pragmatic approach, where the rights of others are respected only to the extent they serve the needs of the individual.

The second level of morality is designated by Kohlberg as conventional in which the predominant mode of morality is in the maintaining of conventional order. Stage three is characterized by an orientation of personal conformity, where maintaining good relations and the approval of others is the motive to conform to rules. Stage four represents a shift to a law-and-order orientation which focuses on the maintenance of the social order and the welfare of society by obeying the law and doing one's duty. Kohlberg calls the

third level postconventional or principled, for in this level moral value resides in adhering to one's own standards of justice based on more than society's rules and norms. For Kohlberg, stages of moral development are viewed as structured wholes, each one representing a hierarchically more complex and abstract mode of moral reasoning.

According to Kohlberg, movement from one moral stage to the next is characterized by an increasing differentiation and integration, dependent primarily upon cognitive development with a correspondence between an individual's cognitive stage and his moral stage. However, cognitive development is not sufficient to promote moral development, but it is a necessary condition. The potentiality of higher moral development in an individual can be facilitated through his/her participation in social experiences and interactions with others. The importance of these interactions rests with the opportunities it gives an individual to experience different and alternate roles. Through this interacting process, which Kohlberg (1976) calls "role taking opportunities", an individual develops a perspective of the social order. The mere process of taking the attitudes of others in organised social interactions allows for the transformation of rules from external concepts to internal principles. The individual, through cognitive development and increasing role-taking

opportunities, changes his view of the social world and its constraining aspects in relation to himself and others.

Kohlberg's structural developmental formulations of moral reasoning focus on highly generalised transformations in the children's knowledge of logico-social concepts, although not denying the existence of distinct psychological variations. In doing so, he has gone beyond the assumption that moral knowledge is learned through conditioning, imitation or identification, to the realisation that it is a process consisting of the construction and elaboration of new ways of thinking about moral issues in the course of development (Kohlberg, 1969). Thus, behaviour hitherto interpreted as being primarily culture-bound is now regarded in terms of the ways children, as active interpreters of their own experience, conceptualize values and problems of a moral nature. That is, within this perspective, children are no longer seen to be passive individuals that simply internalise the moral judgements of significant others (parents, teachers and peers), but rather actively engage in the construction of their own precepts (Kohlberg, 1969).

#### Critique of Kohlberg's criteria for moral stages

Kohlberg has claimed that his model has greater validity than Piaget's two stage model, as the latter fails to meet the criteria which define a stage, and ignores development



beyond middle childhood. However, Kohlberg, like Piaget, is predominantly interested in the development of moral cognitions, even though, under pressure of criticism (Alston, 1971; Kurtines and Greif, 1974; Sullivan, 1977; Trainer, 1977; Murphy and Gilligan, 1980; Schweder, 1982), he recognised that moral judgement involves more than one dimension of reasoning about moral issues. Mature moral reasoning involves sensitivity to complex human emotions and situations, and personal experience of moral conflict, choice and responsibility. However, for Kohlberg et al (1983), the dimension of care and responsibility used by a person to resolve, as well as evaluate dilemmas in the context of a relationship such as family, friends and groups of which the self is a member, is just a supplement to, rather than alternatives for resolution of justice. He never assigned to this aspect of moral experience a status of hard stage, rather it is integrated into the cognitive structure as a soft stage. That is, it is conceived as a development based on the reflective and metaethical soft stage through which adolescents and adults develop, rather than the development of hard structures of moral reasoning.

Kohlberg (1983) makes the distinction between soft and hard structural stages according to the Piagetian (1960) criteria of cognitive stages: structured wholeness, developmental invariant sequence, and hierarchical forms of integration. He argues that the theoretical differences

between soft and hard structural stage models centre on the articulation of the inner logic of the stage. Soft structural stages are defined partly in terms of structure, but also partly in terms of functions and motives pertaining to the whole self and its enhancement and defense, whereas the structure of a hard structural stage is a system of transformational laws that organise and govern reasoning operations. Thus, the thinking that characterises soft structural stages appear to represent theories that the individual constructs rather than structural forms of reasoning. This distinction allows a hard structural stage model to define stages solely in terms of cognitive or sociomoral operations rather than in terms of reflections upon the self, morality or nature. Within Kohlberg's stage model, justice is the structure of conflict resolution for a dilemma of competing claims between or among persons.

Kohlberg's assumption of the direct sequence and structured whole of the moral stages has been questioned by various authors (Rest, 1973; Kurtines and Grief, 1974; Holstein, 1976), who point to irregularities in the sequencing of Kohlberg's moral stages, such as skipping and regression. Although more general cognitive-operational and social perspective-taking structures have been logically and empirically shown to be related to Kohlberg's stage hierarchy (Selman, 1971; Kohlberg and Gilligan, 1971; Tomlinson-Keasey and Keasey, 1974), the moral stages are

not merely reducible to acquisitions in these areas. Rather, they are seen as having unique qualities that result from the reciprocal interaction of cognitive and experiential processes of the child (Kohlberg, 1969).

However, others (Rest et al, 1974) have raised the possibility that moral judgment is not a unitary construct. In addition to the conscious reflective awareness measured by Kohlberg's interview, it may have another dimension of "tacit awareness of higher stage concepts" (Jurkovic, 1980, p.715). Results of several investigations indicate that contextual variables may greatly influence children's moral judgements. They have shown that discrepancies exist between the theoretical and practical reasoning of children, and that responses to hypothetical dilemmas are of questionable relevance to commonly experienced reasoning about actual dilemmas (Haan, 1975; Yussen, 1977; Leming, 1978; Jurkovic, 1980). This brings into question Kohlberg's assumption that a stage of moral judgment implies a generalised way of judging moral issues across various contexts.

In fact, Piaget (1968) had already observed many years ago that theoretical judgements should not be equated with practical reasoning about issues of a personally relevant nature. He acknowledged that his methods of assessing moral judgement by children's responses to stories alone would

not yield the complex relation to behaviour or reasoning in real-life situations.

More recently Blasi (1980) points out that empirical findings do not clearly indicate the presence of a direct link between behaviour and cognitive developmental factors, and suggests that moral actions are the result of a complex interaction of factors, embedded in a variety of feelings, questions, doubts, judgements and decisions. Blasi's theoretical position suggests that it may be more appropriate to focus on questions relating to conditions in which children base their judgements, that is, on the qualitatively different contexts of personal relationships, rather than on questions about when logical capacities arise.

Based on the above discussion, it appears that the major limitation of Kohlberg's approach is that he minimised the influence of the environment on moral development, even though he maintained that he worked within an interactionist perspective. Consequently, he fails to give due significance to the type of reasoning produced by children when personal feelings and loyalties are involved, particularly in situations where moral judgement poses a threat to the child's self-concept.

In this thesis it is argued that, contrary to Kohlberg, depending on the child's involvement in the relationship,

s/he may use a different dimension of moral reasoning than the one used in the context of abstract moral dilemmas, which may not necessarily be less complex than the one applied to judge dilemmas at the societal level. Therefore, a more mature thinking than the one applied to societal morality may also emerge within a stage, in the context of interpersonal morality (Haan, 1977). As Haan (1978) argues, the several moral structures often involved in moral reasoning, such as self and others, must be coordinated by the person's processing of the occasion.

The findings of Haan's study (1978), which examined two moralities within the framework of moral action, showed that interpersonal reasoning is more closely related to ego processing than formal reasoning, particularly to the indices of coping, affective empathy, and interpersonal logic. Therefore, to identify empirically the nature of the morality that people actually use, it is necessary to consider both ideal (formal reasoning) and non-ideal (moral decisions taken in real situations) instances of moral action. This is because within the coping or defensive mechanisms employed by people in specific moral interactions, there exist freedom and constraints which affect their ability to identify, define, and resolve the issue in question.

In a development of Haan's theorising, Lampert (1986)

argues that although moral socialisation generally begins at the level of interpersonal relationships, individuals also receive stimulus for moral development (which stimulate stage gain) from the various spheres of social aggregation found at the institutional and societal levels, such as the place of work and the church. This presupposes that the development of moral judgement can proceed at a different pace at the various levels of social aggregation, thus making it possible to find stages of moral development in individuals specific to spheres or levels of social aggregation.

#### Interaction between moral development and self-esteem

There has been a recognition recently of the complexity of the context in which attitudes operate and a reorientation towards the individual's experience in interpersonal relations. Traditional approaches to moral development have emphasised either the influence of the environment upon the individual's moral conduct, or the role of the constructive, organising activities of the individual in moral judgement. The first approach, whilst emphasising the significance of affective factors as influential determinants of moral action through the socialising impact of rewards and punishment, fails to consider the active interpretation of the environment through the changing perspective of the individual. The second approach, although acknowledging that moral judgement depends upon

experience in social role-taking as well as upon logical structure, has not yet specified the structure of the environment and its relationship to moral conduct and the development of moral judgement.

A more useful framework through which to conceptualise the process of moral reasoning in real life situations can be found in the interactionist approach as formulated by Baldwin (1902) and Mead (1934). For Baldwin, the development of the self takes place within a system of interpersonal relations. Children first have a sense of a projective self in which they are stimulated by parents or authority figures to control their asocial impulses. They strive towards an ideal self as represented in the behaviour of others whom they perceive as good. Initially, the child does not reflect on the motivation of others; hence, the process is not influenced by cognitive considerations of morality. The child comes to know the self and others simultaneously in the course of interaction between self and others. Development proceeds from the projective self to a subjective self when children consciously articulate the existence of an ideal self. This perception of an ideal self is equated with the behaviour of significant others to whom they have an emotional attachment. It is at this point that the child's tendency to identify with the parent's rules and standards of behaviour takes on a cognitive dimension and becomes reflective.

Baldwin's theory suggests that children's need for self-definition in terms of perception of those individuals with whom they identify leads to personal autonomy and self-control. Positive self-esteem in children is associated with many of the same familial conditions that lead to independence, self-assertiveness and instrumental competence. Parental warmth and nurturance, use of induction with firm control, and setting and enforcing high standards are consistently associated with self-esteem, competence and internally oriented moral behaviour (Coopersmith, 1967; Sears, 1970; Baumrind, 1975; Hoffman, 1970, 1975a, 1979). If the child's self-definition emerges from the perception of others, he or she is likely to take on the perceived attributes of the individuals that s/he recognises as important. However, it is not the actual attributes of the significant other that are important, but rather the child's perception and representation of such attributes. It is in this sense that one can consider the child's identification with a significant other as an influence on moral development. Therefore identification with a parent is unlikely to be the only contributor to moral action, for its effect probably occurs together with the child's perceptions of parental attributes that s/he perceives are important to the parent, and a match between those perceptions and the moral conflict to which the child is exposed. Bixenstine et al's (1976) and Francis and Siegal's (1982) studies on the child's perception of



parents in relation to conformity to rules support the suggestion that conformity to adult-endorsed prohibition is significantly related to the positive perception of adults, and fathers in particular.

Mead (1934), influenced by the work of Baldwin, also argues that as the child develops the complex conception of self largely from social interactions, a moral quality accompanies the socially constructed self. Mead (1934) and Piaget (1968) stated that an empathic disposition and realisation of moral responsibility emerges as a result of coming to see oneself as others see one. That is, the conception of self implies constant references to others and to society in general.

In traditional approaches, little consideration has been given to the role that the individual's judgements of him/herself and his/her own behaviours can play in guiding moral conduct. Within an interactional paradigm, the process of moral development can be seen as a construction of evaluative relationships between the individual and other persons (Mead, 1934; Rosenberg, 1972). It is in this respect that the constructive nature of the self-concept and the close relationship between moral judgement and self-esteem becomes clear, for moral behaviour may be guided not by the individual's role playing of judgments by others, but rather by his/her attempts to behave in a manner consistent with his own self-concept (Rogers, 1970).

Therefore, the course of moral development can be seen as one of increasing integration of principles of moral judgment with the concept of self. As Meacham (1975) points out, moral views on abortion and racism may be difficult to resolve, precisely because the moral judgement depends upon and threatens to change one's self-concept generally.

Schlenker (1987) also emphasises the role of self-identification in coping with events that might damage desired identity images. At the core of his approach is the proposition that people strive to construct and maintain desired identity images, which represent what people believe they both should and can be on particular occasions. People have a stake in the construction and preservation of these images, both privately and publicly, and when they are threatened, people take action to defuse them. They cope as best as they can, given their resources, and change their desired identities only reluctantly, when the threat posed to these identities overpowers their efforts.

The relationship between self-esteem and moral behaviour has not been explored fully, and yet self-esteem has been shown to play a role in other studies which have considered evaluative relationships between individuals (Gergen, 1971; Meacham, 1975; Fry and Scher, 1984). For example, based on the cognitive consistency orientation,

Eisen (1972) hypothesised that high self-esteem should deter immoral behaviour because the latter would be inconsistent with one's self-concept. The study indicates that self-esteem is strongly related to boys' responses to temptation but not to girls' responses. Low self-esteem does not appear to serve as a deterrent to cheating, while high self-esteem does appear to serve as such a deterrent for boys. For the girls there was a nonsignificant relationship between self-esteem scores and honesty.

Evidence from other studies also suggests that self-esteem is related to aggression in children (Feshbach, 1970); generosity (Rosenhan, 1972), and conformity (Krebs, 1970). Podd (1972) found that persons undergoing identity crises engage in inconsistent moral reasoning. A similar process is found by Kohlberg and Gilligan (1971) in morally transitional subjects, who were also in transition with regard to identity issues. For the individual who has not achieved a synthesis between moral principles and self-concept, an inconsistent morality may be displayed as the person conforms to various pressures which reinforce his self-esteem. Attempts to boost self-esteem may include the definition of moral principles in terms of the self, rather than the self-concept being a reflection of moral principles. Therefore, in the absence of such a synthesis, self-esteem may play a disproportionate role in moral decisions.

Meacham (1975) also suggests that there is a close relationship between moral judgement and the maintenance of self-esteem. He argues that during the course of moral development, evaluative relationships between the individual and other persons are construed, which lead to an increasing integration of moral judgements with the conceptions of self. Consequently, the construction of the self-concept develops out of how the individual relates him/herself to others by evaluative actions which are then reflected onto himself. In other words, an evaluation of the object by the subject is at the same time an evaluation of the subject in its relationship to the object. To the extent that father and child have characteristics in common, an evaluative judgement of the father's characteristics by the child is reflected into the latter.

In the specific case of father's absence, it has been found that self-esteem is a crucial resource for coping with this type of stressful situation (Parish and Wigle, 1985), particularly when separation from the father involves moral issues (Rosenberg, 1972), which may threaten self-esteem. Several authors emphasise the effect aroused by the process of self-evaluation in which shame is one of its components (Adler, 1958; Sullivan, 1953). A sense of self-worthlessness is at the base of the feelings of anxiety resulting from rejection or negative evaluation by others. For Sullivan (1953), the need to avoid unpleasant affect is a major

function of the self-system. This view is supported by Epstein's (1973) emphasis on the affective element of self-esteem, and the suggestion that the fundamental aim of a self-theory is to optimise the pleasure/pain balance, and Allport's (1963) assertion that self-esteem is the motive underlying defense mechanisms, which are organised to protect the ego.

It is clear from the discussion above, that in the case of separation from the father due to imprisonment the child's judgement of the father's action also implies a self-judgement. It is essential, therefore, to investigate the integration of the children's personal moral experience together with their cognitive structure, within the specific context, in which they attempt to resolve their particular moral dilemma.

#### SUMMARY

It is evident from this review of the literature, that children's perceptions of the experience of separation from the father in general, and the meaning they may assign to it, have been largely neglected, and within studies on imprisonment completely so. Most evaluations of the children's reactions and adjustment to divorce and imprisonment have been gathered through questionnaires and/or interviews with significant adults, particularly the mother. This is somewhat surprising, since it has been

known for some time that differences exist in how individuals perceive the same event (McCrae, 1984), and in children's reactions to the same stress depending on the children's evaluative process of a situation (Rutter, 1983; Lazarus, 1984). As Anthony (1973) has observed with respect to divorce, each member of a family has his/her own peculiar perspective on a shared problem, and that a number of discrepancies are possible between the actual and perceived reality of a relationship. There is the reality seen by the world, the reality as seen by the parents, and the reality as perceived by each one of the children" (p.464).

Various authors have observed that mothers tend to minimise the negative effects that paternal separation may have on children, and fail to link their physical symptoms or behavioural problems to the experience of this separation (Morris, 1965). It has also been shown, in the case of divorce, that how mothers believe children experience the separation from the father differ from how children actually experience the separation (Anthony, 1973).

It is argued in this study, therefore, that it is not sufficient to rely on the reports of significant adults for an adequate understanding of problems associated with the absence of the father. This is not to deny the relevance of such information, but rather that it should be seen within

a more appropriate perspective, in which parental reports are complementary to the child's own perceptions and feelings of the event and the meanings s/he gives to it.

In studies in which perceptions of the child have been sought, questionnaires and scales have been used. However, these types of measurements fail to capture adequately the relevant, complex experience of children (Cairns, 1987). Apart from reducing the complex experience of paternal separation to particular variables, they do not account for children's cognitive and social developmental changes, in that the child's selection of a response to a question or proposition is based upon criteria dependent on the child's developmental period that is ascendent at the time of the investigation.

The majority of studies of father's absence have adopted a research strategy that investigates children at a single point in time, usually immediately after the father's departure from the family home. The main limitation of this approach is that the findings may be misleading to the extent that the design presupposes the absence to be a single event with immediate, unchanging consequences. But as Hetherington (1979) argues, divorce is best conceptualised as a sequence of events, to which the child's responses may not be restricted to the immediate post-divorce phase. Children who seem to experience less difficulties at the initial separation may show delayed

problems, while others who seem to suffer more, recuperate later (Wallerstein, 1983). In a snapshot view of separation from the father, such changes would never be revealed.

A further problem with studies of paternal absence in general, and separation due to imprisonment in particular, is their focus on the effects on the child, without considering variations in modes of adaptation according to age, developmental factors, and sex of the child, or to the quality of the relationships between family members and how they may change over time. As Sameroff (1975) has argued, the developmental model has been inadequately served by an emphasis on main effects, and that the study of interactional effects is required.

In the attempt to understand and explain changes in children's behaviour during the process of adaptation to the father's separation, it is necessary to consider the complexity of internal and external factors that impinge on each individual's experience. This requires that a methodology be adopted which can accommodate the child as an integrated totality within the specific context in which these changes take place.

Finally, we have seen that the role of the father in theories of moral development is given different emphasis, depending on the particular theoretical perspective in



question. However, there is general agreement that the father does play some part in this process. In the discussion above, it has been suggested that the father provides vicarious self-esteem to the child. Therefore, the child's experience of the imprisonment of the father involves not only a moral evaluation of his action, but also a self-evaluation, and that inherent in this process is the risk of a threat to the child's self-esteem.

### THE CURRENT STUDY

Based on the preceding review of the literature which has examined the findings of studies on the effects separation has on children, a number of expectations can now be raised. It must be emphasised that given the paucity of studies on separation resulting from the incarceration of the father, this thesis is an exploratory study with the aim to generate hypotheses.

1 - As imprisonment involves a moral issue because it is condemned by society, it may be expected that the child's perception of this event will affect his/her perception of the father image.

2 - It has been argued above that the child develops a complex conception of self largely from social interaction, particularly with significant others. As this process implies an evaluative relationship between father and child, it is reasonable to assume that the child's

perception of the father's action is likely to affect the child's self-worth and moral reasoning.

3 - Given the stigma attached to the imprisonment of the father and the uncontrollable nature of this type of separation, it is expected that both mother and child will resort to some form of situational redefinition to cope with this particular stressor.

4 - Research shows that there are qualitative differences in how children at various developmental levels respond to separation, therefore, it may be anticipated that the impact imprisonment has on children, and the coping mechanisms they use, will vary according to their developmental stage.

5 - The most consistent finding from all the studies cited point to the influential effects that the mother's ability to cope with the situation and her sensitivity to the child's needs have on the child's adjustment to separation. Therefore, it is expected that the mother's perception of the event and the forms of coping she adopts are likely to have a significant influence on the child's adjustment to the separation.

6 - Finally, studies have also shown that the quality of the father/child relationship is an important factor to be considered in the child's adjustment to separation. This would suggest that the child's adjustment to the

incarceration of the father is likely to be influenced by the nature of father/child relationship.

## CHAPTER 2 - METHODS

The methods used in this study are presented in relation to the aims of the research. These are:

1 - to investigate children's perception of, and the meaning they give to the experience of their father's imprisonment.

2 - to examine the strategies children adopt to cope with the father's change in moral status.

3 - to examine the mother/child relationship and the possible influence the mother may have on the child's perception of the father.

4 - to examine father/child relationship prior to and during imprisonment, and the implications this may have for the child's adaptation to his absence.

5 - to examine the interaction of the children's gender and developmental factors in relation to their perception of imprisonment and their subsequent coping strategies.

6 - to investigate the association between this type of separation and the child's moral reasoning and self-esteem.

As we argue that the imprisonment of the father is appropriately conceived of as a process, and that the children's perception of the series of events which comprise this process are crucial for understanding their

pattern of adjustment, an intensive study in which the required data are gathered through unstructured interviews with mothers and children twice, one-year apart, is used. These methods have not been used in existing studies of father absence due to imprisonment, where the emphasis has been on identifying the different characteristics of children between father absent and father present families and data on children have been gathered mainly from parental reports.

As it has been argued in chapter 1, these existing studies on father absence are extremely limited to the extent that they fail to consider the interactions and perceptions of the children involved in the event. In a reaction to this type of research design, many authors now stress the importance and value of naturalistic studies of phenomena and the identification of the meanings that underlie social behaviour (Hudson, 1977; Harre', 1980; Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983; Magnusson, 1985; Cairns, 1987).

Cairns (1987), for example, proposes that investigations should make use of longitudinal, idiographic, integrative analyses of individuals or clusters of individuals located within a specific context. He argues that methods and procedures based on the statistical research designs that have dominated developmental psychology are inadequate for understanding and explaining behaviour of specific individuals in specific settings, as they may blur the

diversity and individuality of behavioural development, and in some cases, actually retard psychological understanding.

For Cairns, these limitations of existing research designs stem from the ways in which developmental investigators have attempted to make "actions and interactions" accessible to empirical analyses. Whether for reasons of scientific purity or simply due to conceptual analytic convenience, investigators have generally responded by analysing and conceptualising behaviour as static structures or categories. In doing so, they have reduced or eliminated the impact of developmental change. For example, measurement techniques such as rating scales may be biased against the detection of age related changes. Such is the case when the reference group against which the behaviour of the child is to be evaluated comprises children of the same age and gender with whom the subject is affiliated.

Developmental differences may also be neglected by the theoretical constructs researchers employ. This often occurs in longitudinal studies where a single construct is used to describe behaviours which differ in quality and form, but which are presumed to share common functions at different age levels. For example, when the same term, such as "intelligence" is employed at different ages, it implies that this same unitary dimension is being assessed at each stage, when it is known that there exists marked

differences in the factor structure of "intelligence" tests at different ages and there are qualitative and quantitative differences in the performance of individuals. Cairns does not deny that statistical analysis offers useful tools for scientific analysis. What he does argue, however, is that procedural requirements for such analysis should not override matters of substance, the consequence of which has been the low priority given to the intensive study of individuals or families in concrete settings, notwithstanding that this may be the most appropriate strategy to adopt.

Similarly, Magnusson (1985) emphasises the need to understand the process of human behaviour, and suggests that prediction and control should be secondary in the scientific enterprise. To this end, he argues that knowledge of and models for the functional interrelations of the network of individual and situational factors operating in the process of interaction between the person and the situation are prerequisites for understanding and explaining individual functioning in its situational context.

This approach recognises that human functioning has a complex causal background in which a multitude of factors are in continuous interaction with each other, the effects of which differ depending on the age and the course of the individual's earlier development (Magnusson, 1981, 1983,

1985). This view leads to an approach in which the individual, rather than the variable, is the conceptual unit for analysis.

Several authors emphasise the importance of defining psychological constructs in relation to the states and beliefs of the person, rather than in terms of an invariant set of external events (Kagan, 1976; Raush, 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983). Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1983), for example, shows that a high correlation exists between belief and behaviour, such as the mother's belief in what a child can do at different ages and the child's behaviour. Hudson (1977), who also stresses the importance of understanding how individuals think and how they organise their lives, argues that principles of organisation which make individuals seem idiosyncratic and different from each other will not be discovered by studying large samples and seeing what they have in common.

Unlike natural settings, the experimental context may change the nature of the event, making the findings externally invalid. It may also lead to a wrong conception of causation when subjects are seen as only externally manipulated and not as also guided by internal causes, such as intentions or motives. Dependent variables in experiments may be influenced by more than one cause operating at the same time, and similarly, independent



variables may produce more than just one effect. A further problem can arise from the social organisation of experiments when subjects' responses to experimental stimuli are mediated by the effects of the experimental situation on them. The action of the subject may not be determined by the definition of the experimental situation, as defined by the experimenter, but rather as defined and experienced by the subject (Brown and Canter, 1985). Thus, if the objective of the research is to provide programmes concerned with social phenomena, the demands of usefulness and relevance and the consideration of social perspective and understanding of this phenomena must be met by knowledge obtained through an intimate familiarity with the participants and their social world.

As we have outlined in the introduction (p.15), Bronfenbrenner and Crouter (1983) advocate the inclusion of the various settings that are relevant for the individual under investigation. These settings, called microsystems, have particular and material characteristics in which a developing person experiences a pattern of activity, roles and interpersonal relationships over time. Derived from this paradigm is the conception of an "ecological transition", which takes place whenever, during the life course, a person undergoes a change in role either within the same or in different settings. In early childhood such transitions are mainly occasioned by the action of someone else, for example when the mother goes to

work, the parents divorce or, as in our study, the father goes to prison. An ecological transition includes shifts in roles outside as well as within the family. The phenomenological meaning ascribed by the individual to these ecological transitions become of central importance in the study of significant social problems as they occur in natural settings. Therefore, as Bronfenbrenner argues, given the complexity of the variables involved, and the difficulty in indentifying, isolating, and controlling them, methodologically it is most appropriate to describe, measure and relate phenomena as they occur naturally in situations not restricted by the experimenter.

Based on the above discussion, the data are presented as case studies. The nature and complexity of the study is such that a holistic approach to the event under investigation is required, in order that the interaction between factors such as age, gender, and family relationships in context, together with the way individuals perceive and give meaning to the experience, can be adequately explained.

Bromley (1986) promotes the use of case studies as a research strategy for the social sciences in general. The essential feature of the case study is that it refers to data that are gathered from naturally occurring events in the real world. Psychological case studies must be located

within a specific context, for they focus on the person in situation. That is, Bromley suggests an ecological framework for the study of personal adjustment in which the researcher is required to include evidence beyond that considered by psychometric tests and laboratory experiments.

Bromley (1986) proposes a method in which a series of cases are compared and contrasted, and from which a psychological case-law can be developed. Through this method, the knowledge gained from each case study can be systematised to generate theory. Influenced by the work of Levine (1974), Bromley terms this the quasi-judicial method, which adopts an adversarial model based on the study of whole human events, where appropriate evidence is interpreted on the basis of rational arguments to reveal relevant relationships under study. Unlike an experimental design which relies on a representative sample from a demographically defined population, the value of case studies lies in their ability to disclose the relevant relationships which the researcher aims to explain.

A criticism often levelled at the use of intensive case study designs is that the individual/s studied may not be typical members of a group. But as Marsh *et al* (1978) argue, the detailed knowledge gained from an intensive study of a group or individual cannot be gathered in any other way. For Harre' (1980), who also emphasises the need

to analyse the self-reports of individuals to ascertain meanings that underlie behaviour, single case studies are important for the development of explanatory theories.

This point of view is supported by writers in hermeneutics, who although concerned with the interpretation of texts, offer parallels with understanding of people. Ricoeur (1981), for example, argues that in the analysis and interpretation of behaviour and texts, the most useful approach is one based on reasons and not causes. Reasons as explanations presuppose that individuals are intentional actors who are both reflective and aware of their own interpretations of situations. In contradistinction, causes are explanations that presuppose a certain determinism and lack agency on the part of the actor, as they are normally provided by outsiders. Thus, for one to understand another's actions, explanations should be based on reasons alone, and the only way for such an analysis to proceed is through the intensive and detailed investigation of individuals.

The use of case studies has been criticised by Kazdin (1982), who considers them to be pre-experimental, and to carry little insight as they are not able to draw conclusions about internal validity and are unsystematic. He argues that if more objective data were used they would carry more conviction. However, Kazdin's criticism of case

studies are based on designs derived from laboratory experiments concerned with operant conditioning, rather than social psychology. He is concerned with demonstrating that A caused B, and not with theory generation or even explanation.

The criticism of unrepresentativeness related to case studies, according to J.C. Mitchell (1982), results from a confusion between the procedures appropriate to making inferences from statistical data and those appropriate for an idiosyncratic combination of elements or events which constitute a case. He points to the fact that a whole body of anthropological theory has been built upon data gathered from a large number of case studies, from which inferences have been made and propositions formulated about the nature of social and cultural phenomena. He argues that there are many epistemological entities referring to the concept of case study, therefore a definition of what type of case study is adequate for scientific enquiry is necessary. For example, for Van Velsen (1967), an anthropologist, the object of analysis in a case study is not "culture" or "society" of which the events studied might be considered samples, but rather social processes which may be abstracted from the course of events analysed.

For J.C. Mitchell, a case study refers to "a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibit the operation of some

identified general theoretical principle" (p.192). A case study for scientific purpose is essentially heuristic, in that it attempts to understand the group under study to develop general theoretical statements about the regularities in processes. What is important in a case study is not its content but that the data are used to support theoretical conclusions. The case study is a way of organising social data to preserve the "unitary character of the social object being studied" (Mitchel, 1982, p.191), which may be a person, a family or other social groups, as well as a set of relationships or processes, such as those found in family crises, adjustment to disease, friendship formation, or an entire culture. However, Mitchell adds that it is not sufficient simply to amass detailed information about the object under study, for it is also necessary to consider that all cases are located within a wider context which impose constraints on the action of the individuals involved.

A common criticism of case study methodology concerns its validity and reliability in the sense that extrapolations from individual cases to general social processes cannot be made justifiably. However, this criticism is based on the assumption that statistics can be applied to generalise the results of case studies. For Bryman (1988), this criticism is based on a misconception that arises from a tendency to approach a case study as if it were a sample of one drawn

from a wider universe of such cases. But this does not take into account the fact that a wide range of different people and activities can be examined within a case study, therefore the contrast is not as acute as it first appears. For J.C.Mitchell (1982), however, this misconception is due to the failure to appreciate that the rationale of extrapolation from a statistical sample to a parent universe involves two different and unconnected inferential processes, whereas in a case study the inferential process is based solely on the theoretically necessary linkages among its features. In the case of the latter, the validity of the extrapolation depends on the cogency of the theoretical reasoning and not on the typicality of the case. Because of the observer's intimate knowledge of the connections linking the complex set of circumstances surrounding the events in the case, it provides the optimum conditions in which the general principles may be shown to manifest themselves.

In the case of statistically representative samples, however, there are two inferential processes involved: a) a statistical inference which makes the statement about the confidence we may have that the observed relationship in our sample will in fact occur in the parent population, and b) a logical or scientific inference which makes a statement about the confidence we may have that the theoretically necessary or logical connection among the features observed in the sample pertain also to the parent

population. Concerning the first inference, insofar as the characteristic features of the sample reflect those in the parent population, and provided that the procedure for achieving this follows the assumptions of probability theory, the validity of the inference is probably sound. A difficulty arises, however, when the relationship between characteristics is considered and it is assumed that the same relationship exists between the same characteristics in the parent population. The representativeness of the sample can only state that the extrapolation of the inference from the sample to the parent population should be about the concomitant variation of the variables under investigation. However, the researcher must go beyond the sample and resort to theoretical reasoning to link those characteristics together. Therefore, the inference about the logical relationship between two characteristics is not based on the representativeness of the sample, and hence upon its typicality, but rather upon the plausibility of the link between the two characteristics. Thus, according to Mitchell (1982) and Yin (1989), the issue of extrapolation from case studies should be couched in terms of the generalisability of cases to theoretical proposition rather than to population or universes. Within this perspective it is possible to arrive at "analytic generalisation" using the case study method by studying more than one case (Bryman, 1988; Yin, 1989). In "analytic generalisation, the investigator is striving to generalise



a particular set of results to some broader theory" (Yin, 1989 pg. 44).

Underlying the notion of multiple case studies is the logic of replication which, according to Yin (1989), is analogous to multiple experiments, and is distinct from the "sampling logic" found in designs which use many participants in a survey or an experiment. According to replication logic, if similar results obtained from the chosen number of cases turn out as predicted, replication is said to have taken place, providing compelling support for an initial set of propositions. However, if the results are found to be contradictory, the initial propositions must be revised.

This procedure refers to the "explanation-building process", in which the final explanation is the result of a series of iterations. Yin (1989) proposes a comparative method in which theoretical statements or propositions are compared and revised according to new information gained from subsequent case studies, the result of which is the creation of a cross-case analysis, not simply an analysis of each individual case.

A similar method for the generation of theory, termed "grounded theory", has been advocated by Glaser and Straus (1967). Glaser and Straus consider theory to have five important functions. These are:

- 1 - to facilitate the prediction and explanation of behaviour;
- 2 - for the advancement of theory in the particular discipline;
- 3 - to be useful for practical applications, prediction and explanation;
- 4 - to provide a perspective of the phenomena under study, and a particular orientation towards data;
- 5 - to guide and provide a style of research in particular areas.

Although they promote the use of comparative analysis, they point out that neither accurate evidence nor a large number of cases is crucial for generating theory. For Glaser and Straus (1967), important in this process is the use of different types of data, such as self-reports, observations, organisational data, as they provide useful source of information and different vantage points.

Based on the above discussion and given the nature and objectives of this study, the methodology adopted is similar to that proposed by Yin (1989) and Glaser and Straus (1967) relevant for the generation of theory. In the current study the focus is on two perspectives related to the father's imprisonment: the children's and the mother's perception of the father's action. This strategy is based upon the assumption that personal expressions (self-reports) of experience are fundamental ways for eliciting

significant data. Self-report methods constitute the only direct approach to the investigation of the subjective life of human beings, their attitudes, values, motives, beliefs and perceptions (Mischel, 1973).

We conclude this section by arguing that, contrary to advocates of solely nomothetic research designs, the idiographic approach is particularly important in areas where hypotheses and theory have yet to be formulated. Most significantly, it offers a global or comprehensive form of understanding the phenomena under study, in that it can reveal social structures and processes that other methods of inquiry are unable to achieve (Bromley, 1986). The father's absence due to imprisonment is clearly such an area where this methodological approach is most appropriate.

### Participants

The original sample is composed of 30 children of prisoners, 17 boys and 13 girls, and their mothers, from 25 households where the target child remained in the custody of the mother. The children ranged from 8 to 15 years of age, and the mothers from 27 to 39 years of age, apart from one who was aged 55 years.

After a one-year interval, only 23 children, 13 boys and 10

girls, could be contacted. Four families had moved and proved impossible to trace, two refused to cooperate as the mothers had separated and were living with another man, and one child was taken into care. When reduction in sample size occurs, bias in the final sample immediately becomes a concern. However, in our sample, the demographic characteristics of these that dropped out are not different from the ones that remained (see Appendix no. 4). Similarly, with regard to the interactive patterns of the family, as based on the first interview, it seems that they can be described by the families included in the study.

Choosing families with children between the ages of 8 to 15 was based on two considerations. First, it is difficult for children under 8 years of age to understand fully the questions posed or to articulate the subtle meanings of father's imprisonment intended to investigate. Second, the aims of the study include cognitive and social developmental differences with respect to forms of coping related to this event. It was deemed appropriate for the sample to include both primary-school children, aged 8 to 11, and adolescents, aged 12 to 15.

#### Approach to the participants

In July 1986, various voluntary organisations which support prisoners wives were contacted with the aim of meeting families who would be willing to participate in the study.

However, a number of these organisations were reluctant to help, and only two families were contacted by this method. These two families were first interviewed in May and December 1987 respectively. The main reason organisations did not wish to cooperate was that they did not want to act as intermediaries, as they did not see it as their role. Of the organisations that were willing to assist, many did not have access to families with children within the required age range, whilst those that did were generally unsuccessful in their attempts to gain the mothers' cooperation. Many mothers did not want to participate, as they were concerned about their children being interviewed. The organisations reported that, according to the mothers, many children did not know their fathers were in prison, or their children "did not want to talk about it". Some of the voluntary organisations contacted only offered services within prisons, such as running canteens and creches, and felt they were unable to help because of the brief contact they had with the families.

Concurrently, formal organisations and institutions were also approached. These included those that deal with the rehabilitation of offenders, schools, social services, the Home Office, governors of prisons and the probation service. Those that deal with the rehabilitation of offenders are mainly concerned with the assessment of prisoners on their release and did not have information

about the families at the level of detail required. The schools that were approached were concerned primarily about the ethical nature of the study, and even if this issue could be resolved, in the few cases that they were aware of, this information was gained informally and therefore they could not approach the mothers.

When an approach was made to the social services, it soon became apparent, after numerous phone calls and meetings, that because of complex bureaucratic procedures, any contact would take years not months to achieve. Similarly, this was also felt to be the case with the Home Office and prison governors. In the latter case, it was made clear that eventual contact was possible, but given the need to comply with issues of security and secrecy, together with the need for the prisoners' consent, it would be a very long process.

Through the various discussions with the above organisations, it appeared that the Probation Service would be the most likely to assist effectively in making contact with prisoners' families. The headquarters of the Probation Service was contacted and several ways of approaching the problem were decided. First, probation offices at various crown courts were contacted. However, although willing to help, they did not have the information required, as at this stage of the criminal proceedings they do not seek this type of information. It was next decided to send a

number of letters to headquarters, who agreed to forward them to various local probation officers accompanied by a covering letter, explaining the nature of the research and requesting their cooperation. Only two families were contacted using this method, the first interview taking place in April 1987 and the second in June 1987. Due to the limited response from this approach, it was agreed that the central office would send further letters covering a much wider area. No further results were achieved by this second attempt.

In May 1987 a further tactic was attempted by travelling on buses which transport families of offenders to various prisons. Initially it seemed a most useful approach, as many families agreed to participate in the study and it was felt that this personal approach to the women was the main factor in gaining their consent. Unfortunately, however, the majority of the women contacted had children under the age of 8 years, and only three families met the criteria. Of these, only one was eventually interviewed in July 1987, as the other two failed to keep their appointments. This proved to be major problem with the "bus strategy", as the families came from a wide area of the country, and in cases where they failed to keep appointments, return visits were prohibitively expensive.

From this strategy came the realisation that the only

effective way to gain the cooperation of families, not forgetting that our main objective was to interview children, was through a direct personal approach. Therefore, it was clear a different course of action should be taken. It was then decided to approach the women when visiting their husbands at the gate of the prison and seek their participation personally. Brixton Prison was chosen for two reasons: this prison has a large population of remand prisoners, and there is a visitors' centre near the entrance to the prison where families can stop for refreshments before or after the visit. This last approach proved to be the most successful and provided the majority of families. During a seven-month period 106 visits were made to Brixton Prison. Of the women approached 318 satisfied the criteria required for the sample, from which 299 refused to participate, a refusal rate of 17 to 1.

The main advantages of approaching the mothers personally are that one can explain in detail the nature and aims of the investigation, allay any fears they may have, such as those relating to confidentiality and interviewing their children on this most sensitive issue, and thereby establish a relationship with them based on trust and understanding. To gain the mother's trust was essential and to this end, not being associated with a governmental organisation was a vital asset, for, generally, prisoners' families are extremely suspicious of, and mistrust any one associated with the prison or social welfare systems. This



latter point was particularly important in this study, as at the time of the approach to the participants, many of the prisoners were awaiting trial and the family members were very cautious about providing information which could be used against the husband/father.

The main disadvantages of this approach are that it is time-consuming, frustrating and uncomfortable. Long periods were spent standing in front of the prison, in all weathers, assessing the mothers who could have children of the required age before approaching them, often only to be informed that they were visiting a son or a brother, or frequently told in no uncertain terms that they were not interested, or as on many occasions, informed by the mothers that their children had not been told the whole truth or that their husbands would never agree.

#### Problems of Field Studies

It may just be possible that much of the criticism aimed at the case study method is simply a rationale for not using it, for undoubtedly the use of a standardised tool or questionnaire and established statistical techniques to draw conclusions regarding the probability that an independent variable caused a dependent variable to occur is much less problematic. However, preferable as it may have been to adopt a quantitative approach to the current

study (and it was initially considered), given the nature of the subject matter and the participants involved, it would have been entirely inappropriate and insensitive. Moreover, it is a new area where exploration of the factors involved suggest that methods are required that impose very few constraints on the participants in order that the complexity, and wholeness of the experience of the father's incarceration process can be better understood.

First of all, the participants themselves create problems. Many mothers, having initially agreed to be interviewed, changed their minds, but never before the appointment date! Therefore, many days, Saturdays and Sundays included, were lost travelling to their homes only to find no one at home, or as on some occasions, the husband answering the door as he had been released on bail, or the mother just surprised as she had forgotten about the appointment completely, or just assumed that no one would take the trouble to travel to see her just to discuss her problems. When further appointments were made, it was no guarantee that they would be kept. Writing letters reminding them of the appointment would not make any difference. In some cases an event related to the husband's imprisonment took place before the interview date, which made it impossible to undertake the interview at that time. For example, on one appointment the wife had just returned from the court where her husband had been convicted to four years' imprisonment and she was deeply distressed. In this

situation it was possible only to offer sympathy and postpone the interview.

Examples of appointments made which did not proceed further include a wife who had been informed that her husband had a heart attack, a second who had returned to Ireland, a third who had been arrested for being an accomplice to her husband's crime, a fourth who had run away from home the previous night, and in two further instances the children had been taken into care.

Nine cases had to be excluded from the sample at the first interview. In one case, midway through the interview a man arrived who was introduced by the wife as her new boy friend. She explained that her husband knew of her affair and insisted that the interview should continue. However, the boy friend remained present often caressing her, which disturbed the atmosphere conducive to the transmission of reliable information.

On a second occasion, after just completing the wife's interview, it was discovered that she had lied about the nature of the husband's offence. The wife had to leave the room to attend to a workmen who had just arrived. During her short absence, a friend who was present throughout the interview let it be known that the wife's husband was arrested for raping their own daughter. As the participant

child to be interviewed was the girl's younger brother, for ethical reasons alone it was felt that under these conditions, the family should be excluded from the study. On a third occasion, during the wife's interview, it became apparent that the child was not aware that her father was in prison, even though the mother agreed she could be interviewed. It was pointed out to the mother that unless she decided to inform the child of her father's whereabouts, the interview could not proceed. In a further case it was discovered during the wife's interview that she was a widow and that the person in prison was her eldest son. On this occasion, the interview with the child was completed as she was looking forward to the interview and it would have been insensitive to disappoint the child. A further four cases were dropped as it was discovered, during the first interview, that the prisoners were not their husbands but short-term boy-friends. In each case the women had implied that they were their husbands at the time the appointments were made.

Other problems may occur which require sensitivity and diplomacy on the part of the researcher. For example, the author was approached by a woman who insisted that another woman previously interviewed with her three children should not be included in the study, as she was not the current wife of the prisoner in question and during the last five years she herself had been living with the prisoner. Although she was informed that the case would be dropped,

she insisted that the author accompany her on a prison visit and hear from her husband that she was his legal and latest wife.

In most cases, it was necessary to return to the family home more than once in order to initiate the series of interviews, and in some cases four, five or even seven times. On some occasions the mother would suggest an appointment an hour or two later, or simply state that she did not know where the child was. This entailed spending a great deal of time waiting in the area until the family was ready to be interviewed. This was particularly disconcerting when there was no adequate place to wait, when it was cold, raining or at night. Many areas did not seem very safe to be alone whilst waiting. In five cases it was necessary to postpone the interviews as the mothers were not in a condition to be interviewed: two were too depressed to talk, one was drunk, one was drugged and one had to rush out to buy drugs. In a further case the interview had to be postponed halfway through, as one of the children had broken an arm whilst playing outside, and the mother had to rush her to hospital, leaving me to look after her other four children until she returned at 11 p.m.

In this study the interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants. The advantages of interviewing at home are many. The context gives the researcher essential

information as s/he has the opportunity to observe the environment and the interaction between the family members. Also the researcher may perceive important issues which would not appear in another context and which s/he may pursue. In addition mothers and children feel more comfortable, relaxed and there are no limitations on time.

However, disadvantages can also be encountered such as waiting for the child to have a bath, to watch a favourite television programme or return from playing with friends. On some occasions, it was necessary to wait for the mother to cook the dinner or for a friend to leave, and on others, the interview had to be postponed as a visitor suddenly arrived. Although every effort was made to conduct interviews in private, this was not always possible. Generally, the mother's interview took place in the living room or the kitchen, depending on whether the children were at school, watching television, or in bed. However if the children were at home it was not always possible to prevent them interrupting the interview. Two interviews with mothers were conducted in the presence of a friend. In each case the mothers indicated that this friend knew everything about the personal situation and that there would be no problems with confidentiality. Although it was felt that the information given in this situation might have been unreliable, it was verified in subsequent interviews and informal conversations.

My general impression throughout these interviews is that the rapport between myself the mothers and children was good. The majority of families who participated in the study generally welcomed me with warmth, and even a certain curiosity. Several factors may explain their openness and willingness to cooperate: first, not being English I was not associated with the traditional middle class with whom they have problems identifying; second, they did not identify me with governmental institutions which they also mistrust; third, they were appreciative that someone should be concerned with their particular problems and that they could express their concerns in a non-judgemental context. Finally, since I am linked with a university, many felt that I would be in a good position to interpret their experiences and perhaps, help others in a similar position.

The interviews, when possible, were arranged for about two p.m. to enable the mothers to be interviewed before the children returned from school. However, in reality, the interviews did not follow a consistent pattern, and the time spent on each interview ranged from three to six hours.

The amount of data collected by intensive interviewing is enormous. With such data it is crucial to reduce the data so that it can be conveniently communicated without losing

any of its meaning or complexity. As ready-made categories are not appropriate for this type of study, new ones had to be formulated. Among the suggestions made as how to analyse qualitative data, Mostyn (1985) proposes that it should be analysed for repetitions of similar sets of interactions, a process which requires much organising and re-organising. To this end, the interviews were read and re-read many times to discover the important themes and main factors that are involved in the experience of the imprisonment of the husband/father. Characteristic illustrations were extracted to facilitate comprehension of the points under discussion and to summarise the interaction of various factors that takes place in this process of separation. There is no easy way to simplify and reduce the analytical processes required of the researcher, it involves a slow reading, sorting, re-reading and re-sorting. However, the amount of interesting information that can be gathered by in-depth interviews makes overcoming the difficulties worthwhile.

#### DATA COLLECTION

The following sections describe the main problems and implications of the measurements used in the present research.



## Interviews

It is argued that how an event is perceived by the individual cannot be understood by outsiders; therefore it is necessary to consider the perspective of the particular individual and his/her motives (Honig, 1986; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). How the situation is perceived by an observer may be very different from the understanding of the person who is involved in the event. Hetherington (1989) stresses that it is essential to reveal how separation from a father affects the child's feelings and perceptions and how s/he acts as a result. Thus, she feels that the understanding of an issue as complex as father's absence can only be gleaned from the children's point of view.

Given that we are concerned with the impact of an environmental event on the participants of our study and how the event is defined in terms of the experiencing person, the interview was adopted. It is a technique well suited to reveal subjective definitions of experiences and to assess the individual's perception of the significant people and events in his/her life. For it is only when the researcher and the respondent have the possibility of communicating directly with each other that the subtleties of the mutual understanding between the two parties can be harnessed (Brenner, 1985).

In their longitudinal study of child-rearing practices, the Newsoms (1976) adopted a hypothesis-generating strategy, since they were sceptical about drawing conclusions from laboratory studies, as previous encounters with women in their own homes had convinced them of the benefits of such an approach. They intended that their study develop within an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983) and believed that an interview in which participants could "bring out the detail and variety, the reservations and ambiguities, the principles and the expedient exceptions to principles which they believed to be implicit to the process of child-rearing" (p.31), was the only viable way to achieve their aims.

The value of reports has been questioned by Kazdin (1982), who argues that they cannot be shown to be valid or truthful. However many writers feel that this is a short-sighted view and that it is only through such reports that a better understanding of behaviour, particularly social behaviour, can be achieved. When considering the interview procedure to be used in a research context, it is important to identify its particular qualities and to state carefully its weaknesses in order that they can be minimised (Brenner, 1985).

Harre and Secord (1972) support this view, for within the context of describing a person as a self-directed, self-

monitoring being, they argue that self-reports are crucial in explaining behaviour and the rules underlying social acts. It is only through studying the reports and accounts of individuals that the rules and meanings of social life can be understood. Through such reports people's emotional states can be investigated and related to their actions, particularly when given almost concurrently with actions, as well as retrospectively, as these may modify the earlier ones.

Similarly Canter et al (1985) and Shepherd and Watson (1982) propose that the conceptual frameworks of participants should be the starting point for understanding their actions. They argue that explanations should be used as a data base in research and suggest the respondent is the best person to provide, through interviews, explanations which can be used as valid data for understanding actions. They add that such explanations will be in the form of reasons, rather than causes, a distinction discussed earlier (see p. 119).

De Waele and Harre (1979) advocate the use of autobiography as a psychological method, and describe a systematic manner in which such documents are gathered by interviewing subjects and reviewing accounts with them. They suggest that the validity of a personal document is not dependent on "objectivity", for it reflects personal attitudes and interpretations which are relevant in providing the

participant's view of his/her life situation. As a consequence, accounts may vary at different times which reflect the various perspectives an individual has on his/her life. However, which of these is 'real' is a question which cannot be answered and may be irrelevant to ask.

An observer can draw conclusions and make interpretations about behaviour based on his or her own perspective, knowledge and suppositions, not those of the participants. But it is only by talking to individuals that it is possible to understand their own perspective, and the only way to do this is through interviews, even though they have failings and limitations.

One of the great advantages of the interview situation is that the interviewer is in a position to use his/her relationship with the respondent to elaborate and clarify information at the time. Kahn and Cannell (1957) suggest that the respondent is more likely to be motivated as a result of the relationship established with the interviewer and that the information provided is more likely to be honest and accurate than in other settings. The openness of the relationship allows the interviewer to guide the subject, to help with the interpretation of questions, and to be flexible in the ordering and phrasing of questions. Brenner (1985) also believes that the interpersonal rapport

can contribute to the validity of the data. The direct relationship not only reduces misunderstanding by providing the opportunity to clarify the meanings of unclear questions, but also provides a context in which the participant may feel more secure to express emotionally charged experience.

According to Sudman and Bradburn (1974), the interview can be considered as a microsocial system in which there are two roles and a task (participant and interviewer joined by the common task of giving and obtaining information), where the interviewer is the component of this social setting most affecting the interviewing process (Brenner, 1981). The interviewer cannot be completely neutral, but the level of relationship in terms of empathy and responsiveness must be controlled. An interview that probes feelings, attitudes, and deeply personal orientations requires a deeper level of relationship in terms of warmth, sensitivity and responsiveness. Negative or too strongly positive rapport can deter communication between the subject and the interviewer, and the subject may give responses s/he thinks the interviewer wants and inhibit responses s/he thinks the interviewer would find unacceptable (Yarrow, 1960).

For Sherwood, the relationship between subjects and interviewers is not fortuitous or 'unscientific' for it is the very medium through which the study proceeds and the

research data are gathered. The research data "are enhanced and deeper meanings are yielded if there is a full, conscious attempt to recognise the dynamics of this mutual interaction" (1980, p.27).

All methods have disadvantages, and interviews are no exception. They are time consuming and can be expensive. The staff need to be trained in the skills of interviewing and if intensive interviewing is required, a commitment to the interviews and individuals that require emotional involvement is necessary (Bromley, 1986). Although the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is an advantage of this method, it is also a potential source of bias. It is therefore essential that one must be aware that this relationship may influence the content of responses, which in turn provides a source of variance difficult to control. Thus, an important factor to consider in the interpersonal relationship formed in an interview setting is the establishment and the control of this relationship. However, preoccupation with standardisation of behaviour may affect spontaneity and result in artificial behaviour. There must be a sensitive awareness of those aspects of behaviour which may be biasing in terms of the particular interview situation and content (Yarrow, 1960). Great care must be taken in relation to threatening questions, even though Bradburn *et al* (1979) did not find any difference in response effect when these type of questions were asked by

telephone or face-to-face interviews. In general, threatening questions have high response biases that are not affected by the way in which the question is asked, even if privacy is preserved. However, a face-to-face interview gives the opportunity to probe and eventually assess the bias.

A most useful approach for dealing with sensitive topics is the funnelling technique (Rich, 1972; Gelles, 1978). In funnelling, the interview begins with general questions such as "What do you like best in a friend?", "What do you normally do when you leave school?" and is then gradually channelled towards the central issue under study. This has the advantage of minimising bias on the part of the interviewer and also establishes the frame of reference. This technique enables the interviewer to develop a rapport with the subject, whilst familiarising him/her with the basic content of the interview and helping the individual to build a greater commitment to the interview. It has been found that using this approach in sensitive areas, such as in discussing personal violence, participants begin to discuss the issue without questions being asked (Gelles, 1978). In the present study children were initially asked general questions about their hobbies, what activities they engaged in after school, and about their interaction with their best friends. Whilst discussing their relationships with their friends, the issue of the father's imprisonment was introduced by inquiring whether or not their friends

knew about his incarceration. This question enabled the gradual probing of the child's perception and feelings towards the event.

Although it has been found that open-ended questions are most adequate for understanding participants' motivations, feelings and perceptions as closed questions constrain response, controversy still remains as to whether and how open and closed questions affect the quality of answers given by participants (Dohrenwend, 1965). Bradburn *et al* (1979) investigated the effects on response of open-ended questions against closed-ended questions, long (containing more than 30 words) against short questions, and questions that use familiar words, defined as questions that use wording chosen by the participant and standard research-chosen wordings. They conclude that threatening items must be separated into two categories: items that ask about performing a behaviour even once within some time span and require yes or no response, and items that ask about the frequency or intensity of a behaviour. The former shows no systematic interpretable effects from the question length and wording-familiarity manipulations. But questions requiring qualified answers proved consistently sensitive to the question-structure, length and wording-familiarity manipulations. Long, open-ended questions are found to be the best format for asking threatening items. Even when the difference between open, long questions and closed, short



questions are tested on an item-by-item basis, these differences are statistically significant. Furthermore, they suggest that longer questions improve reporting by giving the participant more time to recall events.

The above findings are supported by Sudman and Bradburn (1974) who suggest that close-ended questions may increase the threat of the threatening questions as the participant is forced to choose one from a number of alternatives. This certainly appears to be the case with questions on attitudes to the family, where response effects are higher on close-ended questions compared with open-ended questions. Evidence of this can be found in the Newsoms' study (1976) where mothers' responses were found to be constrained by the choice between "fairly difficult" and "fairly easy" in relation to their total impressions of their children's behaviour. Given this choice the mothers selected "fairly easy" despite indicating how uncooperative their children were in previous questioning about particular behaviours. In general, the higher the threat, the greater the response effect, but the higher the saliency the lower the response effect.

According to Brenner (1981) the main sources of bias are the background characteristics of the interviewer (age, education, gender), psychological factors (perception, attitude, expectations or motives) and behavioural (inadequacies in the interviewer's task performance). Even

though the sources of bias related to the interviewer have been researched extensively, a lack of theoretical framework does not advance understanding of the way in which interviewers do, in fact, bias results nor aid in estimating the extent to which different types of effects actually occur (Sudman and Bradburn, 1974).

For example, interviewer expectations are assumed to have a strong effect on responses. Using a national sample survey of 1172 participants, small but generally significant effects of interviewer's expectations on response variations were found (Sudman and Bradburn, 1974). They report on only two factors: interviewer's expectations about the general difficulties of the interview, and level of reporting. It must be emphasised that the small interviewer effects found in the above research is only related to the two aspects chosen as indicators by the researchers and does not exclude a possible significant effect of the interviewer's expectations on the overall aims of the interview. Furthermore, it should be noted that they used the best interviewers, which presupposes better training and, consequently, better ability to deal with their own expectations. Nevertheless, they point out that others factors could have affected responses, apart from interviewer bias, such as interviewer's appearance and behaviour, situational expectations, prior expectations or some combination of these variables. All of these relate to

biases on the part of respondents, which may affect their answers. They conclude that what occurs in the interview is clearly more important than the extra-role characteristics of the interviewer such as gender, age or social class. Studies of the influence of the extra-role characteristics of the interviewer found that the effects of these characteristics only occur when the topic of the study is related to these characteristics. For example, in a review mentioned earlier, Sudman and Bradburn (1974) found that the gender of the interviewer affects responses on gender issues related topics. In studies of political or racial attitudes, there are no reports of the influence of the interviewer's gender on respondents.

At this point it appears useful to report my own experience in relation to the effects that the interviewer expectations may have on the participants responses. During the process of contacting the families of prisoners, several organisations and psychologists advanced the possibility that the questions I would ask the children could upset them deeply. These arguments led me to question the wisdom of the research design. After much deliberation it was decided to continue with the research, and leave it to the children to decide not only if they wanted to participate, but also if they wished to answer any question or not. However, I had to drop two interviews as my uncertainty was apparent, and it did not allow a relaxed atmosphere in which the child could talk about

his/her problems. During these two interviews, I realised that the children were not only prepared to talk about their experiences, but also appreciated the fact that someone was genuinely interested in their opinions and feelings.

Unlike Brenner (1981), Sudman and Bradburn (1974) consider the task of the interview to be the central concept and the task variables to be the most important sources of response effects. Results of research on the influence of task variables: location of the interview, method of administration, level of threat, the possibility of a socially desirable answers and the saliency of the question to participant, position and structure of questions and the referent person about whom the questions are asked, indicate that the nature of the task and the conditions under which it is performed are among the variables that have the strongest effects on responses. These effects are far larger than the effects due to the interviewer's or participant's characteristics.

The content of the interview, independent of the formulation of the questions, may influence how respondents present themselves and also what they remember. For example Brown and Sime (1981) argue that the salience of an event greatly facilitates the recall of it. Thus replies to questions that are not salient are likely to be inaccurate

and distorted by intervening similar events (Baddeley, 1979; Cherry and Rodgers (1979). In addition factors such as the tendency to suppress unpleasant or threatening experiences, and/or the individual's limited possession of the information sought, will render such information inaccessible (Cannel and Kahn, 1968).

The role of emotion in memory was investigated by Miall (1986). The effects of both emotional and non-emotional verbal material on remembering were examined in relation to the subject's self-concept and to his/her concept of a friend. The manipulation of remembering by type of phrase reveals that self-reference is distinct from friend reference and that the self-concept as a context for remembering is differentiated according to whether the material is emotional or neutral. For example, if the material to remember is emotionally charged, relating it to the self will greatly improve its chance of recall. In addition, Miall suggests that memory for actions may differ from memory for moments or objects: in the case of self-reference, negative experiences which imply action may be more salient than positive experience. Even though these findings support Brown and Simes' (1981) assumption that saliency of an event facilitates recall, the experimental design - phrases as stimulus - and the particular population that participated in this study - psychology students - place severe limitations on the external validity of the results.

The problem of saliency with regard to attitudinal data is not only related to memory, as in behavioural data, but also to the clarity of the participant's beliefs. That is, the extent to which the respondent has a well formulated idea about the question asked is dependent on whether or not s/he has reflected upon the particular aspect of the issue under investigation (Sudman and Bradburn, 1974).

It has been suggested that the accounts of participants are not authentic as they lack the knowledge of what they are doing or have done (Shotter, 1977) and they can provide the most convincing explanations of their own behaviour even if it is manifestly false (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). However, as March et al (1978) and others point out, it is not possible to gain an insight into people's intentions and feelings without first listening to their accounts. Whilst there is no guarantee that different explanations will not be given to different interviewers, the role of the interviewer needs to be considered in understanding the material given (Brown and Canter, 1985).

Given the importance of adequate participant motivation, it is surprising that, in comparison with research into the biasing effects of the interviewer, only two kinds of undesirable participant motivation have been reasonably well researched: acquiescence and need for approval (the

need to respond in culturally approved ways) (Brenner, 1981). Fein (1970) points out that great emphasis in survey research has been placed on maximising validity, minimising error and optimising participation related to the interviewer, whereas the participant's role, feelings and reactions to the interview situation are virtually ignored. Furthermore, she believes that there exists a devaluation of the lower class participant which is implicit in survey research despite efforts to control it by sophisticated research designs.

One of the characteristics of the participant's role is that s/he cannot be forced to share the interviewer's perspective of the situation; thus, s/he may interpret the encounter in other terms, for example, as an opportunity to express personal views beyond the interview (Brenner, 1981). The participant can also choose not to cooperate with the action suggested by the interviewer. Therefore adequacy of measurement in the research interview relies on the participant's good will to maintain the necessary working consensus, which the interviewer can try to reinforce positively but cannot entirely create on her/his own (Brenner, 1981).

Some of the most important factors related to accuracy of reporting are the participant's understanding of his/her role, his/her comprehension of the meaning of the questions asked and the depth and level of specificity of the

response desired (Cannell and Kahn, 1968). Therefore, the participant and interviewer must develop a common frame of reference, a common conceptual language and a common understanding of what constitutes an adequate response.

Four situations can be distinguished in which the forces that motivate participants toward presenting themselves favourably or towards reducing anxiety may produce significant effects (Sudman and Bradburn, 1974):

1 - Questions that pose a threat to the respondent and tend to arouse anxiety may introduce an element of tension into the interview which can alter the relation between interviewer and respondent.

2 - Socially desirable responses. If the respondent has a socially undesirable attitude s/he may face a conflict between desire to conform to the definition of "good" participant behaviour and a desire to appear to the interviewer in a socially desirable light.

3 - The participant may give answers to questions when s/he does not know the answer.

4 - Since disagreement may lead to conflict, there is some pressure in the interview situation towards agreeing with the interviewer insofar as one can determine his/her opinion or think that one can. This tendency Sudman and Bradburn term "acquiescence", which to avoid, interviewers have to establish a relationship in which participants realise, at least in some vague sense, that interviewers



will not disagree with them no matter what they say.

Brenner (1981) believes that the participant's answers cannot be taken literally, as the participant's cognitions are further modified by the effects of the interviewer-participant interaction within the totality of the interview situation. Even though it is impossible to detect the total influences involved in the participant's answers, an attempt should be made to discriminate these influences to enable the investigator to answer questions related to the reliability and validity of the data gathered. When possible, one should compare information against verification data, that is scrutinise accounts for overt observable undesirable influences in the interview situation or employ a cognitive approach for the assessment of the participant's motivational state during the interview. However, the expression of attitudes, judgements, sentiments, values statements and cognitive experiences cannot be compared with verification data simply because these data do not exist. The only way of assessing the authenticity of such expressions is to scrutinise the interviewer-participant interaction as recorded on tapes for possible biasing effects (Brenner, 1981).

Brown and Sime (1981) suggest that, in this context, instead of the concepts of reliability and validity, the

alternative concepts of authenticity and attestability should be adopted. Authenticity relates to the corroborative support given to an account either by artifacts or by its internal consistency or cross-reference to other sources of information. However, this is subject to the perceptual and cognitive distortion occurring at the time of the event, which may be influenced by social desirability, self-justification or post-hoc rationalisations. Internal consistency can be analysed through the degree to which the participant contradicts or corrects himself/herself or gives apparently inconsistent or paradoxical information. Therefore, the emphasis should be placed on examining unintentional rather than intentional distortion. It has been pointed out by the Newsoms (1976) that internal consistency is unlikely if the person is lying.

Attestability is defined as the degree to which the researcher has made explicit his/her methods and distinguishes his/her interpretations of events from those of his participants such that the academic community can scrutinise and evaluate the legitimacy of the findings. The researcher should be able to demonstrate the degree to which accounts are authentic by showing how they have transformed, analysed and reported their findings.

While one may argue that the participant's motivation is strongly influenced by the behaviour of the interviewer,

other factors such as temperament, events that have happened to the participant before the interview began, and environmental factors such as the presence of others, can undermine the participant's motivation to take the time or make the effort to be a "good" participant (Sudman and Bradburn, 1974).

It has been argued that to investigate and understand an issue as complex as the imprisonment of the husband/father, the interview technique is most appropriate as it reveals the subjective meaning of the experience. The advantages of the interview over the questionnaire are the potential for spontaneity, flexibility and probing. However, it is assumed that there will be errors in reporting due to the individual's conscious distortions of his/ her responses, and problems related to internal processes such as motivational states and problems experienced answering the questions. Although finding a method for assessing the probability that any particular respondent is distorting his/ her answers is a difficult one, the problem can be minimised by establishing an adequate interpersonal relationship between interviewer and respondent.

Three conceptually distinct sources of variance in the interview situation have been identified: 1) variables related to the characteristics of the interviewer, 2) variables related to the characteristics of the respondent

and 3) variables that derive from the nature and structure of the task.

Response effects appear to be larger in the case of threatening questions than non-threatening questions. However, no particular method of administration seems to be better than other. Different methods may be appropriate for specific studies.

Finally, it is proposed that, in the context of the interview, emphasis should be given to authenticity and attestability, rather than reliability and validity. That is, the data gathered through interviews should be supported from other corroborative sources of information. In addition, the researcher should make clear how this information has been analysed, transformed and reported.

### Interviewing children

The procedures for interviewing discussed so far apply equally to both adults and children. However, in recent years a major innovation has occurred towards viewing children as valuable informants regarding their own behaviour and feelings. Interviewing children directly has been shown to be a useful method of obtaining data for diagnostic and research purpose (Rutter and Graham, 1968; Herjanic et al, 1975; Starr and Raykovitz, 1982), one which can give access to data that may remain out of view when

other methods are used. This includes data on the subjective world of the child, such as perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, memories, feelings, hopes, judgements and plans. Observational techniques cannot reveal this kind of data, as they rely instead on inferring it from observed behaviour. Questionnaires and attitude scales might uncover such data, but because they are paper-and-pencil techniques, they require children to be literate and permit no follow-up probing.

There are a number of factors that are relevant to consider when interviewing children. These concern:

- 1 - The effects of the interview as a method of research;
- 2 - the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and the child;
- 3 - the age and developmental status of the child.

1 - Effects of the interview as a method of research

In regard to the effects the interview as a method of research may have on children, two aspects have been identified: a) the degree to which the interview itself is structured and b) the nature of the questions asked. It is generally agreed that unstructured interviews are more suited for children, as it is assumed that to ask them

direct personal and emotional questions would be upsetting and hence reliable information would be withheld. However, even in a study to establish guidelines for assessing the possible risks involved in administering structured research interviews, Herjanic et al (1976) found only four children that reported bad effects from the interview, compared with 253 neutral or favourable responses. The main concerns reported by the children were related to their embarrassment over questions on drugs, sex and suicide. However, they still thought the interview was helpful to themselves, and several recognised the value of the research procedure as a way of helping others. Although Herjanic et al (1976) acknowledge that their interpretation of the results cannot be compared to the risk/benefit ratio of other research procedures, they note that less than 2% of the children experienced adverse effects.

## 2 - Nature of the relationship between the interviewer and the child.

Rich (1972) agrees that differences exist between children and adults as to what they notice and the relative values they give to various observations. Therefore, fact-finding questions formulated for children have to be much more specific and direct. This arises from the inequality between the roles of the adult and the child and the fact that if a child simply answers questions without feeling

sufficiently free and secure to explain points that the adult did not consider asking, the truth will never be revealed. As children's experiences are limited, they may not recognise that they are being asked a question that cannot be answered accurately without a wider range of knowledge than they possess.

The interviewer must be sensitive to the subtle signs that may communicate feelings such as warmth, suspicion, hostility or boredom, as children's emotional responses are more volatile and hence more likely to be affected by sudden instances of antagonism or enthusiasm. According to Rich, children are more likely to be motivated if they have warm feelings towards the interviewer and feel that s/he has a desire to solve their problems. Conversely, if children experience feelings of hostility, suspicion or boredom in the interview setting, they are less likely to communicate. For Rich, the key to successful communication with the child is to find a common ground, which may be achieved by using language with which the child is familiar. However, it may be necessary for the interviewer to point out to the child the common ground as he or she may not be aware of it. Therefore, when formulating questions it is necessary to consider the effect of the topic chosen and the effect of the language used. There is also the option of using open or closed questions and direct or indirect questions. In the case of indirect questions it is crucial to convey to the child that there

are no "right" or "wrong" answers, and it is the child's opinion that is important. This is significant as many children may believe they will get into trouble should they give what they perceive to be the wrong answer. It must be made clear, therefore, that the child will not be punished or ridiculed, whatever his or her opinion may be.

Finally, adequate communication with children may be blocked, either by their wish to avoid certain topics or by their inability to express themselves. In order to avoid misunderstanding, it is important to define one's frame of reference, and not use leading questions but rather neutral phrases such as "What do you mean?" or "I don't quite understand". It is often the case that interviewers are misled by children's answers as their frames of reference differ from those of adults. To avoid this problem it is necessary to ask children to elaborate their answers much more frequently than one would do with adults.

Parker (1984) also suggests that the personal relationship that results from the interaction between the interviewer and the child is important for reliable access to the child's subjective inner world. He argues that the main challenge for the interviewer is to manage the relationship without contaminating the collection of subjective data. Parker also points out that the context of the interview will shape its content, therefore the child's



response will be shaped by the situation. He notes that for many children it may be rare to have the undivided attention of an adult; however, how they evaluate the situation and how this may affect their responses has been neglected. The general tendency has been to standardise the interview oversimply and underestimate the potential impact of the situation.

#### 4 - Age and developmental status of the child

Newman and Newman (1975) point out that the ways children understand and express their own experiences, feelings and behaviour vary according to their age and developmental status. Developmental factors such as comprehension of language, language facility, affective and role relationships between children and adults, and normative motivation (negativism, independence, striving) are crucial in any assessment procedure based on direct questioning of the child. Mills' (1985) study of adolescent reactions to counselling interviews shows that interviews which respond to their developmental needs stimulate self-expression and produce the most favourable responses.

Leon Yarrow (1960) describes four age categories that are based on normative developmental positions and that are relevant to the interviewing process: preschool, middle childhood, early adolescence and mid-adolescence. He argues that a failure to adapt the interview relationship and its

setting to the developmental stage of the child can compromise seriously the validity and reliability of the interview. An investigation of age differences in the reliability of children's reports about clinically relevant symptoms and behaviours found that the reliability of these reports increases with age in almost all symptom areas (Edelbrock and Costello, 1984). Although these results suggest that the child's memory and linguistic skills improve with age, it should be remembered that improvements in the child's ability to report verbally his/her perceptions can also increase the child's ability to conceal responses that he/she feels will meet with disapproval.

For instance, during middle childhood important changes in linguistic abilities and conceptual development occur (Newman and Newman, 1975), which enable the child to think about ideas far removed from their immediate concrete experiences. They have well developed language skills and their concepts of time are becoming clarified. The child's feelings and speech are socially direct and utilitarian (Yarrow, 1960).

In middle childhood and increasing into early adolescence, peer identification develops, which leads to a tendency to withhold personal information from adults (Parker, 1984). This behaviour has been considered a normal developmental

phenomena which is assumed to be motivated by the child's fear of upsetting the unstable equilibrium achieved over the conflict between biological impulses and social demands (Yarrow, 1960).

In the case of adolescents, it is known they resist adult attempts to probe their private world, especially if they are characterised by some undervalued aspect by their environment, for example, underachievers (Mills, 1985). Within the adolescents period, it is important to be aware of significant differences related to the three phases in which adolescence has generally been divided.

The early adolescent tends to be close in psychological orientation to the late latency period. As parental identification is replaced by a peer group identification (Yarrow, 1960), the intense curiosity of this period can be used to counteract the emotional resistance to adult authority figures. In the middle adolescence period, the individual seems to develop a preoccupation with the self and to strive to find a satisfactory ego ideal (Yarrow, 1960), which may increase an awareness of others' attitudes and opinions. This increased awareness may lead the adolescent to accept the opinions of acceptable adults; interviewer must pay careful attention not to reveal his/her own attitudes. The mid-adolescent's increase in self-consciousness is supported by research examining the variation of self-disclosure at different levels of age

development (Sinha, 1972). This study found that early adolescents disclose the most, followed by late adolescents, with mid-adolescents disclosing the least. However, it must be pointed out that the sample consists only of females, who may experience adolescence differently from males. In addition, as the subjects are Indian adolescents, cultural factors may have some effects on levels of adolescent self-disclosure.

Important as it is to consider age in the interviewing process, motivational characteristics are not completely related to a given chronological age: there may be considerable overlap between developmental periods. We therefore conclude that the developmental variables which cannot be ignored by an interviewer are: the child's ability to comprehend language, the child's ability to articulate subjective experiences, the child's willingness to articulate experiences and the affective relationship between the interviewer and the child respondent.

#### Interviews used in this study

The aims of the mother's interviews were to determine her perception of the husband's imprisonment and to assess the extent to which she felt she influenced the child's adaptation to the event. To this end, information was sought concerning the mother's perception and definition of

the event, her attitudes towards her husband, both before and after incarceration, her relationship with the children and the explanation she gave for the husband's separation, and how she believes the children were affected by his imprisonment.

The main objectives of the children's interviews were to establish their perception of their father's incarceration and to discover whether or not the experience had implications for their self-esteem and moral development. The interviews also focused on the children's perceptions of their relationship with the mother, father and friends in order that any changes and/or influences relating to these relationships could be identified.

The interviews conducted with the prisoners' wives followed no rigid or fixed sequence, although an interview guide (see Appendix 1, p. 489) was used to ensure the same basic topics were raised with each participant. Thus, the use of an interview guide also allowed a degree of control over the interviewing process, whilst at the same time, facilitating the spontaneous uninhibited expression of the wives perspective and feelings, enabling the wives themselves to raise issues. In this way, potentially difficult topics were more easily addressed. Sherwood (1980) found such a method essential in her study of the sensitive area of inter-racial attitudes, as did Gelles (1974) in his study of unstructured interviews channeled

towards questions about fights, in order to explore marital violence.

Data from mothers were gathered through focused, in-depth interviews lasting no less than two hours, and often as many as five hours. Most interviews required more than one visit to complete, particularly in the case of children, for whom at least two visits were needed. However, there was considerable variation in the number of visits. Three factors appear to have determined the frequency and duration of interviews: the willingness of wives to share aspects of their lives, how articulate they were and their desire to talk about a related stressful event that happened just before the interview. In the latter case, much time was spent listening to the wife's problem in detail until she felt satisfied and focused questions could be asked. It must be pointed out that some wives of prisoners experience social isolation, and therefore grasp at the opportunity to express their frustrations to someone they feel is in a position to understand them. The children's interviews (Appendix I, p. 491) were semi-structured to the extent that they included open-ended questions such as, "What do you think about your dad being in prison?" and close-ended questions such as "Whom do you think you take after, your mum or your dad?".

The interviews were tape recorded and subsequently

transcribed. This allowed for much detail to be recorded, and for the tone of voice and emotional timbre of what was being said to be noted. Using a tape recorder allows the flow of the account to continue without interruptions, and enables the researcher to concentrate more closely on the answers being given, identify possible contradictions and ensure relevant questions were asked. It also improves the rapport with the participant as the interviewer is free to respond to the individual, unlike when detailed notes are taken where the researcher is preoccupied writing and unable to do so.

Brown and Sime (1981) confirm that note taking is distracting to both researcher and informant and add that it may cue respondents into talking more about issues that they see the researcher write down and into talking only briefly about those which the researcher does not note. Taping avoids these pitfalls and allows the researcher to give attention to both the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the participant. They do warn, however, that the tape may encourage the interviewer not to listen to the participant and the interviewer must try to counteract this tendency. A further consideration has been raised by Roberts and Renzaglia (1965) whose investigation into the effect of tape recording on counselling sessions found that clients were more apt to speak favourably about themselves when they thought they were being recorded than when not. However, they do not compare the results with the effects

of note taking, nor do they make explicit to the client the nature of their recording. It is difficult therefore to use such results to generalise to a study such as this. At best their results indicate that the method of study will affect the outcome and must be taken into consideration. This is however, as suggested earlier, true of all types of research.

In the current study, notes were only taken after the interviews were concluded, and these generally concerned the context of the interview and any important aspects of which the researcher was aware, such as the overall mood of the participants.

Interviews conducted in this way are lengthy and time consuming to transcribe but provide accurate replicas for careful analysis. At time one, interviews began in April 1987 and were completed in December of the same year. At time two, interviews began in May and were completed in December 1988.

### SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem refers to the value or worth attached to the self-descriptions of the dimensions which define the self. In other words, self-esteem as a psychological construct is concerned with the degree and strength of positive self-



evaluation (Harter, 1983).

Despite the diversity of conceptions of the self-esteem construct, the general belief in the importance of the esteem dimension of the self-concept in human functioning is demonstrated by the great quantity of research conducted adopting this variable (Wylie, 1979). Empirical research has shown that a positive attitude toward the self is central in coping with stress, particularly stress arising from conditions over which a person may have little direct control (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). Conversely, negative self-perceptions have been found to be associated with depression in children, even though not generalised across all situational contexts (Asarnow *et al.*, 1987).

The self-concept defined as an internal working model containing expectations about a person's effectiveness in solving developmental tasks is proposed as a significant protective factor in children's coping with normative developmental tasks and subsequent adaptation (Van Lieshout, 1986). Garnezy (1983) analysed studies focusing on characteristics of resilient children and their environment that distinguish them from others who respond maladaptatively to stress. They consistently found that high self-esteem was one crucial factor within dispositional and constitutional characteristics of the child that protected him/her from emotional or psychological problems related to the exposure to deprived

or disadvantaged environments during development. Self-esteem is also believed to influence both children's school performance and their social relations. Low self-esteem has profound and widespread effects on achievement aspirations and emotional adaptations of the child (Gergen, 1971).

In order to measure a construct like self-esteem, which involves the individual's phenomenal self, it is necessary to use some form of self-report, usually taking the form of a verbal or written response given by the individual as a basis for the inference of this construct. This method appears to be the most appropriate for indicating a specific conscious process (Wylie, 1974). The individual, therefore, is the best source of information about his/her own personality because he/she is in the best position to observe his/her behaviour, in having the largest body of data from which to make assessment and in having access to subtle or covert response (Mischel, 1973).

#### Methodological problems in assessing a self-referent construct

One problem is the difficulty of checking independently the individual's reports, since there is no immediate stimulus as in the case of experiments in perception (Wylie, 1979). Although both are investigating the phenomenal field, experiments in perception deal with individuals' response

to an externally verifiable stimulus. Bagley et al (1979) argue, exact external validators of a self-referent construct are practically impossible to achieve, because of the phenomenological nature of these constructs. A second problem is that, given the different and general definitions of self-esteem, it is difficult to arrive at a precise operational definition of self-esteem (Harter, 1983). Several conceptual dimensions have been identified by Shavelson et al (1976) which emphasise different characteristics of this construct, such as stable or changing; normative standard (perceived evaluation), absolute personal standard (ideals) or non-evaluative types of description (descriptive); unidimensional or multidimensional self-structure. The difference between self-evaluation and self-description has not yet been clarified, either conceptually or empirically. Consequently, the terms self-concept and self-esteem have been used interchangeably in the literature, adding to the already imprecise discrimination of self-referent constructs.

According to Epstein (1973), the confusion in the definitions derives from the inadequate definition of self-concept as a hypothetical construct. A solution offered by Epstein is to consider the self-concept as a self-theory, the fundamental purpose of which is to optimise the pleasure/pain balance of the individual over the course of a life-time; to facilitate the maintenance of self-esteem

and to organise the data of experience in a manner that can be coped with effectively. If the self-concept is accepted as being a self-theory, the attributes with which all theories are evaluated (extensiveness, parsimony, empirical validity, internal consistency, testability and usefulness) will apply to the self-theory. To begin with, a self-theory cannot be characterised as unscientific, otherwise all theories would be so. If a self-theory is a hierarchically organised conceptual system for solving problems, its disorganisation can be explained by the invalidation of a basic postulate, or if the theory is incapable of fulfilling its functions. The need for people to defend certain concepts or values, no matter how unrealistic they are, can be understood once it is recognised that a self-theory is necessary in order to function and that any theory is better than none.

Although the proposed consideration of the self-concept as a self-theory may provide a framework to improve understanding of human behaviour, the problem related to the translation of the theoretical concepts into operational definitions are still far from resolved. The failure to define clearly self-esteem is reflected in the items included within, as well as across esteem scales. While some self-esteem measures concentrate on skills and achievement, others include items tapping morality, likeability and appearance. Within scales one can find

items in evaluative language, while others describe behavioural tendencies from which evaluative inferences must be made. Some items are worded as behaviour, others refer to observable characteristics, trait labels, subjective experience effects, and inner thoughts (Harter, 1983). Given these variations, Harter asserts that one cannot accept that self-esteem is what self-esteem scales measure.

The view of self-esteem as a global psychological construct or as a differentiated aggregate of evaluations is another central issue. According to Harter (1983), Coopersmith, following William James and Cooley, emphasises the global nature of self-esteem. This conclusion is derived from his investigation of 56 children 10 to 12 years old in which no systematic differentiation was found between global self-esteem and self-esteem in four areas: school, family, peers and general reference to the self. Therefore, he concludes that pre-adolescent children may make little distinction about their worthiness in different areas of experience, or, if such distinctions are made, they are made within the context of the over-all general appraisal of worthiness that the children have already made (Coopersmith, 1959).

Harter (1983), however, points out some factors that may have interfered with the lack of differentiation of self-esteem in the above four areas: inadequacies in the model

on which the instrument is based, problems with items, selection of domains, and question format. A study by Mullener and Laird (1971) supports Harter's assumptions. They contend that there is a change with age from relatively global to relatively differentiated self-evaluations in five domains: traits of achievement, intellectual skills, physical skills, interpersonal skills and sense of social responsibility. Again the lack of clear operationalisation of global self-esteem, independent of the relationship among five areas, or inadequacies in measuring instruments may have precluded the discrimination of the five areas in relation to self-esteem.

For Rosenberg (1979), global self-esteem and the components of the whole are not identical and should be studied apart. He claims that the failure to recognise the existence of both has led to misleading inferences. Consequently, global self-esteem has been measured in cases where poor achievement is attributed to a child's perception of not being intelligent enough. Harter (1983) corroborates the tendency to confound global self-esteem with specific self-attitudes and cites data from Backman and O'Mally (1977) in which the correlation between self-concept of school ability and global self-esteem is .33. Although this correlation indicates some overlap, the two are not identical. For Harter (1983), children may have a superordinate concept of their overall self-worth;

consequently the conceptual framework should consider dimensions of self-evaluation as hierarchically organised and differentially weighted.

Unlike Rosenberg, who has focused on global self-esteem, various theorists have considered hierarchical models of the self-concept, which have implications for self-esteem (Shavelson et al, 1976; Epstein, 1973). Even though Epstein postulates the self as hierarchically organised, the self-esteem dimension represents the superordinate construct under which other subcategories are organised. The convergence between Epstein's (1973) second-order postulates: moral self, approval, power and love worthiness, and Coopersmith's (1967) four dimensions of self-evaluation: virtue (adherence to moral and ethical standard), competence (success in meeting achievement demands), power (ability to control and influence others) and significance (the acceptance, attention and affection of others) is emphasised by Harter (1982).

The hierarchic feature of self-esteem may account for the controversy about stability versus changeability of self-esteem. As one descends the self-concept hierarchy, the self-concept increasingly becomes dependent upon specific situations, and therefore less stable. Changes to self-concept at the lower levels may be attenuated by conceptualisations at higher levels, making the global self-concept resistant to change. For example, failure in

athletic tasks may change the individual's view of himself/herself in relation to a specific physical ability, but may not change the general view.

Considerable attention has been directed to the affective domain and its interaction with situationally specific variables. Several personality theorists (Bem and Allen, 1974; Kenrick and Stringfield, 1980), argue in favour of an interactionist perspective which pays less attention to the stable attributes of persons and more to the conditions that affect what they think, feel and do. The degree of consistency in affective behaviour is a function of the type of interaction which takes place between the person and the environment (Prawat et al, 1979). Therefore, the affective reaction to a judgement and its differentiation from the cognitive dimension should be considered in the measurement of self-esteem. Within the cognitive dimension, the actual achievement predicts the evaluation of academic competence which in turn influences the affective reactions, and the affective component predicts the motivational orientation towards engaging in school tasks (Harter, 1983). The relationship between emotion and cognition provides an indirect means of identifying an individual's significant concepts: emotions depend on the interpretation of the event and the significance of that event for the individual (Epstein, 1973). Therefore, affective reactions may vary as a function of the



particular dimension measured. For example, an affect such as shame may be related more to approval by others than to judgments of moral worth. Conversely, guilt may be related more to judgments of moral worth than approval by others.

Whilst the diverse findings on self-esteem derive from the consideration of different dimensions at different levels of specificity, Harter (1983) believes that the four dimensions theorised by Coopersmith and Epstein in conjunction with the construct of global self-esteem can provide a framework for the development of a theory of self-esteem.

A further possible source of confusion in interpreting measures of self-esteem may arise from the lack of empirically demonstrated equivalence among self-concept measures which precludes generalisations across studies. Wylie (1974) criticises those tests which combine responses to items reflecting diverse content and then conclude that the total score represents general (content-free) self-worth.

Additional problems may arise from measuring a self-referent construct: other variables may be influencing the results (inferred process or states) such as the individual's desire to give a favourable self-presentation, or methodological factors such as the form of the instrument or scoring and statistical procedures (Wylie,

1974). Individuals with very low self-esteem may wish to disguise this from other people (Bagley et al., 1979), or individuals may hide their true appraisal because they are afraid of the negative evaluation they may receive if they are honest. It is possible, too, that individuals with very low self-esteem will resist labelling themselves as worthless persons. Thus a self-esteem scale is likely to be a conservative measure related to the amount of negative self-esteem; hence the individual's tendency to respond in a socially desirable way on self-report instruments decreases the construct validity of the self-concept (Wylie, 1974).

Various issues are involved in the assumption of social desirability. First, there are individual differences in this variable, and, second, there are differences between the individuals' conceptions of what is socially and what is personally desirable (Wylie, 1974). If an individual believes that it is more desirable to be extroverted than introverted or vice-versa, and if s/he is able to recognise the item in the scale and the possible keyed response to the item, s/he may attempt to falsify this item (Edwards, 1970). But there is no way to differentiate between those individuals who obtain a certain score on personality scales designed to measure specific traits because of impression management and those who obtain scores because they have accurately described themselves (Edwards, 1970).

A third issue presented by Wylie (1974) is related to the assumption that socially desirable responses are untruthful, whilst socially undesirable responses are truthful. She stresses that by the measurement operations per se or the related validation studies of these instruments, there is no possible way of knowing if the individuals' variance in the scales is a conscious falsification to fake good or to fake bad. To what extent the tendencies towards social desirability decrease the construct validity of specific self-report measures as indicants of self-esteem is an empirical methodological question to which still there is no satisfactory answer.

The way put forward by Wylie (1974) to minimise the influences of social desirability is to establish testing conditions which maximise rapport with the researcher and make it worthwhile from the individual's standpoint to be as honest as possible. However, there is no way to be sure that this desired condition has been achieved. It is possible, also, that low self-esteem scores could be attained not only by subjects who intentionally do not wish to report low self-esteem, but by those who are unreliable reporters due to poor ability or motivation to read or follow directions (Wylie, 1974)

## Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory

Coopersmith (1967) defined self-esteem in terms of evaluative attitudes towards the self. His definition of self-esteem centres upon the relatively enduring estimate of general self-regard, rather than on more specific changes in evaluation. Although the idea of self is open to change, it appears to be resistant to such changes. Coopersmith recognises that self-esteem is multidimensional and may vary across different areas reflecting different experiences, different attributes and capacities, and it may vary according to gender, age and other role-defining conditions. A third feature of Coopersmith's definition is that, by self-evaluation, he means a judgemental process in which the individual examines his/her performance, capacities and attributes according to his/her personal standards and values, and arrives at a decision of his/her own worthiness.

The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) was developed especially to obtain a subjective rating of self-esteem, and consists of 58 items, which the individual checks as being "like me" or "unlike me". The scale covers three areas: self-esteem in the context of the home and the family, self-esteem in school and peer group and general evaluation of the self. The items are grouped into four scales: general self (26 items); social self-peer (8

items); home-parents (8 items); and school-academic (8 items). The remaining 8 items comprise a lie scale included as a measure of defensiveness, but scored separately from the total self-esteem score. The test-retest reliability coefficient is 0.88 over a five-week interval with a sample of 30 fifth-grade (usually 11-year-old) children, and a coefficient of 0.70 was obtained over a three-year period with a sample of 56 public school students. Fullerton (1972) reported a coefficient of .64 for 104 children in grade 5 and 6 who were tested twelve months apart.

A study by Spatz (1973), shows internal consistency reliability of the SEI for 5th, 9th (usually 15-years-old) and 12th (usually 18-year-old) grade students. He investigated racial attitudes and self-esteem of rural school children. The sample consisted of 600 students with equal numbers in the 5th, 9th and 12th grades, equal numbers of blacks and whites, and equal numbers of males and females. To analyse the internal consistency, Spatz computed a Kuder-Richardson KR 20 for a randomly selected 100 inventories from each grade level. The reliability coefficients for the 5th, 9th and 12th grades are respectively: 0.8136, 0.8574, 0.7951.

Acquiescence is controlled for the SEI by including an approximately equal number of favourably and unfavourably

worded items (Wylie, 1974). However, according to Harter (1982), using "like me" - "unlike me" as a format presents problems. She suggests that this type of two-choice format leads to socially desirable responding and presents a more adequate alternative, that is: to give children a choice between either "sort of true of me" or "really true of me", which would broaden the range of choice, after having chosen what kind of child s/he is most like.

The SEI has been factor analysed in a study by Barbara Kokernes (1974) to investigate the construct validity of the sub-scales proposed by Coopersmith as to sources of self-esteem. The SEI was administered to 7,600 public school children in grades from 4th to 8th in two northern Illinois communities. The sample included a middle range of socio-economic status and ethnic mixture. The result tended to provide empirical support for the constructs suggested by Coopersmith (1967) as the factors that emerge in the study are similar to the sources of self-esteem that Coopersmith describes.

Coopersmith has established a wide range of correlates for his scale, pointing to its external (not its phenomenological) validity. He found that scores on the Inventory correlate significantly with sociometric isolation, being compliant to group norms, intelligence, academic achievement, stated willingness to express an unpopular opinion, being sensitive to criticism in a group

discussion, inability to confide in parent, having poor physique, coming from a home with few and poorly defined limits for behaviour and harsh and authoritarian methods of control.

Various statistically significant correlations obtained in several different samples investigating a wide range of variables indicate the general validity of the SEI. Two measures of self-esteem are used in a study by Morrison et al (1973): Coopersmith's inventory and the Ziller Social Self-Esteem Scale, to investigate the hypothesis that individuals low in self-esteem evaluate their performance on an examination less favourably than individuals high in self-esteem. Data were gathered on 94 students enrolled in two sections of an introductory psychology class at a small college. The hypothesis is confirmed for the Coopersmith's global score but not for the score on the academic subscale or for Ziller's non verbal measure of self-esteem. The results not only give some support to the discriminatory power of the Inventory, but also to the desirability of using verbal self-reports. However, the lack of significance for the school subscale should be investigated. The lack of relationship may derive from unclear operational definitions or from the assumption that children do not make distinctions among the domains in their lives. Harter (1982) questions the latter assumptions by stressing that children from the age of 8 not only make

meaningful differentiations about their competence among different domains, but by that age they have also organised a view of their general self-worth as a person.

She describes a new self-report instrument The Perceived Competence Scale for Children (PCSC), in which the children are able to discriminate among three competence subscales: cognitive, social and physical and a fourth scale related to general self-worth. Perhaps the different approach to the construction of the items in the SEI and the PCSC can explain the opposite findings. While Coopersmith emphasises affective aspects of the school competence items: "I am proud of my school work"; "I often feel upset at school", Harter emphasises the active aspect: "doing well"; "good at school work".

Edgar *et al* (1974) provide empirical support for the notion of global self-esteem, since all the sub-scales are strongly correlated to one another. The authors aimed to determine the effectiveness of the SEI as a measure of global self-esteem for Australian individuals. They carried out two studies: in the first they administered the SEI to 816 children whose ages ranged from 12 to 14 years and lived in different socio-economic areas. The Inventory was administered to all students during the same week under standardised testing conditions. At the same time, a three item defensive behaviour rating of the subject by the teacher (DBRF) was completed for each child by a teacher



who knew the child well. In the second stage of the study two groups were formed: one with a score of 22 or less as low self-esteem and another with 41 or more as high self-esteem. The cut-off points produced a high esteem group containing 10.4 percent of the sample, and a low esteem group with 9.3 percent of the sample. The Sarason Anxiety Scale was administered to the two groups, and they were re-tested on the SEI items, repeating the procedure of the initial testing. The time interval between the initial data collection and re-testing was five months. They found that the domains of home-parent, school-academic and self-peers are justifiable as subscales in their own right, and that a global self-esteem measure can be reliably obtained. The sub-scales have been demonstrated to be internally consistent, have acceptable reliability over a five month period, and operate in the hypothesised manner in respect to the relationship with the Sarason General Anxiety scores. However, they emphasise that this study used only children in the twelve to fourteen years age group. The alpha coefficients for the intercorrelation of DBRF (0.89) and SEI scales (self subscale 0.78; self and peers 0.63; academic 0.58; home and parents 0.74 and total self 0.87) are indicative of the SEI internal consistency of items within the other scales, with the possible exception of the academic scale. In the case of the teacher assessment, high internal consistency has been obtained with the relatively few items in the DBRF. Concerning the lie scale, the low

alpha coefficient (.38) and the high mean for the lie scale indicate differences between Australian and American samples. They suggest other methods of eliminating deliberate mis-answering of the schedule and conclude that, with the exception of the lie scale, the SEI is one of very few personality assessment procedures constructed on an American population which can be used without recourse to extensive rewording of items on an Australian adolescent group.

The second study investigated the internal consistency and construct validity of the SEI. The internal consistency was examined by means of internal consistency reliability coefficients, item analysis and factor analysis of the inventory items, while the construct validation procedure consisted of testing several predictions concerning the relationship between self-esteem and other variables with which it would be expected to correlate. In particular it was predicted that, compared with adolescents low in self-esteem, those with high self-esteem have greater self-acceptance, greater peer acceptance and higher school achievement. They used 107 pupils, 46 males and 61 females, from a suburban high school. Most of the children in the sample were 13 or 14 years old and resided in a middle class area. The tests used were the SEI and a sociometric "Guess who" questionnaire, design to measure peer- and self-acceptance. The measure of school achievement used was the aggregate school mark for the first term of the year

in which the study was conducted.

The self-esteem sub-scales were found to have adequate internal consistency as showed by the reliability coefficients obtained: total self-esteem 0.86; peer sub-scale 0.74; school sub-scale 0.54; self sub-scale 0.79; parent sub-scale 0.72. The authors conclude that the internal consistency of the self-esteem sub-scales is generally adequate considering the length of the scales, the school sub-scale being the only one with a rather low reliability. These findings were confirmed by an item analysis of the Inventory, which revealed that 41 of the 50 items had correlated significantly with the total self-esteem beyond the 0.005 level. Factor analysis of the items provide some support for the organisation of self-esteem into subscales and that a global factor of self-esteem underlies the inventory responses. As predicted, self-esteem is significantly related to both school achievement and self-acceptance. However, contrary to expectation, peer acceptance is not related to the self-esteem score but it does correlate with the social self-peer subscale. The lie scale appears inadequate in its present form.

Reschley and Mittman (1973) also administered the SEI to 90 seventh-graders drawn mainly from working class homes and found a relationship between self-esteem and rates of self-reinforcement under different conditions of task ambiguity.

Bagley et al (1979) analysed the SEI for boys and girls. In a sample of 149 boys and 154 girls aged 14-15, data were collected on the Coopersmith SEI, Eysenck's personality inventory and demographic variables. They extracted ten principle components which were systematically reduced to two factors for each group of participants: parental neglect and lack of social confidence in boys, and lack of family concordance and lack of social confidence in girls. The first two factors load highly in the item "I'm a failure". The second factor in both boys and girls had been construed as representing "lack of social confidence". The following correlations are found: ego strength measured by Cattell HSPQ correlates with the two main factors of Coopersmith Inventory in both sexes; lack of will power (HSPQ) is associated with poor self-esteem in both boys and girls; neuroticism measured by Eysenck Personality Inventory correlates with the factor "I am a failure". Levels of school stream and measures of achievement, have a consistent negative correlation with poor self-esteem in boys but not for girls, which suggests that school achievement may be less important focus of self-esteem for girls than for boys. However, girls in lower streams have poorer self-esteem on the "lack of social confidence" factor. The highest correlation obtained by Bagley is that between Castaneda's measure of anxiety and self-esteem (.727 in boys and .675 in girls).

The convergent validity of the SEI receives strong support from research carried out by Demo (1985) in which eight measures of self-esteem are compared. Four of these instruments involve self-ratings: Beeper Self-Reports; Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and interviews self-descriptions, which measure the experienced self. Three measure the presented self: peer ratings, observer checklist and observer Q-sorts. One is a projective test that measures unconscious feelings and attitudes. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory is found to correlate significantly with every other measure except the observer checklist: Beeper Self-Reports 0.44; Rosenberg self-esteem scale 0.58; Peers ratings 0.41 and Observer Q-sort 0.33

Finally, the SEI is shown to have convergent validity with respect to the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Behavioural Self-Esteem Scale and discriminant validity in regard to the Children's Social Desirability Scale (Johnson et al, 1983). The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Behavioural Self-Esteem Scale appear to measure the same construct and the Children's Social Desirability Scale seems to be measuring a construct other than that measured by the SEI, CSCS and BASE. Moreover, the Self-Esteem Inventory shows sensitivity to differences in achievement level and to display internal consistency (coefficient

alpha for the total test is .86). Internal consistency coefficients for the subscales are: general self .71; home-parents .61; school-academic .61; social self-peers .61; lie scale .63.

### Self-esteem and developmental changes

Since it is postulated by various theorists (Mead, 1934; Rogers, 1970) that one's self-evaluation is derived from our perception of how we are evaluated by significant others, changes in how we select significant others or the relative importance of specific situations, as well as the criteria underlying these evaluations, may lead to increase or decrease in levels of self-esteem (McCarthy and Hoge, 1982).

Hales (1981a) proposes two sources of self-esteem: an internal source of personal evaluation based on past performance in relation to success and failures, and an external source derived from the evaluative attitude of others. The influence of the two sources of self-esteem vary according to the period of development. That is, the outer source of information is more important during early childhood, whereas both sources assume more equal importance later in development. However, the reliance on the external source of evaluation may lead to instability of the level of self-esteem. This is because the approval from significant others is often unconditional (parents)

and arbitrarily based on extrinsic factors such as parental prestige. As the child matures, the criteria on which self-esteem is based change from extrinsic factors to socially valued behaviours such as, social skills, intellectual competence, and altruistic and socially responsible behaviour. Therefore, to develop a stable self-esteem, the child must also develop the socially valued skills necessary to earn self-esteem. Hales (1981a) concludes that these findings provide support for the influence of developmental changes in the criteria on which self-esteem is based. Younger children's self-esteem is more strongly influenced by the approval from significant others (external source of evaluation). For the older children indices of competence, rather than unconditional or arbitrarily based approval from others become important determinants of self-esteem.

A major study by Bachman and O'Malley (1977) gives evidence suggesting that self-esteem tends to become more positive during adolescence and early adulthood. They show regular increases in self-esteem in a large sample of boys over an eight-year period of repeated measurement. These findings could be attributed to artifacts of the method used, such as the repeated exposure to self-esteem questions. However, this problem was controlled by comparing regular participants with a control group of 115 students from the same year who were sampled at the start of the study but

not interviewed until midway during the eight-year period. The self-esteem score of the control group showed a mean virtually identical to the total sample, leading to the conclusion that repeated interviewing did not produce the change in self-esteem scores over time.

Similarly, in a longitudinal study by McCarthy and Hoge (1982) it was found that global self-esteem increases during adolescence. They administered two of the most widely used and well validated measures of global self-esteem available: 10 items of Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale and 25 items of Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory to 1,970 children in both junior and senior high school in public and parochial schools. The sample constitutes 55 per cent male, 45 per cent female, 49 per cent whites and 51 per cent black children. The schools are heterogeneous with regard to status. The testing effects were controlled by comparing the experimental group with a control group who answered questions about attitudes unrelated to self-evaluation. Seven months later, both groups responded to the items on the SEI. Their findings showed that increase in self-esteem cannot be accounted for by the effects of attrition, testing, or errors introduced by carelessness. Concerning the ceiling effects, they believe that the present scales are inappropriate for evaluating changes in self-esteem over the life course, because if the score is registered at the top of the scale there is no way to improve the score, even though one may have improved one's



global self-evaluation.

According to Coopersmith, based on a test-retest correlation of .70 over a three year period, self-esteem is a relatively enduring judgement on the part of the child. However, it can be pointed out that the individuals of his study are elementary school children between the ages of 10 and 12, a period in which the self-concept appears to be relatively stable (Rosenberg, 1979). In contrast, the transition to adolescence may bring significant changes.

Simmons *et al* (1973) found a decrease in self-esteem between the ages of 12 and 13, which they interpret as a result of the shift from primary to junior high school, where environmental changes put demand on the adolescents that may heighten self-consciousness, instability of self-image and lower self-esteem. Harter (1982) supports the above findings, based on results in the Perceived Competence Scale for Children. While the relationship between perceived cognitive competence and achievement test scores increases steadily across grades three to six (primary school), this relationship decreases sharply in the seventh grade and then increases across the eight and nine grades (all junior high school grades).

Given the hierarchical organisation of the components of self-esteem, Harter (1983) points to the different levels

of development through which the individual passes. For example, the capacity and tendencies of the concrete operational child for hierarchically ordering objects and events in the non-psychological area may also be observed with regard to self-constructs. It seems that the influence on levels of self-esteem depends on the salience of the four dimensions: virtue or moral self, competence, power, love or worthiness or significance, which may vary with the developmental levels of the child.

Damon and Hart (1982) claim that self-esteem scales in the current literature do not anticipate or correct for developmental transformations in the conceptions of self; the conceptual bases of an individual's self-evaluation may be differently constructed and differentially weighted at different periods in the individual's development. As a result self-esteem cannot be assessed independently of development of self-understanding. Reviewing the literature on the development of self-understanding from infancy through adolescence, Damon and Hart (1982) conclude that some regular, ontogenetic patterns are revealed, such as: the shift from physical to psychological self-conceptions; the emergence of stable social characterisation of self; the increasingly volitional and self-reflective nature of self-understanding, and the tendency towards the conceptual integration of diverse aspects of self into a unified self-system. For example, by age eight children recognise differences between inner and outer states and define the

true self in terms of subjective inner states rather than material outer states. Conscious deception becomes possible due to the child's ability to manipulate the relation between internal and external reality.

The increasingly differentiated way in which the self is perceived with age is investigated by Mullener and Laird (1971). In their study, 72 individuals (24 seventh grade, 24 high school seniors, 24 evening college students, half male and half female) evaluated themselves on 40 personal characteristics represented by five content areas: achievement traits, intellectual skills, interpersonal skills, physical skills and social responsibility. The results indicate that, with age, there is a change from relatively global to relatively differentiated self-evaluations. This trend is supported by Montemayor and Eisen (1977) who point out that it may reflect the adolescent's use of a greater variety of constructs to describe themselves.

Bernstein (1980), focusing on the cognitive base of the development of the self-system, also found that abstraction is not only one of the major cognitive developments occurring during adolescence, but this ability appears to be of central importance to the greater differentiation of oneself and one's world and to the integration of a more comprehensive self-system. In addition, this capacity

(abstraction) appears to contribute to a transformation from the child's dependence upon surface qualities as behavioural determinants to the adolescent's greater awareness of dispositional determinants of behaviour.

The overall findings show that children describe themselves primarily in terms of concrete, objective categories, while adolescents use more abstract and subjective descriptions such as personal beliefs, motivational and interpersonal characteristics. It is stressed, however, that change from concrete to the abstract concepts is not a simple linear one, since additional findings suggest that curvilinear changes occur in the use of categories that could be considered either concrete or abstract (Mullener and Laird, 1971).

#### Self-Esteem and gender of the Subject

Several theories have attempted to explain the relationship between self-referent constructs and the gender of the individual. The main self-referent variable selected to investigate this relationship is self-esteem, together with various factors that may influence the relationship between gender and self-esteem (Wylie, 1979), such as academic achievement, social confidence and so on.

The relationship between gender and overall self-esteem has been approached in two ways: by including some role of

biological factors or by defining the relationship entirely in social or cultural terms. Example of the former are Freud's writings on psychosexual development and Horney's and Fromm's consideration of the effects of biological gender differences on the formation of females' and males' personalities, even though Horney and Fromm emphasise society's interpretation of biology, which is the value given to that difference that provides a basis for positive or negative self-esteem (Wylie, 1979).

Theorists who consider only social or cultural influences stress the women's subordinate position in the social hierarchy and the cultural ideology that favour men over women (Keller, 1985). Since cultural and social influences are hypothesised to influence self-esteem in relation to gender both in theories that postulate biological influences in various degree and theories that do not, it may be expected that self-evaluation related to gender of the subjects should be investigated within a social frame of reference.

Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) do not find gender differences in their review of the literature related to self-esteem in children and adolescents. Wylie (1979) cites a number of possible reasons for this lack of significant differences between the sexes, including the practice of summing across items in order to obtain a self-esteem score. She

speculates that perhaps males and females obtain equivalent total scores by endorsing different sets of items and proposes to analyse the items separately by gender to investigate this possibility.

Studies that have used the SEI do not in general find a relationship between gender and self-esteem. Non-significant differences between males and females on rates of self-reinforcement and self-esteem Inventory scores are found by Reschley and Mittman (1973) in a study of 90 mainly working class seventh graders. An American study comparing 98 Danish and 190 American subjects from the fifth and sixth grades of several suburban schools found no gender differences within countries, although the trend for American, in contrast to Danish individuals, is to report higher evaluations for females than males (Bagley *et al*, 1979). No differences between girls and boys are also found by Friedman *et al* (1975) in an investigation of a group of emotionally disturbed children from 9 to 15 years of age.

Although in Coopersmith's (1967) research the sample is entirely composed of males, he initially administered the Self-Esteem Inventory to two 5th and 6th grade classes of boys (n=44) and girls (n=43). The difference between the mean scores of boys and girls is not significant: the mean score for the boys is 81.3 and the mean score of the girls is 83.3. The inventory was also administered to a total of 1,748 children attending the public schools of central

Conneticut. He informs us that these children are more diverse in ability, interest and social background than the initial sample, and again, the mean of the boys is not significantly different from that of girls.

A study by Bagley et al (1979) does find differences between boys and girls in a correlation between overall self-esteem measured by the SEI and the Wilson-Patterson Conservatism Scale. The correlation for boys is .43 and for girls is .09. Following Wylie, they suggest that data related to differences in levels of self-esteem in boys and girls should be analysed separately by gender, considering that if the sexes are combined the overall correlation would be not significant.

It is assumed that females are more often valued for their interpersonal skills and personality and males for their behaviour and achievements (Hollander, 1972), thus self-esteem of boys and girls may depend to some extent on different components, which may be the result of sex-role stereotypes. Wylie's (1979) interpretation of the findings on sex role stereotypes and self-referent variables suggests that the correspondence of sex-role stereotype and self-referent variables may mean that stereotypes influence self-referent variables either directly or through intervening variables. She cites a study in which significant gender differences in self-description emerge

on 8 of 14 scales: males score higher than females on intellectual orientation, self-confidence, enjoying being a centre of attraction, being a leader, while females exceed males on conformity, cultural interests, being kind to others and interest in others' behaviour.

Harter (1982) gives credence to the hypothesis that social conditions influence self-esteem. She reports her analysis of the Perceived Competence Scale, which reveals consistently that boys have perceptions of greater physical competence at sport and out-door games than girls. The largest correlation found in her study is between the social and physical scales, suggesting that popularity during the elementary and junior high school year is dependent to a considerable degree on prowess at athletics, which is an attribute socially valued by boys.

The failure to find significant gender differences may indicate genuine similarity between sexes in levels of overall self-esteem. However, consistency of results of different investigators may reflect not genuine similarity, but similarity between the sexes in social desirability response set. The same influence may apply with respect to gender differences on self-referent variables. Women may regard themselves as more affiliative or are more likely than men to say so because it is a social desirable attribute of women (Wylie, 1979).



Some notion of how to interpret the lack of significant difference between males and females in Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory can be derived from a study by Bagley et al (1979). They conducted a separate factor analysis of Coopersmith Inventory scores obtained from 149 boys and 154 girls age 14/15 years. The first factor loaded high in "I am a failure" and the second loaded high on items measuring "lack of social confidence". Although there is some item dissimilarity in the two factors, they produce similar components in boys and girls. As they do not report the factor scores for each gender, it is not possible to know if girls obtain a more positive score on one factor and boys on the other factor.

In summary, it would appear that studies of the relationship between gender and self-esteem of children and adolescents offer no clear conclusion about this relationship, although few differences are found. Some possible explanations can be put forward: male and female may share many of the same values but females obtain higher scores on some factors and males on others, which can result in equivalent total scores; a given item may differ in importance to males and females. Therefore, if this is so, there is no way of comparing how they are weighted according to the perceived importance for the sexes; different frames of reference for self-ratings may be operating (individual's conception of society,

significant others or his/her own personal beliefs about the definition of the typical male and female) affecting the relationship between self-esteem and other variables. Moreover, the practice of summing across items to obtain global self-esteem score does not provide a clear understanding of the data.

### KOHLBERG'S MORAL JUDGEMENT SCALE

According to Kohlberg (in Likona, 1976), the development of moral reasoning proceeds through an invariant sequence of stages and becomes more differentiated and integrated in each subsequent stage in a stepwise fashion. Therefore, each stage is considered qualitatively different from the previous one. In other words, the stages are said to be hierarchically related; a new stage does not simply replace a previous stage, but rather the new stage is a transformation of elements of the old along with new elements integrated into a new emergent structure.

Although Kohlberg claims invariance of the stages, he predicts variability in rate and eventual end point of development, which can be determined by attainment of appropriate levels of cognitive development and exposure to appropriate social experiences and stimulation by which he means the opportunities for new roles. The movement to the next stage is a function of a reflective reorganisation resulting from sensed contradictions in one's current stage

structure. Therefore this movement follows these steps: logic (based on cognitive development, for example, attainment of formal operations) to social perceptions to moral judgement. Kohlberg (in Likona, 1976) has hypothesised that cognitive development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of moral reasoning.

Kohlberg's central thesis, that changes in moral judgement follow a stepwise invariant sequence of stages, structurally defined, has been criticised in relation to questions of validity and reliability of the instrument developed by him (Kurtines and Grief, 1974).

Some evidence of the sequentiality of the stages comes from longitudinal, cross-cultural and experimental studies (Kuhn, 1976; Holstein, 1976; Rest *et al*, 1978; Nisan and Kohlberg, 1982). Since moral development is not related to age per se, a pattern of no change or a pattern of progress to two stages above would not provide disconfirming evidence because an individual may not have progressed or could have passed through the intervening stage during the interval between testing (Holstein, 1976). But, as Kohlberg claims that moral stages are developmental, age progression with respect to the stage must be demonstrated within some age range.

Kuhn (1976), in a short-term longitudinal study examined 50 children (21 girls and 29 boys) with the mean age of six years and nine months. These children were attending kindergarten through second grade in a middle-class, urban public school. The dilemmas were administered three times with a six-month interval each time. During the first six-month interval, 10 individuals showed a decline in stage level, and during the second six-month interval, 14 showed the same trend. But over the one-year period from first to third assessment, only five of the 50 individuals declined in stage level, with a significant progressive change in the other cases. The fluctuations observed are attributed by the author to either measurement error or to genuine fluctuations in the individual's judgement in the course of overall progressive movement. They proceeded to collect longitudinal data on the subjects related to several Piagetian logical concepts and found significant progressive movement during each six-month interval as well as the one-year interval. Since moral development depends not only on cognitive development but also on socio-moral experiences, it can be speculated that short-term environmental influences may affect moral judgements but not logical judgement. It must be pointed out that the above study considers only the sequentiality of the first three stages in Kohlberg's sequence due to the age of the individuals.

An important factor that may have influenced the results is

the variation in scale content adopted by the researcher. He administered a simplified version of two dilemmas from Kohlberg's Moral Judgement Interview, which contributes to the difficulty of comparing studies, hence to the difficulty of establishing the generalisability and validity of the results (Kurtines and Grief, 1974). In addition to the content consideration, it must be emphasised that gender differences or variations in verbal facility may have influenced the scores. There is evidence that scores on projective test are influenced by verbal facility (Kurtines and Grief, 1974) and that gender may be a moderating variable (Holstein, 1976). Unfortunately the researcher gives no information about these aspects.

A further study which assessed the two central issues of stepwise, invariant sequence and irreversibility of the stages was carried out by Holstein (1976). Five of Kohlberg's moral dilemmas were administered to 53 upper-middle-class families, each with a 13-year-old son (N=24) or daughter (N=29). The sample is drawn from the only junior high school in a wealthy small community in the urban San Francisco Bay area of California. Being Caucasian, having an I.Q. over 100 and being from an intact family are the criteria used for including those families in the study. The mean age of the fathers was 44 and of the mothers, 41. Nearly all the fathers and mothers are college graduates but while the fathers are in a career

(business, management or profession) only 3 of the mothers worked. A three-year interval was chosen for retest. She found that movement for young males and females over the three-year interval is from the preconventional level to the conventional level, with stabilisation at the conventional level rather than stage to stage (adolescents are modally at stage 2 at the first test and are modally at stage 4 at the second test, while girls are modally at stage 3 at both testings, with the minor stage suggesting some forward movement to stage 4 at the second test). She concludes that a three-year test-retest interval is too long when studying younger individuals, since they may have moved sequentially without being observed. It seems, however, that the above conclusion is based only on the young male sample inasmuch the females in this research remain in the same stage during the three-year period. Holstein (1976) suggests that definition of pure stage three reasoning in the 1972 scoring manual is not compatible with the traditional instrumental American male role, nor is pure stage 4 compatible with the traditionally expressive female role. That is, emotional responses (compassion, sympathy, etc.) to moral conflict are classified in stage 3. She also finds a proportion of regression in higher stage individuals, but virtually no regression in lower stage subjects. According to the theoretical organismic model, there should be no regression. However, Holstein (1976) offers an alternative explanation to possible measurement error or to the

invalidation of the irreversibility concept of the theory. The stages beginning with the conventional level are content-bound and used when and if preferred, once certain cognitive pre-requisite are met. She refers to another study carried out by her in which principled stage 5 and conventional stage 4 reasoning among college educated adult males varies as a function of types and level of education.

Yet another possible explanation for regression is given by Turiel (1974). Regression could be a temporary disorganisation, not in the sense that there is a reversion to an earlier stage, but in the sense that the disorganised form of functioning represents a less developmentally advanced structure. Regression may be a pre-condition for progressive developmental change. He refers to the observations that individuals may use more than one stage at a given time, thus lower stages after the attainment of higher stages may express a confusion of processes that should be treated separately - transitional states. New elements are assimilated to the existing stage, which is affected by these new elements and does not remain in its original state, resulting in discontinuity of developmental stages. However, changes stem from the earlier stages; thus, each stage represents a transformation of the preceding structure, resulting in continuity in development. In Turiel's (1974) discussion of his work on stage transition in the process of change from stage 4 to

stage 5 during late adolescence, he argues that judgements of the stage transition are characterised by inconsistency, conflict and internal moral assertions. The apparent rejection of morality seems to be a rejection of stage 4 (self-questioning) which has its basis in the emergence of incompletely understood stage 5 moral values. Therefore what defines the transitional process is the combination of the emerging incomplete state of one way of thinking and the re-evaluation of another way of thinking. According to Turiel the relativistic and egoistic responses given by individuals in a Kohlberg study are not to be assumed as regression to stage 2 but as a reflection of a differentiation of individual and societal moral systems and a changing conception of each of these systems. Moreover, he points out that similarities between stage 2 thought and the individuals' concern with the individual moral decision are only similarities in content and not in the structure of the judgement made.

Rest et al (1978) argue that directional changes do not proceed step by step but rather as a shifting distribution of responses, in which thinking in the lower stage schema decreases while thinking in the higher stage schema increases. Furthermore, they admit that a certain degree of error is unavoidable in all development assessment and that subjects are not perfectly consistent in their thinking; thus, some number of reversals are inevitable. They also believe that the manifestation of organisational



structures by the individual under investigation depend on the difficulty of the task, stimulus characteristics, testing conditions, response mode, stringency of scoring criteria. In a study to investigate the hierarchical structure of Kohlberg's stages, observed increased difficulty in the stage sequence and in the preference by the subjects to use the highest stage of which they are capable, Rest (1973) presented a set of balanced (pro-con attitude) statements to 47 subjects from a middle class suburb of Chicago, after a pretest to examine their own spontaneous moral orientation. The subjects were asked to analyse the statements in relation to various aspects, to evaluate or criticise the statements and to rate each one from 1 to 5 on how convincing an argument is presented.

The analysis and scoring of the responses to the 60 statements support the claim that each succeeding stage is more cognitively differentiated and integrated than the preceding one, and an order of preference shows that each succeeding stage is more conceptually adequate (subject's own predominant stage on the pretest does not predict his preference. Eighty per cent of the subjects prefer the highest stage comprehended).

Additional support for the developmental invariance of the stages of moral judgment is provided by cross-cultural studies (Parikh, 1980; Harkness *et al*, 1981; Nisan and

Kohlberg, 1982). Although these studies show a sequential advance with age through the stages of moral development, the analysis of each issue by age and social group reveals that village subjects are significantly lower in their moral judgement than city subjects (Nisan and Kohlberg, 1982). However, these differences do not interfere with the identification of basic structures which frame the responses. In addition, contrary to the claim that stages of moral judgment have little to do with social reality, the above finding demonstrates a significant relationship between social context and responses to moral dilemmas. Herkness *et al* (1981) also find a relationship between a social indicator, a person's status as a moral leader in the community, and moral dilemmas. It must be mentioned that in these studies, the sequence observed is limited to the first four stages in Kohlberg's schema. The attainment of a higher stage (stage 5) by the American subjects compared with that of Indian children from the same age group and socio-economic class in the Holstein (1976) study, may be understood in relation to social context. It is possible that due to distinct principles held by different cultures, moral reasoning may not fit the structure described by Kohlberg, or it may be that only the first four stages meet the criteria for a naturalistic developmental sequence, while the higher stages, which are almost absent in the interviews, appear to be formalised extensions of earlier stages (Gibbs in Kohlberg, 1982). Such extensions seem to be culture-dependent and may take

forms which are hard for outsiders to identify, especially if the dilemmas are modified and translated to meet these cultural differences. The upper stages of the moral judgment scale may be an abstraction of the ways in which western concepts of law and government have evolved in response to the requirement of social heterogeneity and complexity (Harkness et al, 1981).

### Sex-bias in Kohlberg's scoring system

Kohlberg's moral dilemmas are based on the assumption of justice as primary in defining the moral domain (Kohlberg et al, 1983), which implies the measuring of reasoning about dilemmas of conflicting rights or of the distribution of scarce resources (justice concern). Besides the limitation to justice dilemmas, Kohlberg focuses on probing questions and scoring procedures which elicit judgments that are prescriptive and universal, avoiding dilemmas about pro-social conceptions of caring and responsibility. He argues that moral forms of caring presuppose prior conditions and judgement of justice.

Kohlberg's position has given rise to great controversy about the possible sex bias in the instrument. Gilligan (in Kohlberg et al, 1983) argues that Kohlberg's measurement reflects greater understanding of male than female personality development. She contends that Kohlberg's

theory and scoring system are insensitive to the characteristically feminine concerns for welfare, caring and responsibility and that not recognising these concerns as principled lead one to classify such thought as characteristic of lower stages. The emphasis is on traditionally masculine values, such as rationality, individuality, abstraction and impersonality. She also points out that his major work on the development of moral judgement has been based upon the longitudinal analysis of a totally male sample.

Other authors (Weisbroth, 1970; Parikh, 1980) suggest that observed differences between male and female may be a function of differences in social experience, education and role-taking opportunities, and not a function of some immutable difference in sexual development. When females and males are similar in occupation, social class and education, gender differences normally do not exist in the reasoning of moral dilemmas (Weisbroth, 1970). Support for the possible influence of social experience in the findings of gender difference is given by a study in 40 Indian families. These families belong to the upper middle class but while the fathers are self-employed professionals (doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants), most of the mothers are housewives. The only mothers to have obtained scores above stage three were working at the time of the research or had worked in the past (Parikh, 1980).

In an investigation of the relationship between moral judgment and political attitudes, using a liberal-conservative dimension (Holstein, 1976), no gender differences were found either on stage 5 or 4 individuals, but stage 3 females are significantly more liberal than males and nearly as liberal as stage 5 females. These results hold true for adolescents as well as adults. An analysis of the females' reasons for being opposed to or in favour of a position reveals an emphasis on the affectional system (compassion, sympathy, love). No gender differences is also the result of a study by Keasey (1972) on a sample of pre-adolescents boys (N=80) and girls (N=75) drawn from two schools: one in California and the other in New Jersey. The California sample is predominantly working class of average intelligence, and the New Jersey sample is from predominantly middle-class homes and of slightly above average intelligence. In this case cognitive developmental theory is claimed to explain this lack of gender differences. Pre-adolescent males and females may not employ different underlying principles in making moral judgments, since the focus is on rules and prohibition rather than their underlying reasoning.

The predominance of male protagonists in the moral dilemmas used as stimulus materials in eliciting reasoning is also pointed out as a potential source of bias (Walker, 1984). Bussay and Maughan (1982) test the hypothesis that women

may be unfairly disadvantaged in responding to Kohlberg's moral dilemmas because the main character in the stories is usually a male. They constructed two versions of Kohlberg's dilemma stories, one with a male central character and another with a female central character. The results of the Kohlberg's original Moral Maturity Scale show that typically males reach stage 4 and females reach stage 3. For the individuals presented with the revised Kohlberg scale in which the protagonist is a female, an interesting result appears. The males' responses express the adherence to the prevailing cultural stereotypes about women: when presented with a female character, males see her actions as stemming from expressive (feminine) reasons, and respond at a lower level of moral reasoning. In the case of a male protagonist, they respond in the usual instrumental (masculine) reasoning characteristics of stage 4. Bussay (1982) illustrates the differentiation in moral judgement by presenting the responses to the life-versus-law dilemma. Both males and females judge the feminine protagonist's action in stealing the drug to save her husband's life as arising from affectionate ties and concern for social approval. In contrast, the male protagonist's theft and the question of his punishment is seen by males more in terms of marital and social obligations. These results appear to be consistent with Hoffman's (1975b) view that males respond more to external cues when judging moral transgression, whereas females responses are based on their internal values. Therefore, because males respond to

external cues they are more likely to be influenced by factors such as the gender of the character. However, gender may interact with variables other than the one mentioned above. Women use more stage 3 reasoning than do men on the standard dilemmas involving fictitious characters, whereas there are no gender differences on modified dilemmas involving primary others such as best friend or mother (Levine, 1976).

An extensive review and meta-analysis of the research literature in childhood and early adolescence, using Kohlberg's measure, concludes that very few gender differences in moral development are found (Walker, 1984). In addition Walker points out that for 41 samples studied, only six studies report gender differences. Given that studies which find differences are more likely to be published, gender differences reported in regard to moral development may be less than commonly assumed.

Several of the studies yielding gender differences favouring men have methodological problems, primarily because gender, occupational and educational differences are confounded. In addition most studies reporting gender differences rely on early stage definitions and scoring procedures, whereas a new manual is now available (Colby and Kohlberg, 1987).

## SUMMARY

The main aim of this study is to investigate the children's perceptions of and the meaning they give to the experience of having a father in prison, and the possible influence this event may have for the child's moral development and self-esteem. The methods adopted in this research are based on the individual's self-reports. It has been argued that predictions cannot be made only on the basis of objective stimuli affecting the individual; therefore, it is fundamental to know the meaning the stimulus has acquired for the subjects under study. And as has been pointed out, self-reports are necessary in order to account for human action, in particular the complex patterns observed in natural settings.

Given the nature and complexity of the present study, a holistic approach to the event under investigation is adopted in order that the interaction between factors such as age, gender, and family relationships in context, together with the way individuals perceive and give meaning to the experience can be adequately explained. To this end, the data are presented as case studies.

Various criticisms of case studies have been discussed, particularly those concerning their validity and reliability, that is, the issue of extrapolation from individual cases to general social processes. The claim



that case studies are non-representative of the population studied, has been counteracted by the argument that they are most appropriate for studies such as this one, where the aim is to generate an explanatory theory through recourse to detailed knowledge of the interaction between individuals and to the meanings they give to behaviour.

Various methodological issues have been analysed pertinent to the use of self-reports, which include: problems derived from the design of instruments which measure self-reports; problems related to the occurrence of self-favourability biases in self-evaluation, and psychological influences on the relationship between self-referent constructs and other variables. The advantage of adopting the concepts of authenticity and attestability rather than the concepts of reliability and validity in the context of interviews has also been highlighted, as the former can be analysed by the degree to which the participant contradicts or corrects himself/herself or gives apparently logically inconsistent or paradoxical information.

Finally, despite the difficulty of inadequate conceptual and operational definitions, and the problems of relating self-referent constructs to other variables, studies have been presented suggesting the fruitfulness of adopting a methodological programme which integrates the subjective

meaning of an event with self-referent and developmental variables.

### CHAPTER 3 - RESULTS

In this chapter the method of analysis is described and a rationale provided for the presentation of the interview material. This is followed by the identification and discussion of the main topics and substantive themes that have emerged from the data.

The study reported here can best be thought of as a description of prisoners' families, based upon the mother's and children's perceptions of the man's imprisonment. The analysis of the data has used a variety of sources which have been subjected to comparisons, cross-checking and validation with respect to the experiential frame and lifespace of the prisoners' children and their mothers. This has been done by following the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990): a method that involves the juxtaposition of categories of data and searching for similarities and differences. In this fashion, wives who retained their marital ties have been compared to divorced wives, middle school children's justifications of the father's action with those of adolescents, mothers with fathers as confidants, problem-solvers and trustworthy figures. Other comparisons have been made along a variety of dimensions.

Following Glaser and Strauss (1967), characteristic illustrations from the data are used to facilitate the

understanding of concepts and themes being presented. The interviews are used in a number of ways. Initially they are used to provide a picture of the mother and child in order to familiarise the reader with the people whose interactions will be elaborated. To some extent, the themes were dictated by the interview guide but within this restriction, the mothers' and children's individuality emerge, and different areas arose as important for consideration.

In order that comparisons are made most effectively, the recordings of the mother's and child's interviews, informal observations and diary notes were transcribed and coded according to a series of general themes and categories. These themes and categories continually evolved, since they were based on what seemed to be the most salient aspects of the data. In the course of the research, for instance, domains were sub-divided into general themes and categories based on topics mentioned by respondents. For example, the domain "child's response to the father's arrest" was sub-divided into three themes: child's sense of shock and disbelief; feelings of sadness and anger; and fantasies, the first being further divided into the categories of first-offender father and recidivists. The second was further divided into the categories of witness or non witness to the arrest procedure, and the third into fantasies of abandonment and fantasies about the father's

well being. These categories serve as a guide for information used in comparisons. By making these comparisons, for instance, it was found that primary-school children had special problems not encountered by adolescents, such as fantasies of abandonment in relation to the mother, and that the justifications for the father's offence formulated by the adolescents are different from those articulated by primary-school children. In creating an overall representation of the reality depicted in the data, categories and sub-categories are re-arranged so as to assemble together material relevant to each domain. New patterns appeared and older ones disappeared in the process of determining the final arrangement. Thus, much of the analysis of how children and mothers perceive the man's imprisonment is a product of the continual refinement and reformulation of a series of themes and comparisons implicit in the categories and sub-categories derived from a distillation of the many interviews, informal observations, and diary notes.

The moral development interview and the interview that followed are presented separately from the main body of interviews. The quotes from these interviews are used to compare the child's ideas about punishment in general with the punishment the father received as a result of his criminal actions. This adds to the understanding of how the child makes sense of the changes to the father's status and the threat this change poses to his or her self-

esteem. Relevant themes emerging from these interviews were also noted. These proved to be important when comparisons were made with the coping mechanisms children employed when dealing with the imprisonment of the father.

In accordance with the aims of the study the data collected are presented in two sections: the mother's perception of the husband's imprisonment and the child's perception of the father's imprisonment. The data from each section are organised under specific domains that reflect the original schedule of the interviews and the topics raised: five related to the mother's perception and ten to the children's perception of the event. Within each domain, themes that have emerged from data are presented which integrate different sorts of evidence to form a comprehensive perspective. Qualitatively, verbatim reports referring to each theme show what mothers and children actually expressed in response to the questions asked. This in turn leads to quantitative evidence of the numbers of mothers and children whose answers fell into each category. To illustrate differences in perception of the husband/father's imprisonment, it has been necessary to quote extensively from transcripts (these quotations have not been changed for grammatical errors). This enables us, first, to give an account of what mothers and children typically say and do in relation to this event, and, second, to chart the variations in standpoint which

characterise mothers and children according to their perception of the event.

### MOTHER'S PERCEPTION OF HUSBAND'S IMPRISONMENT

In this section the data are organised under five domains: 1) contextual; 2) mother's perception of the imprisonment process; 3) mother's perception of changes and difficulties after the husband's imprisonment; 4) visiting; 5) support system.

#### Domain 1 = Contextual

As we have emphasised in Chapter I, it is essential to consider the interaction of the environmental conditions in which the imprisonment of the father occurs. The above domain, which refers to the general socio-economic situation of prisoner's families, is organised around three themes: Chaotic living; Mother's pattern of education, work and marriage; Husband's pattern of criminal activity.

#### Theme 1A = Chaotic living

Well, he worked up until March but since March he hasn't been working. Everytime it seems to start, something happens. I just live on social, but when he's working he can earn £200 a week so I have to keep on him. The only thing is that it's not guaranteed, I mean he can work for another few weeks or few months you really don't know. He's more to go out with his friends, I think he knows it's wrong, he wants both sides, he wants the settled side of it as here and he wants the social side with his friends, and

the two they're just clashing. When he was out I find it harder, like you're feeding a man and three kids so I mean I've been in more debts really when he was in, and I work around him like as I said at dinner time you know, the housewife routine. But he's good to me and he's harmless, he never beats me up or the kids. (Annabel, 45 years old, Family R)

He takes me for granted, he does. You couldn't wake him up and couldn't say nothing because of he's shouting; just take him coffee but if it's too cold he just chucks it at me, then half an hour later he'd start laughing. He changes all the time. The problem is that we've been here 7 months (bed and breakfast accomodation) and it's only one room; you can't get away from each other in one room, and no family round me. We lost our own house because he got unemployed, no responsibility. I mean he loves the children but he can walk off when he wants to go out with his mates and have a drink, and after days come back as nothing has happened. That's probably why he's done it (theft), just to have some money to go out with. (Karen, 29 years old, family F)

He's so unreliable, I mean you can never rely on him for money, or to be here, he would go out and he wouldn't come back for days, you wouldn't know where to find him. He wasn't quite so bad when I first met him. He's never worked, I mean he has a casual job which would last a month and he's off and then there's no work for another year. We used to live on this bit of money that social security gives, and now and again he'd go out and do something he could get away with, and have some money in his pocket but you could never rely on him to bring home something, to pick up his daughter from places like school. (Susan, 28 years old, Family P)

According to the above accounts, in many respects the households of prisoner's wives closely resemble those of traditional working class families, inasmuch as there is a clear-cut division of labour between the spouses and the husband is relatively uninvolved with domestic chores. In other respects, however, these same families do not comply with traditional characteristics, in that the husbands do not conform to all the components of a settled working class male role. That is, many husbands have since the



beginning of their marriage engaged in a form of chaotic living. We define chaotic living in terms of husbands who comply with four or more of the following criteria:

- 1 - erratic or chronic unemployment;
- 2 - in regular receipt of social security benefits;
- 3 - heavy drinking or drug abuse;
- 4 - frequent absence from home whilst spending time with peers;
- 5 - lack of participation in family matters;
- 6 - engaging in various forms of criminal activities;
- 7 - living in poor council accomodation.

The following table 3.1 shows the frequency of each of the above characteristics of chaotic living in the sample.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of chaotic living in the families.

Characteristic	Families	Percentage
1-Erratic or chonic unemployment	10	53%
2-In regular receipt of social security benefits	12	63%
3-Heavy drinking or drug abuse	11	58%
4-Frequent absence from home whilst spending time with peers	10	53%
5-Lack of participation in family matters	9	47%
6-Engaging in various forms of criminal activities	11	58%
7-Living in poor council accommodation, generally in an inner city state	15	79%

Table 3.2 illustrate the number of characteristics of chaotic living found in each family.

Table 3.2 Characteristics of chaotic living per family.

Families	Number of characteristics
M	1
D, L	2
C, E, N	3
A, B, G, H, I, K, O, S	4
R	5
F, J, K, P	7

As can be seen in table 3.2 more than half of the sample is characterised by chaotic living. Thirteen husbands of the 19 families in the sample comply with four or more of the seven criteria of chaotic living.

Theme 1B - Mother's pattern of education, work and marriage

I left school at 16, then I went to train with the G.P.O. for a telephonist, so I've done that, but then shortly after I was 17 when I met him (husband). I was a bit naive and before I knew it, I was pregnant, so started from there, you know, so I haven't really see much life. I've seen a lot of prisons. I've been round the country quite a lot after prisons (laughs). (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

I left school at 15 and I got a job, I was the general dogsbody in an office. Soon after I met Ronald's father, I got pregnant then I went to live with him. (Frances, 39 years old, Family M).

I left school at 15 and then I got married so young (16 years old) and gave it all up. I was already pregnant when I got married. I had a few jobs in pubs. (Doreen, 36 years old, Family J).

At the time of the first interview, the age of the mothers ranged from 27 to 39, apart from one mother who was 55. Eighteen of the nineteen mothers in the sample left school at the age of 15 or 16 with no academic qualifications. One left school at 18 years old. Fourteen mothers married or went to live with their future husbands between the age of 16 and 19. Three married at the age of 21, one at 25, and another at the age of 28. Eleven were already pregnant when they decided to live with or marry their partners.

The mothers who reported having worked did so in a discontinuous, casual fashion and most of their work is unskilled. The various jobs mentioned included working in pubs, bars, pet shops, fish and chip shops, cleaning, shop assistant, and cashiers in supermarkets.

Theme 1C - Husband's pattern of criminal activities

Never in his life. He was never in prison in his life. It's the first jail he went to. I never went to the police. I didn't know where the jail was (Sandra, 55 years old, Family L).

He's never been in prison before. I mean, he went to prison once but that was before I met him, when he was 18. He always worked very hard, he sells and buys cars. We're together 20 years now. (Tina, 37 years old, Family D).

Five or six times. Ever since the age of 15 he's been in and out until he met me. The most he's done is two years. Since he's been with me he never went to prison. He went before but not since he's been with me. (Karen, 29 years old, Family F).

His parents split up when he was young and he was in a

children's home and borstals, and I really believed that the man would change. He's got a lot of background, he didn't suddenly one day decide he was going to commit a crime when he needed for example shoes, he'd go and steal them, you know, but that doesn't help in my situation because I've been brought up completely opposite, I mean I've never been involved with the police, I've never done anything terrible against the law. Don't ask me how many times he has been in prison, because I couldn't tell you. Since I've known him I completely lost count now, but he did go through a period, at least 2 years, where the only offence he was arrested for was failing to have an insurance certificate for a car, which is mild really, and abusive language one night, again when he was drunk. He's been arrested for burglary, shoplifting and theft of petrol, and you name it ...silly things you know. (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

The above illustrations give a picture of the criminal backgrounds of a cross-section of the husbands in our sample. Of the nineteen husbands, nine were first offenders and 10 were recidivists. Table 3.3 shows the categories of offences committed by the husbands.

Table 3.3 Nature of husbands' offence

Category of offence	First Offender	Recidivist
Armed robbery	1	
Murder	4	
Fraud		1
Grivious Bodily Harm	1	1
Handling drugs	2	3
Theft and Burglary	1	5
Totals:	9	10

Table 3.4 Sentences of convicted men.

No. of fathers	Sentence	Sentence already served
1	3 years	9 months
1	5 years	7 months
1	6 years	2 years
1	7 years	4 years
1	9 years	2 years
1	14 years	3 years

Total: 6

At the time of the first interview, six husbands had been convicted and were serving sentences from three to 14 years, part of the sentences already having been served. The remaining thirteen husbands, had been in custody on remand for between two and nine months. At the second interview, all thirteen husbands had received a prison sentence ranging from 12 months to 15 years. Five husbands had been released by the time of the second interview.

Table 3.5 Sentence of husbands convicted by the time of the second interview.

Nos. of husbands	Sentence
1	12 months
3	18 months
3	4 years
1	5 years
1	6 years
1	8 years
1	9 years
1	14 years
1	15 years

Total: 13

## Domain 2 - Mother's reaction to imprisonment

This domain is concerned with the wives' reactions to the husband's arrest and conviction, their experiences of the legal system, and the impact imprisonment has had on their relationship with their husbands. The wives' accounts are organised around five themes: sense of shock, disorientation and disbelief, which refers to the wives' reactions immediately after the husband's arrest; what to tell the children, within which are presented the various ways mothers inform the children of their father's absence; wives in limbo, which conveys the wives' general feelings during the pre-trial period; they trap you, nothing you can do about it, refers to the wives' responses to the trial and their feelings towards the husband's conviction; and reassessing the relationship, where the wives' views concerning their future relationships with their husbands are presented.

### Theme 2A - Sense of shock, disorientation and disbelief

It was a big shock. I just went blank and cried but I couldn't think of anything. I never imagined that thing could happen. (Frances, wife of first-time offender (Fro), 39 years old, Family M).

Shocked like it wasn't true, that I was dreaming. That this wasn't happening. (Sybil, wife of Fro, 27 years old, Family A).

Shocked, stunned, I don't know I was terrified, terrified. You don't think. I mean, they (Customs and Excise Officers) asked me: are you married with Ben and I said: "yes... no, I mean yes, I didn't know what I was saying. I couldn't

remember my date of birth. (Pamela, wife of Fro, 36 years old, Family N).

I was shocked because it was so quick. I mean they just come out of nowhere you know, and I just stood there. I knew there was nothing I could do. I must admit at that particular time I felt as if my whole world ended. I felt so lonely that he'd gone..it was a weird feeling. I knew that he would be arrested eventually because he was on the run for two years, you see. I knew it'll come one day you know. I was always waiting for it, I was just sort of wondering when it'll be and how it'll be. I knew it had to come, but not New Year's Eve! Well, at least we got Christmas together. (Vera, wife of recidivist, 32 years old, Family C).

The arrest is a sudden enforced event in which the vast majority of wives experience a sense of shock, disorientation and disbelief. This is generally true for wives of both first offenders and recidivists, even in those cases where the wife was aware of the husband's current criminal activities. However, distinctions can be made between the two groups to the extent that, for wives of first offenders, these feelings are particularly acute, as they could never imagine that their husbands would commit a criminal offence, much less be arrested and go to prison, whereas the reaction to the arrest of many wives of recidivists include feelings of anger and disillusionment. For example, Sara (36 years old, Family E) whose husband has been in prison on two previous occasions for drink-related offences, felt:

Very angry at him for getting himself in that situation again. For going out and getting drunk and getting into a fight again. He's one of those, if you told him a hard luck story he'll give you his last penny, you know, but once he went into a pub, like if he went into a pub half past five in the evening he wouldn't be able to leave untill 11 o

clock, until he's kicked out.

Anger and disillusionment with the husband's criminal behaviour can reach a stage where the wife experiences a sense of relief that he has been arrested. Susan (wife of recidivist, 28 years old, Family P) typically illustrates this process:

I felt two completely different things, I mean at the beginning I've been totally devastated almost at stage when I only could put it on the same ...I remember staying in the kitchen one morning thinking: God it's like he's died, it's like somebody is just taken him away, we didn't even get a chance to say good bye, we didn't get a chance to sort anything out, he just went out and didn't come back, and then lately I've experienced total relief. I'm more secure when he's not here because I know exactly what I'm going to do next day or the next week. I can't make any plans when he's here because he got involved heavily in drugs.

Of the nineteen wives, six were aware that arrest was imminent, but all experienced a degree of shock, even though five had previous experience of the husband's arrest and conviction. The remaining women who did not anticipate their husband's arrest five were wives of recidivists and seven wives of first offenders. In only one case in which it was the husband's first offence, did the wife expect him to be arrested, and this was because she called an ambulance after her husband had stabbed her lover at their home and the hospital informed the police.

For some wives, the husband's arrest is greeted with a sense of relief to the extent that they believe it will



force the husband to change his way of life. Three wives feel so.

He wasn't the same. I think most couples have problems when they have two young children. If you get over it tends to get better.. you know. The wife is so much occupied with the children that the man do feel neglected so they go out. They are like children. When he got arrested I thought it's almost a good thing to happen. I was not glad. He didn't need to go to prison, but I was sort of glad that happened anyway. I thought: It will stop him, you know, make him pull together. It was hard for him, but was a lesson he needed someday. He really has suffered. (Joanna, 34 years old, Family B).

Now this is happening to him, he might grow up because he is really immature. He's 31 but totally irresponsible. But now, I thought, either I'm going to make it or it's the end. See, now if he really wants me he's got to change, I know it sounds wicked but before there was no way of him changing. (Karen, 29 years old, Family F).

When children are present at the time of the father's arrest, mothers do not normally believe that this experience affects them, as they think they are too young to understand the situation:

Yes, she was here, but they didn't realise what was going on and the police was very nice to them. (Joanna, 34 years old, Family B).

Well, she (Natalya) sort of saw him been arrested. When she was three or four years she saw him arriving with four or five policemen, and he was handcuffed to one of them. She was lying against the wall and she became very white; all her blood drained from her face and she slid against the wall. He (husband) was shouting and screaming to the police because he didn't want her to see, but anyway my mother took her out to her place. I don't know if she remembers that, she was very young (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

Although Joanna reported that the police were nice to the children she felt very upset with them as they requested

that she attend the police station for questioning:

The worse thing that happened to me, which I feel very upset about, and I really ought to do something about it when I look back, was the day they came to arrest Trevor. They took me as well because they wanted me in the police station to see if I could tell them anything, and also wanted to take advantage to make Trevor talk probably, inducing him to say something, because he knew that I was being held. Now, my children were two and four and if my neighbour hadn't offered to take my children they would have been put in care for a night, and they've never spent a day away from me. That would've been terrible. They didn't let me out until the following day. It was twenty four hours. They said it was for my protection as well so nobody would try to contact me. That thought of them being put into care horrifies me. The damage that would have done to them could be terrible, specially if you never been away from your mother.

Julia (27 years old, Family I) also believes that her children are unaware of the crime committed by her husband in the family home, for when asked whether or not the children witnessed the crime she replied:

They didn't see anything. They were in bed.

#### Theme 2B - What to tell the children

Normally I talk to George a lot about different things but I don't think I really sat down with him because I didn't really know what to say. He knew that the police took his daddy away. He was here when he was arrested, so what more could I say to the child? (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

Well, when he was arrested last year we just said he was at work and that's really what we've carried on saying. I think the oldest (participant child) might know, to be honest; she's not stupid. She doesn't say much. I mean she did say something once in front of him (brother 6 years old) and he went mad. Something about he's (father) in prison or something like that and he went mad, so I just told her to shut up, and she's never mentioned it again since. She's not stupid. (Annabel, 34 years old, Family R).

The above quotes clearly express the mothers' feelings of uncertainty and confusion on how best to explain the father's imprisonment to the children. In general, mothers find it difficult to talk about the father's imprisonment with their children, even though the child knows that he is in prison. In fact, one mother agreed to participate in this study as she thought it might help to overcome this problem: "he never says anything, and I've never actually sort of said because he doesn't talk about that. That's why I thought with you it might help him to talk about it" (Sara, 36 years old, Family E).

The explanations mothers give their children can be organised into four categories: truthful, partially truthful, totally deceptive and no explanation. In a truthful explanation the mother informs the child of the father's arrest and gives a true account of his offence:

I just explained what happened. It wasn't easy, I just said I was unhappy because daddy was always away and that I met somebody else. Daddy was angry because he didn't want me to be with the other man and ended up in a fight and dad stabbed the other man and that's why he went to prison. (Julia, 27 years old, Family I).

Partially truthful refers to cases where the mother tells the child of the father's arrest, but changes the nature of his offence:

I remember telling her one Saturday morning that he went to

prison for drinking and driving. He hadn't been home for a couple of days and I told her because we were going to see him. But she doesn't know that he broke into a shop. She thinks that he was arrested because they found him, not because of the burglary charge. Well, I don't see the need to tell her all the details. (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

Total deception are cases where the mother provides an alternative reason for the father's absence, the most common being that he is away working or in hospital:

I mean, I don't think that anybody really explained to her. Her first impression was that he was at the hospital with a bad back so that's what we led her to believe. She asked why is dad in hospital? I can't exactly remember if I said: he is in there because he had a bad back or something, or whether she actually came out with this. (Constance, 27 years old, Family O).

An example of a situation where the mother does not provide an explanation at all is Karen's (29 years old, Family F) account of how Daniel acquired the information about his father's imprisonment:

Well, when the police came to tell me that his daddy was arrested he was here anyway. So I mean, at that age he takes in what he thinks he knows. I mean, he might mix up things what I say. When I tell someone else he'll get something right, something wrong. We are pretty close anyway and he just follows everything. I didn't say anything, he just knew what was going on all the time.

Table 3.6 gives the categories of explanations given to the children by the mothers, at the time of the first interview.

Table 3.6 Mother's explanation to the children.

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Category of explanation	Nos. of Mothers
Truthful	7
Partially truthful	2
Total deception	1
No explanation	9*
Total:	19

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\*Note. Three mothers who said they gave no explanation to their children revealed that the children were informed by the police when they arrested their fathers at the family home.

At the time of the second interview, the mother in the total deception category continued to collude with the child that the father is in hospital, although she is aware that the child knows that the father is in prison:

Anyway, she knows a lot more than she lets off and the only reason I know that she knows a lot more is because I've heard her saying to other people. Because sometimes we cut through the prison to go to my mum and once I heard Jennifer saying to my niece: dad used to be in there, it's not really a hospital, it's a prison. (Constance, 27 years old, Family O).

However, these distinctions do not reflect the complexity of the processes through which the child receives relevant information about the father's imprisonment. What, how and when the mother tells the child about the father's imprisonment depends on various factors. Generally, in the case of primary-school children, when a mother reports that she provided a truthful or partially truthful account, this is a result of a process in which she initially tries to conceal the truth about the father's absence in the hope

that the father will return home soon, or based on the assumption that the child is too young to understand. It is not until she realises that the child cannot be deceived any longer or was informed through other sources such as newspaper reports or overhearing conversations, that she tells the child he is in prison. This process is clearly expressed by Joanna (34 years old, Family B):

Before I just said he was at work because I didn't know maybe he would get home soon. It wasn't until she realised that daddy was in prison that I told her. I found her crying one day and she said I heard you saying on the phone that daddy is in prison. She was only four. Oh no, I said, dad was going to get you a present, not prison, because it was around her birthday. Her face lighted up and she forgot it at that time. Well, she looked as she was convinced but I don't think she was really. Children are far brighter than we think they are because they haven't got.. it's their instinct. Because they can't say what they exactly feel they still are aware of the problems. But then he was sentenced then I just said: look it's going to be quite a while until your daddy comes home. Dad has got to pay a debt to the government, but I didn't explain why exactly. I said was money problems. Then I had to sort of say he was in prison because she started to read and she was five and said to me: mummy, here says prison on the front of the gate. I didn't want to lie to her anymore. I just had to tell her and then I explained the best I could. I didn't actually say was because of drugs because in the school there was all this anti-drugs things going on, and they don't really understand differences between heroin and cocaine anyway. As far as she is concerned they're dreadful things because the school children are told that people in drugs are wicked.

In the present study only one mother of a primary-school child told the truth from the beginning, based on the belief that this was the best action to take:

I didn't lie or anything. I came in and said: daddy's been arrested at the airport, bla, bla, bla. I don't think she understood at that time but then she understood what happened because everyday something progressed, because we

discussed in front of her. Everytime I went to see Ben (father) she came and we discuss, everytime I went to the solicitor she came and we discuss, everytime someone phoned she was sitting right next to me. She knew from day one, because I never covered up, right. I just can't understand what is the point of lying, you know, because if I said to Mara your dad is away on holiday or working away, I wouldn't be able to take her to see him. The kids aren't stupid, I had to tell her in the end. I think that's cruel not to tell them. Dad's at work, I mean, stupid. Every aspect of the court case she knew, she knew everything. We cried together many times and that brought us close. (Pamela, 36 years old, Family N).

In three families it was found that the participant child is required, either explicitly or implicitly, to collude with the mother in deceiving his or her younger siblings about the father's imprisonment:

Well, they (younger brothers) don't realise where he (father) is, they just think he's working. I've never said that he's working, I've never told them a lie, they just went on with this idea. Roger (the eldest) knows but never talks about it. (Sara, 36 years old, Family E).

He (younger brother) knew sort of what was going on. He (father) was on the run for two years and Peter knew, so I mean we've both said to him if one day he gets caught, Peter was prepared anyway, so I just said to him: look they've got your dad now so you've got to help me, we've got to try and get through this together and we've got to look after him (father) and your brothers and sister and don't say anything to them (siblings). I just said to them that he was working away, they are too young to understand. It's hard in that sense to have to keep saying to them: Oh, dad will be back soon, you know. The eldest understands but with the younger ones, you know, you can't really say to them where he is. You say he's at work, you know, he'll be home soon. But then they say: when is he coming home from work? Why isn't he at home? and all this, you know. So, you find yourself sort of making up excuses all the time for the sake of the younger ones, you know. (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

## Theme 2C - Wives in limbo

I dread the future. I try not to look that far ahead. I take one day at time. I'll be bloody glad when the trial's over so I know where I am. (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

I don't know what to do, I just live day by day. I can't think, I can't do much, can I? I don't know what's going to happen to him. The barrister told him to say he's done it so he would get less years, and that he would be home with his kids in two years. I don't know. (Sibyl, 27 years old, Family A).

Sometimes I think about the future if he got a long sentence what we'll do, maybe move from here. I don't know. What shall we do about our life? I'm frightened, I don't understand what's going on and why they arrested him. I don't know really. How can you make any plans like this? My daughter, she'll be married in a few months, so only me and my son are left if he come out. I mean if he's not out it'll be very difficult for me, yes very difficult and I don't know, my son might move to... (another town 120 miles from London). I don't know what I'll do, I mean, I'm in a very bad condition. I don't know what to think, I don't know what's going to happen. (Sandra, 55 years old, Family L).

The quotations above illustrate the wives' feelings of uncertainty, powerlessness and anxiety, which stem from the sudden changes they are forced to confront, and their experience of dealing with a legal system which they do not understand and are unable to influence. As this period of uncertainty can extend from several months to one year or more, wives are unable to plan effectively for their future, and essentially cope by taking each day as it comes. In a sense, throughout this period they remain in a state of limbo, waiting for the day of the trial, before they can begin to re-organise their lives.

I mean when they're on remand you don't know how long



they're doing. It's not until you know exactly how long they've got to do that you make your plans, you know. (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

I think the main thing is that it's a relief to know where you stand. When he was on remand you just don't know where you are or what you're doing, you can't make plans, you can't think of anything really, but once he got sentenced we know what to work towards, we both know what to do and just go on with it (Tina, 37 years old, Family D).

All wives share these feelings, although wives of recidivists have their previous experiences for support:

The money is bad, I miss him an awful lot but I accept the fact that he's gone. I think that's because I've a better knowledge of what's in front of me. I know because I've been through it all before. (Annabel, 34 years old, Family R).

Theme 2D - They trap you; nothing you can do about it

I don't understand all that. All the time the solicitor and barrister said: don't worry, you have nothing to worry, hundreds of people walk through the airport. They found nothing on your husband. They searched my bank account, we have no money, just enough to live, and it was: don't worry, don't worry, you won't even go to the witness box. The barrister said no one can be convicted on supposition. My husband is doing 9 years through supposition, nine years! Everywhere, here and there (courts), people they just look at you and literally, as far as I can see, they just put it in the bin, they file it. Because I haven't got no way to pay for it. Anyway, I couldn't believe it, I thought "No, no, just can't be, cant'be". Then I just run out of the court room and came home. I kept stopping the car crying and couldn't even see on the motorway, and I kept crying and then I felt I didn't see Ben, I forgot to see him, I just run out of the courts, it was total shock, I got my car, started driving, I kept pulling over, I got home and I just cried and cried and cried. (Pamela, 36 years old, Family N).

The day of the trial is both feared and desired by

prisoners' families. The wives fear the sentence their husbands may receive, but at the same time they want a decision to be made in order that this period of uncertainty will end, so that they can begin to re-organise their lives and return to a degree of normality:

You have to put up with it. Before the trial was a load of pressure and until this was over we couldn't put our mind to rest, so we just waited until this was over. Now we're a bit relieved and it's a lot easier to cope with not going to prison every day. We settled down a bit more with the children and got on with my life a bit more and just the visit once a fortnight. (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

Fourteen of the nineteen women in the study felt angry and disappointed with the sentence their husbands received.

They complain that the police or the judge are biased:

I felt shocked, I never thought that he would get that much, six years! I was expecting three years again or four the most. Apparently my husband has got a lot of family who have also been in front of this judge, so this judge gave him a very hard sentence. (Sara, 36 years old, Family E).

I was gutted. I was absolutely gutted, up until now I don't think it has really sank in. I was really shocked. I was walking around like a zombie for a few days and I've got a new baby and just seemed too much at the time. I didn't even cryed when I was told he got eight years, it was like being in a dream really. I felt empty. I felt so drained and empty when I realised that he'd gone away for a long time, eight years is a long time. Still hasn't sunk in properly yet, you know. I feel very angry because they (police) were just out to get him. They just wanted a conviction. They just wanted to get him in prison. They would do anything, they followed him, they watched him, even where he worked, you know" (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

No way he deserves 15 years, he's never been in prison before, is not fair is it? I didn't go to the court because if he got a long time I don't think I was able to face it, so I asked his brother to tell me. I just felt like smashing everything in the house. I was really shocked, 15 bloody years, staying on my own. I was worried about him

because I knew no way he was believing he could get such a long time. I was just very sick, thinking of what I'm going to do and there's nothing you can do about it, you know. (Cristina, 32 years old, Family S).

The women report that solicitors and barristers underestimate grossly the likely sentence the husbands will receive. They attempt to convince them to plead guilty, adding more suffering to an already difficult situation, as the following quotations clearly express:

What I felt? I just..Oh, It's so hard! you go numb, cold, you feel like a piece of stone, you couldn't move. I expected three years and when they said six years my mind just went blank. I didn't cry; I think it was a shock. I didn't expect six years because my solicitor and the barrister they reckon three years would be the most. They even wanted my husband to plead guilty for murder and I said no, he's not, if he's going to plead guilty he's going to plead manslaughter. Anyway, he changed his plea to manslaughter and they said he would get about three years. The judge went out for half an hour and they said it was a good sign because it's normally only 15 minutes so he must be giving a good thought. When he (judge) said that (six years sentence), Oh Jesus, I literally went numb. (Frances, 39 years old, Family M).

Everything went wrong. The barrister, he had right from the beginning topped him up, right. At the end someone else was thrown in who didn't know the case. I could do nothing. He (husband) went to the police station in the first place. They said: a good, honest person, and for that they gave him nine years. Then the barrister told him to say he'd done it so he would get less years, five years he said and that he would be home with his kids in two yers. So he's thinking when he's run down, I only have got two years to do, that's better. And then when the judge stands up and says nine years, they laugh at him. Nothing he or I can do about it. They only trap you. They don't want to know about you. They only want to put you in prison. (Sybil, 27 years old, Family A).

## Theme 2E - Reassessing the relationship

Well, I'm hoping he's going to change in a lot of ways really. It's pointless if he's coming back the same. I mean going out all the time and busy. He's got to learn to calm down, he's not getting any younger, like when you live that sort of life you're on the go all the time. Nothing seems settled. I think I'd rather have a bit of peace. Friends round, he knows too many people, the phone is always ringing, people in and out, you know. I want to slow down a bit and he sort of saying to me like: when I come home I'll take a bit more time with you. He's obviously nicer to me, you know. He's all sort of: everything's alright? how are you? I suppose when he was at home he took everything for granted that I'm there. He tells me he loves me more now. We sort of go all right together. We still laugh about things we used to do and I mean because that's what you can do really, to think what you did when he was out. You weigh up the good times and the bad times, you know, all you've got is memories. So lets see, if he sticks to what he's saying. I'm waiting to see this happening " (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

I don't think he'll get back into any kind of cocaine. I think that distorts all the view. When I look back, before we had the children, he was wonderful. The main problem is that he's bitter now, he's got a nice side of his personality that he's able to express what he feels, now he's able to let his bitterness out verbally so at least by getting it out he's not storing it inside him. I couldn't leave him until we worked out our lives because it's not fair really. We were happy before the problems. We used to get on fantastically. I never met anybody else who comes near him, you know, he makes me laugh. He's not an easy personality to get on with because he's very strong character, and you have to lose something with people with a strong character but we've got a lot together, we've got the children, so I just think it would be nice to make it work. When he comes home and realises what he's got (wife, children and the business she took over) he's going to feel so lucky. (Joanna, 34 years old, Family B).

The husband's imprisonment unleashes powerful and conflicting emotions which force the wife to re-evaluate her relationship with him. Based on the outcome of these re-evaluations, the women in the study come under one of four categories: those who hope for change, decide it is

time to separate, adopt a position of resigned accommodation, and those who are satisfied with the relationship.

Women who hope for change believe that their husbands are willing to change their attitudes towards them and the children, and/or their deviant behaviour:

I decided to give him a trial. I'm not going to say nothing when the time comes if not all things go perfectly my way, I wish they could, but when he comes home I'm his wife, not a part-time wife, you know, because it's no good for the children because now is: Oh, I love you, I'll never do it again, all I'm worried about you and all that, you know, but now I've had enough of this, so now he really knows that I do mean. In a way I believe that he has changed. (Karen, 29 years old, Family F).

Other women, at the time of the first interview, are seriously considering divorcing their husbands. They have lost all hope in their ability to change:

The most difficult thing to cope with was to be on my own because I loved him, but now I have changed, I hate him, but now it's getting easier, it doesn't hurt me anymore, it doesn't destroy part of me to see him stoned. I think about myself now, I don't feel sorry for him anymore. I'm thinking of separating but I keep being forced into situations when Natalya desperately wants him back, and he desperately wants to come back, and it seems that I'm the only one to make everybody unhappy. I mean, I go and visit him now because it's Natalya's dad and he wants to see her and she wants to see him, if I didn't go no one would, if I didn't take cigarettes nobody would, if I didn't take a meal now and again nobody would, and I mean nobody. (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

Resigned accommodation refers to women who may still harbour hopes for change but adopt a fatalistic attitude

towards the husbands' criminal activities as they feel powerless to influence their style of life:

I feel just the same (towards her husband after imprisonment). I knew what he was doing, I can't do nothing to stop him. It's just him. Well, I'm just used to it, I've got used to it. Life must go on. (Marion, 36 years old, Family G).

He is that type of person, he's always going to be ducking and diving in some way. He's not going to be a hundred per cent straight because I don't think they are. I mean I always sort of stop him to a certain extent, I mean if I think something is getting out of hand then I've got to sort of put my foot down and say "look, now I don't agree with this", you know, but I mean on the whole I used to let him take care of things. He knows the situation and he knows the consequences. I can't sort of say ; "you are not going to do this", because he'll say: "who bloody are you to tell me not to do so". Well, you can't blame him for doing it because I mean, they really only know one way of earning money. If I sit and blame him it's not going to change anything, is it? So you just have got to put up with it. I think if you've been with someone as long as I have and he's been away before, so obviously I've accepted the way he is, you know. I mean I just can't make him out. I mean, I think is just him, you know. But not only that, once you've got a record the police don't leave you alone, you get fitted up, you get arrested when you haven't even done anything and you can't get away, so once you are in that circle you can't get out of it, one way or another you're going to be involved. Because you've got a record you've got no chance. They're not going to believe you, they get fitted up and the jury don't believe it. So you can't get out of the fact that you are going to be tormented (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

Women who are satisfied with the relationship they have with their husbands hope that imprisonment will not affect their future together:

He's the only man for me. I hope things don't change that much. Things were great as they was, but people do change, but I don't think he will. I hope we'll be able to just carry on as if he's not been away. That would be lovely, but I know people change and they sort of resent and they come out and want to sort of take on people, but then they

sort of get round after a while, just that initial time. (Tina, 37 years old, Family D).

Table 3.7 Wives' reassessment of the relationship with their husbands.

	Time 1	Time 2
Hope for change	10	8
Time to separate	3	0
Resigned accomodation	3	3
Satisfied	3	3
Separated	0	5
Totals:	19	19

Table 3.7 shows that at the time of the first interview, ten women hoped for change; three were resigned to her husband's style of life; three were thinking it was time to separate; and three were satisfied with the relationship.

At the time of the second interview, five women had decided to separate, three of whom were thinking of separating earlier and two had hoped for change. In four of these five cases the wives have stopped visiting their husbands, and in one case the wife makes periodic visits just to take the child:

I'm getting a divorce. We never got on anyway. When he was here he was getting out with his mates, that's why he's in prison. He's just selfish. He isn't going to change time he comes out and I might waste my all life. I hate to be on my own. When he was here every time we argued and he left, I didn't like to be on my own so I was having him back, you know what I mean? But now I'm not going to wait because if I get a divorce I can do what I like, but if I'm married to him he wants me in, locked up. (Sybil, 27 years old, Family A).

For the wives who decided to wait for their husbands, a degree of psychological presence is maintained by including him in the family's decision-making process and by mentioning him frequently in general family conversation and future plans:

I still rely on Ben a lot and if I've got any problem I do tell him. He's still involved because I've always asked Ben. If I'm going to do something then I go and discuss with Ben. If I go on holidays, or if I go out I ask Ben first, I don't just go. He ain't gone, he still rules the roost. His coat is still hanging in the cupboard, I mean I won't put it away and pretend he's not there because he is. (Pamela, 36 years old, Family N).

It's the same now. When I go see him he keeps saying you should do that and this, I want you to do this and that, make sure you do this and that. Whether we do or not doesn't matter, he's still in command. He orders and expects to be obeyed. (Sandra, 55 years old, Family L).

We talk about him all the time as if he's here. We talk about him among friends, what we used to do and laugh about things he used to do, and we talk about what he's doing now what he's making, and we mention things we used to do and things we'll do when he comes home. (Joanna, 34 years old, Family B).

As we can see by the above quotations, the wife's decision to remain with, or separate from the husband is influenced by the nature of their previous relationship and their assessment of whether or not there is hope that he will change his previous style of life. Therefore, the decision to separate is not a direct consequence of the husband's imprisonment, but rather the result of prior unresolved conflicts with him, and the belief that there is no hope that he will ever change. For these women, the husband's



imprisonment is seen as "the last straw", or simply provides the rationale for separation:

I still believed he'd change. I was only 19 and I had his baby and I managed to get a flat so I thought everything would change. He'd never had a flat, he's always been in council care and of course I was great, wasn't I? I thought I could help him and I was hoping he would change. The second time he got a prison sentence I couldn't believe it, but I still had hopes. I even didn't believe the police. Anyway, I still missed him but I was determined to help him and I thought that we still could go on together, and then there was Natalya. Then I understood that he'd never change. He used to disappear many times and I didn't know where he was, I mean I pleaded with him, I begged him, I gave him everything I had, but he just kept throwing it back in my face everytime. He didn't respect me so what happened? In the end he killed it all. (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

According to Susan (Family P), it was her husband's inability to give up drugs and the effects this habit had on their relationship that led her to take the decision to divorce:

I wouldn't leave him just because he was arrested. I stood by him during many years. I really did love him and I was prepared to do anything for him and I believed he'd change, I really did, otherwise I probably wouldn't have stuck by him. In the beginning, I didn't care about anything, all I cared about was getting up to that prison and I felt sorry for him, really sorry, and when I was visiting him he'd have this running nose, cold, but I didn't know this were the first signs of withdrawal, I had no idea, I was completely stupid. Then I had to accept that this man was on drugs, but I would never ever be able to accept the fact that he's taking drugs. I mean, it's taken six years now and I still can't come to terms with it, I cannot come to terms with the fact that he injects drugs. The risks that go with it, I mean they don't even come into it. I still can't accept this filthy, disgusting, horrible thing. I don't want anything to do with it. I mean it's probably unusual to find a drug addict living with someone so straight but that's exactly what I am. I mean I don't even take aspirin, the only thing nearer a drug I've ever taken was tranquilliser when he was in prison, and I never ever would and I never ever did, and I never ever thought about

taking them, not once ever. (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

The five women who divorced their husbands based their decisions on the following: their husband's took them for granted, would disappear for days leaving them alone, did not participate in family matters, did not provide financial support, spent money drinking with friends and/or they were drug addicts. However, in the case of four wives, the final decision to divorce was made only after the husband was convicted and sentenced, when they realised that he could no longer play even a minimal role which could compensate for his shortcomings. For example, Sybil's (27 years old, Family A) attitude towards her husband's imprisonment changed after learning that he received a sentence of nine years, and she decided to separate. Previous to the sentence her attitude towards her husband was supportive:

I'm not thinking of leaving him he's done everything. He took the kids out, he went to work and gave me the money. He bought things for the kids. He was never in prison. It's his mates' fault, they just stayed there and went on the other person's side and did nothing. They didn't help him.

But after his sentence her attitude changes and she focuses on his faults:

He was selfish, he wouldn't take me anywhere. I stayed here or go out with my mum. I used to argue. He would upset me over any little thing, going out with his mates. He's selfish that's the main thing. He got into a fight and stabbed this man because he was getting out with his silly mates and that's why he's in prison. I'm mad because he's

over there (prison) I have three kids and he'll only come home when the kids are 18. Because he's got time I've got to do it here and all. I don't like to be on my own, I hate to be on my own. If I'm married to him he wants me in, locked up.

In the case of three wives, however, they felt that imprisonment would be beneficial for their future relationship, even though they would have preferred not to have experienced it to save their marriage. For example, Frances (39 years old, Family M) feels that her husband's imprisonment has given her hope for change:

When he comes home it's going to be better. It's going to be better. I mean, this sort of shock has brought it home to him. I mean, we've never been apart, I mean we've never had a separate holiday or anything, but he was an alcoholic and he tried doing different things but nothing changed, I mean weekends he used to come home and he used to be really drunk. But since he's been there his attitude has changed towards me and he won't drink again, we know this. This situation brought us much closer together. Well, is an experience that I wouldn't like to have to go through again. Some people say that takes them apart, it separates them, but we've got more closer.

### Domain 3 - Mother's perception of changes and difficulties encountered after imprisonment

The nature and extent of two main problem-areas reported by wives since their husbands' arrest are described in two themes: managing on limited resources; and managing the children. In the former are presented the mother's accounts of coping with reduced financial resources and its associated consequences; and in the latter, their perception of changes in the child's behaviour.

### Theme 3A = Managing on limited resources

Money, money, sorting out bills and have the money to pay the bills. He was a bus driver. You see, I only get £29 a week with three children and he used to take care of the bills now is all for me to arrange the money. I might run away with a rich bloke (laughs). Hum... money is not everything, but it is when you haven't got it. It's difficult, I have to live day by day. I can't buy nothing for the kids. I can't live on what the social security gives me. They give me family allowance so makes £50 a week. They expect me to buy school uniform with £9, they do though. You can't argue with these people (Sybil, 27 years old, Family A).

The money is a problem. That's hard, I mean he was bringing home £100 a week and suddenly it dropped to £18, is a big drop, a bloody big drop. I was supposed to receive £36 but they cut to £18 because I was behind with the electric. I managed, I still don't know how I did it with two children. It was horrible. (Constance, 27 years old, Family O).

Well, thinking when the next meal was going to come from actually and telling the kids they couldn't have this, they couldn't have that when he was in prison. I mean it was really very difficult for all of us to cope with that really. I mean, out of £52 a week with four children, time you put money in the electric, and the gas, is almost gone. That was what I was allowed to, because I was only getting money for three children. I wasn't getting for five because my oldest daughter was married, but she was living here with her son, and my other daughter had already left and she got her own money. I mean this flat is just driving me round the bend, I mean I've got damp in the kitchen, the wall paper just come straight off. I can't cope with this bleeding place" (Key, 39 years old, Family Q).

All but three families in the study suffered material deprivation after the husband's arrest. As was shown in the contextual domain, the majority of families in our sample are located in the lowest socio-economic strata of society, therefore, the imprisonment of their husbands generally exacerbates their already severe financial situation.

Before the husband's imprisonment, 13 women were in receipt of social benefits, although seven of these received additional financial support from the husband's erratic work or proceeds from his criminal activities. In the remaining six cases, five husbands provided the family income through conventional forms of employment and one by dealing with fraud.

After the husband's imprisonment, 16 women received social benefits, three of whom supplemented these benefits by part-time work, and one received additional financial help from her brother. Of the remaining three women not in receipt of social benefits, one took over the husband's business and two entered into full-time employment. The women who experienced the greatest decline in the family income were the 12 whose husband's were either employed or contributed by erratic employment or unlawful means prior to their arrest. However, variations exist in how women manage their new financial situation. Seven women reported great difficulties managing their financial affairs. Typical of women in this situation are the cases of Karen (29 years old, Family F) and Doreen (36 years old, Family J):

I went in a lot of debts. Before he was signing on, then I had to do it, so for three weeks I didn't get paid. He used to get a giro for all of us and than I had to do it. The man downstairs (hotel reception) lent me £75, a friend gave me £120 another friend gave me £40. Well, I didn't cope with this situation. I felt sorry for myself. First I got ill; I got pneumonia, then I went to live with my mum and my sister took care of the baby. That kind of illness

takes months to get over but after a fortnight I had to go back to the hotel otherwise they were going to cancel my room, so I started to get all this dizzy spells. Usually they came when I had to go out. I didn't want to go out, it was just fear of going out. But I had to go out to get something to eat, but you have to walk down the street sometimes and I couldn't. I used to get like this thing in my throat, a kind of choke. Sometimes I felt so bad that I used to bang her (baby) head on things while I was rushing her along because I couldn't see. The doctor gave antidepressant tablets but I wouldn't take them. I was too frightened that something might happen to me, and what about the children? I took one before I went to bed and used to get me spark out, knock me down. I start sleep-walking. I wake up in the basement and the baby was in the room alone, and I was turning on the bath and go back to bed, so in the end my mum tied my wrist down to the bed so I'd enough space to move.

About money I just can't see anyway out of it and you are not able to change. Well, if you go to work full time, you know, I can't earn enough and that really annoys me, winds me off and I think: fuck you, I'm not getting up 7 o'clock in the morning getting home at 6 o'clock, worrying about the kids, worrying what's going on around here and not even been able to go out for a drink at the end of the week; I'd rather go and rob first. You know, for the first time in my life I honestly say I've been shoplifting for the last few months because I felt so bitter. So I thought fuck you bastards, no one helps me so I help myself. It's only silly things like a jar of coffee and things like that. Mind you I've been finding that it's fun as well because you feel that you're getting a bit of the cake out of it, get something for a change.

At the other end of the spectrum, five women took action to become independent, although they had not been in paid employment during marriage. This can be seen in the following two examples of women who experienced a significant decline in their financial situation:

Financially it's disastrous. He was self-employed, he was in cars. All the bills were paid, clothes were bought, food was bought, he was paying for everything, so initially it's a big difference. But now I'm working and sorting out things like taxes. I'm so pleased. He got sentenced in October and I started this job in January. It was amazing, I just went for an interview and out of 10, I got the job,

which is amazing not having worked since I was 18. It was strange going back into that sort of environment which I've forgotten all about it. It was quite weird really to find out all about what you get from work and things you need. I mean I never knew anything like that, how much taxes, insurances. I enjoy finding out everything. I feel quite good and I'm independent as well. (Tina, 37 years old, Family D).

Kay (39 years old, Family Q) had been relying on social benefits since the age of 16, however, when her husband was arrested she decided that enough is enough and took steps to do something about it:

I don't get nothing of them (social security). Now I go to work, I earn a wage! Well I don't have the five children here no more. The elder two have got their own place, in March they moved out, so I only got three now. They're not too bad. I've been quite pleased really how it turned out. I mean I've had money every week, you know what I mean, and before I never knew when I was going to get the next meal from, and all this. I mean my basic wages is £82 but I bring about £72, but if I do overtime I can bring over a £100 home, so that's all right.

The remaining seven woman reported managing the family budget with some difficulties on the limited resources they receive in social benefits. Frances, for example, has reorganised her life reasonably well considering her financial constraints:

It's difficult, I mean the money that you get (social security) is enough to buy food and pay a few bills, but you can't go out or buy things. When he was here I used to think: Oh I'm going to buy this and I'm going to buy that, but I can't now. Well, every Monday I go to keep fit, then on Thursdays I go to my sister's, on Tuesdays I go to my friend, she lives round the corner, and then on Saturdays I help in the jumble sale for the church; no cinema, no pub, no nothing, but I manage. (Frances, 39 years old, Family M).

### Theme 3B - Managing the children

He (participant child) became very aggressive, he has sort of tantrums if he doesn't get his own way. He gets into more mischief; he breaks things, he's got destructive now, not only with my things but with his own. If he can't get his own way he just throws things across the room. He can be very badly behaved, very disobedient. He went down a bit at school, but now he has caught up. In fact, he has now to go to a special unit in the school to sort of bring him up to standard, but I think this is because he developed epilepsy during the last months. It's very difficult to discipline them (Roger and his two brothers), even when we go to see my husband now, they're as good as gold when they're there with him but you should see them on the journey there and on the journey home, they're absolutely monsters, but there they're as good as gold. I think it's because they're too used to me, because a lot of children are the same, I mean, even if their dads are not at home, they're just the same. (Sara, 36 years old, Family E).

Before she was sort of like a very contented child, then she started wetting the bed, having nightmares. She'd see a car that looks like my husband's and have a fit in the street, crying and screaming. She's very clinging; she sleeps in the same bed with me all the time, I go to the toilet, she's behind me, I go round the shop and she's there, I go up to the front door and she's there, I stand on the balcony and she's there, she's like a leach, a complete leach. The only break I get from Mara is when she goes to school. I tell her don't be frightened I'm not going anywhere. But she says that dad didn't do anything wrong and he is not here, perhaps they'll get you, so she's frightened in case anything will happen to me. (Pamela, 36 years old, Family N).

Fourteen mothers reported changes in the behaviour of their seventeen children, and five mothers reported no such changes in their six children. The changes in behaviour most frequently cited by the mothers are: withdrawal, answering back, fighting with peers, hostility towards the mother for depriving them of the things they were used to before, such as sweets, clothes, pocket money, and particularly not taking them anywhere, deterioration in



school work, truanting, clinging behaviour, and feelings of insecurity.

In some cases these behaviours were reported to be more pronounced at the time of the second interview, after the father's conviction:

Since he's been sentenced Walter has become more audacious, he's like his dad; he's selfish and hasn't got no respect for people. He looks right through you. God, he's so quick tempered as his father. He talks to me as if I'm a bit dirt, if I muck around with him then he takes it the wrong way. The other day I told him he couldn't come in, for a laugh, to watch the video, so he picked up the skate board and threw it at me. I battered him and then you have to leave him alone and let himself calm down because he'll do a self injury one day, just go into fits. I don't know what to do. If I stop the tele he don't care, nothing hurts him, if you hit him you might as well hit yourself because it's all you're hurting. You know, another kid, you can get hold of him an they'll feel frightened, he don't, he just hardens up to it. When you go and pick him up off the floor he seems heavier, you can't pick him up, you can't do nothing, just leave him because in the end he sends you mad and he's okay. He would've taken notice of his father. Sometimes if he's having a bath like I'll say: why can't you be a good boy? and he says: because you don't do any favours for me. You have to do him favours. If you want him to go to the shops you have to pay him. If he asks me to have his mates round and I say no, because I don't feel well, and ten minutes later I ask him to go to the shops he'll say : no, you don't do me no favours, you don't let me have my mates, so why should I do you favours? He don't talk to me, he don't trust anyone, that's his trouble. (Sybil, 27 years old, Family A).

Apart from the behaviours mentioned above, four children have engaged in illegal behaviours. Since the father's arrest, one stole a car radio, another stole money from school, and two children, who already had a deviant background, began to mug and steal from shops. At the time

of the second interview, the latter two children, had been charged with committing eight offences and placed in a residential school, where they will remain until they are 18 years old. (As these two children were 15 years old, they were allowed a degree of freedom of movement from the school which enabled the second interview to proceed at their mother's home).

However, not all changes in behaviour reported by mothers were for the worse. In three cases, in which the mother reported no changes in behaviour at the first interview, said at the second interview that the children had matured and become more understanding and responsible:

He's grown up a lot. He sort of feels as he's the man about the house now. He sort of takes on a lot of responsibility and I suppose he's trying to look after the little ones as if he is the father, you know, so he's good in that way. He locks all the doors in the evenings and makes sure everything is secure before we go to bed. He sits and talks to me and he sort of pays attention. I mean, I'm lucky really that I've got someone at his age that I can talk to. I mean, if I didn't have him I would crack up, you know. We can have a conversation, he tells me what he needs and, you know, we sort it out (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

In the father's absence, some mothers allow the children a much greater degree of freedom compared to when he was at home. This can take the form of extending the hour at which the child should go to bed, usually to keep her company; permit the child to stay out later without knowing where he or she is; not taking action when the child engages in disrespectful behaviour such as answering back, swearing,

demanding money or disappearing without informing her.

In some instances mothers invoke the father figure as a means of control, usually in the context of a threat of what he will do when he returns home, or simply that she will tell him at the next prison visit. However, according to the mothers, this method is not really effective, as the father's return is too distant for the child, and/or the husband refuses to chastise the child during their brief encounter together at visits:

When he plays me up, you know, I say: you watch it, you wait until your father comes back and he'll sort you out. When he's here they do what they're told. (Marion, 36 years old, Family G).

The thing is, if I get upset over the kids, like the other day they disappeared and I couldn't find them for two hours, and then I threaten them to tell their dad, he (husband) has a go at me: why are you losing your temper? is not often I see them. But I say: you don't have to put up with them as much as I do; he says: well, I can't have a go at them they don't often come up here. I'm not going to hit them when they come up here. They're going to think they only come up to have a good hiding. Then I say: I don't expect you to, but you can have a word with them. So the last time we went up there he had a word, he said: if you play-up your mum the way you have been, next time you come up, I'm going to smack you for it. But they haven't changed. Now if he will or not I don't know, but when they go up he tends to spoil them: Oh come on, let them have it, let them have the sweets. If he was at home he wouldn't put up with none of that nonsense. He just wouldn't put up with all this, they would be a lot different. Oh yes very much so (Constance, 27 years old, Family O).

Others say that they give vent to their frustration by punishing the children indiscriminately:

When I get frustrated, I stamp on the bed, slam the doors, slam plates about, scream and shouts and also pick on Mara.

The other day she fell over at school, and split her chin and all she wanted was: daddy, daddy, daddy. I sent her to bed and I said to her: Bloody daddy, he's not here, what do you want me to do about it? (Pamela, 36 years old, Family N).

Women also report that they have difficulty substituting the husband's role as provider of masculine experience:

Peter takes notice of him (father) and he understands Peter, and this is why I know he should be here because I suppose he (Peter) feels as if he can't talk to him (father) when he feels like, and he can't tell me the things he wants to tell him, like now he's worried about changing from a junior school and wants to know how is it like for a boy, but I can't tell him, so he's feeling frustrated inside and taking it out in others ways, like tormenting the little ones and giving me a hard time because he can't win himself. I think if he (father) was here then he'd quieten down a bit (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

Controlling the children is the next major problem reported by the wives after managing the family finances, although some do not make the association between the children's behaviour and the father's absence. They explain these changes in behaviour in terms of the lack of a controlling agent:

I think they get to know you. When there's only one parent they get to know you, don't they? They know it's easier to get round me. I'm tired and they take advantage. (Sybil, 27 years old, Family A).

They totally ignore me. I can shout and scream until I'm blue in the face and they take no notice. But their father has only got to say something once. I think it's because they are too used to me, because a lot of children are the same. When their dad was here, he used to take them out over the park up the road, over the woods. He often took Roger up to London to the Museum. (Sara, 36 years old, Family E).

After the father's arrest, mothers report that they find it difficult to substitute their husbands as a controlling agent. Notwithstanding that the majority of fathers believe that the children are the mother's responsibility, in general it is the father who enforces discipline when necessary:

He always had the hard hand on them anyway. I mean if they got a bit naughty then he just sort of waves his finger and they realise. I mean, on the whole he used to let me sort of get on with it, you know, you're the mother, you look after them. But I mean, if they really got naughty he just waves his finger and they do as they're told. (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

Variations exist in how women cope with the sole responsibility of the children. Eleven women in the study reported that they find it most difficult to discipline the children, and eight reported no such difficulties. Five of the eleven women, however, said that they manage to cope, despite the difficulties, by attempting to set rules and standards of behaviour. The remaining six mothers, find the task of controlling the children overwhelming. In these cases the women take no action to discipline the children, but rather wait passively for their husbands' return "to put things right". Four of these women have health or drug related problems: one was admitted to hospital suffering from depression, one was suffering from diabetes, one was receiving treatment for drink and drug abuse and one for panic attacks. Seven children from these latter families

were separated from their mothers: five were taken into care and two went to live with relatives.

Jasmine and Constance, for example, found it very difficult to deal with the children alone and expressed feelings of insecurity without the husband's support:

It's difficult to be on my own because I relied on him a lot, quite a lot. See, he helped me a lot, I was quite ill a couple of years ago because I've got into heavy drugs and he got me off right, and he took over sort of thing, like when I don't feel quite well I used to go to him and now I have no one to go to. He might not have understood what was going through my mind, but he was there. I have no one to lean on now. (Joan, 33 years old, Family K).

I was scared to be on my own. Being a diabetic I relied on him to do my injections, but when he went to prison I had to do them myself. And I thought, well if something happens to me what is going to happen to the kids? I start worrying sick, because although I have only been in a coma twice, I was alright one night and the following morning as far as I'm concerned I didn't wake up, I didn't know what's going on. It does get on top of me when I can't handle the children because of my health and I get in a right state. If I have one of my "hypos" I like to sit down and eat sweets on my own with no kids, and if I was very bad I used to have the sugar bowl beside me and eat from the sugar bowl and they'll come in and: mum can I have this, mum can I have that, I want some of this, I want some of that, and I couldn't take it. I just wanted to be left alone. I couldn't stand no noises, makes me panic, makes me go worse. (Constance, 27 years old, Family O).

In the cases of the eight women who did not report difficulties managing the children, there appears to be a continuity in their approach to parenting, which has not been affected by the separation. For example, Joanna has always taken a close interest in her children's activities, and since her husband's imprisonment she has made an effort to ensure that the disruptions to the children's

daily routine are kept to a minimum:

It was difficult to cope with the children's sadness, Lola especially; she was pining for her dad, so I made an effort to do things with them. I'm always busy during the week and I get very tired, but I always make sure that we do something every weekend, a trip out, cinema, zoo or allow their friends to stay because I thought the more people around the less they'll think about what happened. It's when we're alone together that I found they're miserable and tend to play me up. I think you don't feel like a family and then I have to make an effort to stick to the same routine as before (Joanna, 34 years old, Family B).

Joanna also monitors Lola's school work and ensures that regular visits to the prison are maintained:

"...if she's not going to get lost in the state system she has to have a little more help. She has to get all these ideas in her head onto paper, but she's very untidy and I sit down and help her...and then I see him on average twice a week. I've done 20,000 miles a year in my car which is double what everybody else does. I wanted to because of the children. They did miss him terribly and I want to keep a degree of normality.

#### Domain 4 - Visiting the husband

The most salient problems reported by wives associated with visiting the husband in prison, together with their feelings and expectations arising from their interaction within the context of prison visits are presented under four themes: reorganising the daily routine, which refers to the wife's need to accommodate the pattern of visiting and the extra demands it implies into her existing daily schedule; feelings of powerlessness and confusion with the prison system, which illustrates the frustration felt by

most wives at the lack of information and perceived inconsistency of prison rules related to visiting; restricted sense of time, which conveys the wives' feelings of dissatisfaction at the short time allocated to the prison visit; and they don't consider children, which is concerned with the wives' belief that the prison system does not provide an adequate visiting context for the children.

#### Theme 4A = Re-organising the daily routine

Obviously to visit him is a big strain on me because everything else comes second around the house. I have to take her (daughter) out, 9 days old in the rain and get on buses and trains to see him for a 15 minutes visit! (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

During the period the husband is remanded in custody, the prison visit is limited to 15 minutes, six days per week. There are two main problems associated with this pattern of visiting: first, husbands expect their wives to visit them as frequently as possible, as they are expected to mediate with representatives of the legal system and to provide various essentials, such as money for cigarettes batteries for radios, and magazines. Second, the wives' daily routine has to be re-structured to accommodate these visits. For example, many wives had to cook meals to take to the prison (since the time of this study, this rule has been rescinded), provide regular changes of clean clothes and make the actual journey, often with their younger



children:

It was hard to visit him all over the country, wherever he might be. He was moved every three weeks or every month. He was in a police station in Surrey one day, and another police station in north London in another day, and after that they sent him to a prison in south London. It was terrible because I was going to see him nearly every day plus my two children, two year old and four year old, and feeding him because he didn't like the food in there, so shopping and cooking and travelling. Oh! I was really exhausted and frustrated (Joanna, 34 years old, Family B).

I don't take her (Sally) everytime I go to ...because it's very far and we have to get up very early and I don't want her to lose school. It's a very bad experience for children and we don't have much time to talk down there anyway, only 15 minutes. She stays at my brother's, then I pick her up on my way back. All this for only 15 minutes. (Cristina, 32 years old, Family S).

After conviction, prison visiting varies from 30 minutes to two hours, once or twice per month, which terminates some problems but creates new ones. The major problems reported by nine wives after conviction are related to the geographical location of the prison and eight to the cost of the journey. In many cases the husband is located in a prison far from the family home, that is, journeys which entail the whole day to go and return. This means that some wives are only able to see their husbands once a month because of the costs involved and the difficulties taking the children on long journeys:

The problem now is going to see him. It's such an awful journey. It takes all day. We leave here about 8 o'clock on a Saturday morning, we get to King's Cross. We get a coach from King's Cross which takes us all the way there. The coach stays there and brings us back to King's Cross. But it's trying to keep three boys occupied on a coach for three hours. They very nearly destroy the coach (laughs). You should see them on the journey there, and on the

journey home; they're absolutely monsters. There are loads of other children and they are all as bad. I just take a load of food and keep shoving food at them. I have been going every fortnight. The DHSS pay for once and I pay once. But it costs me £20. If you go by train and taxi it would cost £35.40. Actually it costs £17 by coach but you have to have coffee out of the machine. They (children) are fed up with the journey but they still like to go. (Sara, 36 years old, Family E).

It is very tiring travelling with the children. The prison is so far, it takes 6 hours, from here to there but coming back it takes 4 hours because I normally leave a quarter to 4 from the prison and I get home at 8 o'clock. I leave home at half past 8 in the morning and get down at 2 o'clock, is very tiring (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

Theme 4B - Feelings of powerlessness and confusion with the prison system

I don't understand all that. They sent me to A. Prison, but he wasn't there. We stood there 2 hours, me and my three children, then they told me he was in B. Prison, but he was still in C. Prison when I went there. But they say nothing, the pigs, they can do what they want, pigs! I don't understand. The kids want to see their dad but I can't do much, can I? (Sybil, 27 years old, Family A).

Women report that they feel frustrated at the lack of information provided by the prison authorities in general. They complain bitterly that their husbands are moved from prison to prison and they are not informed in time to avoid making unnecessary journeys, wasting time and money which they cannot afford as well as bringing disappointment and frustration to the children:

He was moved all about the places while he was on remand, he was in D., E., and F., which is very, very far. He was put in all these different police cells so he was losing all his privileges because he was in a police cell and not in the prison. I couldn't get to see him when he was in F. because was too far so we were cut off for over 6 weeks. I

couldn't have no contact with him. He suffered as well; he was depressed because he couldn't see no family because was too far. I was heavily pregnant so I couldn't risk to take the journey, so we both missed each other very much. I couldn't go anyway even if I wanted to because I didn't have the money, with two children cost me a lot of money. (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

Even when information is provided about prison rules, women are still confused as these vary from prison to prison, and they state the same rules can be interpreted differently according to the personality and mood of the prison staff, as well to circumstances:

What really annoys me are the silly rules. I mean if every prison had the same rules at least you know where you stand. Since he's been on remand he's been in 3 different prisons. I mean, in G. I was allowed to have flasks, so you can take a nice hot soup in a flask. In H. no flasks, they're allowed food containers so you have to sort that out. Now in I. they're not allowed flasks or food containers, everything has to go in on a plate so I mean they say to you it's on the list what you're allowed to have like certain amount of food enough what they can consume in 24 hours, but I mean if give them one meal on the plate is not enough, you can't argue with them. Some of them wouldn't allow in chocolate with nuts in, another one won't allow raisins. They've got all these stupid silly rules. I can't make it out. Each day they turn something away and you say: why can't he have this? and it's another reason. It's so stupid because you get aggravated before you go in a visit. Then you can't take any clothes with a stamp, why? Of course when you go on a visit you're all agitated and he knows that something is going on, so you tell him what's going on. So of course when he goes back to the wing he's going to get wound up because you've got wound up, so he's going to start trouble with one of the screws, so you try to hold that in because I don't want to go and let him see that I'm upset because they've turned this away or that away, because I know he's going back on the wing and get himself into trouble. The screws get away with murder. They just make their own stupid rules up and I can't see why. I mean: what's wrong with yogourt? In H. they can't, they can in G. and in I. They think that the dogs sniff and can have explosive, but you know, are the dogs different in G. from the dogs they've got in H.? No milk at all in H. no cheese, all they're allowed is tin of condensed milk (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

It all depends on the officer. You get 15 minutes a visit, but sometimes if you are lucky you might get 30 minutes. Depends on the officer's mood (Frances, 39 years old, Family M).

Is so frustrating! Not only they have category A prisoners, but now they've come out with double A category, which there's nothing down, nothing in the books, nothing different from A category prisoner to double A. But they've made this high risk, so when I go to visit Chris we go in this segregated bit like, which is partitioned off from the other visit. But my friend went last week and because they were short staffed Chris was out with everybody else on the visit, so as he says: I'm not dangerous this week, when they're understaffed you're not dangerous, you go and have your visit with everybody else. When you've got the staff you're dangerous again. They just make things out on their own as they go along. If you ask to see a book with the rules and regulations for high risk prisoners they haven't got one. That makes everything more difficult. (Tina, 37 years old, Family D).

#### Theme 4B - Restricted sense of time

This was the worse period (remand). The pressure was terrible, because he wanted me to visit him every day so I was going to B. everyday bringing him food, cooking everyday. My life just become upside down. All this hassle just for 15 minutes visiting and if you're lucky they (officers) may let you stay a bit longer. What can you say in 15 minutes? You just don't bother to talk about us. The time is taken talking about barristers, solicitors and all that. (Cristina, 32 years old, Family S).

The women feel that 15 minutes is totally inadequate to discuss developments of the husband's court case, to keep him informed about family matters and to leave time for their own personal problems. Often problems have not been elaborated sufficiently before the prison staff interrupts them to end the visit:

If there's any problem at school I sort of can't discuss

with Bill at the time, I've got to wait until I see him on the visit and then you don't have enough time on a visit to discuss the problems that you do have at home, and you know is just sort of: Hello? how are you? you know, your visit is over sort of thing. But you know, like, when they've got something they want to tell me it's frustrating because you want to say something and, Oh I'll have to wait until tomorrow, then tomorrow comes and something else comes up so you forget about that, so you need to sit down for some time. (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

Once the husband has been convicted, the pattern of prison visiting changes from 15 minutes daily to 30 minutes to two hours once or twice per month. The majority are relieved that they do not have to make daily visits:

It's better now, I can sort out my life. I mean, I still miss him. I mean, when you go to see him there's much to say in that two hours and you can't always say everything you want. We only get two hours, I mean, we have a lot of things to say and he obviously has stories to tell and when I talk he is listening but, I can see his eyes and mind ticking over, as soon as you say something he wants to say something else, is weird. It's just you want so much to say that he's listening. He does take it in, but only when he goes back he has time to think, it's all registered but only when he goes back he has time to think, because for him to come out in two hours to hear everything, sort of bombarding him with everything that's going on (Tina, 37 years old, Family D).

Although the time allocated for visiting is greater after conviction than it is when on remand, being less frequent, it is still insufficient to allow for the elaboration of the current conflicts and problems which may exist between the husband and wife, to discuss the future difficulties they may encounter on his release or even to recount all the things they want to tell each other, leading to feelings of anger and disappointment, clearly expressed by

Judy and Joanna:

I think they should be allowed longer visits. Once a month is not enough. What kind of relationship can you carry on with your husband once a month. You only chat verbally, you go to give him a cuddle and they're (officers) telling you to sit down. They tell you this all the time: don't stand up, sit down, sit down, what's your name? sit down, terrible! I mean, you go there, you travel all that way just for that little bit of time and you can't even talk about things; the time goes so quick. (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

It was once a week, it's a fortnight now and only 40 minutes. Two hours we used to have at the other prison. The first months we only had a visit a month. Terrible it was. Funny enough, I did notice that the children were naughtier, unhappy, and realised that they were not seeing him enough. They kept saying: when are we going to see daddy? When you don't see someone for a month and then you just see him for 40 minutes, what can you say to him? You just start to become isolated again from each other. In A. prison you could keep your family alive, but in B. no chance. (Joanna, 34 years old, Family B).

Their conversations during visiting tend to focus on their future relationship and making plans about what they are going to do together:

He's always telling me that something good will come out, not to worry and that he'll be out in no time. Now I know that he loves me, I didn't know that, but now he told me he loves me and the things we're going to do together when he comes home (Cristina, 32 years old, Family S).

You see, we plan for the future, you know, we might say: Oh yes we'll do that, Oh yes that'll be good for the children, you know, you talk things over together and you want the same things, silly little things but it's something to look forward to like we will go to somewhere nice, we'll invite so and so round for a drink or dinner, you know. (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

Eight wives express a sense of loyalty to the husband irrespective of his criminal actions, and five report that

the husbands show more affection towards them now that they are in prison compared to when they were at home. Vera (32 years old, Family C) and Frances (39 years old, Family M) typically express these feelings:

At the moment he's very loving towards me. I get a smooch over the table. I'm quite satisfied with that because I know I'm not going to get anything else, but as I say, when he was out he was too busy for that, so you know I sort of feel satisfied knowing where he is now and you know what he feels for me, he's showing it more now. I know he loves me but he didn't show it so much. Deep down they feel something but they're too busy, so I mean, at the moment I've got his undivided attention, just to me, so that's good. So it's just a matter of standing by him and help him as I can because you know when they are at home, although they can be a bit nasty at time and they sort of leave you on your own a lot, sort of thing. I suppose a lot of women who are married to them sort of men, you know what I'm talking about. But when they're in there you can't turn your back on them. Well, I don't think so anyway. I mean obviously you feel a bit lonely and upset he's in there you know, but you have to accept it, you know, is your husband. But I think if you've got children it's easier because they do take your mind out of it you know, you haven't got the time to sit, you just have to get on with it.

Everytime I visit him, he promises me that he's not drinking anymore. He's determined not to drink anymore, he loves me, he misses me and he feels sorry he can't help me. Anyway, you don't turn your back on your husband just because he goes to prison, you don't feel any different for that person, well I don't, so I stick by him for his sake and my sake.

#### Theme 4C = They don't consider children

As we can see by the above accounts on visiting, women argue that prison authorities do not consider the needs of children in the allocation of prisoners, in the facilities they provide, or in the time allocated for each session. When the husband is on remand, much time is spent waiting

to go through the various procedures that visiting entails and mothers have difficulty keeping the children occupied:

You have to queue up for tickets and if it's pouring down with rain, you have to wait outside in the wet and you get soaking wet. Then you have to queue up to put the food in, then you have to queue up again to put clothes in, and then you have to queue up again to put your bags away and then you have to wait until they call you in, which can be 15 minutes to up to one hour. Don't ask me why, I never knew why and they don't tell you. Then you get 15 minutes. Sometimes if you are lucky you might get 30 minutes. Depends on the officer's moods. I mean, at least they should put a shelter outside where you get your tickets and where you line up to get in. They don't care, my eldest is not so bad but the younger, he just drives me mad, and then there is nowhere to leave the pram, you cannot take the pram in, but if you leave it outside someone may steal it. It's already happened. (Vera, 32 years old, family C).

Vera is helped overcome such difficulties by her son Peter:

When Peter is off school two or three time a week he comes with me. He's company for me as well on the way, plus he knows you've to take clothes up, food, you know, and can be a bit of a strain everyday. So, I mean, the littles are okay but it seems an extra thing to carry you know. When you're doing everyday you just want to get on with the visit and get back home but when you've got the little ones with you it seems longer and tiring, you get no peace so it's a joy to take Peter with me actually (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

The restricted sense of time, together with the lack of facilities for children, result in nine mothers perceiving the children to be a hindrance during prison visits. This view does not change after conviction, even though the visiting time is extended. Mothers often complain that children have nothing to do and run amok with other children, annoying everybody. They become irritated and bored frequently, and interrupt ongoing conversations,



competing for the father's attention:

They could visit him more. It's amazing once they know they're going to see their dad they're all right, they're on their best behaviour, but when they get in there they run wild. Some prisons have little tables for them but nothing else so they still run around, they won't sit down, they run around annoying everybody else (Vera, 32 years old, family C).

She seems a big pain all the time. I mean he (father) loves to see her but we have things to talk about and he'll say: would you go and play with T. for a little while, while I talk to Mummy? and she'll go up and she'll come back and she'll be round his arms again and he says: please Jennifer, let me talk to Mummy, I've got to talk to Mummy like, you know, go and play, you can come and sit on my lap later. But again there is nothing for them to do or to play with, they get bored and are a pain (Constance, 27 years old, Family O).

They are fed up with the journey but Roger still likes to go. But when they are there they run around, run riot, what any kids usually do. I mean there is nothing there for them to do (Sara, 36 years old, Family E).

My little girl comes with me sometimes and Lauren comes with me quite a few times but I don't like taking the kids to the prison, you have to wait for a long time sometimes and they get tired and drive you mad (Annabel, 34 years old, Family R).

Ten women also complain that the environment of the prison is not suitable for children:

It's too crowded. The visit room is very crowded and everybody listens to what you have to say, it's awful. (Sara, 36 years old, Family E).

The conditions in the prison are absolutely disgusting. For a start you have to leave the pram outside the front where everybody can just walk off with it. That's bad enough, then you go inside and everybody listens what you're saying, no privacy (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

## Domain 5 = Support Systems

The wives' accounts of the nature and extent of help they receive from three areas of support are organised around the themes: wives' family as the main source of help; support from friends and neighbours and they don't understand us, I don't trust them anyway. The latter reflects the general perception wives of offenders have towards the Social Services.

### Theme 5A = Wife's family as the main source of help

My mother and father have been marvellous. I mean when they're at the school I've got the little ones and if I go on a visit on my own, my mother will have the two for me. They just can't help me enough, so I'm very lucky in that sense to have my family behind me as well (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

According to the wives' reports, most help is provided by their own families, particularly their mothers. This is in contrast to the husband's family, who generally do not provide any help. Of the 19 wives, 14 received some form of help from their side of the family, and only four reported to have received help from the husband's family. The main reasons given by the wives as to why their husband's families do not help are: the husband does not see his family; that the in-laws are not interested in them; or that the family have disowned him because of his criminal activities:

He won't talk to them. They didn't want to know him in the past. They've tried to come into his life now and he don't want to know. There is a big family problem, all arguing against each other. They want to see him and he refused quite blatantly. They went up there (prison) and he sent them away. I think they've just been bloody nosy. (Joan, 33 years old, Family K).

They know but we haven't been in contact. They don't want to know. His brother comes round now and again, but I don't get any support from them. They're just not interested. (Pamela, 36 years old, Family N).

They don't give me no help, they tend to disown him because of his background. I asked for a bit of help and they turned away (Vera, 32 years old, Family C).

My husband's family does not want to know, actually his mother told me that she don't have a son therefore she don't have grand children (Annabel, 34 years old, Family R)

The two most common forms of aid provided by the wives' families include looking after the children and financial assistance:

I used to take his dinner every time. My mum was alive then, I used to take Roger to school and straight to the prison and then I would be back just after lunch. But I could only cope because my mum was looking after these two. She used to do all the house work while I was gone and all the cooking. I couldn't have done it without her. (Sara, 36 years old, Family E).

I've got only my sister really and she's very good. I go out with her and if I need money she gives it to me. It's more deep with me and J. (sister) (Annabel, 34 years old, Family R).

I find...I wake up.. I don't sleep very well and I don't want to eat, you don't feel like, but then I go to my sister and she forces me to eat. My sister is very good. Because my mum is not capable of looking after herself, so my sister is very good. She took me on holiday, and my sister used to take me on Saturday to the prison because I had an operation on my feet, and I couldn't take a bus and I used to go and visit him every day (Frances, 39 years old, Family M).

Theme 5B - Support from friends and neighbours

Generally, wives report that they are not close with neighbours apart from the general exchanges made when they meet by chance. Only five wives said they received help from neighbours, and this was generally limited to sporadic baby sitting. Conversely, friends play an important role providing the women with emotional support. Fourteen women reported receiving support from friends, of whom the following are typical examples:

A few of my friends know. They're very close friends, they're very good. They support me in any way emotionally. I can pick up the phone and say I feel miserable and they say: come round or I'll come to see you. Then I have a giggle then I'm alright (Pamela, 36 years old, Family N).

My friend has been very good. I've got one friend, she's been very good. She comes round every day since I had the baby and gives me moral support (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

I have two or three close friends. I couldn't have done without them, you know. None of them could tell me what to do, but they listened for months after months, year after year the same thing (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

They (friends) were marvellous. I discovered I have a lot of good friends. They helped me and I think they kept me going (Joanna, 34 years old, Family B).

Theme 5C - They don't understand us. I don't trust them anyway

I wouldn't ask anything from them (social services) because once you get them on your back you can never get them off you. They come here to find out if you're looking after the children properly. They turn up and say they're here for the children only, they see if you're feeding them properly, they're suppose to check on children. They want

to know the ins and outs what you do, and to me they're a bloody nosy buggers because we had a welfare woman coming to my house when the kids were small right and she come to our house to find out if we was all right. I don't know why, just to be nosy I suppose. Well, usually they come to check on people anyway because when I was 18 right, I had two kids before I got married right, and then when I got married and had another child they just checked on me and the children (Kay, 39 years old, Family Q).

The above quote is an example of how wives feel towards the social and probation services. They distrust the social services, as they believe that their main objective is to assess and judge them in their capacity as mothers, and fear that some reason will be found to take their children into care:

The probation officer offered help but I didn't want it because the probation officer came to do a report and Joan had one of her tantrums so he offered me help. She would shout, chuck herself about and I was frightened in case they took her over, you know, I'm on my own and they could put her into care (Karen, 29 years old, Family F).

If you say you need help, you have them on your back every five minutes. They think you're like just the rest. They think you can't cope and take your children away. They do. You ask for a holiday for your kids and they think you aren't coping (Sybil, 27 years old, Family A).

Women also believe that these services do not understand them, and when they do provide help they make one suffer. As a consequence nine wives says that they are not going to bother with them anymore and are seeking alternative ways of securing the assistance they need, or they just give up all together.

Kay (39 years old, Family Q) and Susan's (28 years old,

Family P) reports are examples of how women can suffer from the ordeal of seeking support from the social services:

It's a waste of time because when you try to explain anything to them it's like is coming out of their pocket you know. You say, look I'm entitled to it and they look down on you and say: I don't think that you are. They make you suffer. I hate those places, I really do, time they sort it all out, they make me laugh. The first time I went down there, right, to get travel warrants to see my husband, I lined up and when I got to the window they asked: where to? I said to the Isle of Wight, so she said: go to the travel agency find out how much the fares are to the Isle of Wight, and then when you've done that come back and queue up all over again, about an hour to get to the window to tell her how much it was. We worked out it was 21 pound for me and 17 or 16 quid for each child and that was return. Wait over there, she says, someone will call your name. I was there since 9.30 and it was 3.30 in the afternoon and I was still sitting there waiting, so in the end I went back to the window and say: look, I've been here since 9.30 this morning my name's not been called. Oh, hang on a minute, she says. She went back and called me over and says we'll send the travel ticket next week. I said: all right what day will they be send? Monday, she said. Monday comes no post, no travel tickets, nothing, and the V.O. (visiting order) was for the next day. So I rang them up and she says: they'll be in the first post in the morning. I said: they've got to be 6 tickets, not 5 or 4 or 3, six! She wrote down, six. Then next morning comes, the post comes and I opened it up and there was 5! My daughter couldn't come. I was so annoyed because one of the children couldn't go after 3 months! I thought we wouldn't make it. We did it by the skin of one teeth. When we got to Waterloo Station I found out it was only 9 pounds return. Then I could scream. When I got home I told her: don't worry next time I'm not going to bother asking them, because they take too bloody long. I'll take all of you in turns. It just pissed me off the way they look at you, seems they take it from their own pocket to give to me to see my husband, you know (Kay, 39 years old, Family Q).

I've never had a penny towards my visits. Once someone said you can claim for petrol but you've got to go down with the mileage, this, that and the other and I did, you still never get anything. You have to sit down hour after hour. I spend more on the phone trying to claim it, so I gave up (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

Joan (33 years old, Family K) believes that social services

wait until the problems are serious before giving support, rather than preventing them in the first place:

I wanted them (social services) to do something because I didn't know how to sort out things, not just turn around, like they've turned around and said: no. That's thick! That's why all these poor little kids out there get murdered because they let it go on, and on, and on, and you know it's going to happen, and you go up there and they say we can't do nothing until it happens.

For Susan and Judy, social services are not interested in identifying their special needs:

They really don't understand our problems. I don't want social workers round here preaching, I don't need them, I've got enough trouble. What can they tell me? (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

I really never got the help I needed, because they just don't know what's going on, they don't have the right attitude. They really don't want to know what a person need in the first place. Not every one, because when he was on remand I went to the social services because I didn't have any money and I was crying and I was very depressed and they were just not interested. They said to me: what about your family? why don't you go to your family? I wasn't even talking to my mum at that time; how could I go to my family? I just come home and I didn't bother with them no more (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

However, some wives emphasise that differences exist between welfare officers; therefore, much depends on the particular officer who is dealing with their case:

When I used to live in Essex, 4 years ago, I had a social worker there and she was very good. I didn't have any problem with William or anything, my problem was financial, so whenever I went to see her was only for financial reasons and she was very good, she used to listen to what I had to say (Judy, 27 years old, Family H).

With regard to the probation service, wives report that they are only interested in making a prisoner's report and knowing whether or not they will be taking their husbands back on their release:

I never had any help. All I've ever seen is a probation officer, when they come round here it's because they want to do a social report for him, not for me (Susan, 28 years old, Family P).

They don't help you. He (probation officer) did come once just to do a report but didn't come to help me or the kids, just to do a report. He wanted to know if I was having him back, that was it (Marion, 36 years old, Family G).

During the time the author spent in the prisons' visiting centres it was widely reported by wives of offenders that the types of help they require are: financial, clear information about the prison and court systems to be provided personally, and emotional support from someone who understands their situation. They find the various leaflets explaining the prison rules too general, and complain that they do not provide the answers to the questions that they consider to be important.

#### CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE FATHER'S IMPRISONMENT

In this section, the children's perceptions of their father's imprisonment are organised in ten domains: 1) child's response to the father's arrest; 2) attribution of responsibility; 3) moral development; 4) mother/child relationship; 5) father/child relationship; 6) the prison



visit; 7) interaction with friends; 8) coping with the father's temporary separation 9) self-esteem; 10) children's attitudes towards the interview. These domains refer to the most significant areas under which the data gathered from the children can be organised and described to provide a comprehensive picture of how they experience the imprisonment of the father.

#### Domain 1 - Child's response to the father's arrest

The data described in this domain refers to the child's initial feelings and concerns about the father, at the time of the arrest. The main substantive themes that have emerged from this domain are: sense of shock and disbelief, feelings of sadness and anger, and fantasies.

#### Theme 1A - Sense of shock and disbelief:

That day we were all very confused. We didn't know what was going on. We didn't know when he was going to come back because we have been told by the police that he might be home that very night. We were all very scared and shocked, very shocked. We just couldn't get on with anything else, that was the only thing in our minds (father's arrest). (Tom, 15 years old, Family L).

It was a shock, I couldn't believe it, I didn't know what I was doing. (Sousie, 10 years old, Family A)

I couldn't believe it, but I thought he would come back soon. (Walter, 8 years old, Family A)

I felt funny, I thought my dad is in prison, and he said is not really a prison and then I thought: what is it then? and I found out it was a prison and I didn't believe it. Than I felt very, very sad. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B)

I was very upset and I wondered where he was, but in a way I thought he would come home soon and was all a mistake. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N)

The above quotations represent the initial feelings of the majority of the children at the time of the father's arrest. Most children reported feeling shocked when they learned of their father's arrest, although most believed that it was a mistake and he would return home soon.

Children's feelings of disbelief vary in nature, depending upon whether or not it was the first time they had experienced the arrest of the father. Table 3.8 shows what children believe to be the father's imprisonment records.

Table 3.8 Children's reports of the fathers' imprisonment records

	First offender	Recidivist
Primary-school children	11	4
Adolescents	6	2
Totals:	17	6

Note: According to the mothers, nine fathers are first offenders and ten are recidivists (See p. 230).

In cases where it was the father's first offence (or in the child's perception, it was the father's first offence), the news of the father's arrest is a complete surprise and their feelings centre on the disbelief that the father, as they know him, could commit a deviant act. For example,

George typically expresses this feeling:

My daddy shouldn't be in prison, because wherever he's done is not his fault because he's kind man and wouldn't hurt anybody. (George, 8 years old, Family H)

In cases where children experienced the father's arrest on a previous occasion, the feelings of disbelief are related to the father breaking his promise of not offending again:

Oh no! not again, I didn't believe it. He said: Oh yes, I promise you I won't do it again, but he does. I really believed he'd never do it again. If I were a dad I won't go to prison, I'd have a job and I'll be reliable. (Natalya, 9 years old, Family P)

#### Theme 1B - Feelings of sadness and anger

After the initial shock of the father's arrest and the realisation that he will not return soon, most children experience feelings of sadness and express a longing for the father:

I feel sad because I still have got that much love inside me I can't really think that's gone. I still feel towards him (father) a lot of love because he cared for me for a long time. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N)

I felt sad because there is nobody to talk to, my mum is not the same, she's not a man. (Larry, 8 years old, Family I)

I felt very upset and sad. I miss his cuddling. (Sousie, 10 year old, Family A)

I feel sad because the place is gone all funny without him now. Because when he's around all his mates come round and is a laugh, now is sad. (Louise, 11 years old, Family Q)

I felt very, very sad, he's my dad and I love him. (Dennis,

14 years old, Family J)

Children feel particularly upset at times such as Christmas, school opening days, at night or when friends talk about the contacts they have with their own fathers.

George (8 years old, Family H) feels most sad at Christmas:

When my friends talk about when their dads get something all the time, like buy them a bike for Christmas, makes me feel bad about my dad because he's not here and can't get me anything.

Sousie (10 years, Family A) and Mara (9 years old, Family N) feel very upset when they see or hear about other children with their fathers:

When I see other people with their dads I feel I wish my dad was here. I feel very sad.

I can't talk about my dad because I've got to keep the secret. I keep quiet but I feel sad because they say things like my dad took me to the park on Sunday or to the fun fair, things like that.

Peter (12 years old, Family C) finds it most difficult to cope with the opening day at his school:

If... like my school was going to have like an open evening, when my parents come to see my work and everytime I go to it is just my mum, I feel a bit left out because everyone else's dad is there and I think I'm the only one in school with a dad in prison, because everyone's dad is there.

Lola (8 years old, Family B) feels most sad when she thinks about her father at night:

When I think of daddy, that he's in prison, at night-time makes me cry. I don't like when I think that because then I have a lot of horrible dreams about the killings of the girl. I dream that somebody stabs me and I can sort of feel the pain.

The child's feelings of sadness can also interfere with school work. As Dennis (14 years old, Family J) explains:

I'm not doing too well in the school. I do good in some lessons but some lessons when I get bored I just think of my dad. It just makes me feel unhappy and sad. I just don't like the lesson anymore and I think of my dad all the time.

The second most common emotion reported by children is anger. In four cases anger is directed towards the father for breaking the promise he made to the child of not re-offending and in two cases anger is directed toward the father as they think that imprisonment could have been avoided if he did not drink.

Dennis (14 years old, Family J) and Natalya (9 years old, Family P), express these feelings for the father re-offending. Dennis says angrily:

Last time was bad enough just waiting for him to get out of prison; it seemed so long. He promised me last time when he was in prison: I promise you son that I won't touch drugs, and then he got arrested again, I feel so angry.

Natalya felt very disappointed with her father when he was arrested for the second time, although she now appears to be resigned to the fact that he doesn't keep his promises:

I like to see my dad but I'm annoyed that he's done it again, he shouldn't so he would be at home. I feel annoyed with him because he promised me he wouldn't do it again, but he says that all the time but then he still do. I don't like it but I accept it. He's putting away, getting round my finger. My dad lets me down, I get angry and upset and he sort of explain and he sounds like he really couldn't when he could. I end up going along with what he says. (Natalya, 9 years old, Family P)

Roger (8 years old, Family E) felt very angry at his father's arrest. According to his mother, he refused initially to see his father and it was only after a month that she was able to persuade him to visit the prison:

I don't really want him to be in prison, I want him to come home because then we could do better things. He promised me he wouldn't drink anymore. I would stop him drinking. He shouldn't fight, but the man started picking on him. But he won't be naughty again, he promised me he won't be. (Roger, 8 years old, Family E).

Table 3.9 Feelings of anger towards the father.

Feelings	First offender	Recidivist
Angry	2	4
Not angry	16	1
Totals:	18	5

$\chi^2 = 6.39$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.02$ . (Calculated using Yates correction).

Table 3.9 shows that children of recidivists are more likely to express feelings of anger towards the father than children of first offenders.

In other cases feelings of anger are directed towards the judicial system in general, and the police in particular. However, variations in feelings of anger were found according to whether or not children were personally involved in the procedures of the father's arrest. Of the seven children who were a witness to the arrest procedures, that is, those who actually witnessed the arrest, and/or the police search of the home, and/or were subjected to police questioning, four reported hostile feelings towards the police. For example, Ronald (15 years, Family M) was alone at home when the police arrived to arrest his father. Reporting his experience, he states:

They just said he's a bad man and I shouldn't associate with him. When I opened the door they rushed in upstairs and said: Where's him? and I said: I don't know, and they rushed upstairs took his clothes out right, and I said: what's the matter, have you got a warrant? They said: no, we don't need because it's a murder investigation. What's he done? and they said: he's a very bad man, he's done a very terrible thing. They didn't even know was him or not, and they said that to me, at home.

Ronald's feelings of anger were exacerbated when he discovered that the police should not have made him sign a statement, and he complains they distorted the information he gave them about his father.

Sally (9 years old, Family S) felt also very angry at the attitude of the police. She was at home with her mother when the police burst in to search for drugs. They pushed

her mother aside and after looking everywhere in the house, they questioned Sally about family relatives and the interaction she had with her father:

They asked questions to me and I didn't like that stupid woman. She's a detective. She asked about my dad, my grandfather and my uncle and she put down my name and my grandfather's name and my uncle's, and she wanted to know where I went with my dad and what presents he gives me.

Feelings of extreme anger resulting from this type of experience with the police are expressed by two adolescents. For example, Tom (15 years old, Family L) does not trust the police anymore:

I hate the police. I find out that the police lie a lot. They want it to go through as easy as possible. I don't respect the police at all, not only because the way they treated my father but because the way they lied in court. On the day of the arrest they searched the house and the way they did it they didn't really care what they were doing. They were very rude and thought that the whole family was involved, especially the person in charge. He was telling us that my father was this and that and I found really rude and disturbing. I thought the police was great, no, I thought they were brilliant, and after that day all this is gone. No respect for a start, and I find that a lot of kids at school don't respect the police. I always wondered why, but now I know why. The way they told me about my father was really shocking. They didn't really care how I felt. The first thing they said was: Do you have any powder in this house? Come on, come on tell me. They treated the family as bad as they treat the person who's involved, what is wrong.

Although hostile feelings towards the police were also expressed by four out of the 16 children who did not witness the arrest procedures, these feelings are elicited by a sense of injustice in general or by experiences related to their own deviant behaviour. For example, Mara



and Sousie feel angry with the representatives of the legal system in general:

I feel angry because the police, the judge, all this people, they are just not interested in the person or the family. I think they can't be bothered to look to my dad's case so they just say he's guilty. If you get into trouble they just don't understand, not only they don't understand the person that they arrest, but they don't understand the family where he lives. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N).

I understood all that, but when he had to go to court and he was sentenced to nine years I just didn't understand that, and why he was sentenced to nine years. I got upset first but, in a way, I thought he would come home soon and that it was all a mistake. But when he was sentenced to nine years I felt like going up there and ripping and smashing the place up. (Sousie, 10 years old, Family A).

The hostile feelings towards the police expressed by Donald, are related to experiences of his own illegal behaviour:

Policemen are just funny aren't they? They wouldn't be the one who upright the law. I reckon we should make citizen's arrest against them. I can see enough stuff. I've seen kids getting beaten up by a police. They don't care, all they care is about themselves and their families and their things, everything they want. They don't care about us, they wouldn't care right if my mum died right, my dad got a sentence to life right, they don't care. If they knew that my mum died right, and my dad died right, they would still try to put me down. The court might care but the police wouldn't. They wouldn't even put it in the statement. (Donald, 14 years old, Family K)

Two children, a brother and sister, who actually witnessed the father's crime, expressed feelings of fear towards the police as they believed that they too could be arrested or taken into care:

I heard my dad and the man screaming. I thought that he (father) was killing my mum, that what I thought. I felt scared. I just lied in bed quiet. When all went quiet me and my sister run down and saw the man lying on the floor. My dad was gone, my mum had gone to ring the ambulance. I thought that the police would come and take me away. (Larry, 8 years old, Family I)

In three cases, the child's anger was directed against the mother for not providing the things they were used to receive when the father was at home, such as clothes, presents, sweets and pocket money:

Well, all my friends they buy jeans and the next week I want to get them and she (mother) hasn't got no money so I say: Oh! all my friends get money is not fair. But now I know that my friends they've got a dad and they're the only child and my mum has got three kids and she's really on her own, but I still feel angry, maybe she could do something. (Lauren, 11 years, Family L)

When Sybil (Family A) could not give any pocket money to Walter (8 years old, Family A), he refused to accept her explanation that his father did not give her any, and accused her of keeping the money. Walter cannot understand that the money was given to his mother by his father in the first place:

When my dad was here we used to get pocket money, but I don't have pocket money now, my mum don't want us to have pocket money, she wants to spend herself.

### Theme 1C = Fantasies

I want to know where my mum is all the time, what if I go up the road and the police gets her? What is going to happen to me? I've got to go in a home. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N)

I think.. nobody told me. I knew about it because I was there when he was taken away. I thought that something had happened like him been taken to be killed, that's what I thought in the first place, because he was stucked in a police car, and I got really funny and I was going to cry. But I soon find out that he was just gone to prison and I didn't believe it. This relieved me from being killed but I still didn't like it. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B).

As the two quotations illustrate, there are two main categories of fantasies resulting from the father's arrest: fantasies of being abandoned by the mother, and fantasies of the father's well being. Nine children expressed fantasies about their father's well being and five children fantasies of being abandoned by the mother.

Children's fantasies about the father's well being generally focus either on the material conditions of the prison or his physical safety.

My daddy told me that he got red carpet and green wall paper in the cell in this prison, because when I went to see him in a police cell he didn't have a carpet, the mattress was rolled in the corner and the toilet didn't have a flush. My mum told me that was for men that are arrested because they're drunk in case they're sick. I was upset, the place looked horrible. (Natalya, 9 years old, Family P)

I asked him how is the bed and he says is rotten because he only has one blanket, one sheet. He might feel cold. (Louise, 11 years old, Family Q)

I want to know if he's all right and what they (police) do to him. He tells me that they haven't been touching him, the police can beat people. (Jamie, 10 years old, Family G)

Table 3.10 Fantasies of the father's well being.

Fantasies	Witness	Non-witness
Reported	6	3
Not reported	1	13
Totals:	7	16

$\chi^2 = 6.57, df = 1, p < 0.02$  (Calculated using Yates correction).

As table 3.10 shows, children who witness the father's arrest are more likely to express fantasies of the father's well being than those who do not witness the arrest.

Fantasies of the father's well being can be distinguished between those that are based on factual criteria, such as the father's medical history, or those based on the children's imagination, for example the fear that he may come to some harm by the police. Fantasies expressed by the adolescents are based on factual criteria, whereas those expressed by primary-school children are based on their imagination. For example Sally (9 years old, Family S) says about her father's arrest:

I didn't believe, may be they were lying, or was somebody else, and I thought they may hit him to make him tell who was involved.

However, Paul's (13 years old, Family D) concerns about his father's health were based on the fact that he had been shot by the police during his arrest:

I was just worried if he was all right. I didn't know what was going on and what the police did to him.

In Table 3.11 is considered the relationship between age and expression of fantasies.

Table 3.11 Children's fantasies according to age

	Fantasy of father's well being	Fantasy of being abandoned by the mother
Primary-school children	7	5
Adolescents	2	0
Totals:	9	5

Fantasies of being abandoned by the mother are based on the assumption that, as their fathers had been taken away, this could also happen to their mothers. In the case of Mara (9 years old, Family N), her fantasy of being abandoned by the mother was based on the belief that her father's incarceration was not justified, and therefore the same could happen to her mother:

Daddy didn't do anything that wrong and he's not here, perhaps they'll get my mum.

The fantasies of being abandoned by the mother can be exacerbated by events that add a sense of reality to the children's concerns, such as the mother's hospitalisation and the mother attending the police station for

questioning. In the former case, the mother reported that during one of his visits to the hospital George (8 years old, Family H):

Cried, cried and cried. He wanted me to come home: mummy, I want you to come home today, ask the doctor to let you come home today. He's really frightened that I wouldn't go back home. (Judy, Family H)

At the time of the second interview, no children reported concerns about the father's well being. However three children still expressed fantasies of abandonment by the mother.

#### Domain 2 - Attributing responsibility

Once children have overcome the initial shock of the father's arrest, they attempt to make sense of his action. The domain attributing responsibility which refers to this process contains two themes: the explanation children are provided with to account for their father's absence, and "It's not his fault, he's still my dad and the same person", which reflects the general response given by children to the question of the father's responsibility for his incarceration.

#### Theme 2A - The explanation

She (mother) just told me that he was arrested and I had to wait a while until she said why. She said he had been arrested and kept there (prison). I understood everything

about customs and all that and I thought they were only doing their job, but he had to go to court I just didn't understand that. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N)

Nobody told me anything. I know my daddy's in prison because my mum was talking to his friend about prison, that daddy was in prison. But I keep thinking he's in hospital all day. (Jennifer, 8 years old, Family O)

She (mother) just said that he was nicked again and he's gone to prison and she said : don't tell no one but I only told D. (best friend) and my teacher. (Louise, 11 years, Family Q)

Nobody told me, my mum acted like nothing happened really, but she told me in the end. She said it was a prison and he was trying to make money for us. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B)

She just said that he's gone again. (Jamie, 10 years old, Family G).

She told me everything that happened. Just told me that the police phoned her up that my dad was in the police and that he stabbed someone. Someone jumped on him and he (father) stabbed him. (Jaber, 14 years old, Family K)

At the time of the first interview all but three children in the study knew why the father was in prison. These three children, although they knew that the father was in prison, thought that he was arrested for an offence other than the one for which he was imprisoned.

Table 3.12 How children knew about the father arrest

	Primary-school children	Adolescents
Mother	6	4
Father	1	0
Witness the arrest	2	3
Other sources	6	1
Totals:	15	8

As the table 3. 12 shows, three of the eight adolescents were informed by the police at the time of the father arrest, four were informed by the mother and one learned about the father's arrest from a report in a newspaper. Of the 15 primary-school children, one was informed by the father, two witnessed the arrest, six received the information from the mother, and six learned about the father's arrest from overhearing conversations between the mother and family members or friends, or from the media. Although a further two primary-school children also witnessed the father's arrest, they only became aware of his incarceration at a later stage when their mothers explained the event to them.

At the time of the second interview, the three children who did not know the true nature of the father's offence continued to give confusing accounts of the event. For example, during the interview, Lola (8 years old, Family B) made conflicting reports about the father's offence. In one instance she said:

My daddy's in prison because he got very friendly with R. and they started doing alcohol and one day the police came round, no they were waiting and said: you're under arrest and my dad didn't even had time to say the truth.

and on another:

He was trying to make some money by not paying tax.



Although mothers inform the child of the father's arrest, or confirm it when the child learns from other sources, not all mothers provide an adequate explanation of the event, and some do not give any explanation. All adolescents followed the imprisonment process and talked about the sequence of events with the mother. In the case of primary-school children, six received some form of explanation from the mother, and seven no explanation.

Children who receive a truthful explanation from the mother express feelings of pride that she trusts them:

When my mum told me that my daddy was arrested, I wondered where he was. I didn't understand much, but then after I understood about customs and the courts and all that. My mum tells me everything, she wouldn't lie to me. (Mara, 9 years old, family N)

Conversely, children who have been deceived or given no explanation at all, express feelings of rejection and confusion:

I must've tried to think how... I must've think... I keep thinking daddy is not in prison, I think he's in hospital and then there's hospital chairs everywhere. I know because my mum was talking to her friend about prison, that daddy was in prison, I feel sad because nobody told me anything. (Jennifer, 8 years old, family O)

In the absence of an explanation children sometimes construe a dramatic account of the father's arrest based on fragmented information they receive from various sources:

My daddy robbed the bank twice. I think was a jewelry or a bank. His brother was standing guard, I think he was

telling my dad: they come, they come (police), but he wouldn't listen, so because when they turn into that road the sirens were off so that's why he just thought he (brother) was lying like that. (Daniel, 8 years old, family E)

The police stayed outside the house to see who was coming in and out. These policemen, they were spies and they followed my mum behind, when she went through corners they quickly went through corners and stuff like that and followed her here. (Sally, 9 years old, Family S)

Theme 2B - It wasn't really his fault...he's still my dad and the same person

I knew in a sense, I know it wasn't his fault, it wasn't him, because my dad couldn't do that, and I still have got that much love inside me because he cared for me. (Mara, 9 years old, family N)

My daddy shouldn't be in prison, because whatever he's done is not his fault because he's kind man and wouldn't hurt anybody. (George, 8 years old, family H)

As we can see by the above illustrations, children do not associate the act for which the father was arrested with their perception of him as a father. They use various forms of justifications to dissociate the father's culpability from his deviant act. These forms of justification can be grouped under seven categories: 1) displacement of responsibility; 2) diminished responsibility; 3) focus displacement; 4) family loyalty; 5) selective avoidance; 6) innocent of the offence; 7) comparative deviance. Children whose explanations are categorised as innocent of the offence do not admit that the father has committed the offence, the remainder accept that the father was involved in the offence but neutralise his culpability.

Children who displace responsibility apportion blame for the father's offence to external agents:

The man that really made him go to prison. A man called R., he made him go to prison because they were doing this cigarettes. Well, he was playing this game, just sort of R. was playing games with my daddy saying that he stay there, because they were making cigarettes. He wasn't a very nice man. He was telling daddy to stay there and make the cigarettes up on the top floor, no, in the streets, so until he had this police people coming, and it was R. who should've got arrested. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B)

It's the fault of the people who makes the beer lager because they shouldn't really make it and make people drunk. (Roger, 8 years old, Family E)

I blame his friends because he was just driving the car and they followed him and was the police. (Sally, 9 years old, Family S)

Diminished responsibility refers to children who neutralise the father's culpability by claiming his lack of intent:

What I think right? You cannot really blame him, because he was drunk and didn't want to hurt his friend. It was an accident, it happened, he was there, it was the circumstances. (Ronald, 15 years, Family M)

He stabbed a person but wasn't his fault, someone jumped on him. He took the Max (dog) so he had the knife, and when he's cutting dog's food he must, just like, putting it in his back pocket like just normal, right, and then he went out right, and then someone jumped on him and he felt the knife in his pocket and he pulled it out and then jumped on him. (Donald, 14 year old, Family K)

Focused displacement refers to children who displace the alleged bad qualities of the father onto the legal authorities, such as the police. In the case of George (8 years old, Family H), he focuses on the devious way the

police behaved to secure his father's arrest rather than justifying the offence he committed:

When my dad wasn't allowed out after 9 o'clock (his father was on bail under curfew) the police was watching him, which they wasn't supposed to be doing; they were supposed to be working somewhere else, but they were watching my dad after nine. They see him going round the corner, grabbed him and handcuffed him, and they looked everywhere in the flat and I wasn't allowed to sit in his lap. They just wanted to put my dad in prison. (George, 8 years old, Family H)

Explanations in the category of family loyalty are a justification of the father's action by invoking his obligations as a family member:

Well, he said he done for us. He put himself down for us. It was hard to get a job and is bugging him because everyone was lying about, and just sitting around looking for a job, so he tried to get some money for us. He's got a wife and kids to support. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C)

My dad got involved with his brother; is his own blood. My dad couldn't say no to his brother because he (brother) needed money, because his wife died of cancer. (Paul, 14 years old, Family D)

Some children claim that they do not think about the subject or that they cannot make a judgement about the father's responsibility as they do not know what happened. However, according to other statements they make during the course of the interview, it is clear that they do know. These children are placed in the category selective avoidance:

I never think about that (father's imprisonment). I can't remember why he's in prison. I think because someone

thought he killed a man. (Walter, 8 years old, Family A)

Children in the category innocent of the offence do not attempt to justify the father's criminal action as they are convinced of his innocence:

He's in there (prison) for drug smuggling but he shouldn't be in there because he didn't do anything wrong. They thought he was guilty, but they were wrong. I think they were wrong because if you look at the case they've got nothing against him, and I don't understand why they reckon he was guilty. He didn't have any drugs on him, R. had the drug on him, not my dad. My dad was only with him. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N)

Finally, there are the children who minimise the seriousness of the father's offence by comparing it with a crime of a more serious nature (Comparative deviance):

What he's done is not really as bad as something like ..on TV see people who rape, and my dad did a burglary and got three years, and you see people on TV that rape people and things like that, this is bad. (Laura, 13 years old, family G)

Table 3.13 gives the number of children in each category at time one and time two, according to age and gender.

Table 3.13 Children's justifications of the father's offence.

	Time 1				Time 2			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	P*	A**	P	A	P	A	P	A
Displacement of responsibility	3	0	3	0	2	0	5	0
Focused displacement	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Diminished responsibility	0	4	0	0	0	4	0	0
Family loyalty	0	2	1	0	0	2	1	0
Selective avoidance	2	0	1	0	3	0	2	0
Innocent of the offence	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	0
Comparative deviance	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Totals:	6	7	8	2	6	7	8	2

P\* Primary-school children  
A\*\* Adolescents

The fathers of six out of the seven children who changed categories were convicted between the first and second interviews as were four fathers out of the eight children who did not change categories. Examples of changes in the child's justification after conviction are the cases of George (8 years old, Family H) and Sousie (10 years old, family A). At the first interview George blamed the people with whom his father took part in the robbery but at the second interview he emphasises the role of the police:

They were following my daddy which they are not supposed to be doing.

Sousie also changed concerning the father's involvement in the offence. From a strong belief in her father's innocence at the time of the first interview, she now engages in selective avoidance:

I don't blame no one, what happened just happened, I don't want to think about it no more.

### Domain 3 = Moral reasoning

This domain focuses on the child's moral judgment in relation to the issues of the father's punishment and the punishment of people in general. The results of the latter are represented by the stages children are assigned in Kohlberg's moral dilemma III'. Kohlberg's dilemmas I and III were also presented to the children to assess moral stage (Appendix 5). However, for a comparative analysis of the results of the children's judgment of the father's punishment and the punishment of people in general, only Kohlberg's dilemma III' which focuses on the punishment of the protagonist is considered. The theme which emerged from children judging the father's punishment is: maintaining the consistency of the father's image.

### Theme 3 = Maintaining the consistency of the father's image

The above theme underlies the reasons children provide for not punishing the father or arguing that he should only receive a lenient sentence. Central to the child's reasoning about whether or not the father deserves punishment is the notion that he is not essentially a criminal and whatever he has done, or charged with, is explained by reasons other than the father's character.

In an analysis of the children's judgments of the father's punishment and Kohlberg's hypothetical dilemma it was found that in some cases, the children's reasoning on the two issues share certain similarities, which has given rise to three categories of moral reasoning: separators, transients and integrators.

Separators are children who do not use the same rationale when judging punishment for the father and punishment for people in general:

Father:

He really didn't do it, the man R. made him do it. Well, he could be sentenced but not for a long time, a month. He didn't do it, the man made him do it. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B)

General:

Yes, you should obey the law because you should obey the government to stop the stealing and they should be punished



because is against the law. (Lola, 8 years, Family B)

It is clear from the above example that the rationale underlying punishment for the father is based on the child's construed justification for his offence, whereas punishment for people in general is based on a categorical principle, which is characterised by obedience and respect for authority, and assumes that there is only one perception about the situation and only one morally appropriate response to it (Colby and Kohlberg, 1987). The child's reasoning of the father's punishment reveals that s/he introduces mitigating factors which is an indication of his/her personal involvement in the evaluative process.

Transients are children who show that an incipient transfer of the ideas underlying the judgement of the father's punishment to their judgment of punishment for people in general has taken place.

Father:

He should be free or stay in prison a month or two because he was guilty, but not really guilty. His friends put him into it, he didn't want to do it, and he never done anything like that before. My dad is kind and cares about us. (Sally, 9 years old, Family S)

General:

You should obey the law because if the law was made, was made for good reasons. But if they care about the person, and if they aren't doing it on purpose or for fun, and if it's only once, then they can break the law. People should be punished if they want to do it, but some persons should

be let free if they have a reason to do it.  
(Sally, 9 years old, Family S)

In the above illustration it can be seen that the underlying ideas which determine the father's punishment centre on the notions of intentionality and that a single offence is not sufficient to define a person as criminal. The concept of intentionality used by Sally in her judgment of the punishment her father deserves: "he's not really guilty, his friends put him into it", can be seen in the criteria she uses when judging punishment for people in general: "If they're doing it on purpose, then yes" they should be punished. Similarly, Sally's use of the single offence criterion when judging the father's action: "he never done anything like that before", is also manifest when judging people in general: "if it's only once, no".

Integrators are children who use the same underlying ideas when judging both punishment of the father and punishment for people in general.

Father:

I want him to go free, but it's not the way it goes, he had to be punished by law, but he had do what he had to do, because his brother is his own blood and he was helping him, because if he don't he would feel guilty really.  
(Peter, 13 years old, Family D)

General:

They should do what they can to obey the law, you should try unless they can't, like my dad. If they've got to do

what they've got to do, then they've got to do it. (Peter, 13 years old, Family D)

The underlying principle of loyalty to the family which Peter takes into consideration in his justification of the father's action: "it's his own blood", is replicated in the judgment of punishment in general by the implicit idea that people have obligations for others which may justify breaking the law: "like my dad, if they've got to do what they've got to do, then they've got to do it".

Table 3.14 Children's moral stages and their assigned categories at Time 1 and Time 2.

Separ./ Separ.		Separ./ Trans.		Separ./ Integr.		Trans./ Trans./		Trans./ Integr.	
T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
1(2)	1	3	3	1	2/3	3(2)	3	3	3(4)
1	1	2/3	3	2	3	2	2	2(3)	3
1	1			1	3(2)				
2	2/3			2	3				
1/2	1(2)								
2(1)	1								
1/2	1								
1	1								
2/3	3								
1	1								
2	2								
2	1/2								
3	3/4								
13		2		4		2		2	

Table 3.14 shows the moral stages assigned to the children at the first interview (T1) and at the second interview (T2), and gives the numbers of children allocated to each

category.

At the time of the first interview 19 children are separators and four transient. At the time of the second interview, eight children changed categories: two separators to transient; four separators to integrators and two transient to integrators. All children, but one who changed category also changed their moral stage, with the most significant increase from separators to integrators.

#### Domain 4 = Mother/child relationship

Within this domain are presented the children's perceptions of changes in their interaction with the mother since the father's imprisonment. The data have been organised around the theme: coping with a mother on her own, which incorporates the child's perception of the mother's emotional and physical availability and the changes in the family's organisation.

#### Theme 4 = Coping with a mother on her own

It was difficult to cope with my mum really, because she was very upset and that and she couldn't be bothered with us, she didn't know what to do. She just couldn't handle it, so I help her, just like no arguments and that and do the normal things like baby sitting and cleaning the room. (Lauren, 11 years old, Family R)

My mum felt worse than me because my mum was crying a lot, all the time. When my mum thought about it (husband's arrest), my mum was crying a lot more than me, that upset

me but I can't do nothing. (George, 8 years old, Family H)

The anxiety-provoking nature of the period after the father's arrest is conveyed by the account of Tom (15 years old, Family L):

...there's so much tension here (home), the topic we talk is laws, solicitors, barristers, what's happening and what could happen. Dad's trial is coming soon and that's all we talk about. I just want to get away from everything and just laugh because I haven't laughed for so long. I want to get away, just be with friends and just forget about everything.

The main changes reported by children concerning their relationship with the mother following their father's imprisonment include: 1) mother's lack of attention; 2) being an object of the mother's frustration; 3) increased responsibility; 4) less restriction on time and household rules; 5) changes in mother's usual routine.

At the first interview, 10 children report that the mothers are too upset and too busy to take the time to listen to their problems. At the second interview, nine children complain about the mother's lack of attention, one did not know and 13 continued to think that the mothers gave them adequate attention.

Typical examples of children who feel that the mother does not give them the time and attention they require are the cases of Peter, Walter, Louise and Lola:

Sometimes I talk things to my nan. She sits down and takes the time to talk to me and things like that, because my mum has got too much hassle with those three (brothers and sister). But my nan's children are grown up so she sits down and my grandad might just go to the other room and she talks with me about my daddy. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C)

I talk to my nanny because she's nice, she gives me money and sweets and spends time with me. My mum usually is not here so I go to my nanny, she's always in. I might talk to my mum if she was in. (Walter, 8 years old, Family A)

My mum don't understand how I feel, she's too busy going about, doing things, washing up, doing the dinner. I can't talk to her I talk to my friend. (Louise, 11 years old, Family K)

I talk to my auntie because every time she talks to me she says it'll be alright, she calms me down, she tries to help me to stop thinking about it (father's imprisonment) and help to stop making me remember it. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B)

Seven children report that the mother's attitude towards them has become more aggressive since their father's arrest:

She's very upset and takes it on me. She beats me up, she bangs my head on the television or pulls my hair. (Sally, 9 years old, Family S)

I used to talk to my daddy, but now I talk to my friend. My mum only shouts at me now. (Louise, 12 years old, Family G)

I don't get on with my mum anymore. She gets angry and hits me all the time. Sometimes she hits me with her hand but sometimes with a bat, the tennis bat, the plastic one. I don't know why. (Walter, 9 years old, Family A)

Conversely, in four cases the bond between the mother and child became stronger through the mother's increased interaction with her children; that is, by the mother

seeking their company, opinions and engaging in conversation with them more frequently. Examples of this type of change can be seen in the accounts of Peter's and Tom's perceptions of their mother's attitude towards them. Peter (12 years old, Family C) feels proud to be considered the "man of the house":

My mum understands that I haven't got my dad here and I help her, and like she treats me as if I'm the man of the house. We talk until late and then I lock all the doors before going to bed. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C)

For Tom, his mother has become a major source of support and strength, qualities which prior to the father's imprisonment he was unaware she possessed:

My mum is loving, caring, and now I discovered she's strong. While everything was all right she stepped back, but in a difficult situation like that she showed her strength. She's always here and helped us. I respect her a hell of a lot; I respect her for everything, her support, her sticking by my dad the next day she was so weary she didn't know what was going to happen to her or us. (Tom, 15 years old, Family L)

Children also report that they are asked to perform additional tasks at home, such as baby sitting, shopping and cleaning. Although they accept that they should help their mothers, they feel overburdened with such tasks and believe that her demands are unfair:

I sometimes baby sit and if they (brother and sister) don't go asleep and muck around, because they always muck around, then I lose my temper and hit them, but they don't really do what I tell them. She (mother) ask me to do things. I go shopping and clean the room, but sometimes I just feel like: leave me alone please, because I think she (mother)

was making a habit to send me to the shops, because she used to ask me everyday. (Lauren, 11 year, Family R).

My mum don't understand me sometimes. She now gets me to do the washing up and sweep the steps down. I don't like it, I didn't use to do it before. (Larry, 8 years old, Family I)

In the case of Peter (12 years old, Family C), although proud to be considered the "man of the house", he is frustrated at not being able to join his friends in outdoor activities:

Well, I've got to look after my brother and sister. I stay in baby sitting if my mum has to go somewhere special. But I want to go out and meet my friends and she says: no, you've got to baby sit, and I say: everyone is going, all my friends, and she says: no, I don't care, you've got to baby sit, I've got to go somewhere special. I really don't understand that, I can't come to terms with that because I think it's not fair. My dad will be out and I just want to go back to normal again.

However, at the same time children can also become more aware of the adult's values and concerns when they have to take on adult's roles, as in the case of Peter (12 years old, Family C):

I understand my dad's situation and my mum's situation a bit better I think. I thought like I've just realised how much responsibility my mum has taken on. It's just my brothers getting older, it's more difficult to handle them.

A further consequence of living with a mother on her own reported by some children is that less restrictions are placed on time and household rules. According to eight children, since the father's imprisonment their mothers



have allowed them to play out longer with their friends, to go to bed much later, and watch more television:

Now that he's inside I can do what I want. If I want to stay out she don't mind. I ask: what time shall I be in? and she says: 10 o'clock. She's understanding with problems and with me really when I want to go out. When he's here it's like don't go out, don't stay out too late at night because something might happen to you. I've got to be in bed by nine and if I say: could I just go to bed at 10, he says: no, Saturdays and Sundays go any time. (Lauren, 11 years, Family R)

When he was here we couldn't touch the tele, we had to ask him first. When he went we touch it all the time. (Larry, 8 years old, Family I)

Before he went to prison I had to be in about half past eight, nine o'clock, but when he went to prison my mum didn't mind if I came later, but she didn't help me to do my homework or anything because she had too much in her mind. (Dennis, 14 years old, Family J)

Of particular concern to some children are changes in the mother's domestic routine. For example, Peter and Paul resent not being provided with the meals that they were used to:

Things like meal time, because now we just say what we're going to have for dinner at the last knockings of the day and I go round the shops and get something, but he (father) always make sure that was a proper meal on the table, he made sure of that, that we'll get a good meal inside us. But my mum make sure we get something to eat. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C)

She (mother) don't cook lovely dinners anymore. (Paul, 13 year old, Family D).

Sally, on the other hand, complains about her mother's late arrivals from the prison visits and her forgetfulness to separate her P.E. (Physical Education) clothes for school:

My mum now goes down the prison all the time. I don't like that because when my mum is late then I have to go to a friend's house until my mum comes back. I don't like that. And sometimes she forgets the P.E. stuff and my teacher says I can't do the games, but then some mornings she gets the stuff quickly ready. (Sabrina, 9 years old, Family S)

In the cases of Dennis and Jaber, they feel upset with their mother's uncharacteristic behaviours:

She's not working anymore, she just mucks around and has the hump and that; she don't clean, she don't cook. My mum's unhappy, she thinks of my dad, then I went to bed and started crying and that. (Dennis, 14 years old, Family J).

My mum, don't stop cleaning the house. I would stop the house cleaning. I haven't got a clue why she never stops cleaning. (Jaber, 14 years old, Family K)

Children also express feelings of insecurity as a consequence of the changes in the pattern of the mother's domestic routine. Dennis (14 years old, Family J), worried with his mother's lack of direction decided to write to his brother in Australia:

Before (father's imprisonment) she had a job. But now she don't do anything, just mucks around. I've written to my brother telling him about my mum. He might come back.

#### Domain 5 - Father/child relationship

Within this domain are presented the children's perceptions of their relationship with the father since the arrest. Three themes have emerged from the data related to this domain: father as a trustworthy figure, which refers to the

children's perceptions of whom they trust and whom they confide, or seek help in times of trouble; sense of loss, in which are described the children's perceptions and feelings about the main losses they report since the father's arrest; and changes in the nature of father/child relationship, which are presented the qualitative changes undergone between the father and child after imprisonment and at his release.

#### Theme 5A - Father as a trustworthy figure

It depends, if I'm in trouble at school, like if I answer back I'll tell my mum because she knows what to say to the school, she always does. She just takes the pressure from me, she says she's sorry and that. If I'm in trouble with some neighbour I'll tell my dad because she won't do anything about it. She'll say: I can't do anything. My dad would apologise for me to the people and would repay for the damage if I broke a window or something, my mum leaves me to do it. If something hurts me, or like hurting myself, I would talk to my mum because like she's a woman, you tell her things you can't tell your father. She'll understand better. She always keeps the secret and she never says: Oh you shouldn't have done this or that. She listens and I can tell her anything. (Sally, 9 years old, Family S)

Depends on the problem. If the problem was at school I would go to my mum because she's quite clever and she would understand. If I had a fight I would go to my cousin because he could give me advice. I couldn't talk to my dad like I can to my mum, because he just don't understand like my mum. I love him, he's my dad, don't matter he's in prison, but he wouldn't do anything about it unless was really serious. He wouldn't say anything; he'd just laugh and say: I used to do that when I was little, just enjoy yourself when you can. He wouldn't give me advice anyway, because he don't come to me and that, sit down and that, and ask to me how I'm getting on about my problems and that. My mum does sit down and talk to me. (Dennis, 14 years old, Family J)

As the above quotations show, when children have a problem

that needs to be resolved or one that requires support and empathy, they do not necessarily go to the same person, but rather choose a person they consider to be most able to help them with the particular problem in question. The criteria they use to make this choice are dependant on the nature of the problem. That is, if children wish to confide feelings and personal experiences, they choose the person who they feel understands them and gives them the attention they require. For problems of a more practical nature they select the person who they consider has the qualities most suitable to resolve a particular issue or is competent to provide the advice they need. This person may be the mother, the father, an aunt or friend, or a combination of these depending on the situation.

For example, Lola would confide in both her aunt and her mother depending on the nature of the personal problem, whilst Natalya and Jaber feel they can only confide and seek help from their mothers as they are understanding, take them seriously, and would take action if they were in trouble:

It would be my auntie because in my family nobody really understands me more then her, because she talks to me in a certain way. My mummy talks to me a bit angry. But I would choose different people because sometimes it won't be in that matter (father's imprisonment). If I was going to lose all my concentration at school then it would be mummy who I would talk to. She knows what to do. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B)

I would talk to my mum because dad makes jokes out of things. I tell him something serious and he laughs. If I'm

joking I don't mind him joking with me, but when I'm serious I want him to be serious and all. If I have a problem, you know, with a boy friend at school, I wouldn't tell my dad because he would laugh. Hum...when he does his oil paintings and I'm talking with him, if I was telling him one of my problems he'd carry on painting while I was talking. He concentrates on the paintings and wouldn't listen. And if I'm in trouble, it would be my mum because if it's serious she wouldn't make jokes, she'll take it seriously and do something about it. (Natalya, 9 years old, Family P)

My mum, she's alright, she's the one who brought me up. She can understand and that. She knows why you're bad anyway because she brought you up, she won't laugh about it and she'll probably help (Jaber, 14 years old, Family K).

In the cases of Jamie and Sousie, they choose the mother and aunt to confide in respectively, as they give them time and listen to them:

My mum, because when I speak to her she won't shout back at me and tell me to go away. She listen to me (Jamie, 10 years old, Family G).

My aunt because when I talk to her she sits down and listens, she don't go out or walk away and takes her time. She understands (Sousie, 10 years old, Family A).

The cases of Mara and Peter exemplify the criteria children use to choose a person to help them when they need to resolve a problem:

When I've got problems or I've done something wrong he (father) doesn't just have a fit and then listen; he listens to my side first and that way we work it out. He doesn't just have a fit about nothing when he doesn't know the right side about it. Say my mum told me something and I've got my side and I want to say my side and I say it, she doesn't like it very much. When something happens to me she goes storming there wherever it is and starts shouting and bawling her head off. I would like her to take it easy, and if it's that bad, then shout her head off. With my dad, say I've got my side of opinion, he understands I've got to be able to talk as well. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N)

I would go to the first person I could really trust and if my dad was here it would be him. Say my dad is still inside, I'll go to my mum of course because she's here but I would go to my dad because I think he teaches me to be sensible and other things and tells me what could happen, because now he knows more. Now at home my mum tells me what is right and wrong, then when I go to see my dad he talks to me as if he was out. He just tells what is right and wrong and that. Sometimes is a real trouble, like when that boy and his mum had a go at me, then I came home and told my mum and when we went on a visit we told my dad and we sort it out. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C)

Given the above criteria children use for selecting a person to confide in and/or to help resolve their problems, two categories are used to identify the father in these roles: father as confidant and father as a problem solver.

The children's perception of the father as confidant is determined by their belief that he is the person with whom they can share their personal problems:

My dad understands me, because maybe he's a male and understands me better and is more understanding. My mum does understand me, but not all the time. Things like, when I say: can I wear what I want to go some place, she goes: no, you can't wear that today and I go: Oh but isn't fair or something like that, but if it was my dad he'd say: Oh yes you can wear what you want. He treats me like a grown up, and he talks to me like a grown up, and I feel I can tell things I've got to tell. (Peter, 12 years, Family C)

My dad understands me because he used to work with 15, 16, 17 year olds, and he knows what to talk about. (Ronald, 15 years old, Family M)

Table 3.15 shows the children's choice of the person with whom they confide at time one and time two.

Table 3.15 Children's choice of a confidant

Person	Time 1	Time 2
Mother	10	13
Father	6	1
Grandmother	2	3
Aunt	2	2
Brother	1	0
Cousin	1	0
Teacher	1	0
Friend	0	1
No one	0	3
Totals:	23	23

The reasons given by the seventeen children who did not choose the father as confidant at the time of the first interview, include: the father's unavailability as he is in prison (N=5); the father does not take them seriously (N=3); fear of punishment (N=1); father does not understand female problems (N=2); father does not understand how they feel (N=4); unable to communicate with father (N=2).

As we can see in table 3.15, at the time of the second interview, only one of the six children who chose the father as a confidant at the time of the first interview did so at the second interview. Of the five children who no longer chose the father, four are primary-school children; three girls and one boy, and one, an adolescent boy. The reasons given by the girls include: he is not available when they need him, and they cannot form an opinion as he has been away for some time. The reason given by the primary-school boy is that he feels that he can no longer trust him as he does not keep his promises. The adolescent

boy does not choose his father because he is not available when he needs him. The child who continues to choose the father as a confidant is an adolescent.

Children choose the father as problem-solver when they perceive him to be the most suitable person to take action when in trouble. For Paul, his father was most suitable to help him if he had a fight, whilst he thought his mother was better able to deal with general problems he had at school:

I just tell my dad, because he would know what to do. If I had a fight I would go to my dad and he would talk to me about it, if I have a problem in the school I would go to my mum. I admire my dad he's positive, strong and cheerful and all that. Yes I would accept his advice, it doesn't matter he's in prison, he's still my dad. (Paul, 13 years old, Family D)

At the first interview, seven boys and two girls included the father in their choice of people from whom they would seek help and advice in times of trouble. At the second interview, however, three of these children no longer chose their father. In the case of Daniel, his perception of the father as problem-solver has been modified. At the first interview he believed he could go to his father if in trouble as "he's fat and strong and would hit them". However, at the second interview, and after his father's return, Daniel would not go to his father as he now does not believe that he gives him good advice:



That day happened when he went to prison he stayed away for a long time and I didn't get used to him. I've got used to my mum a bit better than him. He don't take me out no more. If someone hit me he just shouts his big mouth: beat him up, pick up something and hit him with it, hit him, and I don't want that (Daniel, 8 years old, Family F).

Sousie (10 years old, Family A) at the first interview states:

My dad because he listens what I've got to say and tells me what to do about it. It's different with my mum because she's got to look after my brothers so she can't do nothing about it.

At the second interview, Sousie was living with her grandmother after her father had been sentenced. She now says:

No, I wouldn't, I just wouldn't go to my dad. Anyway I don't know if he would help me.

In the case of Walter (8 years old, Family A), he became distressed after his father was sentenced and no longer trusts anybody:

I don't trust anybody anymore. I would go to no one but if I had to I'd go to my mum that's all.

This is in contrast with what he said at the first interview:

He used to help when I got in trouble. When this big boy hit me with a stick he used to hold him and I hitted him with a stick.

Some children who did not choose the father as a problem solver at the first interview, when probed, revealed that they were unsure whether or not they would be able to discuss their problems with their father as he had been in prison for some time. As Lola states:

Well my dad is not exactly the same as my mum because she's been with me most of the time, and she knows what happens. I can't say anything about my dad. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B).

However, at the second interview, after her father had spent two weekends at home on leave, she says that she would not seek her father's help as:

I won't never talk to my dad about my problems because my dad gets very cross and would go and shout to my friends and I don't like that. Because what would happen if I would go to my dad he might give me a bad advice, because if he gives a bad advice most of the time then I think it'll be the same when he comes home unless he learned. Like, say C. is my friend and smashed a mirror on me, he'd say I should do it back. She is stronger than me so better call her names. If N. hits me really hard he'd says: hit her back, chop off a branch of a tree and hit N. with it. Maybe I would if I was very angry, but I don't like that. I wouldn't hit her back. Well, I don't think I would do, my dad gets very cross. The problem is that my dad is really very..too sensitive. My dad's very sensitive.

A further quality of the father that children refer to, is his reliability. This is expressed by a number of children in terms of the father's ability to keep his promises. These can be distinguished between promises that are made within the context of the family's daily routine, and those that are made within the context of imprisonment. Within

the latter context, the promises made by the father to the child can refer to not re-offending and/or promises concerning their future relationship together. Examples of promises that are made within the context of daily interaction between the child and father are:

No, he don't keep his promises. He says things so people won't ask him, like if we keep on asking then he says: yes, and when you get ready he says: Oh! no I'm not taking you out, I never said I'll take you out. (Lauren, 11 years old, Family R)

Sometimes he doesn't. Like when we were going swimming and he fell asleep, then he forgot. (Larry, 8 years old, Family I)

Contrary to the broken promises made within the context of the family's daily routine, the father's failure to keep the promise of not re-offending results in the child feeling angry towards him (see p. 286), whilst broken promises concerning their future relationship can lead to feelings of disappointment for the child and his/her disillusionment with the father. The latter promises apply to children whose fathers have returned home, or have spent weekends at home on leave:

I thought we would go fishing when he got out of prison, but we never. He said we would go fishing when I went to the prison and he promised to find two dogs, but he never. (Jamie, 10 years old, Family G)

A couple of weeks before he was coming home I was excited. I used to think: how many days now, how many days to come when he's coming home? And when he turned up he was really nice, but then he got used to it and got back to it all. He goes out with his friends and gets in a bad mood, don't take me out to the places he promised, spends his money and don't give it to my mum and all that. (Lauren, 11 years, Family N)

Theme 5B - Sense of loss

Like if I was with my dad I could watch a programme and talk about it with my dad. I miss someone around all the time, so like if someone's picks on me I can come to my dad like, and see what's going on and he might say: stick up for yourself, just someone around. And I miss going out with him as I was used to. When my dad's here I was out with my dad most of the time, and now I feel like I'm on my own like men's things, like a situation like that I'm more with my friends and out with other people as with my dad. And it's like, I used to go: dad can I have two pounds and he give me just like that, and I just go out, whereas my mum has got to use the money wisely. What she's got in the bank is to buy food, clothes and spend wisely, not just give me two pounds, you know what I mean? (Peter 12 years old, Family C)

The child's sense of loss at the father's absence is expressed in what s/he misses most since his arrest. These can be grouped into three main categories: the loss of family status, interactional loss and material loss. Table 3.16 gives the losses reported by the children according to gender.

Table 3.16 Children's feelings of loss.

Categories of loss	Boys	Girls	Totals
Loss of family status	5	5	10
Interactional loss	11	8	19
Material loss	10	4	14

Loss of family status refers to the child's notion of living in an incomplete family, which is experienced by

middle-school children and adolescents alike:

It seems quite lonely without my dad. There's only 3 people (mother, 2 daughters) in the house. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B)

This place is bare now, only me and my mum. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N)

I miss being all together because isn't much of a family now, is it? I love my dad, I just want my dad here so we could be a family again. We used to be a good family and that, we were always together. (Dennis, 14 years old, Family J)

I miss just him (father) and the happy family, the whole happy family. (Donald, 14 years old, Family K)

I miss him (father) not being around the house, it's not the same, it's not a family anymore. (Paul, 13 years old, Family D)

Interactional loss, refers to the child's loss of activities normally shared with the father, such as going to football, snooker, swimming and playing games together. In general the mother is unable or unwilling to accompany her children:

I miss going out with him, it's kind of boring in here now. Everytime we go out with my dad we go somewhere exciting and I don't go anywhere anymore until he comes out, because my mum hasn't got the time to take us anywhere. When my dad was here they (brothers) would play with each other and I play with my dad or we go out and they (brothers) stay here. I would go to the park or other places. We play games, me and my dad you know, proper games not toys. Do you know monopoly? I used to play monopoly with my dad, is a proper game. Now I can't do anything no more. (Roger, 8 years old, Family E)

I feel unhappy because when he was here he used to take me out, then I just had to sit indoors watching television or playing out, but then I don't go out no more. (Larry, 9 years old, Family I)

When my dad was here I was out with my dad most of the time

and with my family and that. Now my dad is not here it's hard to cope, and like, I just feel like I'm on my own, like men's things. He took me out in his car and my mum stayed with them (brother and sister), looked after them. My dad is happy all the time. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C)

All children report a great decrease in family outings since the father's arrest, which is the one most difficult aspect of his absence with which to cope, although it is of a lesser concern for adolescents who are able to go to venues such as football and snooker halls on their own. Going out with the father conjoins two great pleasures: the pleasure resulting from going to new or interesting places and the pleasure from having his undivided attention:

I hate when he does this (going to prison) because we used to have lovely weekends, sometimes we used to go down the stables. With my dad he won't go the long way, we'd go across the whole fields and across the meadows and woods, mum would go by car and dad would walk. Dad likes excitement and mum hates it. I love to walk across fields. We used to go down the park, the woods finding nature things like conkers, leaves and things like that. He does things that mum wouldn't do. If we went to the fields to see the horses dad would get in the fields with me, but not my mum, she would take me shopping or down to T., isn't much. (Natalya, 9 years old, Family P).

Differences exist between the interaction children have with the father and that experienced with the mother. Children report that they play more with their fathers than with their mothers, and go out to different places and have more exciting times with him:

Because we had fun all the time together and now we have no more fun. We were playing karate games. We like playing

drums and we like playing karate, with his big belly.  
(Daniel, 8 years old, Family F)

I used to go out with him on bus rides. When he was out we used to have a laugh. He's just kind of happy to be with. I enjoy mucking about with him, fighting with him. We used to go to the park, play football. I haven't done anything with my mum. (Jaber, 14 years old, Family K)

Differences also exist in the type of interaction with the father that boys and girls miss the most. Whilst both boys and girls report missing active forms of interaction, boys emphasise these, whereas girls focus on affective forms of interaction. In general, boys prefer physically active games with an element of surprise:

He used to pick us up and give us swings up and down. He sings to us and tells jokes and chases us in the house, he chases us round the house, in the bathroom and he hides behind the door. Now I have got no one to chase us. I miss because it's a lot of fun. (Larry, 9 years, Family I)

When he used to be here we used to play the smarties game. I used to go to my bedroom and when he said: are you ready? He comes round and you have to try to find the smarties, and we play with my sister the smarties game, we run all over the place. I can't wait until he comes out to play the smarties game. (Walter, 8 years old, Family A)

I used to go to work with him, and he took me out to see boxing or football matches. I used to help him to wash the cars and we used to go out for dinner to Italian restaurants. I would turn the clocks back from that day, get them back from that day, the day he was arrested. I would put the clocks on the day he comes home. (Paul, 13 years old, Family D)

Girls on the other hand, although they enjoy some forms of active play, what they miss the most are the cuddles and attention given by the father:

He sings me songs and he hugs me when he was home. He used

to cuddle me a lot. He played always with me before I went to bed then I was happy. He took me to bed after playing games. We play hide and seek and I used to hide behind those two chairs and daddy couldn't see me. (laughs) (Jennifer, 8 years old, Family O)

I enjoy being with my dad. I feel good because he's different. Sometimes it's raining and I enjoy sitting down on the settee with my daddy and things like that. (Natalya, 9 years old, Family P)

He used to like, everyday when he came home from work he knocked at the door, and my mum opened it and then me and my brother hide upstairs waiting for him, and then he says: are you ready? and then I say: Daddy, hello! and then he goes: yes, and then he comes rushing up to see us both. And then when my mum used to go to bed, he used to take us down put some hot milk and honey, he always used to do that for us, then we drink the milk and go to bed, that's good. (Sally, 9 years old, Family S)

Children also miss the father's supportive role in cases where they need to draw on his experience or invoke his status. For example, Peter (12 years old, Family C) is very worried about entering a comprehensive school, and feels very frustrated not to be able to know his father's experiences about the matter:

I would like to talk to my dad what it's like to move to a comprehensive school. My mum don't understand male things, it's easier for a male to understand a male.

Lola feels that not having her father at home, she is at a disadvantage at school compared to her friends:

I feel I'm not having much support as everybody else in my school. They have their father as well with them. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B).

Primary-school children in particular, express feelings of



insecurity arising from the father's absence. Typical examples are Roger, Lola and Lauren:

When my dad is here I feel safe really because he looks after me a lot and that. I feel safe now, but I feel safer when he's here. (Roger, 8 years old, Family E).

... because I have a lot of horrible dreams. I wake up, I don't cry because I think someone might still be there, the person still might be there so I always creep down from my top bunk bed so I don't make noise, just in case..because it's really dark and I don't know if anyone was in here (bedroom), and I run up and knock on my mum's door and I'd say: I had a bad dream, and she just comes to the door and puts me back to bed and she'd stay until I've gone to sleep. I don't feel safe because my dad is not here, there is no man in this house, just in case something happens. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B).

I miss a man being here really. It was good to know that if something happens you know there is someone you can go to. But when he's inside you are on your own, and you feel lonely because he's not here, and it's different with a man round the house, like I'm used to him being here in the day time. (Lauren, 11 years old, Family R).

Material loss refers to the significant decrease in pocket money, clothes, sweets, holidays, presents and so on, which children experience and on which they place much emphasis:

He gives me stuff, buys sweets and he used to give me money. We used to have 50 pence and then I have only 20 pence. I don't have 50 or 20 pence now, we don't have sweet money no more. (Walter, 8 years old, Family A).

He's kind to me, he gives me money, pocket money. He doesn't give me any money now. My mum promised a bike but now she cannot give it to me. My mum promised it for my birthday present but it's a long time now. I have an old bike but it's punctured. I can't mend it, I haven't got a puncture kit. He can't get me anything for Christmas. If my dad was here he would've got me a lot of things. I did get enough but not much. (George, 8 years old, Family H).

The money has gone down a lot. I don't get as much as I used to. He used to give me presents, buy me clothes, but now I don't get any because we can't really afford it. We used to go over the West End because he used to buy

everything you want like records, books, clothes. We used to go to restaurants, pictures all over the place really. (Ronald, 15 years old, Family M).

Theme 5C = Changes in the nature of father/child relationship

The father/child relationship undergoes changes after his imprisonment: in some cases a previous close relationship may become strained and detached, or conversely, a detached relationship may become closer, whilst other children realise that they had taken their relationship with the father for granted.

A former close relationship becomes detached, particularly in cases where the mother has decided to divorce her husband. As the visits to the husband in prison cease, so too does the interaction between the father and child. For example, for Louise (11 years old, Family Q), her former close relationship with her father has been undermined due to the mother's decision to divorce. At the time of the first interview, she states:

My dad is nice to talk to. He don't shout at me a lot and he understands me. Sometimes he's talking to someone on the phone and I want to tell him something so he stops the phone, he gives it to my mum and then we go in the bedroom and I talk to him.

However, at the time of the second interview and after not having seen her father for the last six months, she says:

I don't think about him that much, I don't know why, I just don't think about him, that's all.

In the cases where the relationship becomes closer this was a result of the father's changed attitudes towards the child. For example, Tom (15 year old, Family L) has become much closer to his father since his imprisonment:

He was very, very strict. I could never communicate with him. I couldn't tell him what I felt, and even if I did he wouldn't listen, he has such a bad temper I was very scared of him, always on the edge. He was distant and I couldn't go to him and talk about problems. I just couldn't relate to him. Since he's been in prison the person he's now is fantastic. I get on with him so well, I can't believe it. He might've cared for us but he never showed it before. Dad used to take us to London and we spent time together when we were young. The more older we got the more distant we got, and now all of a sudden we are together again, it's weird!

In other cases the father's absence has made the children realise just how much they took their relationship for granted:

When he (father) was out like, well I just took it for granted that he was just there, now like when I really need somebody to turn to like he won't be here, but he'll still be there inside me like. I just feel I'm on my own like men's things. I can still make sure I do tell him, I can still get it out from inside me when I go down the prison, but it's not the same. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C).

My dad understands me and he used to help with my work. It's difficult not having him around to talk to and help with my work. I took him for granted and now he's not here, but I save it and talk to him. I can still talk to him. (Ronald, 15 years old, Family M).

The nature of the father/child relationship can also change when the father returns home. As we have described already

within the theme father as trustworthy figure, some children express disappointment with the father when the expectations of their future relationship together developed during his incarceration are not met. They report changes in the father's attitude towards them and feelings of resentment at having to change their daily routine. Larry (8 years old, Family I) says that:

Is all forgotten (imprisonment), but I feel different because before he went to prison he didn't use to shout at us, now he does, because like say, I knock at the door and he keeps on shouting at me: don't knock at the door anymore and shouts loud. I don't get on that well anymore. Last time I was washing up the window and then he came out and told me off, because I put too much water on the floor. I don't deserve it all the time. And like now he's just gone to see his friend and I was playing out with my brother and when I came in and I saw him, I asked him where was he going and he said nothing and just drove off. I thought he'd say to me, would you want to come? He used to take me out more before, but he loves me the same because sometimes he takes me out.

Lauren (11 years old, Family R) finds it difficult to adapt to the father's discipline and to changes in her former routine:

Sometimes he really annoys me, like when he was inside I could do what I wanted and I got used to that, and when he come out I never got used to it, so I used to answer back then I got told to go to my bedroom which I won't do because I'm not used to that.

In cases where the father has returned after a long sentence or went to prison when the child was very young, some children report conflicting feelings towards a father who they do not really know. Daniel (8 years old, Family F)

expresses this situation vividly:

... when he went to prison he stayed away for a long time and I didn't get used to him no more, I've got used to my mum ...then he moved to A. Prison and it took quite a lot of time to get there and I didn't see him much. He took me out but he don't take me out no more, because he goes to work. Sometimes when he comes in sometimes he goes to bed, sometimes he comes in late. When he shouts his big mouth, sometimes I just hate it, sometimes I try to cut down most of the noise, I just can hardly hear him.

Whilst Lola (8 years old, Family B) feels happy to have her father at home on weekend leave, she does not like her father's temperament and believes that it could lead to problems in the future:

I felt pleased that he was at home but I felt that I rather he go back to prison for just a few more days, but not for that long then it would be more exciting when he did come home like he does now. (Why do you think that?) I don't know what makes me think like that, because it would be a lot more exciting if I saw him not everyday, because my dad is sort of different, because he has been away for a long time, that's why, and when he tells me off it's awful because he really shouts and makes me cross. He really embarasses me. It's going to be a problem because he'll be cross because I've done something, and when I tell my mum about all the people being mean to me at school, my dad will probably overhear and then he'll get cross and that'll make him very angry, and he'll shout at my friend and I don't like that.

Of the ten children whose fathers either spent a weekend on leave or were released from prison, only two Roger and Laura experienced his return as non problematic:

Last time he came home he spoiled us, he bought ice cream and two videos. We haven't had ice cream for a long time. I told him not to drink and he only drunk a few cans of lager but that don't really matter. (Roger, 8 years old, Family E).

Yes, my ways have changed (since her father's return) because then I was sad, but now I'm more cheerful and happy because my dad's home. (Laura, 13 years old, Family G).

#### Domain 6 - The prison visit

After the father's arrest, the interaction the child has with him is limited to prison visits, writing letters and in rare circumstances, telephone calls. Visiting patterns vary according to whether the father is on remand or convicted, and from prison to prison. The main themes that emerge from the data concerning the prison visit are: competing for the father's attention, conflicting feelings during visits, unfavourable aspects of the prison visit, and patterns of visiting when parents divorce.

#### Theme 6A - Competing for the father's attention

During the remand period, visiting does not follow a consistent pattern. Although visiting is allowed six days a week, children report visiting their father at weekends during school time and more often during the holidays. However, during the period when the father has to make court appearances, the child's visits may cease altogether, as the mother wishes to discuss aspects of trial with the father in private, or the child is too young to attend court:

I haven't seen my dad for quite a while because he's been

up in court. I can't go to court; you've got to be 14, because you only get 20 minutes every two weeks and my mum wants see him and talk about courts. I'm not sure how long I haven't seen him, at least for a couple of months, I miss him. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C).

Many children report that their fathers do not give them the attention they desire. They complain that the mother dominates the visit:

I don't talk. My mum is always talking. I don't get a chance. I gave up. (Larry, 9 years old, Family I).

My mum talks to him the most. I cried once with him, because he was upsetting me because he kept saying: shut up! at me and I want to talk with him. (Walter, 8 years old, Family A).

I don't talk. He (father) just says: hello and starts talking to my mum about the courts and solicitors and things like that. I just feel bored. I just look around who else is talking and stuff like that. I just say: hello and then I say: bye, bye. (Sally, 9 years old, Family S).

I like to talk to him but I hardly get a chance didn't I? My mum was arguing with him all the time. (Jaber, 14 years old, Family K).

Other children report that the father is not interested in what they have to say:

When I came back from Spain with my nan and my grandad he asked me how was it there, and I told him, and when I went back he asked me again how was it there! (Daniel 8 years old, Family F).

I don't talk. He just talks to P. the fellow he got nicked with. He just talks with him, what's going on and that, and my dad just asks me how I'm going. He looks better now though, and he says: I promise you son that I won't touch drugs, he promised me that on Sunday. I don't know, he said that last time when he was in prison. I hope that he does this time. When I go with my aunt, he normally talks to my aunt and that and just says to me: are you alright? and that and how is my mum and he talks family business, about my uncle and that, because my uncle sells drugs at the

moment but they (police) didn't get him. I just look around and listen sometimes. (Dennis, 14 years old, Family F).

I try to talk to him (father) but he won't listen. He probably has a lot of things on his mind. He says: how are you? and I say: fine, then he turns to my mum and talks to her. I could tell him about my school but I just sit down and play about with the chair. (Lauren, 11 years old, Family J).

Table 3.17 Children's perception of the interaction with the father during prison visits.

	Satisfied	Unsatisfied
Primary-school children	6	9
Adolescents	6	2
Totals:	12	11

Eleven of the twenty-three children complain about the quality of interaction they have with the father. Four of these complain that they do not receive adequate attention from him and seven state that their mothers dominate the visiting session. Within this group who are unsatisfied with their interaction with the father, nine are primary-school children and two are adolescents.

#### Theme 6B-Conflicting feelings during visit

Despite the above complaints, all children report that they look forward to seeing their fathers, although during the visits simultaneous feelings of happiness and sadness are reported:



I'm happy because I'm with him but I'm also sad because I'm in such a place and it hurts a lot. (Tom, 15 years old, Family L).

I feel sad and happy because I want my dad here (home) and because I'm talking to him. (Paul, 13 years old, Family D).

I feel kind of sad because he's in there locked up and I feel happiness because I enjoy it because I like talking to him. (Donald, 14 years old, Family K).

I feel happy in one way because I'm with him and then I get upset when I'm leaving because I know I have to wait two weeks to see him again. Now it's better, before it used to be a month until I'd see him again. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N).

For Natalya, however, her feelings of happiness are tempered by her anger because her father has re-offended:

I enjoy it (the visit), I like to see my dad, but I'm annoyed he done it again, he shouldn't so he would be at home. (Natalya, 9 years old, Family P).

Table 3.18 Children's feelings during visit.

Nature of feelings	Time 1	Time 2
Happy	10	8
Sad	4	3
Conflicting feelings	8	3
Neutral	1	2
Do not visit	0	1
Released	0	6
Totals:	23	23

At the second interview, some children changed the way they experience the visit (see table 3.18). Sousie (10 years old, Family A) and Walter (8 years old, Family A) who reported mixed feelings at the first interview, now say that they feel "just normal". In these cases the mother

separated from the husband and the children's visits have become less frequent.

Lola's feelings changed from happy at the first interview to happy and sad at the second interview. Lola's conflicting feelings are related to problems of interaction, as her father will be released shortly and she feels apprehensive about their future relationship:

I don't know really. I think I feel happy and sometimes sad because I like my dad, but the problem is that my dad is really very sensitive and he gets cross and I feel cross as well, very cross. We get crossed and then I tell dad to cool down but he doesn't. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B).

Only Jaber (14 years old, Family K), says that no longer visits his father, although he adds that he may visit him again sometime to "cheer him up".

#### Theme 6C = Patterns of visiting when parents divorce

Once the father is convicted, the visits are generally restricted to once or twice a month, and in cases where the mother has decided to divorce, visiting either ceases or becomes extremely infrequent. As a result, the children's contact with the father also becomes infrequent or ceases altogether, as they depend on their mothers or an adult to accompany them to the prison:

I would like to see him but I don't see him now, because I'm waiting for a V.O. (visiting order) and I'm waiting to

go with someone from the house (special school) I can't go on my own only when I'm 18. (Donald, 14 years old, Family K).

I only see him sometimes. I can't remember how many times. I saw him two or three months ago. I do mind and I don't, but my mum got divorced and she don't go there no more. He looks happy but I don't know if he's happy. (Sousie, 10 years old, Family A).

No, I don't see him. I don't know why. My mum divorced him and that's life. I would like to see him but I don't miss seeing him. I don't know why, I don't think about him that much. (Louise, 11 years old, Family Q).

However, adolescents are better able to overcome the constraint of relying on an adult than primary-school children. For example, although visiting is problematic for Dennis (14 years old, Family J), he is able to travel alone to his aunt's home in order that an adult accompanies him to the prison:

I see him once a month for two hours now. My mum never goes there, but I go to my aunt's and then I go to the prison with her or my uncle. I wouldn't miss a visit, I feel just happy to see him, he looks better all the time. He's putting more weight on.

#### Theme 6D = Unfavourable aspects of the prison visit

With regard to the context of the prison visit, many children dislike the prison environment and complain about the lack of facilities and the long journeys they have to endure. Lola (8 years old, Family B) and Ronald (15 years old, Family M) both complain about the prison environment:

No, not really because it's a very horrible place (prison). He's now in W. and it's dirty, horrible nature.

I like to see him but I don't really like to go there because.. it's not the queue, it's when you are in the visiting room waiting to go in they are all smoking and gets in my eyes and I don't like that.

Sally and Lauren both feel bored as there is nothing to do during the visit. They feel excluded from contact with the father and are told to sit quietly for too long:

I just feel bored. I just look around who else is talking and stuff like that. In the prison there is only tables and you can buy some food there. I just sit down and muck around and listen for about two hours! until the man comes up and says: hurry up the visit is finished. I don't like to go there, I wish I was home, I'd do better things (watch television, or play with her friend). (Sally, 9 years old, Family S).

I stay there sometimes an hour, sometimes an hour and a half. I feel bored because there's nothing to do. I just sit down and play with the chair. But it's a day out. (Lauren, 11 years old, Family R).

For George and Sally one of the most disagreeable aspects of visiting is the journey:

I like to see my dad but I find it a bit difficult to go there because is really far away. Sometimes I enjoy the train because we get a train from S and then go to M, and then we get a train what takes us straight to P, and then we get a train what takes us all the way to G, and takes about four or six hours and I get a bit fed up. (George, 8 years old, Family H)

I like to see him, but I got sick last time because the journey was long on the coach and was so hot! You first go on the coach then you go on the ship and then after that you go back on the coach. I don't like the trip it's a bit boring, but the ship is alright. (Sally, 9 years old, Family S)

Eight children complain about aspects of the prison

visit such as the long journey, prison procedures, dirtiness of the place and nothing to occupy them in the visiting room while their mothers talk to their fathers.

### Domain 7 - Interaction with friends

Within this domain are described children's feelings and the problems they encounter regarding the father's imprisonment in their interaction with friends. The two main themes included are feelings of anxiety and bullying. In the former theme are described the children's feelings at the prospect of having to explain the reasons for the father's absence to their friends, and in the latter the children's accounts of the forms of bullying to which they are subjected from peers.

### Theme 7A - Feelings of anxiety

Children in general consider it important to have friends as clearly expressed by Mara (9 years old, Family N) and Walter (8 years old, Family A):

When a friend is helpful and you're sad you can talk to them, and like, I don't know what I would do without friends because you just have lots of fun with them.

When I have a fight I don't tell my mum or my nan. I would go to my mate because he fights, he knows better.

All children in the study experienced anxiety at the thought of facing their peers when their father was

arrested. Dennis (14 years, Family J) reported difficulty coping with the fear of what his friends would ask about his father's imprisonment and mentally prepared himself for such an occasion:

I was just scared in case anyone said anything to me about him being in prison. Is it true that your dad's in prison? and that, and people come up to me and saying: don't your dad live here no more? and I'd say: no, and they just say: why? and I'd just say to them: mind your business.

Larry (9 years old, Family I), George (8 years old, Family H) and Lola (8 years old, Family B) also prepared themselves for what to say to their friends, should they ask about their father:

I don't want to talk about my dad because I feel embarrassed. Some people may laugh at me. If they ask where my dad is I'll say he's on holiday.

I don't talk about my dad. If they ask where he is I say he's at work. I just say he works more and comes home late at night.

Most dads pick my friends up. I say that my dad is waiting in the car or something like that. Some people ask me: Why your dad don't come up the gate and pick you up and I say: Oh! my dad sometimes doesn't really pick me up, he's always working.

For those children whose father's imprisonment is not known to their peer group, they avoid all possible conversation on the subject:

It's like I'm keeping the secret, keeping something away from them, so because I don't tell about my dad, because a lot of people wouldn't understand and you don't know whether they're going to understand or not. If I say something to them they turn around and say your dad must be

a crook or something like that and take the mick out of me. But if I know is nothing wrong with him then it upsets me a lot, so I don't say nothing. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N).

In cases where the imprisonment of the father is known by the peer group, the child may still make a conscious effort not to talk about the matter, but if a friend should ask questions, the conversation is terminated abruptly:

I don't like to talk to people about my dad. Some people may ask me sometimes about my dad, I just say: I don't want to talk about my dad, just let's talk about something nicer. (Lola, 8 years old, Family B)

Some of my friends know about my dad, but I cut them short because it's bad, because my dad didn't do it, they don't understand. (Sousie, 10 years old, Family A).

I never told my friends, they saw in the paper, but I don't want to talk. I keep my business to myself. (Jamie, 10 years, Family G).

However, children tell their best friend if they feel they can trust him/her. This is exemplified by Lauren (11 years old, Family R) and Sally (9 years old, Family S):

I only told R. because she wouldn't never hurt me, I don't think, we're best mates. Because she's not living with her dad neither, so like she tells me things, like I went to see my dad and I say: yea, I went to B. Prison to see my dad and she knows when I stay off some Fridays, she knows where I'm going, so she knows all about it.

I just told B.. because I know she'll keep the secret. I just saw this sort of white stuff (chalk) on the school play ground and I said: drugs, drugs, then I started telling her about my dad. She said: Oh! and that's that. She won't say anything she just listen.

## Theme 7B = Bullying

Bullying experienced by children can take two forms: verbal abuse and ostracism, which in some instances can lead to fights. Examples of severe bullying are the cases of Natalya, Lola and Tom. Natalya (9 years old, Family P) made a bet with a peer that her father was not in prison and would attend the Christmas concert at the school. However, although he was released before the concert, much to Natalya's disappointment, he did not attend:

R. whispered about my dad, but I didn't really take much notice. That's why I wanted my dad to come to my Christmas concert. I told her if you don't believe me he'll be at the Christmas concert. I was at the concert and I was expecting dad and I'd a watch and I kept looking at the watch all the time and he didn't show up and she said: I told you and things like that. She got a bit nasty so I don't bother talking to her because otherwise she's only going to be nasty to me (what do you mean when you say R. got nasty?) She said to all my friends about my dad and said that my dad used to be nasty to my mum, which was true but none of her business, so I really got upset that day. But I knew he wasn't in prison so let her think that. She thought he was in prison but I knew he wasn't in prison.

Lola (8 years, Family B) told her friends at the onset of her father's imprisonment 3 years prior to the first interview as she wanted them to know so they would be kind to her. However, currently she has experienced severe bullying and now regrets she told them:

Lots of people know about my dad because when I was younger I used to spread it a lot because I wanted them to be kind to me. But they would pick on me. N. insults me about my dad so I insult her, about hers. She says: I wish your dad wasn't coming out, so I say: Well, your dad should soon be



in prison. Then all pick on me, than I have to be very hard because I have an angry growl. I sort of shout to them: Well, that's not very nice. I don't think you'd like it if that happened to you. When my mum had a car crash she said: Oh I wish you were in that car so you did have a car crash. I say horrible things back to her. I do make her cross sometimes and that's my favourite thing, making her cry.

Tom (15 years old, Family L), on the other hand, has been ostracised by friends since his father's imprisonment:

They stopped talking to me unless they have to. I mean they don't go on with me as much as they normally would do. I think they feel embarrassed for me. Maybe they just feel if my father has done something like this I'm like that as well, do you know what I mean?

Table 3.19 Children who experienced bullying.

	Boys	Girls
Primary-school children	1	3
Adolescents	2	1
Totals:	3	4

Of the ten boys and six girls whose father's imprisonment was known to friends, three boys and four girls reported being subjected to bullying, at the time of the first interview (see table 3.19). At the time of the second interview, only Lola was still suffering from bullying. Tom has moved to another part of the country, and Natalya and Donald had moved school, and in the cases of Jamie and Laura the bullying ceased two or three months after the father's imprisonment.

## Domain 8 - Coping with the father's temporary separation

The process of adjustment to the father's temporary separation can be most adequately described by the theme: accepting the father's temporary absence, which includes the child's psychological adjustment to the father's temporary absence, his/her accommodation to the patterns of prison visits and the resumption of customary activities.

### Theme 8 - Accepting the father's temporary absence

After conviction, when the length of the father's absence has been clearly established, children become aware suddenly that the father will not return as soon as they expected. Children's adaptation to this new perception is typically expressed by Natalia, Peter and Dennis:

I accept the way he is, I don't like it when he goes to prison but I accept it. When he was arrested I find that upsets me a lot. It used to bother me a lot when he went in there (prison), but I can't do nothing, nothing to be proud of, but I still love him and I accept that he do stupid, silly things and I just wait for when he comes back. (Natalya, 9 years old, Family P).

Well, he got 4 years and the way I see it like I'm with my mum and I've got to look after my brother and sister and wait for my dad, and just be better friends and have a close relationship with him than I did before. I've got older and I understand more. I understand my dad's situation and my mum's situation a bit better I think. I thought like, I've just realised how much responsibility my mum has taken on, it's just my brother getting older and more difficult to handle.....My dad he's gone for quite a while now and I thought he was just going, like, to get arrested and was going to come out soon, but he never and I

accept the fact that he's in there and wait for him to come back. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C).

I haven't cried about him for ages now. I just try to get on with my life. I try to take all this away from my mind. I'm getting better at school, I'm starting to like school. It's not too bad now. I stopped thinking what it was like when I was little and think about the old times, the good times what we had and what has happened in this last few years. I just have to wait for him to get out of prison. (Dennis, 14 years old, Family J).

As we can see by the above accounts, the children realise that they are unable to influence events, and accept the period of separation from their fathers. Through this process of acceptance they are able to control the conflicting feelings that resulted from the event and are able to resume their customary pursuits.

Children can be helped in accepting the father's temporary absence by the support of a person who is understanding and towards whom they feel close, and/or a positive attitude from parents towards imprisonment. For example Dennis (14 years old, Family J) states that he feels much better as:

I've got a girl friend now. I get on great with her. Sometimes I talk about my dad and she understands.

In the case of Tom (15 years old, Family L), his mother provided emotional support during this time:

I've gone through a lot and I feel better now because I can express myself in front of my mum, because nowadays is sort of saying: Oh! boys don't cry. I feel that since dad's gone to prison I have really broken down and I begin to cry a lot about this situation and I couldn't cry in front of everyone, but I can in front of my mum and she's helped me

a lot. She's there and she gives me her shoulder. After my dad was convicted, my mum and I thought the best thing to do is to move to the town where my uncle lives so I can carry on with my education because here there is so much frustration that I couldn't study, and I don't want to live here anyway because I knew that friends at school knew about it and I was unable to live in such environment, to study in such environment.

Paul (13 years old, Family D), on the other hand, was helped by his father's positive attitude towards his long-term sentence:

He said 14 years is a good result like, then I just felt if my daddy's happy so that's it. I'm fourteen now so maybe I'm lucky and he'll be here on my twenty first birthday. I feel physically wise and I play football alright. I feel better, I don't feel better because he's still in there like, but I still see him in there, don't I?

The process of accepting the father's temporary absence also involves the maintenance of a relationship between father and child:

Well, now at home my mum tells me what is right and wrong, then when I go to see my dad he talks to me as if he was out. He just tells me what is right and wrong and that, like when that boy's mum had a go at me about my dad I never said nothing, then I came home and told my mum and when we went on a visit we told my dad and we sorted it out. (Peter, 12 years old, Family C)

My dad told us to save and buy wallpaper for when he comes out to decorate the house and he's going to give us money and we're going to help him. (Roger, 8 years old, Family E).

I miss my dad, I miss to talk to my dad all the time, but I still can talk to him when I visit him, then I tell him how I get on at school, what I'm doing, everything that's happening here (home) and I tell him about my friends. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N).

In order to maintain some degree of interaction between

father and child, the latter is required to accommodate the pattern of the prison visits to their customary activities. Although all children look forward to seeing their fathers, conflicting feelings may arise from having to choose between visiting the father or playing with friends. This is clearly expressed by Natalya (9 years old, Family P) who has found her own particular way of resolving the conflict:

I can't go out with N. no more because on Saturdays I've got to go to the prison, because we've got to go on Saturday because the school in the week, so I don't get a chance to play with N. except on a Sunday, what is really not nice to go round her house, is it? I don't mind to go with my mum on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday but Saturday...I go out with N. but like if I go out with N. and I'm still going to dad, if I went with N., I'd feel bad about not going to dad's, if I go to dad's I feel bad about not going to N. I usually do Tommy Little Match. It goes: you are not it, and that is dad's side I would go to dad and if that's N.'s side I would go N. Depends, so ain't me it's just my finger who's done it. I suppose I should go to dad more. I see N. more then I see my dad. I like to see my dad but I'm annoyed that he's done it again, he shouldn't so he'd be at home. I told my dad and he said: you have to have your own life so when I come out I'm trying not to do it again, but he always says that and never keep it.

In the case of Paul (13 years old, Family D) the conflict is between playing football or visiting his father, although he always chooses to visit his father:

I always play football weekends, but now because of school I have to visit my dad at weekends. I would go straight to my dad because otherwise I'll have to wait another so often to go up and see him again. I feel joyful like in being there and seeing him and all that, seeing him happy and joyful and strong and positive.

In the cases where the mother decides to divorce after conviction, the interaction between father and child usually ceases:

I don't see my dad now. My mum divorced him and I can't say anything about the divorce or I'll get a slap round the head. I don't know if I miss him or not, I just don't think about him that much now. I used to like to go to the pub with him because I talk to him, but now I prefer to go out with my friends" (Louise 11 years old, Family Q).

I can't remember when I saw him. He's not coming to live with us anymore, my mum is getting divorced. I miss my dad but I don't mind so much now. I think if he's alright it's okay. I'm used to it now. I used to like to go swimming and to the fair with my dad but I don't think I'm going to do these things anymore. I'll be 15 when he comes out. (Sousie 10 years old, Family A).

I don't see my dad much, my mum is getting divorced, but I don't care. I don't think about my dad much. (Walter 8 years old, Family A).

In some cases where parents have divorced, children express a fantasy about family reunion, which may persist despite the fact that there is clearly no hope for such a reunion. Dennis (14 years old, Family J) still tries to persuade his mother to visit his father as he thinks if she sees him, they may reunite:

I would like my dad here, it wouldn't be the best thing but we could be a family again, be all together again, but my mum don't go to see my dad anymore.

Donald (14 years old, Family K) also hopes that some day his parents may live together again, despite the fact that his mother is now living with another man, and he has been placed in care:

He (father) might end up here again, you never know, it depends what happens in the future.

In the case of Natalya (9 years old, Family P) her intense desire for her father's return elicits expectations about a possible family reunion, despite the mother's insistence that this is not likely to happen. She realises that her father is often unreliable, but this does not deter her from asking her mother to take back her father:

He's not reliable if he makes a promise I don't take any notice because I know it's going to be broken, because if we make a plan you know it won't happen, he'll say that, he has big ideas but he won't do it and I feel bad, but I like to be with him. I know my mum would try not to argue with him. If I could, I would change him (father) not living here, not going in prison and have a job, and not to argue with mum, then I would have a family again.

#### Domain 9 - Self-Esteem

The scores obtained by the children in the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory are presented according to four subscales: General Self, Social Self-Peers, Home-Parents, and School Academic (See table 3.20). The subscales express variance in perceptions of self-esteem in different areas of experience. The scores presented in the first and second columns of each sub-scale refer to the first (T1) and second (T2) interview respectively.

Table 3.20 Self-Esteem scores.

Child's Name	General Self		Social Self-Peer		Home Parents		School Academic		Total Score	
<u>Primary-school children</u>										
Boys										
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Roger	16	16	7	6	7	7	5	2	70	62
Walter	17	18	6	5	8	2	4	1	70	52
Daniel	18	19	6	5	7	2	7	3	76	58
George	19	16	7	7	6	7	5	2	74	64
Larry	18	15	5	7	5	5	5	3	66	60
Jamie	16	9	4	3	5	3	4	3	58	36
Girls										
Lola	14	11	8	6	5	5	4	2	62	48
Jennifer	10	10	5	4	4	5	4	4	46	46
Natalya	15	17	7	6	8	8	4	5	68	72
Mara	18	20	6	7	7	7	6	6	74	80
Sally	22	21	5	6	6	4	6	8	76	78
Sousie	20	14	7	6	8	6	2	1	74	54
Lauren	20	23	8	8	6	8	6	8	80	94
Louise	15	15	6	6	3	3	4	3	56	54
Tania	11	13	6	4	5	4	3	2	50	46
<u>Adolescents</u>										
Boys										
Peter	21	20	7	7	7	5	7	4	84	72
Paul	22	23	6	8	7	8	8	7	86	92
Dennis	14	19	6	7	8	8	3	2	62	74
Donald	20	21	5	6	7	8	0	3	64	76
Jaber	14	15	5	6	6	4	3	4	56	58
Ronald	19	21	6	7	7	6	8	5	80	78
Tom	16	14	6	5	7	3	4	2	66	48
Girls										
Laura	15	14	5	7	6	7	4	7	60	70

The decline of the levels of self-esteem for all six primary-school boys, from the first to the second interview, is significant at the 5% level using the simple sign test. The decline in the level of the self-esteem of



the six boys is mainly manifested in the school academic sub-scale. It can be observed that the three boys who show the greatest overall decline in self-esteem also show a significant decline in the home/parent subscale.

With regard to middle school girls, there is no clear pattern in changes to the level of self-esteem between the first and the second interviews. As can be seen, three increase, three decline, and three remain the same. In the case of the two girls where the level of self-esteem declines significantly, one has gradually become aware of the implications of the father's imprisonment, as she has been severely bullied by peers. In the case of the second girl, she was extremely shocked when her father was convicted, resulting in confusion about her father's moral integrity.

Similar to the middle school girls, no consistent pattern of changes in self-esteem occur in adolescents: 2 decrease, 2 remain the same and 4 (including one girl) increase.

#### Domain 10 - Children's attitude towards the interview

Children in general expressed positive attitudes towards the interview. The majority felt excited to be asked their opinions, although some also felt sad at recalling their experiences:

I feel a bit sad because is just bringing the thing to me but I don't mind I want to tell you what I think. I felt excited when I knew I was going to talk to you. (George, 8 years old, Family H).

The main reasons reported by children for cooperating with the interview are:

a) It helps them to express their feelings:

I though that it might just help me out to get it a little bit out of my system and I would be able to talk to someone who can understand and help other people. (Mara, 9 years old, Family N).

I think it's a great help to get it all out. It's nice to share and be able to talk to someone because I've never been able to talk about this with anybody except my own family, and to be able to share something of my own problems with someone outside the family, it's great. I felt quite excited actually. I thought, God we can actually talk with someone outside the family. (Tom, 15 years old, Family L).

b) In order that other people may understand what children of offenders experience:

I don't mind, I don't care who really knows were I stand, if you want to show it don't bother me, because I don't want no one to feel sorry for me but if people know what I've been through then they'll treat me with a bit more respect. (Donald, 14 years old, Family K)

c) That someone is interested in their problems:

I was excited, I like to talk to people, but not anyone, some people. I thought you wouldn't come, I don't know why I just thought you wouldn't come. I want you to come, nobody talks to me. (Sally, 9 years old, Family S).

I like to talk to you, I don't mind. I like it because I'm not used to this, nobody talks to me. I felt glad because you were somebody to talk to really. (Lauren, 11 years, Family R).

I feel happy because I talk about my dad and because no one talks to me, but it's too long and some questions I don't know the answer. (Louise, 11 years, Family Q).

d) Pleased to help the researcher:

I feel happy really because I like to talk to you about my dad. I thought it was good, I was excited and I like it because I can help you. (Natalya, 9 years old, Family P).

I don't mind, I just knew that you were going to write about it and I was going to help you so people may understand a bit better about all this. (Ronald, 15 years, Family M).

Some children, however, were apprehensive at the prospect of being interviewed as they thought it would be like an exam and they should know the right answer to the questions posed:

I was scared. You could be one of those persons you don't answer the question they force you to say, like the person who exams you. I don't feel scared anymore, I answered all the questions. (Larry, 8 years old, Family I).

Happy because I talk about my dad. I felt shy but now I don't feel shy anymore. I thought it could be an exam. (Tanya, 10 year old, Family I).

I felt a bit nervous because I didn't know what the answers would be. I'm not worried anymore. (Jaber, 14 years old, Family K).

A bit frightened what I should answer, but now I don't mind. (Dennis, 14 years old, Family J).

However, eight children felt bored as they thought that the interview had too many questions:

I feel a bit bored because they're a lot of questions and some are difficult. (George, 8 years, Family H).

I feel a bit bored, too many questions and I have to meet my girl friend (laughs). (Donald, 14 years old, Family K).

It was boring, too many questions, and some too difficult. (Sousie, 10 years, Family A).