

1987

# SAILORS' WIVES AND HUSBAND ABSENCE

Chandler, Joan

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/1283>

---

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/3986>

University of Plymouth

---

*All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.*

SAILORS' WIVES AND HUSBAND ABSENCE

Joan CHANDLER, B.A. (Soc) Hons

A thesis submitted to the Council for National Academic Awards  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy.

Plymouth Polytechnic, April 1987  
Department of Social and Political Studies

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that whilst registered as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with the Council for National Academic Awards, I have not been a registered candidate for another award of the Council, nor of a university.

The following activities, comprising the programme of related studies, have been undertaken:

1. Attendance at various courses and conferences including the ECPR Summer School at Essex (1985), the BSA Conference (1984 and 1986) and annual research seminar of the Marriage Guidance Conference (1986).
2. A programme of reading guided by the supervisors.

Joan Chandler

Plymouth, April 1987

## SAILORS' WIVES AND HUSBAND ABSENCE

Joan CHANDLER

### ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a study of women married to Royal Navy personnel and resident in the West of England and Wales. The analyses are based on data derived from secondary sources, a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews, the field-work having been conducted between January 1985 and April 1986.

Past research has concentrated on the emotional reaction of wives to husband absence, its relationship to anxiety and depression. This thesis is, however, concerned with the social situation of wives intermittently without husbands. It is an exploration of the marital and domestic consequences of husband absence and the implications it has for the wider relationships of wives periodically without husbands.

A distinction is drawn between long-term absences of weeks and often months and short-term, weekday absences. Here the evidence suggests that short but frequent absences are the most disruptive and "weekend marriages" the least satisfactory. Husband absence is seen to impact deeply into the life course experiences of wives; it increases their domestic powers and responsibilities, especially if they are resident in private housing; it alters relationships with children and the contexts of child-rearing; it effect the employment opportunities and experiences of wives; it transforms domestic



routines and household timetables; and it influences the social contacts and neighbouring relations of wives, leaving wives without husbands relatively isolated members of the community. The thesis also suggests that although separation and absence have been the foci of past concern, reunion and reintegration are equally problematic.

The findings provide case study information on a particular set of marital experiences and relate to wider perspectives on the construction of marriage and wifehood.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Diana Gittins and Lyn Bryant for their tuition and early support and David Dunkerley for his careful shepherding and practical help. Special thanks go to Lyn Bryant whose unfailing encouragement, cheerfulness and interest was invaluable in the completion of this thesis.

I would also like to thank Devon County Council for funding the post of a research assistantship, Plymouth Polytechnic for providing resources and the academic and administrative staff of the Department of Social and Political Studies for facilitating the production of this thesis.

Thanks are due to the naval authorities for their cooperation and especially to Colin May of Family Services for his help. The naval wives who completed questionnaires and who talked to me so openly and willingly about their lives also deserve special appreciation.

Finally, thanks are due to my husband and children for their patience and understanding and their determination that I should complete this project.

Joan Chandler

Plymouth Polytechnic

April 1987

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page No</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u> .. .. .	1
<u>CHAPTER ONE - THE IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE</u> .. .. .	7
Marriage as an Institution .. .. .	7
Marriage and its De-institutionalisation .. .. .	9
The Nature of Marriage .. .. .	15
Marriage, Women and Wifehood .. .. .	17
Conclusion .. .. .	21
<u>CHAPTER TWO - LONE WIVES: THEORETICAL THEMES</u> . .. .	23
Patriarchy and Husband Absent Marriages . .. .	24
Matriarchy and Husband Absent Marriages . .. .	29
Companionate Marriage and the Context of Husband Absence ..	33
Patriarchy, Companionacy and their Implications Beyond Marriage .. .. .	37
Absent Husbands and Distressed Wives .. .. .	39
Husband Absence: an Anthropological View .. .. .	59
Marriage Careers .. .. .	62
Conclusion .. .. .	71
<u>CHAPTER THREE - THE ROYAL NAVY AND THE NAVY WIFE</u> .. .. .	72
Married to the Navy . .. .	73
Naval Service and the Service Family .. .. .	79
Allowances, Benefits and the Naval Family .. .. .	86
Naval Welfare Services .. .. .	89
Sociology and the Service Family .. .. .	91
Conclusion .. .. .	96
<u>CHAPTER FOUR - METHODOLOGY</u> .. .. .	98
The Origin of the Thesis . .. .	98
The Wider Issues of Methodology .. .. .	99
Defining the Terms .. .. .	103
Negotiating the Issues .. .. .	104
Choosing the Method . .. .	107

	<u>Page No</u>
<u>CHAPTER FOUR - METHODOLOGY (Continued)</u>	
The Questionnaire Survey . . . . .	109
The Interviews . . . . .	113
Analysing Transcripts . . . . .	125
Secondary Sources and Other People . . . . .	127
Conclusion . . . . .	128
 <u>CHAPTER FIVE - NAVAL MARRIAGES: A STRUCTURAL PICTURE</u> . . . . .	
Area and Settlement Pattern . . . . .	130
Marriage Patterns . . . . .	133
Housing Patterns . . . . .	138
Length of Residence . . . . .	142
Area and Accommodation Moves . . . . .	143
Family Size . . . . .	146
Children's Ages . . . . .	148
Children's Education . . . . .	149
Educational Attainment . . . . .	155
Pattern of Employment . . . . .	157
Conclusion . . . . .	165
 <u>CHAPTER SIX - THE PATTERN OF SERVICE SEPARATION</u> . . . . .	
Types of Service Separation and their Incidence . . . . .	168
Distance from Home and Visiting Patterns . . . . .	176
Conclusion . . . . .	179
 <u>CHAPTER SEVEN - HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS AND HOUSEHOLD</u>	
<u>ROUTINES</u> . . . . .	181
The Attitudes of Wives to Service Separation . . . . .	183
Domestic Power and Responsibility . . . . .	187
Money Management and Service Separation . . . . .	195
Household Routines in Separation and Reunion . . . . .	204
Separation and Relationships with Children . . . . .	208
Separations and the "Homecomer" . . . . .	213
Types of Separation . . . . .	215

	<u>Page No</u>
<u>CHAPTER EIGHT - THE HOUSING CAREERS OF NAVAL WIVES</u> .. ..	225
Getting Married and First Homes .. ..	228
Married Quarters .. ..	230
The Decision to Purchase .. ..	240
Home-ownership .. ..	242
Housing Career and Employment .. ..	247
Housing Career and Children .. ..	250
Conclusion .. ..	254
<u>CHAPTER NINE - NAVAL WIVES: SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND</u>	
<u>LEISURE PATTERNS</u> .. ..	256
Marriage and Support Structures for Wives .. ..	257
Companionship and Help .. ..	261
Some Sources of Variation .. ..	264
Assistance at the Time of Childbirth and Illness .	266
Visiting Patters .. ..	272
Friendship and Neighbourliness .. ..	276
Friends and Neighbours on the Naval Estate .. ..	278
Returning Husbands and Friendship Patterns .. ..	290
Private Housing and Friendship Patterns .. ..	293
Community Efforts and Naval Wives .	294
Conclusion .. ..	299
<u>CONCLUSION</u> .. ..	301
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u> .	312
<u>APPENDICES</u> .. ..	327



LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page No</u>
<u>CHAPTER FOUR</u>	
TABLE 1 - Replies to the Questionnaire Survey .. .. .	112
TABLE 2 - Replies to a Request for an Interview .. .. .	114
<u>CHAPTER FIVE</u>	
TABLE 3 - Area of Residence .. .. .	131
TABLE 4 - Area of Residence and Servicemen's Rank .. .. .	132
TABLE 5 - Wife's Age and Area of Residence .. .. .	133
TABLE 6 - Age at Marriage .. .. .	134
TABLE 7 - Age and Rank of Personnel and their Wives .	135
TABLE 8 - First and Subsequent Marriages Amongst Servicemen's Wives .. .. .	137
TABLE 9 - Rank and Type of Accommodation .. .. .	139
TABLE 10 - Wives' Ages and Accommodation Type .. .. .	141
TABLE 11 - Rank and Length of Residence .. .. .	142
TABLE 12 - Accommodation Type and Length of Residence in Area in Years . .. .	143
TABLE 13 - Length of Time Resident in Area and Accommodation .. .. .	145
TABLE 14 - Wife's Age and Length of Residence in Area ..	146
TABLE 15 - Family Size . .. .	147
TABLE 16 - Family Size for Women Over 35 .. .. .	147
TABLE 17 - The Distribution of Children's Ages in Naval Families in Years .. .. .	148
TABLE 18 - Accommodation Type and Children's Ages in Years .. .. .	149
TABLE 19 - Pre-School Attendance . .. .	149
TABLE 20 - Pre-School Attendance and Accommodation Type .. .. .	151
TABLE 21 - The Distribution of Naval Children in Educational Establishments . .. .	152
TABLE 22 - Children's Education by Type of Establishment, Gender and Father's Rank .. .. .	153
TABLE 23 - Children's Education and the Number of Times Parents Have Moved .. .. .	154

		<u>Page No</u>
TABLE 24	- Children's Education and Mother's Employment .. .. .	155
TABLE 25	- The Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Women Married to Naval Personnel .. ..	156
TABLE 26	- The Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Women Married to Naval Personnel and Husband's Rank .. .. .	156
TABLE 27	- The Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Women Married to Naval Personnel and Present Employment Status .. .. .	157
TABLE 28	- The Employment Status of Women Married to Naval Personnel .. .. .	158
TABLE 29	- Employment Status of Women Married to Naval Servicemen and Length of Residence in Area in Years . . . . .	161
TABLE 30	- The Employment Pattern of Women Married to Naval Servicement .. .. .	162
TABLE 31	- Reasons for Leaving Last Job for Women Not Currently Employed .. .. .	163
TABLE 32	- Reasons for Leaving Last Job and Type of Job .. .. .	164
 <u>CHAPTER SIX</u>		
TABLE 33	- Distribution of Time in Different Service Conditions During the Past Five Years .. ..	170
TABLE 34	- Time Spent in a Sea-Going Ship and Rank .. ..	171
TABLE 35	- Time Spent Unable to Live at Home Monday to Friday and Rank .. .. .	172
TABLE 36	- Time Spent Sea-Going and Husband's Age .. ..	173
TABLE 37	- Time Spent Unable to Live at Home Monday to Friday and Husband's Age .. .. .	174
TABLE 38	- Time Spent Unable to Live at Home Monday to Friday and Wife's Age .. .. .	175
TABLE 39	- Distance from Duty Station and Rank, in Miles .. .. .	177
TABLE 40	- When Husband Returned Home in Last Month and Rank .. .. .	178

CHAPTER NINE

TABLE 41	- Sources of Company and Friendship During a Husband's Absence .. .. .	261
TABLE 42	- Sources of Help and Support During a Husband's Absence .. .. .	263
TABLE 43	- Help and Support During a Husband's Absence and Rank . . . . .	265
TABLE 44	- Company and Friendship During a Husband's Absence and Rank . . . . .	265
TABLE 45	- Assistance at the Time of Illness and Childbirth .. .. .	267
TABLE 46	- The Help and Advice of Husband and Kin at Times of Illness and Confinement .. .. .	267
TABLE 47	- Assistance During the Time of Childbirth and Women's Ages in Years .. .. .	269
TABLE 48	- Visits During the Previous Week . . . . .	273



## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a key relationship in the structure and processes of society and within individual biography. It is a relationship that most people will experience at some time in their lives; despite the increased incidence of cohabitation, marriage retains its popularity. Within an individual's personal life marriage is a 'relationship' writ large, suffused with expectations of emotional unity, companionship and practical support. The married couple is the building block of contemporary family life and normatively, if not statistically, the denominator of household units.

Although marriage is central to society and important to all on an individual level, marriage touches the life experiences of women in an even more fundamental sense. Its impact on the biographies of women is more all-encompassing and its consequences more far-reaching than within the biographies of men. Wifehood stands as a model of behaviour for all adult women; it is central to their psyche; it is linked to motherhood. The day-to-day responsibilities that follow women in the train of their marriages are more extensive in the demands they make on women's time, energy and commitment. Marriage is a prime identity for women. The marriages of women are the focus of this study.

Other research into women's experience of marriage has largely concentrated on women whose husbands are routinely resident and present within the matrimonial home. However, there are groups of

women whose husbands are regularly absent from the household, largely for occupational or custodial reasons. The marriages of lone wives raise a number of questions both for the nature of their particular marriages and for marriage in general.

The description of these women as lone wives appears as a contradiction in terms and suggests that their marital experiences may be ambiguous and their social standing anomalous. Husband absence has implications for the relationships between husbands and wives and potentially alters a woman's responsibilities within her house and home. The contemporary framing of marriage identifies husbands as the mainstays of social and moral support for wives. Here husband absence would appear to create something of a void. It suggests that lone wives are either more vulnerable and isolated or reliant on other people for help and companionship. Furthermore, it raises questions on the privatised status of women whose husbands are absent. They may be more able to forge outside links, more able to participate in paid employment; alternatively husband absence may confine them more effectively, both socially and occupationally, to their homes. The thesis is then concerned with the broad range of consequences both within and beyond marriage for the lives of women married to intermittently absent men.

This interest in the marital experiences of lone wives prompted a research project. The subject chosen was a particular group of women, those married to naval personnel and living within the West of England and Wales. The specific contexts of research introduce the elements of a case study, but it is hoped that the findings have a wider

relevance. These findings relate to the circumstances of all lone wives and shed light on the nature of all marriages. Lone wives stand at the margin of 'normal' marriage; their situation may highlight the universal rules of marriage as they are applied to a particular and unusual circumstance; alternatively the domestic relationships of lone wives may constitute a different style of marriage and add a new dimension of diversity and suggest a range of marital relationships.

The life experiences of lone wives present an area of general theoretical importance; they relate to the centrality of marriage in the workings of society and within the biographies of individuals and the broad arguments for this position are set out in Chapter 1. It is also an area of theoretical importance because lone wifhood provides an arena for the examination of major themes that dominate the literature on contemporary marriage. Marriage is a vehicle for patriarchy, generating and legitimising economic dependence, gendered inequality and domestic labour. An analysis of the structure of domestic power when men are not there is a contribution to this debate. A second theme explored within the study is developed from the emphasis on companionship within contemporary marriage. The emphasis on fellowship, loyalty and emotional satisfaction within marriage is a major force for the privatisation of married women in their homes and in matrimony. How companionship is interpreted by wives with absent husbands and how it influences their behaviour is another area of interest.

The theoretical themes of patriarchy and companionship are examined in Chapter 2. Alongside an assessment of these debates and

their relevance to the area, this chapter also considers past approaches to the problem of intermittent husband absence. Existent analyses of the area have concentrated on whether lone wives have coped with the burden of domestic responsibilities and emotional strain contingent on husband absence. These studies provide an assessment of the practical resourcefulness and emotional resilience of such women. Their social situation has been rarely approached in a more open sociological way and there have been few examinations of how lone wives conduct their marriages. Together with a discussion of the relevant debates within the literature on marriage and a review of past perspectives in the area, Chapter 2 also explores ways in which these themes can be sequentially related to the married lives of women experiencing husband absence. Relationships of marriage are dynamic, sensitive to the changes wrought by passing years and changing circumstances, and these changes must have a place within any theoretical overview, an overview which forms the programme for Chapter 2.

The research project aims to illuminate these wider theoretical issues, but it is also illustrative of the particular practices of the Navy and the relationship of women to their husband's occupation. As wives, women are integrated into the work patterns of their husbands. Accompanying this process is an institutional construction of marriage as employers are active in the definition of good wives and occupations entailing husband absence, such as naval service, are not exceptional in this. In addition the wives of naval servicemen are offered welfare and community services by naval authorities and the Admiralty's assessment of wives' reaction to service separation is



influential in their manpower planning. An exploration of the lifestyles of these women is a useful counterpoint to the institutional vantage point from which they are characteristically viewed. The relationship of wives to their husbands' employment and what it means to be married to the Navy will be explored in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 describes how the research programme was conducted. The research project adopted a dual approach, firstly through a postal questionnaire and secondly in a series of indepth interviews. The postal questionnaire gathered demographic data on women married to naval servicemen, detailed the extent of service separation and provided information on the support structures used by the women. The interviews charted the experiences of, and decisions made by, the sailors' wives as well as their attitudes towards and perceptions of their marriages. The methodological issues and problems encountered in the research are also discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapters 5 and 6 report the findings of the questionnaire survey and describe the structural parameters of marriage to a sailor. Chapter 5 includes demographic data on women married to naval servicemen, their geographical mobility, housing patterns, family size, education and employment histories. Chapter 6 concentrates on the levels and types of service separation they had experienced.

The following Chapters, 7 to 9, focus on the life style and experiences of the women surveyed and interviewed. Chapter 7 explores the domestic issues that arose from service separation and its consequences for domestic power and household responsibilities,

routines and relationships. Also relevant are how the relationships with husbands, and with house and home, were linked sequentially in the life courses and marriage careers of the women; this aspect of the research is tackled in Chapter 8. The consequences of husband absence potentially reverberate beyond the home and marriage as service separation may have implications for the social lives and network contacts of the women surveyed. In Chapter 9 the relationships wives form outside their marriages, their links with friends and neighbours, are examined. Finally, in the Conclusion, the research findings are examined in the light of the theoretical issues and debates that introduced the thesis.

Throughout the thesis the terms 'naval wife' or 'navy wife' have been used to refer to the women married to naval servicemen. There was some initial discomfort over the use of these phrases since they implied some erosion of the women's separate identities and civilian status. However, the terms were used in self-description by many of the women in the study. They have a short-hand value and are descriptive of the powerful influence their husbands' enlistment or commission had on their own lives. To protect the confidentiality of those who took part in the study, the names of the women quoted in the thesis have been fictionalised.

It is the intent of this thesis that an exploration of the life experiences of naval wives will contribute to the stock of knowledge about and theoretical conceptualisation of marriage. It is to this general level of analysis that the thesis first turns.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE

Marriage remains a relationship central to the workings of society and crucial to the life experiences of most individuals. Its social and sociological importance is exhibited in a number of inter-related ways: marriage retains a strong institutional position rooted in material process and cultural assumption; the married couple relationship is the lynch-pin of family life and its position is linked ideologically to both the health and happiness of the individual and the continuance of the state; also the construction of wifehood is a prime vehicle in the gendering of women.

#### Marriage as an Institution

Marriage remains a key institutional element in society. As an institution the relationship receives social, legal and economic recognition; it is a legal status, a religious sacrament, a reference point for tax code and welfare benefit. Beyond the formal estate of marriage within church and polity and beyond the lay meaning of the institution are its wider bases of social and cultural support and other, more sociological, elements of institutional form. For Barrett and McIntosh (1982, p56) the married are "massively privileged by social policy, taxation, religious endorsement and the accolade of respectability". However, their comment that marriage "is sanctified by tradition, not justified by rational social debate" (ibid 1982, p55) contains the implications of historical and cultural lag and the

assumption that with time and right-thinking marriage, being passé, will wither away. But the popularity of marriage remains, its strength emanating from a material base and ideological grip, the working out of its institutional position. And when accompanied by traditional symbolism, the tradition is living, not moribund or "backward-looking".

Marriage connotes respectability, and although there may be popular recognition of alternative arrangements and relationships outside marriage, these are commonly seen as short-lived and not a substitute for "a proper wedding" (Leonard Barker, 1978). The ideological grip of marriage is evidenced in wedding day images and connotations of true adult status. As Busfield argues, marriage

"is a sign of personal and sexual adequacy, of competence in one's sexual roles. Those who are not married are believed to be less competent and successful in their personal relationships, to be less desirable and less attractive" (1974, p22).

Marriage is a sign of maturity and social acceptability and remaining or becoming, unmarried is indicative of inadequacy, failure or great misfortune.

Ideology reduces choice. It simplifies issues for people and identifies normal adult behaviour. Most people are expected and expect themselves to marry (Gittins, 1985; Kiernan, 1983). Hence an individual may not be able to articulate substantive reasons for his or her marriage. Answers to specific questioning may be vague, or couched in generalised appeals to love and the desire to "settle down". The romantic assumptions of marrying for love do render many other motivations, especially economic ones, base and this would



inhibit the range of replies. But the normality and desirability of marriage, entry into which requires no clear reasoning, is another tentacle of its institutional position. The couple is also the denominator of much of adult informal socialising and the unit of familialism (Hart, 1976; Barrett & MacIntosh, 1982).

However, arguments have been advanced on the institutional erosion of marriage and these arguments derive from a number of quarters and have diverse implications. These implications deserve some discussion.

#### Marriage and its De-institutionalisation

Arguments on the institutional decline of marriage have focused on issues of statistical typicality, the extent and durability of marriage as well as on its diverse forms and changed contemporary meanings. The statistical decline of married couple households, especially those composed of married couples with dependent children, is seen as part of a wider institutional eclipse. Here the intellectual battle appears to be waged over which statistic is picked, on whether you count the ever-married or the number of extant marriages, as well as any interpretation of these statistics; on the one hand, marriage is seen as more popular than ever with 93% of the population experiencing it at least once and with increased longevity bringing the possibility of long life to marriages as well as individuals. Alternatively, marriage is seen as sliding into institutional decline with only 63% of households formed around a married couple (OPCS, 1986). The post-war increase in the divorce rate, with presently one third of all marriages ending in divorce

within the first 20 years, has been taken as a sign of the disintegration of marriage and as evidence of its greater personal importance (Berger and Kellner, 1980). The remarrying of three quarters of all divorcees may signify the continued importance of marriage, although the failure of more than a half of these marriages is again grist to the argument for its general decline.

In addition, the extent and significance of cohabitation, illegitimacy and lone-parenting have also entered the debate on the institutional status of marriage. Cohabitation appears to have grown; Haskey and Coleman's work has confirmed the estimates of the General Household Survey that 12% of the population cohabit at any one time and a third of all couples have cohabited at some time (1986). Also, outside issues of definition, demographic analysis identifies cohabitation as a popular prelude to marriage or as an aftermath to divorce and separation (Brown and Kiernan, 1981). However, distinguishing cohabitees from the married is problematic, as is the argument that cohabitation is an alternative to marriage. There are conceptual problems and fieldwork difficulties when non-marital terminology is sought for other forms of heterosexual and residential partnership. Cohabitee, partner, girl/boyfriend appear awkward or fail to encapsulate the nature of the relationship. And so often these alternatives are in fact incorporated within the frame of marriage, or are seen to derive their meaning from it. Cohabitation may have the legal status of common-law marriage; the state statistics on household composition and marital status, derived from the Census, direct a cohabitee to be reclassified as "de facto spouse"; the General Household Survey which has, since 1979, provided information

gathered from women on the incidence of cohabitation, still defines the relationship as "living together as man and wife without a civil or religious ceremony taking place" (General Household Survey, 1985).

Extending the terminology of marriage to include various states of heterosexual "living together" precludes popular or theoretical consideration of alternatives. Also the assumption that, whatever their legal status, their relationship is that of a married couple with all its ramifications, may do violence to people's intents. They may not be married because they do not want a married relationship (Burgoyne and Clark, 1982), but the hegemony of the concept is intrinsic to its institutional basis.

The rise in lone-parenting is popularly cited as evidence of the institutional collapse of marriage. In 1985 14% of all families with dependent children were headed by a lone parent, compared with 8% in 1971 (OPCS GHS/1, 1986). But the drawing of this conclusion is suspect, involving the re-writing of our familial past and ignoring the interpretation that, if marriage were ebbing away, there would be less hue and cry in the press and more unconcern by Government (Finer, 1974) about its decline.

Anderson warns against the development of false nostalgia for some lost golden age of family life; a third of all marriages entered into in 1860 ended within 20 years, a figure remarkably comparable with today's proportion, though he notes that the reason for past instability was death rather than separation or divorce (Anderson, 1983). Chester's demographic description of the neo-conventional

family (1985) emphasises the continuing importance of marriage and couple-based households. He also draws the useful distinction between the demographic interpretations of overall state and developmental stage; although the overall proportion of households conforming to the conventional pattern of married couple with dependent children has fallen, most people will spend at least part of their childhood within such a family and go on to form similar household units as adults. However, the social significance of marriage is not as one option in a range of relationships, but as a relationship par excellence, and its ideological significance is not in its existence as a probable stage in an individual's life course, but as a construction of the quintessence of family life.

Another argument for the de-institutionalisation of marriage centres not on the incidence but the nature of marriage. Here one of the most original and clearest statements was made by Berger and Kellner (1980). They suggest that in the construction and validation of their meaning systems, individuals engage in dialogue with others, so that "...reality is crystalized, narrowed and stabilized. Ambivalences are converted into certainties. Typifications of self and others become more settled" (ibid p316). They argue that marriage occupies a central role in this validation process, being the most important of conversational links, a prime "nomos-building entity". There is the objection that these conversations are not unscripted and the partners not social strangers to one another. Also Morgan (1981) notes the flaw in their phenomenology which fails to treat the focus of their analysis, marriage, as essentially problematic. The concept of marital dialogue is in fact the covert vehicle for the



assumptions of partnership, negotiation and symmetry in marriage. Their conception of marriage has social as well as sociological import since their arguments were extensively reprinted in the journals of family therapists and advisers and added impetus to the popular spread of companionate expectations of marriage. Here the relationship between husband and wife becomes characterised as one of increased friendship and co-operative partnership, and as affording the individual heightened mutual and emotional satisfaction. Thus, Morgan (1985) argues that, with the growth of companionate assumptions, marriage has become a relationship in a very strong sense of the word; ideologically its interpersonal satisfactions and short-comings then become the focus of attention and its institutional bases of more marginal interest. It implies that marriage has been relocated and the relocation is from the institutional to the personal.

However, the interpersonal and the institutional may have been erroneously counterposed in the assumption that you will have less of one if you have more of the other. Harris, whilst concerned to say that "... the process of deinstitutionalisation is simply not proven" (1983, p215), certainly implies that it is underway, as modern society departs from traditional forms.

"In traditional societies interindividual relationships arise from one's membership of the group; the institutional is the pre-condition of the interpersonal. The evidence is consistent with the view that family life in Britain is increasingly moving away from that situation, to one in which the family is a merely residential group resulting from the establishment of a personal and private contract between individuals which is publicly registered and whose existence is dependent not upon their occupancy of an institutionalised status ('married'), but on the continuance of that interpersonal relationship" (ibid, p215).

Such a view seems to rely on a popular rather than a sociological use of the term 'institution', and fails to recognise that the married are still socially advantaged. The emphasis on the interpersonal in the companionate model is another bulwark to its institutional position not a departure from it. Psychologising a relationship does not weaken its social framing, it merely disguises its social reference points and economic nature. There are no signs of the popular abandonment of marriage, nor any diminution of its social relevance, despite a belief in choice about how the relationship is to be built. The stress on compatibility and mutual absorption ties couples more firmly together, in the ideal biography, making marriage the kernel of family life and devaluing adult relationships beyond the dyad.

A similar theme is taken up by the Rapoports (1982), but here the emphasis is not on the waning social significance of marriage, but the variety and diversity of marital and family forms. They contrast the social tradition and family uniformity of earlier family/community studies with family structures today where there

"... is an increased range of options available, ... not only a greater range of recognised patterns, but an acceptance of the value of enhancing personal freedom to choose the desired pattern" (ibid, p477).

For the Rapoports diversity is the background to choice and variety enables the individual to devise their own rules of matrimony. But all family types are not equal; all marital forms and types of communal living exist in the shadow of "conventional families" (Oakley, 1982), a shadow which renders any alternative form odd, inadequate or experimental in nature.

Statements on diversity and choice are problematic, but raise question-marks over the extent to which a spectrum of marital forms can be found and over how elastic the structure of marriage is in response to different circumstance. But before the parameters of this question can be known, the structure and nature of marriage and its implications for biography must be made clearer.

### The Nature of Marriage

Marriage is universally fundamental to the operations of kinship and family. However, in the West, its importance goes beyond this principle. Here marriage is not just part of the articulation of familial relationship and household units, it is central to both elements of family life. Support for this view is diverse and its proponents make very uneasy theoretical bed-fellows.

Parsons described the kinship system of contemporary America, and by implication all modern, industrial, differentiated societies, as open and multi-lineal, the only clear obligations being between married couples. Hence the married relationship has cultural primacy over other kin obligations. Responsibility to children wanes with their maturity and especially their marriage and establishment of a new conjugal pair. This cultural imperative, and the absence of other kinship rules, encourages neolocality and hence the nuclear nature of each family unit. Thus Parsonian functionalism and its intellectual legacy identifies the conjugal pair as the building block of family life (Parsons, 1964). Married couples are the denominators of household units and the parenting of immature children and mutuality of conjugal support the priorities of family life.



The criticism of his work on the family has been both legion and vehement. Initial criticism was concerned with its supposedly nuclear form and a fierce and lengthy debate raged over the interpretation and the extent of its relative isolation, isolation from other social structures but, more particularly, its isolation from wider kin. Its relation to kin was often taken to be an empirical question and spawned the prolific charting of the frequency and the type of contact between the conjugal duo and wider kin (Goode, 1970; Litwak, 1965; Young and Willmott, 1962; Rosser and Harris 1965; Bell, 1968). Whilst providing a reservoir of ethnographic detail on kinship contact, these studies tell us little about marriage, and what they tell us is seen as unproblematic, since they predate a critical awareness of gender in the sociology of family life or the development of the substantive area of sexual divisions. However arid and blinkered this protracted debate on "nuclear" families may now seem, the original theme shorn of functionalist assumptions deserves restating, for there have been other more critical restatements of it.

The cultural ethos of modern Western society gives priority to the relationship between husband and wife. As Greer (1985, p222) argues

"... the relationship takes precedence over all others, and involves more time and more attentions than are given to any blood relationship ... even the children of the nuclear unit..."

For Greer, women in contemporary western marriage are required to be unfailingly available to their husbands, are subjected to the "new opiate" of the sex-religion where orgasm is "...perfect..., regular, spontaneous, potent and reliable" (ibid, p199), and are prevented from



fully enjoying their children or the sisterhood of wider kin, which she identifies as "...the paradigm for the female collectivity". She contrasts the family of the married pair with the Family (writ large) of wider kin, where family is a cultural prescription, a mentality, framed in "...kinds of awareness, patterns of feelings, concepts of self" (ibid, p223). Unlike Parsons who sees conjugality as an imperative of the cultural system, this she sees not as functional for society, but as more easily manipulated by capitalist consumerism and bureaucratic control. For Greer, unlike Mount (1981) it is larger family units not nuclear ones that are truly subversive to state intentions. Greer emphasises the matriarchal dimensions of larger kin groups since the relative isolation of conjugal pairs from wider kinship makes contemporary women in "modern" marriages more dependent on the whims and good offices of their husbands.

Greer's analysis contains a critique of contemporary family life in the pre-eminence and nature of conjugality. Other approaches more firmly within the feminist frame have argued that the real issue is not the isolation of the nuclear family from wider kin and other social processes, but the isolation of women in marriage within the privatised home. Here conjugality is seen to impinge more on wives than husbands and marriage is deemed central to the construction of womanhood.

#### Marriage, Women and Wifehood

Marriage is the means by which the lives of women become privatised and domestic. (Davidoff et al 1976) described the antecedents of privatisation in the last century; the emergent

bourgeoisie constructed a romantic vision of home and family life, a refuge from the harsh outside world and a haven for domestic virtue and female sensibility. They articulated an ideological divide between public and private spheres of existence, between home and the world of politics and commerce. Women and womanly virtue were identified with this private sphere and wifedom became synonymous with housecraft, motherhood and domesticity. Endowed with the value of privacy the home became identified as an arena of putative choice, of secrecy and as a locus of activity set apart from state interference and the world of work. But this is then also a masculinist ideal since it defines the home as a domestic play area for men, as the castle of their personal autonomy, where each husband has "...unlimited power to brutalise his wife as well as please her" (Greer, 1985, p251). Monogamy is the vehicle by which women become the object of sexual privatisation (Firestone, 1972) and marriage the entrance into dependence, isolation and "captivity" for housewives (Comer, 1974; Oakley, 1974; Gavron, 1966).

The privatisation of marriage has widespread implications. It links with state policies towards women in their relations with husbands and children (Zaretsky, 1982; Berger and Berger, 1983), shopfloor attempts to exclude women and children from areas of paid employment (Pinchbeck, 1981) and campaigns for a "family wage" (Land, 1979; Barrett and McIntosh, 1982). These historic strands have pulled together to isolate women as wives, to confine and to devalue what they do.

A further facet of privatisation is that it ensures the continued economic dependence of women on men. Marriage is then patterned by subordination and domination, where the power of the purse (Hunt, 1978; Pahl, 1983) and the power of the fist (R E and R O Dobash, 1977-1978) still hold sway and domestic labour is the unrecognised and unrewarded burden of most married women's lives. As a prime source of gendered inequality, marriage contains an unwritten economic contract, where women exchange domestic labour for economic support; marriage means housework. Delphy (1984) has described the material and exploitative base of marriage as a "domestic mode of production". As women are dispossessed by patrimony and, excluded from the primary labour market, their economic survival requires them to secure a good marriage and marriage harnesses and transforms their production into domestic work. Thus marriage becomes a woman's "best career". The relationship is exploitative since their productivity has the status of a gift; it is deemed as without value and is therefore without reward, the only obligation on husbands being that of the physical maintenance of their wives. For Delphy then, housework is a relationship of production, a relationship with husbands and a relationship that is contingent on marriage.

Motherhood remains peripheral to Delphy's analysis. By contrast Oakley (1982) emphasises how the myth of motherhood entwines with that of wifhood and housecraft to give a more clearly formulated biological base to the domesticity of women; maternity links women's true nature to marriage, family and the home. Oakley has also recounted how women feel about women's work, the monotony and lack of recognition, the fragmentation and sometimes contradiction of tasks,

their loneliness and their isolation. To argue thus is not to ignore women who appear contented with their domestic lot or to decry the joys of motherhood, but to point to the inevitability of their unremitting responsibilities. The issue is not satisfaction but the limits to choice in the lives of women.

The economic dependence of wives enhances the decision-making power of men in marriage (Gillespie, 1971; Edgell, 1980) and secures their political advantage in the field of sexual politics. This dependence becomes a facet of the circular logic that confines women to a secondary position in the labour market in part-time and poorly paid employment, reinforcing their economic dependence on men and ensuring the continuance of marriage.

The implications of the foregoing discussion extend beyond the presently married to touch all women. For many women there are few viable economic alternatives to marriage. Barrett and McIntosh (1982) regard wider concepts of female passivity, submission, and deference as an outfall of domesticity and familialism. Good womanhood is associated with the capable and efficient housewife, the loving and devoted mother, the uncomplaining helpmate and companion of a husband. The gendering of women involves drawing marriage, motherhood and womanhood into the single orbit of the female world (Bernard, 1981), into a single destiny. This implies that marriage is the prime identity of women, that wifedom is the paradigm for all women and that women are more married than men.



## Conclusion

The foregoing discussion underlines the continued centrality of marriage to the workings of society and in the biographies of women. Any changes that have occurred have been largely unsupportive of its de-institutionalisation; cohabitation is frequently a brief interlude in people's lives, its relationships are akin to those of the married and its occurrence devalued in the idealisation of marriage and family life. However, what may pass for the erosion of traditional marriage may in fact signify merely new justifications for it, as the psychologising of familial relationships mask the continued strength of its institutional position. This is seen in the development of romantic love and its attachment to marriage, the emphasis on fellowship between husband and wives and the idealisation of familialism.

Marriage is also the prime social instrument by which women become gendered and it could be argued that the current values and objectives of marriage attach more firmly to wives than husbands. They then continue to ensure that women remain privatised figures in the social landscape, dependent and isolated. These themes of privatisation and domesticity impact on women to frame their relationships with their homes, their husbands, with other women and with themselves.

Nevertheless, discussion of de-institutionalisation raises the possibility of diversity and choice in the forms of marriage; it raises the empirical question of the extent to which marriages can and do vary with social circumstance. One source of variation may be the

situation of husband absence and an exploration of the marital experiences of lone wives may contribute to the debate on the diversity of marital forms within contemporary Britain. Alternatively, it may confirm the coherence and uniformity of all women's lives within the estate of marriage.

The themes of this chapter set the overall bounds for any discussion of women in marriage; they provide the guidelines for charting the variability in women's experience of marriage and, more particularly, the experiences of lone wives. But before a more focused discussion of the experiences of wives periodically without husbands can take place, particular dimensions of this framework and their relationship to the analysis of lone wives must be elaborated.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LONE WIVES : THEORETICAL THEMES

Many women may, at some time or another, find themselves married to a man who is absent from home for a period of time. His absence may be a frequent occurrence or rare, for short or lengthy periods of time, and it may relate to an occupation or result from a custodial sentence. However, when it happens, women find themselves in the situation of being lone wives.

The experiences of lone wives are of general theoretical import to the sociology of wives, marriage and familial structures. At one level, their experiences can be related to the universal rules of marriage and point to the common elements to be found in the lives of all married women. At another level, their experiences may illustrate unique features of their marriages, as husband absence may influence activities and relationships in the home, the self-conceptions of wives and their wider social identities.

Discussion of the marriage patterns of lone wives relates to wider themes in the analysis of marriage; it is concerned with the structures of patriarchy in the relations formed between husbands and wives, men and women, and relates to the companionate and home-centred vocabulary of contemporary marriage. In examining these wider issues, it raises questions about how the balance of power in relations between husbands and wives is sustained in the absence of husbands and how companionacy is evaluated and enacted when husbands are away from home.

Outside these general issues, there are the specific concerns of past analyses of husband absence and its impact on wives. Within western society husband absence has most frequently been associated with various states of distress and anxiety amongst wives and this perspective will be reviewed. Turning to anthropological sources, there are interesting parallels and contrasts with its non-Western counterpart and these sources provide a counter-point in the discussion of husband absence.

It should also be noted that lone wifhood may have implications beyond the relationship between husbands and wives. It may influence their connections with local networks and their relations with kin, friends and neighbours; it may relate also to conceptions they have of themselves and particular constructions of being married.

These form the themes of theoretical interest in the marriage patterns of lone wives and each area will be explored in greater depth in the following discussion. In addition, ways in which the differing and developmental aspects of marriage may be woven together and integrated in a coherent biography will also be examined.

#### Patriarchy and Husband Absent Marriages

Patriarchy is a concept with wide currency in discussions of women and their positions within families and wider society. But to say what patriarchy is, to pin down a clear and universally accepted definition, is somewhat more difficult. Patriarchy is about power and the oppression of women; it presupposes "inequality, subordination and dependence", (Gittins, 1985, p58). Yet any scanning of the literature



on patriarchy reveals some uncertainty about whom this inequality is between, who benefits from it, and what the source of the subordination is.

For Millet, patriarchy exists as an organising principle or principles within society, where men dominate women and older men dominate younger men, the social upshot being that "the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political affairs, finances - in short, every avenue of power within society, including the coercive force of the police, is in male hands" (1970, p25). For Mitchell (1975) patriarchy is embedded in psyche as well as culture; masculinity expresses the power of the father, and femininity the subordination of women to it.

Feminists of Marxist persuasion have deepened our understanding of women's oppression and its articulation with class relations, yet have not spoken with a single voice on patriarchy. Those who could be dubbed "orthodox" (Smith, 1978) have ignored or criticised the concept as a distraction in the main struggle against capital. Their concern with women is as workers; Dalla Costa and James (1975), Bennholdt-Thomsen (1981), and Murgatroyd (1985) have examined the invisible contribution domestic labour makes to capital accumulation, its exchange and use values. Bennholdt-Thomsen (1981) and Beechey (1977) have also explored the role of women workers as a reserve army of labour.

Others have gone further; they have included patriarchy in a feminist and critical development of Marxism; they have used it to challenge "a more or less straightforward model of the male

breadwinner and 'the family wage', and economism... (locating) the central sphere of activity in the public economic sphere, putting to the margin questions of the family, household and sexuality" (Morgan, 1985, p220). Here the links between sexual hierarchy and the class relations of production have as much a political as an analytic base. Socialist feminists express a desire to relate women's struggles to other political struggles (Beechey, 1979) and patriarchy gives voice to their "feelings of oppression and subordination". These theorists draw their ideas and inspiration from Engels rather than Marx, exploring the connections between women and family, ownership and production. This position, found for instance in the writings of McDonough and Harrison (1978) and Eisenstein (1979), emphasises the "two-fold character" of material history in "on the one-hand the production of the means of subsistence... on the other, the production of human beings themselves" (Engels, 1972, p455). Their focus is then on how these processes of production and reproduction intersect and interrelate. This relationship has been variously characterised as a flexible partnership (Hartmann, 1979) or the dynamic duality of "capitalist-patriarchy" (Eisenstein, 1979).

It should also be noted that a more profound attack on Marxism has come from radical feminism, and here a dominant voice is that of Delphy's (1984). The concepts of materialism and mode of production are taken and reformulated outside the workings of a narrowly defined economy. Women as wives locked by marriage into a domestic mode of production, outside markets and capitalism, renders patriarchy a distinct and autonomous sphere of exploitation.

Patriarchy is then an area of debate, not a theory. It is concerned with the exercise of male power within sexuality and reproduction, family and household, and the permeation of this power through the wider political economy, (Beechey, 1979; Walby, 1983; Lown, 1983). As it has become a substantive field within sociology, patriarchy has become a more enveloping concept. Hartmann implies this when she comments that it is "more a descriptive term than an analytic one" (1979, p29), and so raises the danger that patriarchy could become a conceptual bucket into which to throw all the pervasive inequalities between men and women. Charting the historic forms and contexts of oppression is a valuable exercise but, to be truly valuable in sociological endeavour, it must also clarify and explain the social world. In order to refine our understanding of this, patriarchy must also be capable of being itself refined and open to critical reappraisal.

One recent attempt at clarification has been made by Morgan (1985) who has reintroduced the distinction between the older and the newer uses of the term. In its original and more specific meaning, patriarchy meant "rule of the father", but its familial grounding is now regarded as but one example of pervasive male power and women's submission to it. Morgan wishes to emphasise that men have dominion not just as males but as patriarchs. In constructing this argument he notes a structural symmetry between father/child relations and male/female relationship, the similarities of women's and children's dependency, the links between male power and patriarchal control of property and the cultural centrality of, and emotional tangles that surround, the father figure. He stresses that this systematic

connection between the power of the father within kinship and wider male domination is still relevant in societies where kinship has lost sway as the central organising principle.

Putting the patriarch back into patriarchy, as Morgan attempts to do, may have general theoretical import, but it is probably of greater relevance if the area of analysis is that of family and household. Here men are both fathers and husbands and their relationships with women and children are interwoven in the domestic web of male authority. And here patriarchy is crucial to our understanding of housework, of domestic decision-making, of sexual regulation, the economic dependence of women and relationships with children.

Any analysis of lone wives approaches these issues within the particular context of intermittent husband absence and raises a number of questions. How is the "rule of the father" sustained in his absence? Does it give wives greater freedom and greater responsibility in the organisation of their homes? Does it, in short, give women more power? And, if there is any increase in power, is this sustained once their husbands have returned home? Or, alternatively, is a husband's physical presence irrelevant in the maintenance of domestic patriarchy, since wives remain economically dependent and their responsibilities for home and children heightened without any commensurate increase in their autonomy. Any gains in the domestic power of wives may only be in the little decisions, the bigger, more important, ones remaining firmly in the hands of husbands



(Gillespie, 1972; Edgell, 1980). In the light of past comments and analyses, one would suggest little difference in the substantive power of women married to absent or resident husbands.

Such would be the framing of an analysis of lone wifeness within the context of patriarchy, and it is the issues of patriarchy that monopolise debates in this area. Consequently any mention or use of the term matriarchy within the context of family organisation could be seen as passe, blinkered and/or heretical. Nevertheless, it may have some value in exploring the marriage patterns of wives with absent husbands.

#### Matriarchy and Husband Absent Marriages

The concept of matriarchy has been used more by anthropologists in their analyses of kinship groupings, of female lineages where property and title pass through the generational links of women. Where it has crept into sociological usage it has been in the quasi-anthropological studies of kinship and community. The kinship of the immobile working class, with strong ties between mothers and daughters and weaker links between husbands and wives sometimes acquired the epithet "matriarchal". Young and Willmott's study of Bethnal Green (1962) is the classic example and describes a kinship relationship premised on the strength of the "Demeter" connection. Their use of this Greek myth underlines the enduring love that is between mothers and daughters, and their analysis is an exploration of their emotional closeness and their day to day interchange of small services.

However, is the use of the term matriarchy of any value in a sociology sensitised to feminist issues, and in a study of lone wives? On one score clearly not. These earlier studies predicated matriarchal influences on the presence or proximity of families of origin; mothers had to live with or nearby their adult daughters for there to be the possibility of daily exchange and political alliance in the minutiae of domestic life. The telephone and the occasional social visit may maintain contacts, but are not vehicles for real influence. The privatisation of the conjugal unit and distance from kin makes married women more reliant on their husbands and inhibits any matriarchal potentiality (Holme, 1985).

Another feature of matriarchy is that unlike patriarchy, its use within Western culture is concerned with issues of domestic power. Quite outside the presence or influence of wider kin, women who control domestic decision-making may be termed matriarchal (Blood and Wolfe, 1960). Under the aegis of feminist influences the minor decision-making of women in the home has been distinguished from the major decision-making of men and power in housecraft or the routines of child-rearing are seen as trivial or a contradiction in terms. Few voices have been raised in opposition to such a perspective. However, one is Douglas who identified the home, and therefore the housewife, as the main agent for distinguishing and transforming the dirt and chaos of the natural world into the cleanliness and order of the cultural world (1970) and as the organiser and orchestrator of meals and mealtimes (1972). Davidoff notes that

"housework is concerned with creating and maintaining order in the immediate environment, making meaningful patterns of activities, people and materials" (1976b, p124)

In charting the attempts at its rationalisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries she notes how housework is a "constant defensive battle", a struggle to impose and maintain order.

Martin (1984) in her analysis of housework warns against accepting and repeating a wider societal verdict that housework is trivial. Her defence of the importance of housework contrasts with that of Oakley's, where it is important because it forms the bulk of most women's lives, (Oakley, 1974). For Martin its activities are central in the creation of social reality as it is "a cultural practice of great symbolic importance and not merely the performance of mundane utilities" (ibid, p25). Housework is the policing of domestic order; it concerns the detailed and intimate manipulation of time, space, objects and people. The element of personal power surfaces in conflicts of gender and generation, as men may feel managed by the home-maker and children impotent in the face of their all-powerful mothers. Retirement and redundancy often introduce or heighten marital conflict since they also bring the husband's intrusion into the wife's domestic territory (McKee and Bell, 1984; Mason, 1986).

To argue that housework and childcare contain an element of matriarchal power is not to argue that such an analysis is unproblematic. It may be culturally important, but it gives women dominion in a small and undervalued kingdom, undervalued in society and in sociological treatise. Housework may be about the creation of the very stuff of social order, but it is frequently experienced as alienated labour (Oakley, 1974), where women become prisoners of their

own standards. A wife may be "mistress of the household" but she is involved in "all the dirtiest, meanest and most degrading chores ..."  
(Martin, 1984, p33). A wife may be the architect of domestic routine, but she is at the mercy of everyone else's timetable and nurturing others may clash with her other mission, which is sustaining the orderliness of their environment.

In this light matriarchy is not directly comparable to patriarchy; it is not concerned with the same issues. But it may still be useful in discussing the marriages and home-lives of women with absent husbands. Housework is about the generation and maintenance of the powerful symbol system which we call home. How housework is undertaken and is framed by a husband's absence remain important questions. Is a returning husband readmitted into the wife's domestic empire? And, if he is, how is this readmittance accomplished? Does the domestic order have to be re-cast on his return and if so, how?

Discussion of the extent and nature of patriarchy and matriarchy is essential in an exploration of power and control in the marriages of lone wives. But there are other dimensions to this debate. Marriage is also the focus of many people's hopes and ambitions for affection, intimacy and friendship. This has particular contemporary relevance, with the ideological elaboration of the companionate model of marriage and the potency of familialism in wider society.



## Companionate Marriage and the Context of Husband Absence

The concept of companionship is central to the definition and assessment of marriage today; companionate marriage has become synonymous with "true marriage". The companionate model emphasises interpersonal aspects of marriage, not its institutional reference points and implies partnership, mutuality and high levels of emotional involvement and satisfaction. Burgess and Locke noted as long ago as 1945 that there was a shift of emphasis "from institution to companionship in the tone of marriage". Morgan (1985) has argued for the widespread nature of its companionate appeal and claims that marriage has become a relationship in the strongest sense of the term. As an ideological construct its status within society and within sociology has become a matter of some debate.

In the past the companionate model was approached as something factual; here it formed a thread of analysis in post-war and pre-feminist discussions of familial change. The spread of relative affluence, the increased employment of married women, the growth of home-ownership were the ingredients of home-centredness and conjugal partnership, and even symmetry (Young and Willmott, 1973; Harris, 1983; Goldthorpe and Lockwood, 1969). Companionship in marriage was something factual, which could at first be charted and explained, and later "disproved". The debate on the existence/non-existence of conjugal mutuality was in many ways spurious and stemmed as Harris argues from "a failure to keep distinct the concepts in which informants describe their relationships and the analytic concepts of the sociological observer" (1983, p227). People may use

the language of mutuality to describe their commitment to the relationship, but commitment to a marriage is distinct from the divisions and inequalities of being married.

More recently marital companionacy has been discussed as an ideological construct, part and parcel of the vocabulary of modern marriage. Its widespread appeal is further bolstered by an army of counsellors and therapists concerned to foster and repair its companionate nature. The exposure of its ideological basis is then incorporated into a wider critique of marriage and male dominance; thus the putative partnership of marriage is seen as a veil of false consciousness, camouflaging the real bases or constraints of wedlock.

The model of companionate marriage has a complex relation to class. It is seen as a bourgeoisie construct whose hegemony may touch the working class or ethnic minorities but never emanates from them. When it does touch them, it does so only peripherally. Komarovsky (1967) and Rubin (1976) both describe blue collar marriage, where bread and butter survival in a grim economic climate, not companionship, is the central concern. If modern marriage can be viewed as an intimate dialogue, these are analyses of marital silence. Ostensibly these commentators are not searching for or finding personal growth or emotional intimacy in these working class marriages, but their analyses still contain a sense of unfulfillment and tragedy that must derive from companionate assumptions. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in Holme's (1985) return to Young and Willmott's East London she finds that couples are more home-centred, more dependent on one another but this is described

as a response to the strictures of house-ownership and distance from kin rather than to any shift in values. Contrastingly, it has been amongst middle class couples and professional careerists that fellowship in marriage has been most self-consciously approached (Edgell, 1980; R and J Pahl, 1971). Here a sense of sharing was crucial even if the actual division of domestic power fell considerably short of what could be considered egalitarian.

Apart from a complex relationship with class, the emphasis on mutuality in marriage has an uneven connection with gender. Companionship implies friendship and consensus, which override the differing interests and inequalities in marriage. Hence companionate expectations bring greater commitment to an essentially inegalitarian relationship, without bridging the structural gap between men and women, and between his and her marriage (Comer, 1982). Also it has a firmer association with women and wives than men and husbands. Analyses of marital happiness note the premium that women place on friendship and emotional satisfaction (Bernard, 1972). Also women are expected to be more companionable than men; it fits more readily with womanly qualities of nurturing and supporting, with femininity and sensibility (Oakley, 1982).

By contrast, marital companionacy sits less easily with masculinity; the image of the caring/sharing husband is an emasculated one. Furthermore, Bernard (1972) points out that the structure of sexuality in Western society is at odds with companionship, one cannot befriend a lover. Oakley seems to arrive at a similar conclusion

where she feels her personal dilemmas are illustrative of the more general war between love and the family. Here men want

"the conveniences of marriage and the freedom of the sexual chase. (And)... women want sexual joy and security to be combined in the same person: their image of men is an integrated one. Therefore the desires of men and women are incompatible ... because women can't find in men whole human beings, and the whole human beings women are, are not what men have been led to believe they want" (Oakley, 1984, p121)

Hence the companionate model has a particular affinity with women and an antagonistic relationship with masculinist definitions of sexuality.

What relevance does this companionate model then have to empirical research? It is a mythic account of marriage but the value of research is not to disprove the mythology but to map its complex relationship with behaviour. Companionship in marriage is the tenor of the times and wives with absent husbands are unlikely to be immune from this spreading ideology. But how does one then sustain emotional intimacy with an absent man? Using the Berger and Kellner analogy (1980), how is the marital dialogue conducted when one of the conversationalists is away? Do heightened expectations of marital togetherness render husband absence less tolerable? Have these assumptions introduced greater elements of strain and antagonism into the marriages of lone wives, as the scope for disappointment deepens?

On the surface of things the marriages of lone wives seem hard to accommodate within the model. Furthermore, it may be hard to assess the meaning of any accommodations and interpretations of the model that are made. Voysey's (1975) analysis of the parenting of



handicapped children is a study of the outward "normalisation" of an atypical family situation, a study of the fitting of an unusual circumstance into a conventional frame via "public moralities", which supply the vocabularies within which private life is articulated. As Burgoyne comments in her analysis of step families,

"factual responses ... were somewhat eclipsed by their desire to portray their present partnership and the family unit they had created as an improvement on what had gone before" (1986, p9)

Lone wives may reinterpret the rules of companionship to encompass husband absence, but would this then amount to little more than paying lip-service to what they feel marriage should be?

Alternatively lone wives may manufacture a different model of marriage, where day to day mutuality is irrelevant. In fact, the emphasis on companionship may be a diversion since what it brings to marriage is dreariness and boredom. Here temporary separations may contain their own satisfactions. Husband absence may feed the fantasies that couples entertain about each other, or at least add a freshness and unpredictability to marriage as it eliminates the tedium of continuous conversation.

#### Patriarchy, Companionship and Their Implications Beyond Marriage

The themes of patriarchy and companionship also raise other issues concerning the life styles of lone wives. It has been suggested that the absence of a husband may give wives a greater opportunity for structuring their own time (Finch, 1983). This may be so, especially if they live in close proximity to other wives in the same situation. Here they may develop a greater reliance on female networks for support and company. Alternatively, married women without resident

husbands may continue to be over-shadowed by patriarchal assumptions in their relationships outside the home (Whitehead, 1976); husbands may seek to control their wives' sexuality despite their own absence, other men may regard them as open to sexual adventurism, masculinist assumptions continue to permeate their participation in the spheres of employment and leisure and general suspicion may attach to the ostensibly more independent status of lone wives.

In addition, companionate assumptions which prioritise the connections between husband and wife imply a devaluation of other relationships. As a consequence lone wives may find themselves out of step and hence uninvited in couple-based socialising. They may not be able to find alternative non-conjugal sources of companionship, and those that they do find and forge may be more readily interpreted as inappropriate or as threats to the marriage. Companionship in marriage may eclipse other friendships and hence leave wives without resident husbands more isolated.

The model of companionship is central to popular conceptions of marriage and this frequently overlays patriarchal assumptions as to its structure. It is this subtle combination of mutuality and patriarchy that has influenced theorising in the area of intermittent husband absence and has formed the background to previous analyses of absent husbands and distressed wives. It is to this area that the thesis will now turn.

### Absent Husbands and Distressed Wives

Married couples are assumed to be co-resident. However, although the conjugal household is usually regarded as home by both partners, husbands, but rarely wives, may be frequently and regularly absent. Intermittent husband absence is not rare, and it is associated with a number of occupations; it forms part of the life style of, for instance, fishermen (Tunstall, 1962; Thompson et al, 1983), long-distance lorry drivers (Hollowell, 1968), air-line pilots (Cooper and Sloan, 1985), off-shore oil workers (Morrice et al, 1978, 1981, 1985; Taylor et al, 1985; Clark et al, 1985), corporate executives (Cohen, 1977; Boss et al, 1979), members of the armed forces (Isay, 1968; Hunter and Nice, 1978; Nicholson, 1980; MacMillan, 1984), men now working on contract overseas and prisoners (Wilson, 1984; Smith, 1986). However, in some senses it is misleading to regard husband absence as a clear-cut issue, as a feature of some occupations and not of others. As Clark et al comment

"'Are not all husbands intermittently absent' ... (since a) 'typical' family regime is one in which the father is absent from home, children and spouse for considerable periods of the day or week, returning largely for sleep, rest and domestic service" (1985, p46).

Nevertheless, intermittent husband absence is approached in the literature as an atypical marriage/occupational pattern and one that generates problems for wives. It is never conceptualised as the husband's problem; he is a free, quasi-single individual whereas she is essentially dependent, part of somebody else. For him absence from home may be sad or exciting, but the reactions are superficial, idiosyncratic, and somehow without wider significance; there are no assumed syndromes amongst absent husbands unless they are returning veterans (Cuber, 1945; Bey, 1972). By contrast, wives left without

the daily presence of their husbands are seen to be living an abnormal lifestyle, and one which research unanimously regards as stressful. Hence the empirical search has been for psychological disorder and disrupted patterns of eating and sleeping amongst wives, along with emotional disturbance amongst their children and analyses have contained assessments of the efficacy with which different types of wives "cope" with this unnatural home circumstance. Wifehood is in itself treated as unproblematic, only the absence of the husband is conducive to her disorder. Hence there is no attempt at a more neutral ethnography, charting what women do in these circumstances. Instead there is the administration of tests for "satisfaction", "coping strategies" and the measurement of their stress levels. Despite a now copious literature on the emotional poverty of many married women's lives the issue to be problematised is never the intermittently present husband and only rarely does research focus on the issue of periodic domestic change or as Clark describes it, the

"transition from continuous absence to continuous presence, which can produce specific problems of coping and adaptation" (1985, p46).

But again the problems of "adaptation" are always her problems and never his, and separation is the contentious issue, not reunion.

A classic account and conceptualisation of the problems of intermittent husband absence is to be found in Isay's formulation of the Submariners' Wives Syndrome. Like many studies of service wives and children it was based on a clinical population, on submariners' wives who had attended a psychiatric clinic attached to a submarine base. Their symptoms were systematised into a cycle of depressive



reaction and retaliation, a cycle reflective of the three-monthly rhythm of off-shore patrol and on-shore duty.

"'The Submariners' Wives Syndrome' refers to the depressive illness of these wives, who become symptomatic shortly before or after the return of their husbands" (1968, p647)

This is a

"guilty response to the unacceptable rage at being deserted and the frustrated longings to be cared for adequately" (1968, p647)

As part of the depression there is crying, irritability, sleep disturbance, loss of appetite and being ill. A wife "reacts" with neurosis, "retaliates" with infidelity while he is away, frigidity when he comes home, "regresses" by rekindling links with and sometimes returning to her parents, assumes the "traditionally masculine responsibilities" of household managements and "resents" their surrender when her husband returns. Isay and his colleagues offered relief to these beleaguered women in

"psychotherapy aimed at helping patients verbalise their anger, recognise their neediness and demandingness, and gain understanding of the retaliatory aspects of their symptoms..." (1968, p651-2)

Although Isay's research is based on a clinical population, it is assumed that those presenting neurotic symptoms were the pathological tip of the iceberg of widespread generalised stress amongst submariners' wives. They were distinguished from the non-presenting wives not by type, but by severity of their reaction to husbands' absence. It is implied in the Syndrome that emotional instability and disturbed behaviour reflect the unusual and particular structure of their marriage. However this logic is rarely extended by psychiatrists into discussions of neurosis amongst women married to

continuously resident men. Although there have been longstanding analyses of the personal costs incurred by women in marriage it is only amongst the radicals of psychoanalysis that conventional family life is seen as generating mental disorder (Laing and Esterson, 1970) and these ideas have lost the popularity they enjoyed over a decade ago. Nevertheless, Durkheim (1952) described the lower "coefficient of preservation" experienced by wives; Bernard (1972) concluded that marriage is not good for women and contrasted their poorer mental and emotional health with that of men and single women; and a main plank in the feminist critique of marriage is in analyses of marriage's destructive impact on women.

However, on another level, emotional instability could be seen as a component of female personality. Oakley (1982) has argued that it is a main ingredient in the construction of womanhood and femininity. Such instability is an exaggeration of their sensitivity and an augmentation of their "expressive orientation"; depression is then the clinical extension of their "natural" unhappiness at being without their husbands. Busfield (1983) has noted that higher rates of mental illness amongst women have been variously taken as evidence of gender typing in the emotionality and irrationality of women or as a manifestation of the greater stressfulness of women's lives. Neither argument is wholly supportable since the very construction of mental disorder is not gender free and

"the psychiatric conceptualisations of different mental illness are fashioned and created in ways that are often gender specific" (ibid, p131)

It also implies that those without this type of reaction must be in unhappy marriages, are hardened women or uncaring wives. Studies that

have found little anger or impairment (Baker, Fagan et al, 1967), or where "wives cope so well that they deny being stressed at all" (Boss, 1979), are taken by Isay as evidence of wives bottling up their feelings in tune with the stiff upper lip ethos of the naval community. This marks the fashioning of a theoretical framework in which the unstressed lone wife cannot win, being either inhibited or unwifely.

Another feature of Isay's account of the Submariners' Wives Syndrome is that the women's behaviour is entirely reactive to their husbands' departure and rooted in their emotions. She reproaches him and retaliates against him. There is little attempt to gauge the practical difficulties and social ambiguities of being a wife without a husband. Even incidents of sexual infidelity amongst wives are interpreted as reprisals for her temporary desertion; her sexuality is only an adjunct to wifeness. Are then the sexual escapades of husbands to be similarly viewed? Is their infidelity resultant from being made to leave their wives? Or are alternative explanations brought to bear where male extra-marital sexuality is seen as a necessary outlet or, more simply, fun?

Allied to this conceptualisation of wives' dependence on men is the characterisation of marriage as primarily an emotional relationship. There is no attempt to give a more open-ended account of what women do while their husbands are away but only how they cope with their contingent emotional stress; thus there is the charting of how awful they feel rather than how they behave. Also there is no

scepticism on why the depressive responses to his absence should appear shortly before or on his return, rather than on his departure.

Following the theoretical vein of Isay, further research has charted the anxieties and isolation of service wives (Cretokos, 1970; Gonzales, 1970). More have identified the wife's assumption of household control as problematic; Cooper and Sloan (1985) attributed the high levels of "life dissatisfaction" amongst airline pilots' wives largely to what they term "domestic role overload". Here "pilots' wives feel, at times, a 'one-parent family' unable to share the family responsibility with an absent (body and/or mind) husband/father" (1985, p319). It could be argued that "domestic role overload" is a more general problem and contained within all marriages. However, further reading suggests that it is not straight-forward "overload" that is the problem, but the element of ambiguity it entails since they go on to say that

"in addition the wife is frequently expected to provide her pilot husband with the social support he requires from a stressful and tiring job, at a time when her domestic role pressures would encourage her to seek equivalent solace" (1985, p319).

Although not a clinical population, comparisons with other (ie non-pilot) groups are non-existent, and again the emphasis is on what wives feel in the analysis of "pilots' wives stressors".

Bey and Lange's analysis of "waiting wives" who endured "the abnormal stress of their husbands' assignment to Vietnam" (1974, p283) has many parallels with Isay's work. Nevertheless, the fact that husbands were going away to fight, and perhaps to die, adds an extra dimension to the anxiety of wives and confounds the routine nature of



their absence. Although none of the women was a psychiatric patient, they were seen as a high risk group. The researchers noted stages of reaction amongst the wives starting with an increased emotional distance and mood swings prior to departure, a sense of desertion and a tense apprehension on his return. Although the emphasis is again on emotional stress, Bey and Lange are more sensitive to the practical problems and behavioural dilemmas of wives facing at least a year of husband absence. They comment that all the wives were acutely aware of their awkward social situation.

"They were married, yet they had no husbands and were thus out of place with both their single friends and married couples" (ibid, p284)

They felt strange, especially with civilians, and thought that any contacts with men, socially or through their work, would be seen as a sexual invitation so tended to remain, as one of their respondents so poignantly commented, "a stagnant figure in a female world of child-raising and house-cleaning" (ibid, p284). Outside their ambiguous social standing, the increased domestic workload, and especially the lone caring for children, further contributed to their isolation..

Bey and Lange also contributed to the area in their development of Isay's argument that it is not just the assumption of domestic control that is problematic with husband absence but the reluctance and resentment experienced by wives in handing it back. The husband's return marks a disruption of a wife's established routine and an interference with her organisation of the children. Thus his return is clearly not followed by some bland renegotiation of their division of labour, but often experienced as a territorial invasion which wives

find hard to rationalise within their own definitions of wifeness. Bey and Lange are noting the anxieties of husband absence, albeit in the particular circumstances of combat deployment, but also hint at the structured complexities of lone wifeness and the disruptions to patterns of interaction caused by men coming and going from the home. However, it is in passing that they also note that absence is not always experienced by wives as a problem and that some women reported "increased intimacy" through separation. But presumably these wives are to be ignored in the more important process of identifying those who are of "high risk".

Boss' work in the area reflects the continued American weddedness to functionalism in its concern with the structural adaptability of the family. However, despite this frame, she makes the interesting point that, although a husband may be physically absent, he may still be psychologically present (1980); wives may symbolically maintain a husband's presence in the home by not assuming total management, by not "closing out the husband/father" position from the family circle. For Boss, women who do take over are described as androgynous, being

"highly instrumental as well as expressive... (in) possession of a high degree of both masculine and feminine qualities".

The explanatory retreat to personality types with their overtones of trans-sexuality may make one cringe, but this discussion raises a number of issues. It suggests that in a phenomenological sense some husbands may be more absent from the home than others and this may be poorly correlated with their physical presence, referring instead to their place within the symbol system of the home.

The concept used by Boss is akin to that pioneered by Hill (1949) in his study of the returning veterans of World War II, where women orchestrated the style of wider reaction to the husband's departure from and re-entrance into the household. He distinguished a "closed ranks" reaction where mother and children conspired in the husband's exclusion, from an "open ranks" one, where the part he played in family decision-making was kept open and he could regain access to the subtle world of family understanding. Hill adopted the perspective that absence is not merely a physical but a social factor, where "the definition of the situation" is crucial.

In addition, Hill was suggesting that the style of the wife's reaction may carry a different prognosis for the likely outcome of separation and reunion. Wives that do not experience stress and have no difficulties with home/child management may find it more difficult to re-admit their husbands, whereas those most unhappy at their husband's departure, who feel their sole responsibility a heavy and unacceptable burden may long for and welcome his return. The continued logic of this line of argument is that wives who are more stressed by husband absence may have a greater commitment to the continuance of their marriage. In other words the misery of wives may enhance the stability of their marriages. This aside, the style of reaction of these wives suggests a real dilemma for their behaviour, and the implications of "androgyny" suggests that women may be unsexed by their own capabilities, even in the home.

Returning to Boss' assessment of family adaptability, she notes how the "closing out of the husband's role", ending "psychological



father presence", is a necessary and adaptive mechanism for the wives of missing servicemen, but this of course raises the problem of its putative "functionality" when husbands sooner or later come back, when their absence is not associated with a possibility of death and injury. Here, with colleagues, she turned to studying the wives of corporate executives. Critical of the past emphasis on the pathological responses of wives to separation Boss et al (1979) were concerned with a wider repertoire of coping behaviours. They found that women committed to self-development, who valued their independence and self-sufficiency predominated amongst the corporate wives. Boss et al admit that the personal independence of wives is hard to include in a model of family adaptability and certainly challenges the companionate model of marriage since

"All items reflect the wife's recognition and acceptance of a lifestyle other than the togetherness model that is frequently espoused as an ideal for intact families" (1979, p83)

But such independence is still within the context of commitment to husband's career and an additional limiting factor in their analysis is that "these coping patterns appear to be a function of high income" (1979, p81). This hints at the class dimension of women's reactions, that it is middle class women that have the income and the cultural wherewithal to develop themselves in the absence of their husbands.

Along with stress for wives, husband absence has been investigated in relation to possible disturbance amongst children. Here the research is almost entirely focused on the children of service personnel. Tiller (1958) and Gronseth (1957, 1959 and 1962) pioneered the area in their work with the children of Norwegian



sailors. They argued that the behaviour of boys in father-absent families showed an over-dependence on their mothers, "pseudo-maturity" and idealisation of absent fathers. These reactions were laid at the door of over-protecting and over-controlling mothers. Like much of the research in the area it is principally concerned with boys, reflecting the more widespread anxiety over their gender identities than that of girls (Oakley, 1982). Pedersen (1966) and Matthews (Seebom, 1974) in their research, again within a clinical setting, identified inadequate and disturbed mothering as a main ingredient in the psychological disturbance of children in father-absent households. Research that has looked further afield than a clinical population (Wantanabe, 1985) found little difference in the attitudes and orientations of adolescent sons of service personnel, compared with a civilian control group and research that has attempted to gauge the referral rates of service and civilian groups (Scott-Brown, 1974) also revealed that the small systematic differences and variations were certainly unrelated to father absence.

Nevertheless, interest in the area and the construction of the research problem remains throughout largely unchanged since it is a constant temptation to extrapolate from what are believed to be unusual domestic circumstances to putative problems amongst the children of such households. And this trail of reasoning treads back to the conceptualisation of the normal family, wifhood and parenting.

From the foregoing discussion and the research cited, it might be concluded that the pre-occupations were American and outmoded since the transatlantic thinking about family life has remained largely

untouched by the concern in Britain with sexual divisions and the reproduction of gender. However, this is not the case since the analysis of married relationships amongst European off-shore oil workers shows remarkably similar pre-occupations. In 1978 Morrice and Taylor identified a collection of symptoms exhibited by wives local to Aberdeen with husbands in the off-shore oil industry and this collection they called the "Intermittent Husband Syndrome". They were symptoms akin to those found by Isay of "anxiety, depression and sexual difficulties" (ibid, p877) and it was widely thought in the local circles of medicine and social work that many "oil wives" suffered from this disorder. The Syndrome had its origins in clinical observation and the local belief that oil wives were a problem. Subsequently Taylor et al were to mount a research programme to gauge the prevalence of "psycho-social morbidity" amongst oil wives in the local community. They were to investigate the existence of the Syndrome, assess the level of "caseness" and identify wives at particular risk before gauging the "need for a preventative counselling service" (ibid, p877).

In their analysis they compared the wives of men working on- and off-shore in terms of their mental and physical health. The state of their mental health was operationalised in anxiety measures and they found that the major difference was not between wives with husbands on- and off-shore, but within the off-shore group; they found that the anxiety levels were "higher in the wives of men working off-shore but only when they are off-shore" (ibid, p879). This is in contrast to Isay's Syndrome, where wives experienced it just prior to, or on, their husbands' return. There was little difference in the extent to

which these groups consulted their GPs or in how they rated their overall health. Furthermore, their capacity to feel "nervy, tense, depressed or tired", their consultation rates and their assessment of their own health matched national levels identified in the General Household Survey. In their conclusion they admit that the problematic aspects of intermittent husband have been "somewhat exaggerated" both by professionals active in the local community and by their own previous academic probings. Nevertheless, instead of going on to explore the reasons why these women were/are regarded as problematic by the local populace and why past research has so consistently searched for the signs of abnormality and stress, they continued to dimensionalise and measure what stress there was.

Alongside the more global comparisons, Taylor et al were concerned to assess the differential reactions of types of oil wife to husband absence and then to profile their relative risk of experiencing difficulties on a number of dimensions: emotional and behavioural change, marital conflict and physical illness. Emotional change was monitored through measures of anxiety, behavioural change, particularly through patterns of eating and sleeping, marital conflict was arguments and misunderstandings during the period when the husband is at home and illness through the number of medical consultations made and symptoms experienced in the previous two weeks. They concluded that wives recently married, in paid employment and experiencing irregular husband absence had the most adverse behavioural and emotional reactions and that previous experience of absence or the presence of young children was statistically insignificant in their impact on wives' reactions. Furthermore, it



was wives in paid employment who experienced the most marital conflict and the newly married who suffered the most ill-health.

When the risk factors were run together to identify patterns of cumulative risk, it was the novices in marriage, parenting and as oil wives who fared worse and were less "adjusted" than the veterans of marriage and the oil industry. Finally they concluded that about 10% of their sample reported "symptoms and levels of stress which would warrant psychiatric intervention and treatment" (ibid, p885). However given their statement that

"The majority of wives cope satisfactorily with their husband's intermittent absence" (ibid, p885),

and their recognition that the incidence of the Syndrome has been exaggerated, one wonders how far this level of "caseness" would compare with "caseness" in the wider population. Brown and Harris (1978) found that two thirds of all married women with a pre-school child suffered fully or marginally from clinical depression, as did 17% of all the women in the study. If the work of Brown and Harris is used for wider comparisons, oil wives may show lower rates of disorder and then their greater mental health would become the issue to be explained.

In generalising the arguments it must be remembered that there is considerable variability in the patterns of husband absence and the extent to which wives are without husbands. This limits across the board comparisons. There is greater regularity in men's work routines on the rigs, the absences are in weeks rather than in months, husband absence is not accompanied by job relocation and geographical mobility



and when oil workers are at home they are on leave or on holiday. As Solheim (1984) pointed out the continuous presence of husbands within the home may be problematic and this was especially so if their wives were employed. His study of Norwegian off-shore commuting uncovered some of the difficulties experienced by the men. These oil workers had originally been attracted to the job by the opportunities it gave them to spend time with their wives and their families. In Solheim's study, every three weeks spent on the rigs was matched by a fortnight's leave at home. Yet ironically, those who most valued their time at home, those most committed to fellowship in marriage and shared family activities found both the time away and the extensive time at home unsatisfactory. This was especially so if their wives were in outside employment. The readings collected by McKee and O'Brien (1982) suggest a lack of clarity in the domestic role of fathers and Burgoyne (1986) describes a contemporary confusion as to what men should now be doing in their homes. Solheim's research illustrates this; after a time their enthusiasm for DIY jobs palled and, if their leave times were holidays, then they liked their wives to be at home on holiday with them. This could also account for the high levels of marital conflict reported by oil wives in paid work in the research of Taylor et al. The problem of husband absence may then not be just the anxieties of temporarily deserted wives, but of husbands who find the time away unhappy and the unstructured time at home with their families without purpose and debilitating.

Although the situation of oil wives is similar to, but not identical with, that of submariners' wives, the checklist of nervous and emotionally-derived complaints used by Taylor et al (1985) was

administered to submariners' wives whose husbands were attached to the Faslane base in Scotland (Stewart, 1985). Their scores were comparable to those reported in the oil study, except that submariners' wives complained more of disturbed sleep and unexplained tiredness, especially if their husbands' absences were irregular and of shorter duration. Although he also discussed the alienation of naval wives from the civilian community, the ghetto-nature of married patches, the bulk of his analysis is concerned, like Isay (1968) and Taylor et al (1985), with the psychological plight of the lone wife.

Taylor et al's epidemiological approach is grounded in positivist social psychology in contrast to the psychoanalytic stance of Isay. Nevertheless, the lines of enquiry are the same, focusing on the extent to which husband absence makes women anxious and psychosomatically ill. Throughout there is no sensitivity to the social construction of anxiety; there is no awareness that the language of stress, lethargy and illness may have a metaphorical meaning beyond the straightforward reporting of factual events. As Morgan comments, "the allocation of blame is part of the regular small change of family living" (1985, p141) and the exhibition and recounting of suffering may not be an unthinking quasi-biological reaction but part of the drama and politics of the home.

They have forgotten the war-time research of Boulding (1950) who was particularly critical of research where

"crisis situations tend to become stereotyped and it is simply assumed that the absence of the head of the house of military service creates hardship for any family" (p61).

Here an article by O'Beirne (1976) is unusual and in some ways refreshing; although it is written as "chin-up" advice to "waiting wives", she identifies not impersonal stress but the activities and behaviour of husbands as crucial in effecting the experiences of wives in absence and reunion. In all other studies and commentaries the actual relationship between husband and wife remains undiscussed. It is eclipsed by concern for the "stress" of what is regarded as an atypical marital situation. Also there is no obvious awareness of the moral dimension of the reaction of lone wives. The ideological grip of the companionate model narrows the range of acceptable emotions and behaviours; the good wife would feel distressed but "cope marvellously" and would tend her hearth rather than seek outside distraction.

Apart from expressed emotion, disturbance to patterns of eating and sleeping are common indices of distressed wives. Not eating and not sleeping soundly are taken as evidence of wives pining for their husbands, in a rather animal-like analogy. However, eating and sleeping are not wholly biological events, they are social ones. It would be odd if the absence of a significant member of the household were not to alter these behaviours, although alteration is not the same as disturbance. If the production of nourishing and filling meals and eating them with him is part of a wife's duty to her husband, his absence will certainly alter this pattern. Murcott notes in her research in South Wales the centrality of "cooking" to housecraft and the obligations of wives to produce "proper meals" for household members.

"If husbands and children are absent, women alone will not 'cook', indeed may not even eat. It is the others' presence which provides the rationale for women turning to and making a proper meal - that is what the family should have and to provide it is her obligation" (1983, p85).

Within the descriptions of lone wives "not eating" there is no recognition of the freedom of just living on snacks. Similarly Western culture assumes that husband and wife sleep together. The double bed is the symbol of their unity and hence bed-time is encased in conjugal ritual. As with eating his absence may generate change and may not be symptomatic of deeper stress merely strangeness, a feeling that must also be common upon his return.

Throughout the research and literature on husband absence there is little discussion of the styles of life adopted by lone wives, of how they format their lives when husbands are away. Instead the concern is with their "coping" strategies and for evidence of them closing or not closing out their husbands from the home. The limited interest in their behaviour that there has been is also linked to the structural factors which condition and predispose wives to experience stress and the detailing of different stress rates for different social groups. They remain unconcerned with the wider interplay of married life and with the wider question of how married life is conducted when husbands are away.

The emphasis on and use of the term "coping" to describe their behaviour is crucial. A dictionary definition of the verb cope is "to contend successfully with". It is an adjustment to circumstance; it is not about doing, acting, being. Hence the model is premised on



reaction, contains an evaluation of the acceptability and normality of their reaction and posits a divide between those who do and do not cope successfully.

As this model derives from a blend of companionship and patriarchy, there is also the strange problem of wives who "cope" too well. And, although again evaluative in orientation, the approach to any separation in marriage is almost wholly negative and there is little recognition of the advantages of some separation in the scope it gives for personal freedom, the unchallenged control of domestic routine and children, and the potentiality of husband absence for lessening marital conflict.

Furthermore, the model of distressed wives is another theoretical brick in the construction of femininity and conceals a perjorative view of women. Separation is accompanied by a plethora of nervous reactions and is comparable to Bowlby's much-criticised model of separation anxiety amongst children, where separation is accompanied by anger and the purpose of this anger is to promote the bond. Even wives who do not exhibit these symptoms while their husbands are away and feel positive about his return, anticipating an interlude of emotional unity and sexual bliss, may still be described as having problems with separation, since it is seen to give them scope for fantasising about their partners and to prolong immaturity in marital relations (Frances and Gale, 1973; Pearlman, 1970). Furthermore, wives who "cope" too well, who do not like handing back control to returning husbands are also problematic.

Tunstall's (1962) account of trawlermen is perhaps an exception to the prevalence of this model. Here wives are described largely without reference to their anxiety or their adjustment. These wives were conscious of the benefits they derived from the relatively high earnings of their husbands, were pleased to see him return from fishing trips and after a few days even more pleased for him to go back to sea. These women lived within the context of close kin and home town and their dependence on men was described as economic not emotional. Although anxiety and depression are not the foci of his analysis, he does note a certain ambivalence in both the attitudes of husbands and wives; wives look forward to the visits of their husbands so long as they do not overstay their welcome; husbands thought their wives should be self-reliant and good managers, but if they were too self-reliant and too good at managing, men felt they were loved for their pay packets and not for themselves. However, Tunstall's study is a product of the same era as Dennis et al's study of coalminers (1956) where men were described as part of a strong male culture and shadowy figures in the home, when research on the family was more pre-occupied with kinship than marriage, especially if that research was concerned with the working class, where different rules of matrimony were believed to prevail.

The analysis of wives separated from their husbands is also illustrative of Morgan's comments on the current medicalisation of marriage where "therapeutic stance" is allied to "a fairly conventional model of family roles and household structures", (1985, p40), where marital problems can be identified and eased by the counselling efforts of professionals, where marriage is individualised

and depoliticised. This medicalisation is "a new twist in the construction of 'women's place'", (ibid, p56) and the analysis of wives without husbands is not exceptional to the wider trend.

To argue thus is not to say that the situation of wives without husbands is without social ambiguity and the rising expectations of fellowship men and women may bring to marriage gives greater scope for disappointment. Hence marriages within the context of husband absence may not in themselves be problematic but are harder to encompass within a companionate model. An additional perspective on the significance of absence may be gained if we look further afield than contemporary Western society.

#### Husband Absence: An Anthropological View

Female-headed households have in the past attracted the interest of anthropologists. Although they could be found in a number of societies, Solien de Gonzalez (1965) argued that it was only amongst the matrilineal Nyar that such consanguineal households were the culturally dominant form and they were households in which men, although not husbands, were important. Elsewhere women-headed households, however common, occur by default rather than design, are a developmental stage, or a constituent of family breakdown. Here Gutman's historical analysis of the American black family is relevant. He dispels a number of myths about the male-absent households of American slaves, being critical of

"the insistence that slave marriage usually meant little more than successive polygyny, and a belief that the 'matrifocal' household (a 'natural' reaction by most

blacks to the realities of slavery) prevailed among the mass of illiterate field hands and labourers..."

and as having

"encouraged simplified and misleading descriptions of slave socialisation and slave culture" (1976, p13).

Doing for black American social history what Laslett did for the history of the British household, Gutman found that in 3 counties of Virginia in the 1860s, 75% of slave households contained a husband/father and that 4 out of 5 children were brought up in such households. Hence the twentieth century female-headed household amongst black Americans is not the simple descendant of a slave family, but a product of economic change, unemployment, migration and poverty.

Recently anthropologists more concerned with the context of kinship and household relationships in economic change have examined the impact of industrialisation on third world countries, the creation of migratory labour and the seasonal absence of men. This is endemic within southern parts of Africa, where industrialism joins hands with apartheid to produce towns of migrant men and homelands of wives without husbands. Murray found that, in Lesotho, two thirds of rural households were managed by women. Solien de Gonzalez (1965) used the term "dispersed families" to refer to families where husbands/fathers are absent but retain authority and affective links. Superficially one might identify these families as readily comparable to those cited in the previous section. However there are considerable problems in cross-cultural conclusions and these stem from cultural and economic context and from theoretical starting points.



Murray notes that consideration of African families is frequently premised on logic that is the obverse of the Western pre-occupation with nuclear family forms. It is assumed that in the African family extended kinship accommodates everyone, that kinsmen substitute for absent husbands and that, since African marriage presupposes limited affection between spouses, separation poses no emotional problems. Murray argues that husband absence is as problematic in Lesotho as Aberdeen, but his analysis emphasises the structural conditions that generate "acute anxiety, insecurity and conflict" (1981, p103). Marriage requires a man to establish a separate household for his wife, but the economic viability of this household depends on the cash income of migrant earnings. Here wives are caught in an economic trap whereby they bear the full load of domestic responsibility without any control over its resources, and their vulnerability is posited not so much on his physical absence but the absence of his regular remittances.

Clarke and Ngobese (1975) describe how men away are exposed to the urban delights of drink, prostitutes and gambling, and alternative values. Commonly they lose contact with their homes, especially if they have formed another family and women left behind in the homeland, have little defence against destitution. Other comments bear striking similarity to those made about husband absence in the West, that, although it reduces household self-sufficiency, the migration of men allows women greater freedom and husbands frequently find their authority undermined when they do return. But throughout, husband absence is described as intrinsic to a labour system of economic dislocation, as part of a poor marriage of peasant farming and

extractive and manufacturing industry. Hence the economic consequences for families not the emotionality of wives is the prime focus of this research.

So far marriage has been discussed as a social position and set relationship. Little attention has been paid to how the experience of marriage or of husband absence may vary for an individual over time. Taylor et al (1985) noted that the longer term wives were less distressed by separation, and this suggests that there may be systematic changes that occur within marriage over time and that the experiences of lone wifhood may also change with lengthening marriage. Changes within marriage and their relationship to husband absence is also an issue to which the thesis addresses itself.

### Marriage Careers

Structural analysis by social category remains central to the practice of sociology, a tradition that stretches back to Durkheim. In his attempt to establish different rates of suicide for different social groups, he was concerned to isolate the effects of age, sex and marital status as single variables among many, an approach routine in the classification and analysis of populations. However, the danger of this approach is that it generates methodologies and concepts based on the optical illusion of fixity of form, where marital status is a standard input in the determination of behaviour and worse, that "being married" is interpreted as an unvarying experience.

The static nature of structural analysis, its insensitivity to familial and maturational processes, has been well-recognised. Family

relationships are dynamic and it has become conventional to use the family life cycle model to encapsulate their change. As Gittins says,

"families are but groups of individuals; individuals who age, work, die, may have children, marry or move. By definition families are constantly changing. All individuals and thus all families go through life cycles" (1985, p8).

The family life cycle is then conceptualised as a sequence of stages through which individuals typically pass. These stages have been variously defined; they may be seen as a sequence of "developmental tasks" (Duvall, 1977) or a movement through "critical role transitions" (Hill and Rogers, 1964). There has been some debate on what these critical tasks or transition might be, but the categories overlap in a series of family stages from pre-child to young children, to school-age then teenage children, through their launching to the post-parental stage. This sequence summarises the dynamics of family development and offers a natural history view of the life cycle of homo sapiens. It is an ambitious model that links aging to changing patterns of family relationship and which seeks to outline typical developmental tracks in people's lives. Its advantages are that it adds some dynamism to the sociology of the family and it underscores the relational rather than group and unit aspects of family life.

Nevertheless, despite these advantages, models of the family life cycle have their drawbacks. It is an ideal type model that attempts to encompass aging within regular, inevitable and, by implication, normal changes in family form. As a cycle it contains individual transformation within the overall structure of social stability; it describes change without history. Murphy and O'Sullivan (1986) note



the more mystical connotations of the model as it describes the unending stream of life. Allied to this approach, changes have been located within the metaphor of "passages" (Sheehy, 1976), or given therapeutic significance in personality development and adjustment to aging (Carter and Bowen, 1980).

Nock (1979) has criticised the life cycle model for the normative assumptions it makes about "typical" biographies and "typical" families.

"All couples will have children, or at least desire them. In addition, it must be assumed that families abide by normative constraints in that they do not terminate as a result of divorce or separation. The normative underpinning of developmental approaches are obvious and essential" (ibid, p16)

Also, it is assumed that women will not have babies before they are married. It is identifying acceptable as well as typical pathways.

However, its normative nature is partly concealed as life cycle models cloak family behaviour with naturalism. The whole area of family studies is replete with such examples and it is easy to understand why. The rhythms of family life are superimposed upon biological events and the explanatory retreat to naturalism could be taken as an index of the importance and unchallengable position of familistic ideology. Most of the major events that punctuate the family cycle follow decisions made and are mediated by culture, not the unfettered urges of the species. Nevertheless, the analogy is so deep-seated that it extends from the underlying principles to the terminology used in identifying some of the stages; newly married and older couples variously occupy "unused nests" and "empty nests", their



fledgling children having flown or been launched. A new variant of this has emerged with the recession as unemployed adolescents and young adults are unable to leave home, creating the problem of the "crowded nest". The avian metaphor of family life as nesting behaviour may strike an emotional chord with some readers, but it also exemplifies the vocabulary and assumptions of naturalism.

Another major weakness of the family life cycle is that its stages are child-centred. Therefore it may not be well-suited to a discussion of family life where marriage is the point of study. Where marital change has been looked at, the chief concern has been varying rates of satisfaction and these rates have been frequently linked to child-rearing stages. Its child-centredness is part of its connection with the structural-functional legacy which identified parenting as the central process of family life and has led family studies to focus on the family form of parents and immature children. Consequently, however different the relationship of husband and wife may be at other times in their marriage, and however the relations between parents and their young children may differ from relations between parents and their mature children, family groups pre-occupied with procreation and child-rearing provide the model for them all.

There remains a dearth of information on mature marriage, perhaps because these marriages are seen as inconsequential for social structure or it is assumed that they are set and conflicts resolved. Mason (1986) has argued that the range of negotiation in longer term marriage may be limited despite significant changes in employment and child responsibility. But this does not necessarily mean that there are no

changing experiences within marriage. Also its normative, naturalistic and child-centred assumptions are part of a traditional stance on gender with the pathways of marriage and motherhood the route for all women.

Another major set of criticisms of the concept of family lifecycle has been aimed at its ambiguity and its over-simplification. The developmental cycle is characteristically formed through merging the dimensions of age, length of marriage and household composition. Its level of generalisation, its composite nature, may however become sources of inaccuracy and confusion. It is confusing since it encompasses arguments that range between biographical stages in an individual's life and household units in a family cycle, and these distinct levels of analysis are frequently merged; families do not have lives; an individual's life span is not a cycle.

What is selected as the basis of the cycle may be variable; Durkheim focused on age in marriage in his discussion of "the coefficient of preservation". Alternatively when the family is more firmly the focus, length of marriage becomes crucial. Separate approaches may be grouped together in the ambiguous phrase, "family life cycle", where it is hard to distinguish the effects of length of tooth from length of marriage and, more misleadingly, it may be assumed that they run together.

As an ideal typification, it has been used as a standard guage against which to assess cultural differences (Kumaga, 1984; Rich, 1978) and plot demographic change (Glick, 1977). More recently,

however, it has been suggested that the model is less useful because of changing family forms.

"Whereas a generation ago it was quite sensible to analyse domestic circumstances in terms of a 'family cycle' - implying a more or less structured set of stages through which families passed from marriage to death - it is far less so now" (Allan, 1985, p2);

Murphy (1983) has estimated that less than half of British women currently in their twenties will pass through the stages of child-rearing and long term marriage. Such comments on the diversity and unpredictability of contemporary family forms, nevertheless, underestimate fragility of family life in the past (Anderson, 1983), and perhaps miss the point that, as an analytic tool, it can still be used to assess change. As a description it has probably always been weak and Trost's assessment that the family life cycle is "an over-simplified description of over-simplification" (1977, p475) has probably always been true.

As it represents a particular summation of marital and family pathways, its predictive power has been challenged, as a stage of family life may be a poor guide to other factors. Simpler measures, rather than composite models may have the same or better predictive capacity; Nock (1979) suggests the presence/absence of children and Spanier et al (1979) suggest age as more effective discriminators.

Finally, the developmental model presents methodological problems in the relation of the cycle to historical events. Life cycle models are frequently derived from cross-sectional data and synchronic analysis. Longitudinal studies may seem more fitting, but they require long-term commitment and still fail to distinguish between the

effects of cohort and developmental factors (Miller et al, 1982; Nock, 1979; Schram, 1979).

If life cycle models are so problematic and unhelpful in charting marital change, where else can one look for theoretical inspiration? Feminist writers have joined in the critique of this model, especially its assumption that the main developmental tasks of women are marriage and children. However, their work has tended to emphasise the timeless qualities of being a woman, wife, mother, and the unchanging nature of patriarchy and domestic labour in female biography. On a more empirical level, in the exploration of sexual divisions they have examined the different social situations of women, their relationship to class, their educational and occupational experiences. Less interest has been shown in gender-based experiences over time, the biographical dynamics of gender. Where there has been interest in this area, it has been largely confined to discussions of differential childhood socialisation (Sharpe, 1976). This approach has all the theoretical weaknesses of general models of socialisation, with its deterministic view of adult behaviour. It could be argued that gender reproduction has replaced socialisation as the theoretical frame, but reproduction may be interpreted as replication. If it is so interpreted, then models of social reproduction may develop the same problems as models of socialisation.

Perhaps the most favoured alternative to the family life cycle is life course analysis as found in the work of Elder (1978) and Hareven (1982).

"The life course refers to the pathways through the age-differentiated life span, to social patterns in the



timing, duration, spacing and order of events..."  
(Elder, 1978, p21).

It is more orientated toward the individual, more sensitive to the variety of turning points that punctuate human biography and more aware of the various strands that combine in a particular life course than is the life cycle model. As the cycle is the metaphor of the familistic models, the journey is the metaphor of the life course, a journey where there are "life stages, transitions and turning points" (ibid, p22), and a journey that is firmly rooted in historical context. As the life course is more preoccupied with the individual it is also more voluntaristic in theoretical leaning; cultural expectations and historical events impinge on behaviour through decision-making in heavy contrast to the deus ex machina workings of the family life cycle.

Although life course analysis is increasingly hailed as the way forward in studying biographical change, it must be remembered that it is a radically different model from models of cyclical change, resting on different theoretical foundations and taking a very different perspective on individual change. There is the possibility that the problems of over-determinism may be replaced with the problems of voluntarism. As individuals age within historical context, the pathways may appear idiosyncratic and the extent to which individuals are navigating their journeys may be exaggerated.

A model of the life course is an analytic aid in making sense of biographical material. Here it would be of particular value in charting typical pathways in the marriage patterns of lone wives. In

this connection the concept of marriage career is also useful and is intended to have a broad remit. It includes the patterning of tasks and activities over time and the moral dimension of changing identities and relationships. Its conceptual background harks back to Goffman in referring to "any social strand of a person's course through life", (1968, p119), and is akin to Purcell's argument that

"whilst motherhood and the housewife role may be seen as jobs or careers in themselves, they are in fact parts, sometimes stages, of the career of being a woman" (1978, p154)

The emphasis is on movement through structure and within the relationship of marriage. Biographical analysis would search for typical patterns, the common parameters of structured choice, how they change over time and how they produce social similarity in the life courses of wives. As it can be used in relation to women with resident husbands so it can be used in the analysis of lone wives. It would also investigate how different pathways combine, the relationship between having children, housing situation, employment and contact with friends and kin and relate these strands to the changing experiences of marriage for a wife and to the dynamics of women's identities. In itself the concept of career is ahistorical, but a sensitivity to the intervention of historical events enables careers and life courses to be linked with biography and the dynamics of marriage to be contextualised.

### Conclusion

The themes of patriarchy and companionacy are central to the marriage patterns of contemporary women and relate to the dependence, privatisation and domesticity of their wifhood. These themes provide

the broad framework and particular issues important in the analysis of lone wives. They also underpin a more thorough-going sociological approach to lone wifhood, where less emphasis is placed on their emotional reaction to husband absence and there is a greater exploration of their marriage patterns, domestic experiences, self-conceptions and wider social relationships. Sociological analysis is also concerned with the search for consistency in the patterns of stability and change that encompass biographical experiences.

In moving from a theoretical discussion of and speculation about lone wives to empirical investigation of their marriage patterns, it was decided to focus research on a particular group of women experiencing husband absence. Women married to Royal Navy personnel were selected as the subject group. A programme of research was devised for this group with the purpose of clarifying the previously mentioned theoretical issues and accruing empirical data on the nature of husband-absent marriages and lone wifhood. Before this could proceed it was thought useful to clarify the relationship of naval wives to their husband's occupation and review the more specific literature on service marriage.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE ROYAL NAVY AND THE NAVY WIFE

Within the sociology of marriage and sexual divisions, there has been considerable interest in the ways in which home and work articulate and the ways in which wives are related to their husbands' careers. In this chapter the nature and structure of naval enlistment for ratings and commission for officers will be discussed and the implications these have for the wives of personnel and their marriages will be detailed.

There are a number of dimensions to the discussion of the relationship between wives and their husbands' jobs or career. Firstly, the nature of the occupation is important; the relationship of enlisted men or commissioned officers to military command is unusual in occupational terms and entails a particular relationship with dependents. Military service involves a subordination of self to command and such subordination carries implications for wives and children. It is the closeness but indirectness of their relationship to military authorities that determines the particular status of the service wife and is a source of ambiguity. Wives may be intimately involved in service life but are excluded from warfare. Secondly, the allowances and benefits that may be added to a married man's income and the responsibilities that devolve on wives influence household organisation and again relate the position of wives closely but indirectly to military authority. Finally it is believed by the naval



authorities that wives play a crucial role in the re-engagement and retention of military personnel and hence their attitudes are a significant part of manpower planning. This has influenced the policies of military organisations towards service wives and the research they have sponsored.

#### Married to the Navy

As Finch remarked, "when a woman marries, she marries not only a man but she also marries his job, and from that point onwards will live out her life in the context of the job which she has married" (1983, p1). Finch uses the concept of "incorporation" to sum and conceptualise the relationship of wives to husbands' work and the term has wide reference points, including the dual processes by which "his work both structures her life and elicits her contribution to it" (ibid, p2). Such constraints and contributions could be conceptualised within the broad remit of patriarchy and are a feature of all marriages; corpeality is the metaphor of marriage, the becoming of one flesh; incorporation is the material and moral absorption of women into the lives of their husbands.

The incorporation of wives is a general category of analysis. As Callan argues,

"The concept of incorporation is necessarily indeterminate at present; it points to an area of enquiry but does not specify it" (1984, p2)

Within the category, ambivalence in the status of wives relative to their husband's work is the watchword, but the conceptualisation of this ambivalence varies both with frameworks of analysis and the

particular nature of the husband's occupation. Callan offers an analysis of wives from the corporate perspective where they are "Janus-faced creatures" useful in enhancing a man's occupational commitment and supplying extra services, but also a rival for his time and loyalty.

Finch's exploration is more concerned with the view wives have of their situation. The constraints of marriage form the "two-sided coin" of wives' incorporation into husbands' work, "whose shape and size varies in relation to men's jobs" (1983, p3). All wives are more or less hedged in by the extent and accessibility of their husbands' earnings, the consequences for the home of the location and routine of his work and the practical and cultural requirements of submerging their own interests within those of their husbands. Wives are also drawn in as hidden workers, as practical and moral supporters. Wives make invisible but invaluable contributions to a husband's work and especially a husband's career through the performance of vital but invisible tasks, and the qualitative gift of simply being there. Although incorporation features of all marriages Finch notes that men's work varies in the extent to which it structures the lives of their wives and requires their unpaid services.

In the implied continuum of incorporation, the wives of military personnel appear to fall at the more incorporated end on the dimension of being structured or "hedged in" by husband's occupation. However Finch's analysis tends to elide the military services and the different circumstances service wives can find themselves in, particularly at different points in their marriage careers.

Sailors' wives are hedged in by the nature and workings of their husbands' enlistment, by the time-tables of ships, but are rarely drawn in. Within the navy there is no quasi-familial structure equivalent to the regiment. Within the regimental structure of the army, soldiers form a long-standing unit and their wives will either move or not move together. Ships are commissioned every two and a half to three years with new crews drafted each time and the draft is also the pattern for staffing shore establishments. Hence ships or establishments do not form an occupational community for wives.

Callan comments that although there is little systematic knowledge of incorporated wives, there are powerful folk-images and stereotypes of them. Within the services, one such powerful folk-image is that of the colonel's lady. However, within the Navy there is no equivalent of the colonel's lady and the implied shadow hierarchy of wives, nor any organisational vehicle for the ministrations of the wives of officers to the wives of other ranks. The crew of a ship is brought together only for that commission and the wives of crew members form no community. Much of the entertaining undertaken by a ship's crew is undertaken aboard and abroad and therefore to the exclusion of wives. Participators in clubs for navy wives and estate-based volunteers who welcome and introduce newcomers, through the agency of Helping Hands, are acting in their capacity as "wives of". However, such organisations are less integrated into the formal organisation of the Navy, are more reflective of friendship and residential groups, and do not cross the division between officers and

ratings. The inclusion and subordination of service wives through continuity, commonality of accommodation and the regimental unit are more characteristic of army rather than navy life.

Nevertheless, the draft system relocates sailors and, as Finch argues, wives are constrained to follow, since "The pressures to acquiesce to a mobile life style are both cultural and economic", (ibid, p48). Certainly married quarters accommodation is designed to promote the pattern of wives following husbands as they move to each new port or establishment. In a married quarter their tenure depends on their continued marriage and their husbands' continued retention by the Navy, as it is the MOD equivalent of the tied cottage. Within this type of housing, and concomitant mobile life-style, a wife may be encouraged to relegate her own employment and career prospects to a secondary position, secondary to those of their husband. However, any pattern of incorporation may not remain unchanged within the marital careers of naval wives. House purchase, with its attendant expenses of buying and selling, as well as children's education may limit mobility. Thus, if a wife stops moving, the nature of her relationship to husband's work may alter, along with her relationship to her husband.

Following the work of Tunstall (1962) on deep-sea fishermen and Hollowell (1968) on lorry-drivers, Finch noted some lessening of incorporation in the greater marital space that husband absence brings, affording wives more control over their time and enabling them to develop alternative, often kin or neighbour-based, support systems. However, the wives studied by Tunstall had not experienced mobility,



cutting them off from the networks of home town, wider family and friends. Concentration on an immobile way of life may make conclusions somewhat blasé about the ease with which support networks can be forged by wives alone, the greater amount of discretion that lone wives can exercise over their own lives as well as insensitive to possibly new dimensions of normative ambiguity in being a wife without a husband.

Incorporation, as discussed by Finch, and Callan and Ardener, is a broad and useful concept, directing attention to the multifarious ways in which the lifestyles of wives are framed by husbands' occupation. But its breadth and its inclusion of radically diverse situations is also problematic. Their relationship to husbands' income and marriage-based allowances, the time-tabling of domestic routines around ship runs and an identification with husband and Navy matters form the boundaries of marriage to a sailor and are essential pointers to naval wives' incorporation. However, as Macmillan (1984) argues, within the military services, wives are symbolically set apart; women and home are constructed as the antithesis of men, warfare and aggression. Macmillan's comments are directed at the wives of all armed service personnel; all are conceptualised as outside the main mission of military command. However, for the wives of naval servicemen there is an additional level of exclusion. Wives live ashore and are totally outside the day-to-day working lives of their husbands; the contribution of a wife to her husbands' work is to manage the home and any attendant crisis without requiring his

presence or, at times, any communication with him. On a common sense level, their lives appear to exhibit qualities the very opposite of incorporation.

Sailors' wives are women whose husbands may be intermittently present in the home. Their daily lives may not involve the regular and routine servicing of a husband and they may have more personal elbow room within their marriages than women with resident husbands. Husband absence raises the possibility of escaping some of the patriarchal elements of marriage without falling into the poverty experienced by some single women (Duquemin 1985) and many lone mothers (Finer, 1974; Townsend, 1979; Bennett, 1983). Could Cashmore's identification of the potentiality of lone parenthood in "gaining access to new forms of freedom, in escaping the strangulating role-restrictions of marriage" be applied to them as, in not "snapping the economic dependence of conventional partnerships" (1985, p272), women with infrequently resident husbands are not plunged into the poverty so frequently accompanying such independence?

However, husbands do return and sailors' wives are still married; their independence may be of little substance and their incorporation enveloping, as the wider pattern of their lives remains shaped by their husbands' occupation. This conceptual frame directs any empirical investigation of sailors' wives to assess their corporate experiences both as wives without husbands and as wives with indirect relationship to naval command. If sailors' wives marry the Navy as well as their husbands, what then is the nature of the Navy they have married?

### Naval Service and the Service Family

Turning first to the nature of military careers, it must be remembered that these occupations may be comparable to civilian jobs and professions in the tasks and skills that they entail, but offer no comparison when conditions of service are examined. Enlistment is not the same as job recruitment, whether novitiates know it or not; it is commitment of self to service life. It is a resignation of personal freedom and an acceptance of regulation which far exceeds that of contractual employment; conditions of employment are not negotiable by military rank and file and military control extends over areas of behaviour which civilians would regard as entirely personal.

Many of the rights and responsibilities of servicemen are stipulated within a separate legal system. They could be conceptualised as marginal to the structuring of work within capitalism, their economic position being as much in the vein of feudal service as that of wage labour. Within socio-economic classification, they are outside main groupings of occupational categories. Also, naval service is organised into its own particular career structure. Within the navy, there is no simple relationship between rank and skill. Rank locates servicemen at a clear level of command and pay and the manpower structure is such that men cannot be rewarded for their technical skill without being rewarded for their qualities of leadership.

Furthermore, the particular structure of service careers is out of step with the civilian pattern. Within the Navy, there are fixed periods of engagement or commission. The age of retirement for

service personnel differs from that of civilians and a typical service engagement for a rating spans the age-range 18-40 years. This career structure dates from 1853, a time when general standards of health and life expectancy were lower and the hardships of life "before the mast" more physically wearing. In civilian occupation it is the time of having "arrived" and sharply contrasts with the rating's time of departure. In contrast, officers join at 21 and their service life is organised in commissions. They remain within the service until they reach 55 when, unless they have achieved senior rank, they are placed on the retirement list.

In addition, the rights of citizenship enjoyed by servicemen are attenuated in law, and the sometimes contradictory demands of command and personal conscience and responsibility are the stuff of courtroom drama. Not only are they marginal occupationally, they are also a socially marginal group. Janowitz's (1960) classic account of the military emphasises their sectarian position where their lifestyle and the segregated housing of the base or "married patch" sets them apart from the civilian community.

The greater control exercised over the lives of servicemen means that the requirements of the job may come into conflict with family commitments. The nature of the job itself, warfare and organised aggression has no place within it for wives and children. This conflict is certainly not new and historically has been met with a



number of compromises. The problematic status of wives within military organisation has a long history and some of the problems that existed centuries ago survive today.

The point is well-illustrated by Trustam's (1984) documentation of the social situation of army wives in the last century. She describes how the eighteenth century army had been integrated into the civilian community, where women had played a normal and vital part in the organisation of food, transport and civilian support services. However, as armies became more professional, military authority took command of these ancillary services, women became officially excluded and the position of army wives more ambiguous. There was military pressure to delay marriage, since "The army was the soldier's home" (ibid, p23), and the regiment was to be his family.

Trustam notes the ambivalence of past army policy towards soldier's wives since, although they were burdensome, they were also a useful group. From this developed the historic compromise of incorporating a limited number of wives "living on the strength" into the regimental family. In 1867 7% of men were allowed to marry and their wives entitled to barracks accommodation, rations and benefits, such as they were. But there were of course many army wives living unrecognised and in penury "off the strength". Trustam also records the arguments between the public bodies who administered poor law relief and the military over who should take responsibility for the dependents of military men and the progressive inclusion of wives within army welfare programmes.

Sailors' wives of the past did not confront the naval authorities in such a problematic way. They were officially barred from sailing, though there are many references to them forming part of "the hidden navy" (Berckman, 1973; Lewis, 1960). It is not without note that the title "sailor's wife" in previous centuries was a catch-all category, the sea-faring equivalent of "camp-follower", and hence a euphemism for prostitute. The absence of a permanently standing military fleet until the nineteenth century meant that impressment was the only effective and rapid method of manning the ships commandeered by royal command in times of war. Recruitment by impressment occurred largely in port towns and drew primarily on existent seamen and the policy of rarely anchoring within swimming distance of shore kept contact with wives to a minimum. It also absolved the state from serious consideration of their interests. This was the era when the navy took little responsibility for the men, let alone their wives.

"There were some naval barracks and hulks galore in the ports. The policy of those who controlled them was to make them such disciplinary institutions that men were happy to escape to sea-going ships ... Sailors were made for ships and into ships they went and there they remained." (Bonnett, 1968)

Sailors' wives remained unrecognised if scattered throughout Britain or, where congregated in port towns, often believed to be of dubious virtue. They were much less visible than their army counterparts. As such, there were neither the mechanisms nor the inclination to accept any responsibility for sailors' families. Sailors' welfare was largely left to charitable bodies, and extended to health care and pensions, as in the Chatham Chest and Greenwich Hospital. Such entitlements as they had, for instance to the back pay

of those lost at sea or to the moneys collected under the custom of paying "Widows Men", were in practice hard to realise. Finally it must be remembered that the Treasury was frequently unable or unwilling to finance sailors' pay and, if sailors did not receive their dues, their wives and children must have fended for themselves.

However, with the formation and professionalisation of a Royal Navy came a greater concern for ratings' and officers' personal well-being and private lives; orphanages were established for their children; an allotment system organised to ensure wives received some of their income and wives gained some entitlement to share in their pensions and health care. Such changes that occurred in the nineteenth century mark both the transformation of the Navy and changes in the Poor Law Amendment Act, making families more responsible for their dependents and lessening state concern for the destitute.

It is easy to think of these issues as belonging to a bygone age, but they do not. In 1854, the Colchester Poor Law Board was critical of the army in not taking responsibility for wives and children left behind as the soldiers sailed for the Crimea; today in Plymouth the local authority is critical of the Navy for not assuming responsibility for deserted wives who are evicted from naval accommodation and rehoused at public expense. This issue is also the basis of the historic emphasis on recruitment of the unmarried. Single personnel are in many ways more malleable. Until recently the Navy operated age-rulings and these acted as disincentives to

early marriage; before 1970 marriage-based allowances and eligibility for a furnished married quarter were not available to ratings under 21 and officers under 25 year of age. Bamfield (1974) noted the sustained argument against married quarters, an opposition based on the belief that their provision would encourage men to marry.

This issue forms a continuing thread in the debate about who should take responsibility for the wives and children and service personnel and marks the continuing uneasiness and anomaly of any putative solution. The post-war extension of welfare provision for service families by the Ministry of Defence has brought wives into closer contact with naval authorities but has not resolved their anomalous position.

The particular features of a naval marriage and their impact on wives also require some description. Here mobility and separation feature most prominently. Naval personnel are drafted to new bases and ships every two and a half to three years. Hence geographical mobility and long distances to wider kin may be common. Naval wives are in marriages where husbands are likely to have been regularly and routinely absent. Furthermore this separation does not follow a simple or single pattern. A husband may be absent on a ship, where the period of absence is as likely to be counted in months as weeks. Alternatively, he may be absent through drafting to a distant shore establishment to which his wife is reluctant to move, or temporarily attending a training establishment. Here the pattern of absence may be more likely to be one of working week absence, popularly termed in



the Navy as "weekending". However the term "pattern of" absence may in itself be misleading, since there are few cycles of absence comparable to set weeks ashore and on the rig which characterise the work routine of oil workers (Taylor et al, 1985; Clark et al, 1985). As military personnel they are subject to the often unpredictable dictates of operations and command, which the naval hierarchy recognise as causing "turbulence" for the families of officers and ratings.

The other major feature of service life is the housing pattern. Married quarters accommodation is provided for all rates and ranks and takes the form of flats and houses, entitlement being reflective of rank and family size. Such provision was formerly premised on the assumption that wives and children would follow their husbands' postings and that families would remain on "the married patch" for the duration of their service careers. Movement into public sector housing or the private housing market would occur on or near retirement and would be accomplished with the aid of their gratuity. Increasingly men in the navy, and their wives, are becoming homeowners (M.O.D., 1984a) and they are buying houses earlier on in their occupational and their marriage careers. There are also an increasing number of service personnel with negligible or no experience of married quarters. Home ownership then becomes another factor influencing the other factors of mobility and separation, and shaping the experiences of women married to sailors.

So far the Navy has been discussed as a stable context within which family life is organised. This is, however, misleading since

the Navy has experienced recent and rapid change with its reorganisation under the auspices of Nott and as a consequence of the Falklands War. Base ports for ships and submarines have been altered, training centralised, maintenance patterns transformed and the balance between time spent at sea and in a shore establishment tipped in favour of increased sea-time. The percentage of men at sea has risen to nearly 50% and these men spend more of their sea drafts actually sailing. These changes may be necessary for increased efficiency, but also signal a shift in the demands of the job. Just as family life is not static, neither is the operating pattern of the Navy. Consequently, another part of the rationale for the exploration of the marriage patterns of sailors' wives is to assess the impact of new patterns of naval operation on the familial relationships.

#### Allowances, Benefits and the Naval Family

As an employer the Navy exercises a level of control over the lives of servicemen unparalleled in civilian occupation, but provides a wide range of allowances and benefits. These allowances and benefits feature large in the domestic economy of naval families and in turn influence the pattern of naval marriages.

Officers and ratings are legally required to declare their marital status category, and any change in their marital status, to their supply officer. This declaration must be accompanied by the relevant documentation. These categories distinguish the legally married officer or rating from the widowed, separated and divorced and detail the serviceman's or servicewoman's relationship to the care and

control of the children. This declaration is an essential part of pay regulation for only those who are legally married and would normally live with their spouse, were it not for the requirements of naval service, or those who have care and custody of their children, have entitlement to an array of naval allowances and benefits. The logic of these benefits is that they are paid, or are available, as compensation for the extra expenses and inconvenience of service life for those who are seen as having the additional responsibility of caring for legitimate dependents. It must be underlined that it is living with, not merely contributing toward the economic maintenance of, a wife and children which is the crux of the allowance system.

Overseas Allowance:

A married man receives a higher allowance than a man single or estranged from his wife, when operative out of a foreign port.

Food Charges, Accommodation and Lodging Allowance:

Since it is assumed that a married man who is unable to live at home will be maintaining himself and another household, he is entitled to a larger allowance to cover food and accommodation charges.

Travel and Separation Allowance:

When the distance between a married man's home and his duty station is more than 200 miles by road, or 100 miles by road and sea and includes a two hour ferry crossing, then he becomes entitled to a separation

allowance which is added to his pay. Married men are also able to claim more travel warrants to enable them to visit their homes more frequently.

Housing Benefits:

Married personnel are able to secure cheap accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence in married quarters estates. The weekly rent of an unfurnished service flat ranges from £11.69 to £16.38 and £12.39 to £17.36 for a furnished flat; a two-bedroomed council flat in the centre of Plymouth would cost £22.00, inclusive of rent, rates and water. The rent for a three-bedroomed house in married quarters ranges from £13.37 to £16.38, if unfurnished, to £14.14 to £17.36 if furnished; the rent for three-bedroomed council houses in Plymouth ranges from £34 to £40 a week, again inclusive of rent, rates and water charges. Also, married personnel are entitled to rent allowances if resident in a hiring.

Furthermore, naval personnel receive financial assistance with house purchase. The married rating who has re-engaged for 22 years or more or the married officer on a pensionable commission of 16 years or more, provided they are at least 25 years of age, are eligible for the Long Service Advance of Pay Scheme for House Purchase. This entitles the career officer or rating to an interest-free loan to assist them in buying their own home. This loan is, however, recalled if they should decide to leave the Navy early. Once a house is purchased they are entitled to Disturbance Allowance and removal expenses if they wish to sell up and move to a new draft.



### Boarding School Allowances:

These are paid where the children of married personnel or personnel with the care and control of children are being educated in boarding schools.

The scheme of allowances is wide-ranging and each benefit is influential in shaping the marriages of sailors since it constitutes a factor to be weighed in family economy and decision-making: marriage brings an entitlement to a home away from ship and dock and hence marriage may be a method by which sailors may secure off-ship accommodation; the Long Service Advance of Pay may enhance career commitment and encourage home ownership and home ownership may relate to immobility and service separation amongst personnel; the separation allowance, although designed to compensate for separation, may in fact provide an incentive for that separation. A similar point on Lodging Allowance is made in an in-house naval report which noted that for officers

"it is worth over £5,500 a year free of tax to live on Lodging Allowance in London, but is conditional on rules which prevent the family living permanently with the man..." (Hogg, 1979)

The Report concluded that the allowance system makes separation financially attractive and inadvertently encouraged it. Also it must be remembered that the benefits cease with the dissolution of the marriage and so could form an incentive to remain married or provide encouragement in the concealment of de facto separation.

### Naval Welfare Services

The allowances detailed above operate through the pay office and

could be loosely construed as having an indirect welfare function. The Navy also has a more direct welfare function in its dealings with the servicemen, their wives and children. There are a number of welfare agencies involved in this. SAFAB (Sailors and Families Advice Bureaux) offers routine help and advice to servicemen and has officers in major shore establishments. Naval Community officers organise community activities, play groups and clinics on the married quarters estates. Their dominant client group are the wives and children who live on those estates. Also there is Family Services, which is more involved in crisis management and intervention and offers the skills of professional social workers to naval families.

All these organisations are in a political position vis-a-vis their client group, but this political position is especially acute for Family Services. When things go wrong at home, only they can authorise the return of absent husbands, their dual responsibility to client and command is more obvious and their relationship with wives more ambiguous than the other agencies. In addition, it should be noted that seamen in the past who were married to wives whom it was claimed could not cope with the rigours of naval life, or who developed welfare problems, acquired "welfare packs" and their career development stopped, as they were identified as bad risks for promotion. Although the policy on this has now changed, traditions die hard and the concept and fears linger on, generating a certain reticence amongst personnel in availing themselves of what services there are. Along with this reticence there are also possible feelings of privacy invasion, concomitant with involving one's employer in one's domestic life.

The concern of the naval authorities for the welfare of personnel and the quality of their family lives is also tempered by a practical concern for the impact these have on the recruitment and retention of personnel within the service. This concern for the practical upshot of welfare programmes is reflected in governmental reports; the Seeborn Report (1974) addressed itself explicitly to welfare issues in the navy and proposed ways of structuring Family Services to deal more effectively with the problems identified; the Troup (1972) and Hogg (1979) Reports are more exercises in manpower planning and examine the implications deployment and drafting have for cost and efficiency in manning the fleet. They also look to the ramifications possible policies have on the quality of family life, in the amount of separation and "turbulence" concurrent with these policies and note their possible impact on recruitment and retention. These reports share the common assumption that wives' adjustment to service life influences men in their attitudes to their jobs and careers; dissatisfied wives are seen to inhibit men in relishing their work and to encourage them to leave early.

#### Sociology and the Service Family

The pre-occupations of naval authorities have been reflected in the psychological and sociological research on naval families. Particularly influential have been the beliefs that the attitudes of wives are crucial in the retention of personnel and that service separation constitutes the major familial problem of service life. These research programmes are premised on the same conceptual

assumptions of husband absence and distressed wives previously discussed in Chapter 2. They also relate to another dimension of the incorporation of wives within husbands' careers; employing organisations are active in defining what marriage is and what wives are for. As Callan argues,

"this enables all manner of troubles ... to be represented as failures of 'adjustment' calling for ever more strenuous efforts at accommodation, rather than as consequences of institutional practices that could be changed." (1984, p23)

Wifely dissatisfaction has been amply charted in a number of American studies (Decker, 1978; Boynton and Pearce, 1978; McKain, 1976; Woelfel and Savell, 1978). However, these studies offer a descriptive account of felt discontent and the impact these dissatisfactions have on family structure is rarely explored in any systematic way (Rienberth, 1978). The extent of separation or mobility fails to distinguish between those who leave the Navy and those who stay and the characteristics of family form seem to have little predictive capacity within the issue of retention. In discussing attitudes it should also not be forgotten that there is considerable variability of reaction in that what one family rates as a plus factor in naval life, another regards as a minus (Woelfel and Savell, 1978).

In some research wives' reactions have been gauged from the questioning of husbands. In a study concerned with American naval personnel (Lund, 1978) servicemen declared their wives' opinions crucial in their decision to remain within, or to leave, the navy.



However, the reality of career decision-making is certainly more complex than this study would suggest and the explanatory power of such research suspect. Relatedly, a study of American naval officers and their wives (Grace and Steiner, 1978) demonstrated how husbands misjudged the attitudes of their wives; husbands believed their wives to hold more hostile views towards the Navy than they in fact held and wives were keener for their husbands to re-enlist than husbands perceived them to be.

In trying to encapsulate the relationship of wives' attitudes to husband's career decisions, Hunter (1982) suggested that wives' opinions serve to amplify those of their husband - if he is dissatisfied, they support and magnify his dissatisfaction. Furthermore more, she argued that the perception of any of the "stresses" of naval life, commonly identified as separation, mobility, and "turbulence", is mediated by family ideology and organisation. This point is followed in other research which suggests that particular family circumstances are more important than the sheer experience of separation or transience; it is the younger wives with younger children who are more likely to view naval life with anxiety and resentment and the maturer wives who regard it as providing opportunities to develop their own lives and interests, to travel and to keep their marriages fresh.

The issue of attitudes "causing" behaviour is a fraught one. Whatever the relationship between career commitment and wife's attitude, it cannot be claimed that the opinions of one person can

cause the behaviour of another to be altered in a mechanistic way. If people inhabit a world of meaning and are predictive of one another's behaviour, there is always an element of "I think she thinks I think" in relationships, as well as the inevitable distortion of perceiving other's perceptions. Furthermore, there is also the escape route it offers for the less than honest; to claim publicly that your wife cannot cope or is unhappy with service life may be more psychologically comfortable than admitting you dislike the rigours of naval service.

A final and more general note of caution must be raised in any review of the sociology of the military family. Many of the studies fall into the category of policy-driven research. This means that the research has often been eclectic in its approach, responding to the issues of the day. Manpower problems arising from falling recruitment and early leaving have been the main prompts to research in the recent past and, in the USA, the aftermath of the Vietnam War. If tied to particular circumstances, it is harder to build up more generally applicable data. Furthermore, the problem-diagnosis and problem-solving approach may inhibit a broader and more critical assessment of the issues. It should not be assumed that what is a problem for the authorities is a problem for the population studied: the "problem" is often identified a priori and therefore never found not to exist in such research; the comparisons with the "normal" population are weak, and in this instance the stresses of civilian and unseparated marriage ignored; and such research may be undertaken to give credibility to already proposed "solutions". Policy-driven

research rarely suggests the lines of action unpalatable to its military sponsors.

In the past, considerable efforts have gone into assessing the effects of service life on the families of servicemen, and the further consequences this has for retention and early retirement. However, none of the many domestic factors investigated seem, in the last analysis, as potent a discriminator between those who leave and those who stay as satisfaction with the job itself (Woelfel and Savell). But, within military circles, analyses of job satisfaction and attitudes to work are rare. This is an area of investigation which has been neglected in studies of naval servicemen, although not in studies of the merchant fleet (Fricke, 1973, 1974). This may be because job satisfaction amongst military personnel is too sensitive an area to probe, that the rigours of duty and service do not countenance choice and popularity; since the tasks undertaken are vital and unalterable, their exploration is then deemed irrelevant. Analyses of the family life of servicemen, as an ingredient in retention and recruitment, may then be a softer target for policy reformulation and the nature of the job itself becomes ignored. Also manpower shortages in specific areas may be aggravated by shortage itself, as the existent men are drafted for more sea-time which they may not welcome.

A final point should not be forgotten. Many men have joined the Navy because they enjoy sailing and enjoy the greater demands and organisational involvement of service life and do not relish a more

routine nine to five working day. For men in this category, familial discomfort with naval life may be unfortunate but irrelevant to the enjoyment of the job. Other sailors may look forward to periodic absence from wife, family and domestic routine. Similarly, one cannot assume agreement between husband and wife. Her dissatisfaction may be of little consequence to his orientation towards his job. Past research has rarely stressed the triangular nature of the relationship between wife, husband and service command. To speak of service families misses this obvious point, since it assumes that all family members speak with one voice.

### Conclusion

The structure of a husband's occupation shapes the marriage pattern and the lifestyle of a wife. This is true for naval wives as well as for women married to civilians. Such shaping has been conceptualised within the analytic frame of incorporation. However, within this overall frame there are special features of naval service which structure the lives of wives in particular ways, giving unique qualities to their anomalous and ambiguous situation. Their lives may be radically structured by the mobility implications of the draft system; their domestic decision-making may be influenced by the allowance and benefit systems; their neighbourhood relations may be at times co-terminous with "the married patch". Yet wives are radically excluded from the world of their husbands' work, in marriages punctuated by spells of service separation.



An exploration of husband absence in the context of marriage to a sailor is an exploration within the general frame of incorporation. For all wives incorporation creates ambiguity, but the shape and nature of this ambiguity is variable. The issues then to be explored reflect the context of husband absence, the particular pattern of husbands' employment which structures their wives' marriages but radically excludes wives from its daily operations.

A research programme to examine marriage to a sailor and its wider social consequences in the lives of women was devised. The empirical formulation of the issues, the methods used and the methodological problems encountered are examined in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### The Origin of the Thesis

This thesis had its origin in discussion with colleagues about what life must be like on the service housing estates of Plymouth, estates largely populated by women and children since husbands/fathers were frequently away. Also there was something of a local stigma that attached to naval wives; they were variously seen as rather helpless and certainly pampered, unlike naval wives of an earlier generation, and occasionally as women with loose morals. The marriages of these women seemed an interesting topic and it was felt that a project on service marriages would have a particular local relevance.

I had no further immediate or obvious interest in the subject. I had been married for 17 years but not to a sailor, although my husband was occasionally absent from home. A personal standpoint of being sympathetic to feminism, cognizant of the problems of marriage while being married myself undoubtedly influenced the formulation of the research project. Initially, given the vibrant critique of marriage in the literature and the identification of the problems of lone parenting as primarily economic ones, service separated marriages seemed to offer an opportunity for some measure of freedom for wives and the possibility of a different type of marriage. In conversation

the notion that service separated marriages might be somehow different but not necessarily more problematic than unseparated marriages often received an intriguingly hostile or incredulous reaction and I was occasionally quizzed as to why I had such a jaundiced view of marriage - had I had a terrible experience? Was it my age? The popular assumption that such marriages were difficult and unsatisfactory was repeated in the literature where they were largely described as stressful for wives. Therefore the issues in the research emerged from the strain between feminist accounts of marriage and previous research in the area of husband absence.

The aim of the research was then to give an account of a particular type of marriage characterised by separation and mobility and to relate these critically to major themes within the current sociology of women and marriage. The account would be based on an enquiry not into how women were stressed, or how they coped, but what they did, how they conducted their married lives and how the nature of their marriages influenced their other relationships.

#### The Wider Issues of Methodology

There is no advancement made through abstracted empiricism and the amassing of sociographic data. Only at the conceptual level are developments made; theorising is essential. However, the relation of theory to research is not unproblematic. At one level the problems are general and relate to all sociological work and, at another level, it has been claimed that researching women contains additional methodological issues (Roberts, 1981; Graham, 1983).

At the general level, the themes of this thesis were not hypothesised and tested in a model akin to that of natural science. Positivism has been attacked on almost every level as an unworkable (Popper, 1962) and mythic (Kuhn, 1970) account of how natural science is conducted, as inappropriate to the social sciences in the understanding and construction of social reality (all phenomenologists) and as arid and unimaginative (Mills, 1959). Research is not then the simple testing and verification of theory; nor is it the bringing of a fresh-minded open questioning into an area, but the choosing of an alternative frame within which to discuss issues and areas and the possible reformulation of that frame. This is not to argue that data collection is trivial and that theories are unchallengeable, but that there should be a dialectical relationship between them. As Baldamus comments on theorising,

"its outstanding feature is the interminable restructuring, redefining, reinterpreting, reformulating of conceptual frameworks." (1982, p220)

Here the logic follows the dynamic of double-fitting where data are structured, as frameworks are reformulated. Although such methodology contains the implication that it is "cooking the facts" it is not the same as the opportunistic use of theory in exemplifying so criticised by Glaser and Strauss (1967), but intrinsic to the workings of theory as a process.

At the more specific level of researching women's lives, other issues arise. Graham (1983) raises two areas of concern: firstly, the deep roots of "masculinist" theoretical frameworks within sociological modelling and secondly, the social relations and



processes of doing research. The term "masculinist" has been applied to survey methods per se because they are associated with objectivity and rationality, attributes of public life and characteristics of men (Reinharz, 1979; Morgan, 1981). Such a critique is, however, unacceptable since it reifies sexual divisions, ignores the achievements of survey methods in detailing women's lives and may become an unwitting instrument in the "building (of) a methodological ghetto for women" (Graham, 1984, p136), where feminist research can only use qualitative approaches.

Nevertheless, if the term "masculinist" is given a smaller remit in the critical appraisal of types of theory, it has an important bearing on the topic area. Models which try to determine the levels, extent and nature of wifely distress contingent on husband absence would qualify as "masculinist" in formulation since here the lives of women are in focus only so long as they are reactive to the lives of men. It also contains a covert assessment of women and their adequacy as wives. Thus such modelling would be rejected.

In relation to the social processes of researching, new criteria for assessing the adequacy of research have been called for in researching women. Data should not only be reliable and valid, they should also be sensitive to the structure of women's lives and experiences. In reply it could be said that sensitivity, the appropriateness of techniques and sympathy of the observer, should be intrinsic to all research, but its practical consequence has been a

greater reliance on qualitative techniques, an emphasis on women researching women and a greater awareness of the power structures that impact on women's lives.

This research project, concerned with the marriage patterns of sailors' wives, related to many of these issues. Most obviously it was a study of women by a woman. However, such a research structure was not without its problems. The substitution of a sociology of wives for a sociology of the family has been criticised in the past (Safilio-Rothschild, 1968; Thomson and Williams, 1982). The same criticism could be levelled at the sociology of marriage, where the nature of marriage has been explored more through the experiences of women than men. But, echoing the words of Bernard (1972), this thesis is intended to be a description of her marriage not his and the women were not researched as family spokespersons. How husbands accommodated to marriage, separation and reunions, their relationship with other family members, the links between familial and occupational commitment were important questions, but not the focus of this research.

A major methodological danger of feminist research is that it may be premised on the assumptions of a "we-women" methodology, which presumes a natural rapport and understanding guaranteed by gender. It could assume a gnostic knowledge of other women's lives, and worse, it could represent another ideological brick in the construction of female personality and its intuitive sensitivity. The feminist researcher is enjoined to defend the common interests of other women.

This raised the question - do women married to sailors share a common interest even if they do not exhibit it and, to what extent has the researcher the power to defend their putative collective interests? On the one level it is obvious that people who are researched should not be ridiculed, trivialised or exposed, that research requires a sympathetic stance. This is not a stance, however, peculiar only to feminist research. Also, how is feminist research to deal with the statements of women that do not fit the existent critique of marriage? Are their statements to be dismissed or patronised as the words of the falsely conscious? These considerations permeated all the stages of the research.

#### Defining the Terms

Before any research on sailors' wives could begin, the problem of defining and identifying the married had to be considered. Being married was operationalised through the naming of a wife as next-of-kin on the listings of personnel. This was in line with a common-sense definition of marriage that relies on self-identification, but it must be remembered that service marriages are shaped by a greater weight of administrative constraint.

The Royal Navy uses a stringent definition of marriage in the regulation of pay and accommodation. For instance, to obtain married quarters servicemen must prove themselves legally married. As only 17% of Royal Navy and Marine personnel have never lived in such accommodation (MOD, 1984a), this test of entitlement has at some time been applied to nearly all. Also other benefits and allowances are obtained only on the demonstration of legal matrimony. Hence a

financial premium is available on marriage with the administrative upshot that legal matrimony is indirectly encouraged. This may have influenced the population of married women from which the sample was drawn.

### Negotiating the Issues

The natural science paradigm of research assumes that data are neutral, facts there to be gathered, respondents observed and questioned. It is a model of science where methodology is "a matter of strategy not morals" (Homans, 1949). However, in the establishment of the research project, political issues and interests were all too apparent. "Gatekeepers", "sponsors" and "inquirers" if not "citizens" (Barnes, 1979) juggled their respective interests, and negotiation was an ever-present part of these early processes. The co-operation of the naval authorities was thought to be important because only through them could access to a widely based population of naval wives be obtained.

Other surveys in the area of service families had concentrated their efforts on service estates in port towns (Nicholson, 1980). This concentrated and hence more accessible community was thought to be unrepresentative of some important groups of naval wives as it would exclude those living remote from naval bases, home-owners and would under-represent older women, with maturer families. The Royal Navy was then approached to elicit their co-operation and support and to gain access to their personnel listings, from which would be derived a sample of wives. This was not a polite formality prior to being given a free hand, but a delicate series of discussions and



negotiations. Within these negotiations a number of hurdles were crossed.

Research on service personnel inevitably encounters security problems. Therefore it was hardly surprising that the Royal Navy was apprehensive about any organisation having access to personnel listings. Even the computerisation of next-of-kin records had been delayed until November 1984, since it was considered that electronic records constituted a greater security hazard than a cumbersome card-index system. Access to such records was limited, even within the Royal Navy, and they were certainly not for outside eyes. There was also an additional problem. The Ethics Committee of the Royal Navy had in the past developed regulations, it was claimed, to protect the civilian status of naval wives; they were not to be contacted by civilian or naval authorities without the prior permission of their husbands. Although the Navy was clearly interested in the consultative value of outside research, initially these problems seemed to be major stumbling blocks. Eventually, however, a compromise was reached and a listing of all the personnel in the administrative region of Western Area was sent to the Family Services section in the naval centre of HMS Drake, Plymouth. No names or addresses were to be removed from these premises, but all anonymous replies to a survey were to be returned to Plymouth Polytechnic.

The research could go ahead so long as all communications were addressed to both husband and wife, although they could contain letters which made it clear that wives were the group being researched. This was the basis on which the research went ahead since

it was felt that this compromise with naval regulations was more acceptable than the original suggestion of the naval authorities, that each husband's permission be sought for their wife to be contacted.

As Barnes has argued

"when the citizen's right to privacy is recognised either by custom or in law, a gatekeeper may consider that he has the duty placed upon him to protect the citizens from unwarranted invasions of their privacy" (op cit, p87).

A concern for privacy tempered by a patriarchal view of the status of wives did create a problem in the initial constitution of the research. These types of problems may become commoner in the establishment of research programmes with the introduction of the Data Protection Act.

There were also other issues involved in these negotiations with the gatekeeper. The naval authorities displayed a certain nervousness about the project's capacity to uncover a seamier side to naval life which would then be exposed and sensationalised. Here it was essential to stand firm on academic probity and professional integrity, to point out that research was not an exercise in moral entrepreneurship, but would present them and the public with findings and interpretations which they would then be free to challenge. Also the relationship with the gatekeeper meant that the researcher entered the investigative arena with a particular identity. This again prompted another series of negotiations whereby women had to be reassured that, although the survey had the Navy's blessing, the researcher was independent, their co-operation voluntary and the information imparted entirely confidential. Barnes sees researchers as people who inevitably cannot be entirely honest with any of the

parties. Dishonesty may be too strong a word but there are undoubtedly elements of self-interest and manipulation in these negotiations and the compromises that come out of them.

#### Choosing the Method

The exploration of the marriage patterns of sailors' wives was designed to fall into two different, but complementary, stages. Previous related research had been port- (Stewart, 1985) or estate- (Nicholson, 1980) based, drawn from a clinical population (Isay, 1968) or based on a population sample generated by random telephone dialling within a locality (McCann et al, 1984). In the present survey it was felt that a broader picture of the lives of women married to sailors should be initially drawn. This would attempt to pinpoint where they lived and offer a structural guide to their patterns of mobility, age, length of marriage and family size, contacts with kin and non-kin, education and employment histories.

A postal questionnaire sent to 10% of married servicemen and their wives, who were living within Western Area, was to be the vehicle for this initial exploration. Western Area is one of the Navy's three administrative regions in the British Isles and stretches from Land's End to the Dorset border and north to include Wales and Lancashire. The survey of naval wives within this region would then be followed by thirty in-depth interviews to gain a more detailed picture of household organisation, to penetrate the more qualitative reaches of their marital lives and to assess the impact of their marriage patterns on their other relationships.

The selection of research methods was a pragmatic decision, the questionnaire and the interview being devised to answer different questions in the area. As Zelditch (1982) has argued, it is not a matter of one method being superior to the other, not a context in which the "hardness of data" of the structured sample survey is matched against "the depth and reality" of the probing interview. Each have their place and their own problems of validity and reliability in the extrapolation of meaningful data. Also it was hoped that the survey would contextualise some of the issues explored at greater depth in the interviews. However, this is not to go as far as Sieber in his argument that combined methods generate a qualitative improvement in the data, as well as generating simply more of it, and are the basis of more valid interpretations. He seemed to be suggesting that one method validates the other in "a new style of research (which) is born of the marriage of survey and fieldwork methodologies" (1982, p177).

Two further sources of data and information were also used in the project. Multifarious secondary sources provided additional data and helped to fill out the statistical picture of naval marriages. Individuals connected with naval wives and the naval estates, either in a voluntary or professional capacity, were talked to, to gain their perspective on and attitudes towards service marriage.

A final general point to be made about the methods is that the research was cross-sectional in nature; the survey offered a statistical snapshot of the naval population and the interviews qualitative data from one point in time. This raised the vexed



question of whether inferences could be drawn about marital change and historical context from such data. The sociological pursuit of selected women over tens of years is impractical in terms of most funding and unacceptable to sponsors who may want more immediate feedback. It is unlikely to gauge attitude shifts more accurately as these may be mercurial and hard to capture in a series of interviews. Also, "experimenter effect" renders highly studied groups self-conscious and progressively unrepresentative of the "normal" population. Finally, it must be remembered that neither method can distinguish between cohort and developmental factors. Whatever the pros and cons of cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys in this area (Miller et al, 1982; Nock, 1979 and 1981; Schram, 1979), synchronic analysis was the one favoured.

Such was the design of the project and the execution of each section will now be discussed in greater detail.

#### The Questionnaire Survey

The first stage of the project entailed a postal questionnaire sent to 10% of married servicemen and their wives resident in Western Area. It was used as an informational dragnet, to trawl for simple and socially descriptive data. Except for the final question, no attempt was made to assess the feelings or attitudes of the respondents, and questions were pre-coded and closed in nature (see Appendix A). To resolve ambiguities in the wording of questions and instructions, and to check the completeness of pre-selected answers, the questionnaire was given trial runs in two pilot studies. Both led to revision in its design.

The questionnaire was comprised of a series of pre-coded questions, sectionalised into areas dealing with where naval wives were living, where parents and parents-in-law were living, ages, lengths of marriage, and details on their children, husbands' positions within the Navy and extent of absence from home, contacts with kin and friends and the women's pattern of employment. At the end a general and open-ended question was asked, which provided an opportunity for respondents to describe their feelings about service life, if they wished to and it was hoped this general question would provide topics for subsequent interviews. No attempt was made to guess at the nuances of family life or the nature of marital experiences from the survey. It was but an initial guide to the exigencies of service life as it had affected women and to the marital decisions that had been made: when they had married, how many children they had had, where they had lived and how often they had moved, whom they relied on for social support and companionship and what sort of employment they had undertaken if any. It was hoped that answers in these topic areas would provide pointers to some of the issues to be discussed in the in-depth interviews and a database within which qualitative data could later be located.

Data derived from the questionnaire would also offer a statistical picture of the naval marriage, essential in its comparison with national surveys of civilian marriage patterns. Nevertheless, such comparisons were not without their difficulties, as using a variety of statistical sources introduced elements of confusion because the populations they counted were not identical. Naval servicemen as an occupational group fall within a limited age-band.

This is further complicated by the different age limitations for different ranks; the career pattern of a typical long-serving rating spans 18-40 years. In contrast, officers join at 21 and are put on the retirement list at 55, unless they have achieved senior rank, when they are allowed to continue in service.

Analysis of the total listing of personnel in Western Division revealed that 55% (11,240) of the servicemen named their wives as next-of-kin. From this basis it was calculated that 35% of Junior rates, 85% of senior rates, and 72% of officers were married. This figure may not totally reflect the numbers of seamen married, as some may have married or become estranged since the list was compiled, or may have continued to identify parents as next-of-kin although they were now married or living as married. However, those on the register formed the population from which a 10% sample of married personnel could be drawn. Having randomly selected the number 6, the sixth and every subsequent tenth wife was selected into the sample. After some preliminary publicity in local newspapers, Navy News, and a mention in Flag Officers Temporary Memoranda, the questionnaires were sent out between 25th January and the 1st February 1985, with a follow-up letter just over a fortnight later. From the 1,124 questionnaires that were sent out, there were in total 702 returned, representing an overall response rate of 62.5%. The replies can be broken down as follows

TABLE 1: REPLIES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

	No	%
Not known at this address	13	1.8
Returned uncompleted	15	2.1
Replies from officers' wives	143	20.4
Replies from senior rates' wives	323	46.0
Replies from junior rates' wives	202	28.8
Completed but unidentified by rank	<u>6</u>	<u>0.9</u>
	702	100.0
	—	—

A response rate of over 50% was achieved for all ranking categories of the Navy; 68.8% of all officers' wives replied, 62.0% of senior ratings' wives and 51.1% of junior ratings' wives, and there was an additional 0.9% who had preferred not to answer this particular question.

Hoinville et al (1979) regarded a 70% response rate to a postal, questionnaire as a high level of response. Hence the response rate of 62% on this project was felt to be an adequate level to ensure the reliability of the data. A second reminder, together with another questionnaire may have boosted the response rate further, but it was felt that this would constitute harassment. The rate of reply for all the three main service groups was over 50%, the lowest being for the wives of junior rates. This group was also the most transitory, hence their address list would have become rapidly out-dated. The data for this group were then less reliable and under-represented in global



analysis, but much of the data were broken down by husband's rank to alleviate this problem.

The questionnaire was largely precoded and therefore required very little additional preparation prior to the data being entered onto a Prime computer. The preliminary analysis and editing was completed with the aid of Minitab and SPSSX was used to perform the remaining statistical analysis.

The questionnaire yielded a vast array of data from which could be derived a broad image or demographic profile of the naval marriage. At this point the project was a descriptive rather than a sociological exercise. It was the task of the series of interviews to relate structure to experience and to give some qualitative depth to the nature of marriage to a sailor and its further consequences for the lives of the women interviewed.

### The Interviews

A series of interviews was conducted with thirty women (ten married to junior rates, ten to senior rates and ten to officers). From the questionnaire replies sixty five women were initially selected to represent husbands of different ranks, different housing situations and ages. The code numbers of these questionnaires were given to Family Services in HMS Drake who had kept the original sample list. Family Services sent out a letter to these women (see Appendix B) asking those interested in being interviewed to send their name, address and telephone number to the Polytechnic. This means of contacting women was cumbersome, but it protected their anonymity and

fitted in with the Navy's regulations on security. It was assumed that the level of reply would be the same as to the questionnaire, hence letters were sent out to forty wives of junior rates, thirty wives of senior rates and twenty five wives of officers. The replies were:

TABLE 2: REPLIES TO REQUEST FOR AN INTERVIEW

Wives of junior rates	6
Wives of senior rates	10
Wives of Officers	11
Women who moved respectively to Scotland & USA	2
Woman declined as marriage had broken up	1
Returned by the Post Office "not known at this address"	12
No reply	<u>23</u>
TOTAL	65

Wanting ten in each category, the last officers' wife who replied was not interviewed and four junior rates wives were recruited as volunteers from the Mother and Toddler Club at the St Budeaux Naval Community Centre, to make up the numbers required.

The interviews were loosely structured and covered a wide range of topics, which were organised in a rough chronology from when they met their present husband to their anticipation of the future. An interview schedule detailing questions was devised but used only in the first interview. The conversational basis of this interview was

stilted and disjointed, as I was only half-listening to what was being said in the pre-occupation to keep to the schedule. In subsequent interviews a memorised list of topic areas and key questions was used. These topic areas were then woven into the discussion in an order most appropriate to the particular biography of the woman being interviewed. This maintained the conversational flow and facilitated both more careful listening and the ability to return to past issues and events when new areas were broached which also helped to check any apparent contradictions. The initial schedule is included in Appendix C, but the main areas around which discussion centred are listed below:

Meeting and marrying their husband

Relationships with children

Employment pattern before and since marriage

Patterns of mobility, separation and housing

Household routines

Financial management of the household

Friendship patterns and contact with kin

The future

All interviews were tape-recorded and varied in length from fifty five minutes to two and half hours. Although appointments were made to interview only the women, on two occasions husbands were present. His presence transformed the interview; he altered the questioning, the woman's answers and sometimes he joined in. Even when he did not speak he communicated what he felt by means of what has come to be known as body language and his reactions were monitored by the women in their replies. The difficulties of interviewing couples and

particularly the behaviour of men in couple interviews has been noted elsewhere (Edgell, 1980; Mason, 1986). These interviews were not abandoned or cancelled as it was felt that this would make a pointed issue and a re-appointment may have created difficulty between the woman and her husband. They have, however, not been discounted since in many ways the circumstances of all interviews are variable; each has its unique elements. For instance, does the presence of young children matter? Other researchers seem rarely to record their presence at interviews since this is assumed to be inconsequential. Nevertheless, the presence of husbands is indicated in the short summary of biographical details of the women interviewed, included in Appendix D.

Tests of reliability and especially validity are challengeable when applied to sample surveys and their tightly structured, carefully worded questions. They are totally inappropriate when the information is derived from the loosely structured interview with its flexible format. A series of such interviews contains an evolutionary element; answers may be pitched at different levels of generality and, although interviewers are encouraged to "probe", probing does not always yield a set of comparable answers; common elements are always embedded in biographical uniqueness; tests of scientific rigour rely on the capacity of data to be reduced to numbers and since the important detail of the transcripts is truly qualitative, such tests cannot be applied. Some women who were interviewed were like coiled springs, already pre-occupied with the issues to be covered and eager to tell their stories, whilst others were more reticent. Some women gave



accounts full of names, dates, events, places and personalities, whilst the answers of others were more clipped and general.

Although interviews are not quasi-experimental situations and the data unsuited to statistical analysis, there must still be ways in which the adequacy of the material can be assessed in terms of the purposes of the research. These interviews were akin to prompted, episodic story-telling. One standard by which the interviews were assessed was in terms of their thorough coverage of the same ground. Issues of meaning and accuracy were more problematic, but, as far as possible, these were checked during the discussions with summaries, recapping and returning to contradictory issues or topics and the discussion of the same area from a variety of standpoints. During the interview what people said was never directly challenged as research interviews do not take the stance of investigative journalism, relying more on the sympathetic ear and the assumption that relaxed individuals will recount their version of "the truth".

The objectivity central to the traditions of scientific method has been seen as not only inappropriate but also dehumanising in the conceptualisation of the interviewee as passive respondent. Where subjectivity and the interactive processes are acknowledged, they are seen as an adjunct to eliciting co-operation and cajoling information, or an obstacle to detached and valid researching. The manipulation of the personal has traditionally been approached as an issue of fine-line treading between the twin dangers of under- and over-rapport. Science is then part of the wider ideological construction of public and private spheres of behaviour. Interviewing

stands at the borders of this divide and assumes that researchers are planted in the public zone, outside their humanity, but at a vantage point from which they can view the private, the object of the study.

More recently there has been a greater recognition that interviewing is not some special behaviour wherein the rules and processes of interaction become suspended;

"all research is grounded because no researcher can separate herself from personhood and thus deriving second order constructs from experience." (Stanley and Wise, 1979, p361)

This acceptance then leads onto debates about how the personal is interwoven with the research structure of the interview situation and the consequences of this. It must be remembered that this is an area of fluctuating opinion and presently the intersubjective and the empathic are stressed and linked to the wider aims of feminist researching. But perhaps the pendulum has swung too far.

One aspect of the debate has been concern with the identities individuals bring into the interview situation. There has been particular interest in women interviewing women and the links of such researching with feminism (Oakley, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1983; Graham, 1983; Finch, 1984). These accounts have emphasised the ease of rapport, the empathy of gender and the dangers of "objectifying your sister". This emphasis on mutuality is particularly relevant where researchers share a situation or experience with the interviewee and that situation or experience is the focus of the research, as with Oakley on childbirth and Finch/Spedding on clergymen's wives. Being a woman/wife/mother gave me common ground with the women I interviewed,

but no personal knowledge of the specific issue of marriage to a sailor; ignorance of this was the prompt to the research.

Nevertheless, perhaps there should be greater caution in overemphasising the issue of gender in interviews; how, for example, is Parker's (1985) collection of edited transcripts of soldiers' wives talking different in nature from, or less adequate than, one collected by a female researcher? Whilst accepting that gender makes a difference, it still remains unclear exactly what this difference is. There may be differences of fellow feeling and in dialogue between same sex/different sex interviews that do not affect the informational content or the data, which is of course not the interview itself, but the transcript. And again there is the danger of constructing femininity and female personality in claiming a special place for women interviewing women, without noting the specific intents and characteristics of the researcher.

People carry identities other than gender into the interview situation. The women interviewed also placed me in terms of age and imputed level of experience. The commonest questions were, was I married? Was I married to a serviceman? And did I have children? The answers given supplied the biographical framework within which they could place me relative to themselves; it enabled them to contextualise their answers. Age differences also introduced an element of inequality and altered the dynamics of the interview.

I arrived with an occupational identity and there was often a request for this to be clarified at the beginning of the interview, as

well as my relationship to the Navy and especially Family Services. Some assumed that I would have the power to alter naval practice and the commonest reaction was not wariness but forthrightness as many women treated the session as a rare opportunity to be heard.

Furthermore, class is relevant in the interplay of any interview. It must be noted that the cartoon of a young, stereotypically intellectual woman interviewing an older, working class woman, with a large shopping bag that signals housewife, on the cover of Roberts' collection of readings (1981) raises issues of difference as well as commonality in relations between women and in feminist researching. None of these issues were, however, raised within the Oakley article despite its major contribution to the arguments of this collection. Although rapport was established with all the women interviewed, conversations were variable in their ease of flow, a product of the interface of the women's and the interviewer's identities. Oakley discussed how she befriended four women selected into her sample on childbirth, but does not identify their characteristics, other than gender, which was assumed to be the background to the greater openness and the befriending. Some discussion of the other women who were not befriended would have been of interest.

Apart from identities, there has been concern with the processes of interviewing. Classic texts that offer recipes for the good interview stress the importance of rapport. As Oakley notes, the work in this context does not denote the mutuality of a sympathetic relationship,

"but the acceptance by the interviewee of the interviewer's research goals and the interviewee's



active search to help the interviewer in providing the relevant information." (op cit, p35)

Rapport then means an easy flow and truthfulness in their co-operation with the purposes of the research. Rapport was established easily in concurrence with the experiences of Finch, but this does not mean that "the model (of the interview) is, in effect, an easy intimate relationship between two women", (op cit, p74). The discussion was a structured, purposeful conversation and the interviewer is structuring and hence controlling it; none of the women that I interviewed was, to my knowledge, recording me. Also, the women's questioning of me was minimal compared to my questioning of them and their questions were different from the questions I asked. They looked for perfunctory biographical detail or sought reassurance on the normality of their feelings and experiences compared to other women who had been interviewed; I did not seek reassurance from them. My answers were short and unelaborated. I could claim no special knowledge of what marriage to a sailor was like; I could never say "I know" in any personally authoritative way and this lack of intimate connection then led them to detail what it was like. Empathy has its drawbacks. It can shut down conversations since the realm of what everybody knows is the realm of the unstated. Although the women asked me questions, they were not as interested in me as I was in them; the interviews were conducted in their homes not mine; they offered me hospitality, I did not offer it to them; they were opening their personal life to scrutiny and I was not.

There is an element of hierarchy in the interview situation, a sympathetic demeanour and intent and willingness to answer questions

is not sufficient to term the interview egalitarian and the relationship between interviewee and interviewer is never symmetrical. The feminist model of interviewer as friend or sister is not a description of the relationship but a political appeal to commonality amongst women. Women do not confide in interviewers as they would a real sister but, if they do, as a sister in an anonymous and collective sense; the relationship is also not that of friend, since friends are people with whom there are established and long-term connections and hence possibly appearances to keep up, positions to defend and even axes to grind. Oakley comments that women are able to talk freely to interviewers because of their lack of close relationship,

"It was generally felt that husbands, mother, friends etc did not provide a sufficiently sympathetic or interested (my emphasis) audience for a detailed recounting of the experiences and difficulties of becoming a mother." (op cit, p50-51)

The interviews worked because the interviewer was a sympathetic stranger; the processes of interviewing may be like the early stages of befriending, but this is radically different from interviewing an existent friend. Oakley's model is one of possible and putative friendship and sisterhood, not the real thing.

In some ways the relationship of interviewer to interviewed is closer to that of counsellor and counselled. As the women were talked through their biographies, parts of their accounts were infused with emotionality. For instance six were tearful, four being sorrowful in remembering the deaths of loved ones and two in recounting their recent or present unhappiness. Although they were given what sympathy and reassurance felt to be appropriate at the time and I tried to

control my own wet-eyedness, there seemed to be few research guidelines for this situation. The protocol of research is that of non-interference, to leave as you find, to finish the interview on a light note. However, social interaction leaves a wake and this is especially so when it entails self-examination, enabling people to draw new conclusions and hence re-direct their lives. Counsellors would not set out to rake through people's biographies and to pry into what may be the thick of human tragedy without some training and clear guidelines for their behaviour, but researchers do.

Much of the above discussion aims not to deny gendered differences in how interviews are conducted and not to deny the ease with which women can talk about personal problems to another woman. However, the conclusion that such ease of communication connotes egalitarianism in the interview situation and yields qualitatively different data is challengeable.

Equality is not synonymous with ease of rapport as the openness of the interviewed is their openness to manipulation and use by another,

"...ethical dilemmas are generic to all research... But they are the greatest where there is the least social difference between the interviewee and the interviewer." (Oakley, op cit, p55).

Oakley and Finch are right to see the issue as an ethical one, not just a moral one, since ethics recognises the fundamental inequality of the situation and the need to protect those unable to protect themselves. It is impossible to control the way in which published material is used; this is beyond ethics. But not deceiving or

who are being interviewed and cognizance of the dangers of the ease with which women may divulge personal information to another woman would seem to be the bottom line.

One area where ethics seems especially relevant was the quoting of off-the-record, after-the-interview comments, when the tape recorder had been switched off and the women were extra relaxed. Once an interviewee has agreed to co-operate it could be argued that the whole of their behaviour then becomes "fair game". But this was felt to be unacceptable and these comments have not been reported since the women thought that what was being said was private and personal and not being said during the process of the interview. The press and media are frequently criticised for not observing this rule and research should not be immune from such criticism since the search for "the truth" does not obviate integrity.

Many of the methodological issues discussed are concerned with the impact of the research on the women interviewed. But the research has also had an impact on me. I have developed a fierce identification with the preoccupations of naval wives and have found myself defending them against any criticism. However, although I feel quite clearly that I am on their side, I am not quite sure what their side is. This is not just a personal issue; in writing a report to the Navy on the findings I felt I must represent their interests, despite their diversity of opinion and without giving the impression that naval wives constitute a welfare problem, which they do not. It seems to be one thing to know whose side you are on and quite another



to know exactly what the interests of the side are and how they are to be advanced.

### Analysing Transcripts

Discussion on interviewing seems to carry the covert assumption that the problematic features of this type of research enterprise finish with the end of the interviews. They do not. There is the reading and the analysis of transcripts, because it is these transcripts which are the data, not the interviews. The analysis of transcripts was the attempt to discover common themes, variations and the possible sources of variation in the marital careers and lifestyles of naval wives. This was undertaken in a number of ways. Firstly the tapes were listened to and the transcripts read a number of times. During this process it was striking how often they offered unique variations on common themes and how, in the life stories and incidents recounted by sailor's wives, the same issues were confronted although different decisions may have been taken. From these an attempt was made to construct typical pathways in their life courses and to detail the range of sentiments on particular issues.

In order to pick out common themes in the marital experiences of the women who had been interviewed, the transcripts were then re-read and sections of text categorised under the broad topic areas that had originally structured the interviews. These were housing, separations, kinship ties, friendship patterns, relationships with children, employment patterns, housework, household routines and household management patterns. Each section was then examined for common experiences, attitudes and strategies and these behavioural and

attitudinal items as detailed by the women themselves were then the basis of the qualitative analysis.

To check the commonality of these themes a chart relating biographical detail to experiences and attitudes was constructed. This was in the form of a large matrix, where personal details and information in the chosen topic areas were recorded against each woman. This was used to check the thoroughness of the interviews and to defend against impressionistic analysis. On the chart, almost all boxes were filled and it recorded the range and frequency of attitude and experiences amongst the women interviewed.

However, analysis of transcripts is the search for uniformity amongst the unique. Each transcript was an historic document; when the experience of getting married of one woman, then aged 43 and married for 22 years, was compared with another, aged 20 and married for 3 years, different historic settings come into play. Some transcripts were more story-like and fuller than others and it was hard to treat the taciturn account in the same way as the gushing; the fulsome were more likely to be the source of quotes and the unelaborated the basis of background corroboration.

Analysis, aimed at the interpretative linking of different aspects of their lives, goes beyond the simple reading of transcripts. Unlike Parker and his interesting vox pop recordings of soldiers and their wives (1985), this research was concerned not only with the statements of people, but an explanation and analysis of their situation. He was trying to describe the ranges of attitude and

experience in editing his hours of tape recordings and pages of field notes, to illustrate everything, to offer a democracy of interpretation. The purpose of this research was to link the statements of the women interviewed with their social situation in a systematic fashion and to relate structural position to experience.

#### Secondary Sources and Other People

A motley collection of data was also accumulated from other sources. Published reports in the area were looked at. These included the Report of the Naval Welfare Committee (Seebohm, 1974), the Report to the Army Welfare Committee (Spencer, 1976), the Report on the Armed Forces Accommodation and Family Education Survey, 1983 (MOD, 1984a) and the Survey of Wives of Service Personnel (1984b). Some less security-sensitive sections of the Troup (1972) and Hogg (1979) Reports on manpower in the Navy and its implications for the domestic lives of sailors and their wives were used. The Census and the General Household Survey were used for national comparisons. Also an area central to the married quarters estate on St Budeaux was pin-pointed using Small Area Statistics and here Census details gave another insight into the structure of the "married patch". In addition Navy News was regularly read.

As a last stage in the research process, after questionnaires had been administered and women interviewed, representatives of Family Services, Naval Community Officers and members of the wives-based services and groups of Helping Hands and Cope were contacted and their views elicited. Their perception of naval life, its consequences for

married personnel and their wives and their relationship to it were discussed as a final contribution to the research programme.

### Conclusion

Discussion of the methodology of any research programme is concerned with two major areas, with the philosophy and the strategy of its approach. These two areas are, of course, connected.

In framing the research issues, the project drew from the on-going debate on feminist researching. Here the research was an attempt to reject the "masculinist" conceptualisation of wives and husband absence that had previously dominated the area. It was also an attempt to let the experiences of women in a variety of areas determine frameworks of explanation whilst recognising the extent to which wider social structures influence these experiences. It was hoped that analyses would highlight the particular features of marriage to a sailor and biographical pathways of sailors' wives as well as inform wider debates about the nature of marriage.

In choosing the research techniques it was felt that different types of questions required different research strategies. Hence questions concerned with the extent of an item or the demography of naval wives were approached through the questionnaire survey and questions about the meaning of events and experiences were the basis of the interviews.

Within the context of interviewing some reservations were expressed concerning the special place being claimed for women



interviewing women. However, the possibilities it afforded for extra rapport and hence for greater manipulation were noted. Secondary sources were used and volunteer and professional workers in the area were also contacted and talked to.

It was hoped that the analysis of the questionnaire would generate descriptive data, useful in the comparison of naval wives with their civilian counterparts and give a broad picture of the extent of separation. The interviews were to add a qualitative dimension in charting the experiences of women married to naval servicemen, their domestic relationships and the consequences these have for other aspects of their lives and other relationships. But it is the first objective, the description of the social characteristics of naval wives and where they lived that is the concern of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NAVAL MARRIAGES: A STRUCTURAL PICTURE

The initial part of the research programme entailed an analysis of survey material. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the data for this were derived from two sources. Firstly, the results of a questionnaire survey administered to 10% of the wives of naval servicemen who were living in Wales or the West of England in the early months of 1985 were used. Secondly, data from two Ministry of Defence surveys, one dealing with forces accommodation (1984a) and the other with the mobility and employment patterns of service wives (1984b), were incorporated into the analysis.

This analysis was intended to answer broad descriptive questions about the demography of the naval population and the social characteristics of naval wives. The question areas ranged from where the women were living and how often they had moved, to how old the women were, how long they had been married, their housing pattern and the numbers of children they had and to their levels of educational attainment and employment histories. It was also hoped that this exercise would yield background information essential in the contextualisation of more qualitative material.

#### Area and Settlement Pattern

The sample of service wives that formed the basis of the study was drawn from a naval listing of all next-of-kin living within Western Area. Husbands may have been drafted to duty ports and

establishments outside this area, but the list could be considered a record of their home addresses. The Royal Navy is organised into three administrative regions. One is Western Area, stretching from Land's End to the Dorset border, and north to include Wales and Lancashire. The survey found that within this region, Naval families predominantly lived in the South West, and were particularly concentrated in the naval centres of Plymouth, Helston and Yeovilton; 70% of naval wives surveyed lived in Devon or Cornwall and a further 19% in Avon, Somerset and Gloucestershire (see Table 3).

TABLE 3: AREA OF RESIDENCE

	%		%
Devon & Cornwall	69.7	Plymouth	44.9
		Helston	7.2
		Rest of counties	17.6
Somerset, Avon & Gloucs	19.5	Yeovilton	7.9
		Rest of counties	11.6
Midlands & Border Counties	2.2		
N Western Counties	3.6		
Wales	1.9		
Outside the division	3.1		
	100.0	N = 671	

The concentration of naval personnel in the centres of Plymouth, Helston and Yeovilton represented them as centres of forces' accommodation; 83.4% of all those living in married quarters lived in one of these centres. Relatedly, the settlement pattern varied with

rank; junior rates were more likely to live in one of the naval centres rather than dispersed in the surrounding areas; senior rates were slightly more inclined to live further afield; officers lived largely outside Plymouth or Helston, although within Devon and Cornwall, and outside Yeovilton, although within the Somerset, Avon, and Gloucester region (see Table 4).

TABLE 4: AREA OF RESIDENCE AND SERVICEMEN'S RANK

	Devon & Cornwall			Somerset & Avon & Gloucs		Other Areas	Nos
OFFICERS	65.1%			27.3%		7.7%	143
	Ply'th	Hel'n	Other	Yeo'n	Other		
	30.8%	3.5%	30.8%	3.5%	23.8%		
	Devon & Cornwall			Somerset & Avon & Gloucs		Other Areas	
S. RATES	74.5%			19.3%		9.3%	323
	Ply'th	Hel'n	Other	Yeo'n	Other		
	47.7%	8.7%	18.0%	8.7%	10.6%		
	Devon & Cornwall			Somerset & Avon & Gloucs		Other Areas	
J. RATES	70.5%			14.4%		15.0%	202
	Ply'th	Hel'n	Other	Yeo'n	Other		
	53.5%	9.0%	8.0%	9.0%	5.0%		



Examination of the age structure of naval wives in the different districts within Western Division suggests that a varying residential pattern was experienced by women at different points in their marriages. It was the areas furthest from and closest to the naval bases that had the highest proportion of young wives. This divide probably marked an initial decision in the course of the marriage, a decision either to stay close to one's home town, family and friends or to move to married quarters in the heart of the naval communities (see Table 5).

TABLE 5: WIFE'S AGE AND AREA OF RESIDENCE

	Under 25 %	25-29 %	30-34 %	35-39 %	40-44 %	45+ %	Nos
Ply'th. Hel'n. Yeo'n.	21.4	29.7	22.2	17.7	6.0	3.0	401
Remaining Devon & Cornwall	15.3	26.3	17.8	22.0	11.9	6.8	118
Remaining Avon, Gloucs & Som't	9.1	20.8	18.2	23.4	16.9	11.7	77
Other Areas	33.3	25.5	17.4	21.6	0.0	2.0	72
ALL	19.8	27.7	20.4	19.9	7.8	4.5	668

### Marriage Patterns

Over half the servicemen in Western Division were married. When marriage was related to rank the figures were 35% for junior rates, 85% for senior rates and 72% for officers. For this married population the average ages were 32 years for servicemen, 30 years for their wives, and they had been typically married for 7 years (all

figures are medians). An important element in the marriage patterns of naval personnel and their wives was their relative youthfulness on marriage. Ten years ago Oglesby found that 20% of ratings were married by the age of 18 and 63% by the age of 24.

Table 6 illustrates the present position with nearly 10% of all women having entered their present marriages at or before the age of 18, and 54% of women and 34% of their husbands married at or before the age of 24.

TABLE 6: AGE AT MARRIAGE

	Wife		Husband	
	%	Nos.	%	Nos.
18 years & under	9.7	65	3.0	20
19	12.2	82	5.8	39
20	15.2	102	10.0	67
21	17.1	115	15.1	101
22	10.1	68	15.8	106
23	10.6	71	11.2	75
24	6.3	42	10.1	68
25 - 29	12.2	82	22.0	147
30 years & over	6.7	47	6.9	51
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>674</b>

Comparison with the national picture confirms their relative youthfulness; census data describes the median age at which current marriages were entered into as 23.3 years for women and 25.8 years for

men. In the survey the median age at which the present marriage was entered into was 21 years for women and 23 years for their husbands.

Part of the difference may be explained by the different age profiles of the samples. Naval servicemen as an occupational group fall within a limited age-band, and the age limits vary with rank. A typical service engagement for a rating spans the age-range 18-40 years. In contrast officers join at 21 and are put on the retirement list at 55, unless they have achieved senior rank and then they are allowed to continue in service. Consequently there were few wives over 40 years of age and these were largely married to officers. An examination of the age structure by rank indicates this idiosyncratic age structure; few senior rates were over 40, and the bulk of junior rates were under 30 (see Table 7).

TABLE 7: AGE AND RANK OF PERSONNEL AND THEIR WIVES

	Under 24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+	Nos
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<b>OFFICERS:</b>							
Husbands	1.4	20.3	21.0	23.1	16.8	17.5	143
Wives	7.0	19.6	21.0	23.1	14.7	14.7	
<b>S. RATES:</b>							
Husbands	2.8	19.8	24.8	41.5	7.1	4.0	323
Wives	7.4	24.5	27.2	27.9	9.6	3.4	
<b>J. RATES:</b>							
Husbands	41.1	40.1	14.9	3.5	0.0	0.0	202
Wives	48.5	37.6	8.9	5.0	0.0	0.0	
<b>ALL HUSBANDS</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>666</b>
<b>ALL WIVES</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>4.8</b>	

However, concentrating the analysis on wives who were in their first marriage showed that nearly 11% of these were 18 years old or less when they got married, 60% were 21 years or less and over 88% were 24 years or less.

It could be argued that the women were predisposed to early marriage by their class backgrounds. Poor employment prospects for women make marriage essential for economic survival. Early marriage was further encouraged by the relatively easy availability of cheap and secure accommodation in naval quarters. In addition, demographic theories argue that in areas where men outnumber women, as in port towns, age at marriage will fall in the competition for mates (Gittins, 1982). In the arena of sexual politics, marriage may be a strategy by which sailors, frequently away in ships, secure sexual accessibility and fidelity amongst their girl-friends. Also, marriage for naval servicemen does not necessarily bring the same burden of finding and furnishing a home since this is provided by the employer.

Youthfulness was again a striking feature when the age structure of married quarters estates was examined. When focused on the naval estate at St. Budeaux, in Plymouth, an analysis of the couples on Census night lent detail to the picture; 8.1% of the married women were 19, or under, as were 2.3% of the husbands, and 60% of the married women were aged between 20 and 24, compared with 54% of their husbands. The age specific nature of naval patches was underscored by the fact that a mere 12.2% of St Budeaux's married population was 30 years old or more.



Most marriages in Western Area were first marriages for wives, and despite the wide disparity in age between ranking groups, the incidence of remarriage was evenly spread (see Table 8).

TABLE 8: FIRST AND SUBSEQUENT MARRIAGES AMONGST SERVICEMEN'S WIVES

	First Marriages %	Subsequent Marriages %	Nos
OFFICERS' WIVES	93.0	7.0	142
S. RATES' WIVES	88.2	11.8	323
J. RATES' WIVES	91.1	8.9	202
ALL WIVES	90.1	9.9	667

With age came the increased possibility for women that they would be in a second marriage. This trend, however, stopped once women reached their 40s and these women who were almost entirely officers' wives were most likely to be still with their first husbands. In line with national profiles, age relationships were more disparate for the remarried and divorced women were more inclined to remarry men younger than themselves; for women in their second and subsequent marriage, 16.6% were under 30, but 21.2% had husbands under 30.

Most women were service wives from the start of their marriages; 97.5% of husbands were already in the Royal Navy when the couple married. The minority who were not amounted to only 17 of the respondents, and of these 12 were officers' wives.

## Housing Patterns

The 1981 Census points to the growing predominance of owner-occupation in housing tenure. Amongst all heads of households, 58% were owner-occupiers, and, more importantly for our analysis, the figure was much higher for married couple households. Of these, 65% were owner-occupiers, and for the rest, 25% were council tenants, 1% in accommodation rented by virtue of employment and 8% privately rented from other sources. Also, there appeared to be a clear division between manual and non-manual groups; 84.5% of non-manual couples owned their own homes, compared with 55.1% of manual couples. How in step were naval families with this national pattern?

The Armed Forces Accommodation Report (M.O.D., 1984a) shows them to be very much in step. Over 65% of married sailors and marines owned their own homes, a figure considerably higher than those for the other forces; for the army it was 24% and for the RAF 42%. Turning to the married population of Western Area, the focus of this survey, the pattern was yet more sharply defined; 72.6% were owner-occupiers, 25.2% lived in married quarters and the remaining 2.2% lived in other rented accommodation.

Also, the owner-occupiers lived in houses and only 0.6% (4 respondents) owned and occupied a flat. This was not a new position amongst the services, as naval personnel have always been the keenest house-buyers and over the last 10 years have followed the national trend of increased home-ownership.

Turning to variations in the pattern of home-ownership, Table 8 indicates that officers and senior rates largely occupied privately-owned houses and were almost twice as likely as junior rates to do so.

TABLE 9: RANK AND TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION

	Married Quarters %	Privately Owned house or flat %	Other Rented %	Nos
OFFICERS	11.2	87.4	1.4	143
S. RATES	14.9	83.0	2.1	320
J. RATES	51.0	46.0	3.0	202
ALL	25.2	72.5	2.2	665

The disparity between officers and ratings disappeared when only senior rates were considered. Differences in home-ownership related as much to the different economic capacities groups had at different points in their careers as to any general value placed on home-ownership. The Armed Service Accommodation Report (M.O.D. 1984a) described the intention to purchase as wide-spread: 76% of all personnel intended to buy their own home and, of the remainder, only 12.3% definitely did not. Officers showed the highest preference for home-ownership; 88% of officers and 75% of ratings had this ambition. But officers may have been able to realise their ambition sooner. To emphasise this point, it was interesting to note that, whatever their plans, at the time of the survey, only 33% of able seamen or below, and 46% of all junior rates did own their own homes; in contrast 68%

of Petty Officers and 94% of Fleet Chiefs were home-owners. For ratings home-ownership was something progressively achieved. Officers were much more likely to have been both married and house-owners at the outset of their careers.

Opportunities for house-purchase may be greater for naval ratings than civilians in manual jobs; while 55.1% of married couples, where the husband was in manual occupation, owned their own homes, 68.9% of all ratings in Western Division were home-owners. If servicemen choose the Royal Navy as a long-term career, they can avail themselves of the cheap loan facilities of the LSAP (Long Service Advance of Pay), and many of them have done so. Senior ratings particularly have taken advantage of this scheme; 76% of senior ratings had used LSAP to purchase their homes, a much larger percentage than the 47% of all naval officers who had used the scheme.

With increased house purchase came declining use of married quarters accommodation. The Forces Accommodation Survey (M.O.D. 1984a) found that 17% of all married personnel had never lived in a married quarter, and there were indications that this was a growing proportion. This could be construed from the Report's comparison of newly-weds and more seasoned married couples; 65% of officers and 62% of ratings, who were married for less than 2 years, had never lived in married quarters, in contrast to the 13% of officers and 11% of ratings, married for more than 15 years, who had never occupied such accommodation. Traditionally the married patch has been the first-stop accommodation for young marrieds in the Navy, but this pattern appears to be losing its popularity. Further corroboration



can be sought in an analysis of the "don't want" factor calculated in the Accommodation Survey (1984a). Overall, 46% of married sailors and marines "don't want" service accommodation; this was highest amongst officers and increased universally with age. This suggested that the mature and experienced naval wife was an increasing rarity on the married quarters estate.

This conclusion was corroborated by the examination of the relationship between accommodation and the age structure of occupants. All figures pointed to the domination of the young wife on the married patch; of the wives under 25 years of age, 55% lived in married quarters. But, with each advancing age cohort, there were dramatic falls in the numbers remaining in such accommodation as navy personnel and their wives exited to the private house market (see Table 10).

TABLE 10: WIVES' AGES AND ACCOMMODATION TYPE

	Under 25 %	25-29 %	30-34 %	35-39 %	40-44 %	45+ %	ALL
Married Quarters	55.2	29.2	16.9	12.8	0.0	3.2	25.2
Private House or Flat	42.5	67.6	81.6	85.7	100.0	90.3	72.6
Other Accommo- dation	2.3	3.2	1.5	1.5	0.0	6.5	2.2
Nos	134	185	136	133	52	31	671

Home-purchase has wide implications for the family life of sailors. It marks the putting down of firmer domestic roots, and this

consideration appeared to dominate the thinking of such servicemen; they favour home-purchase as a means of providing a "settled home for the family" (M.O.D., 1984a). Those in the Army and the Airforce were more inclined to regard home-ownership as a form of saving; for them houses were not so much havens as investments. As a consequence, house-purchase in the Royal Navy was almost synonymous with owner-occupation, unlike the other services; 92% of homes owned by naval personnel were occupied by at least their wives and children, if irregularly by themselves. That other services used houses to provide nest-eggs was clearly seen in their lower occupancy rates; only 56% of the Army and 77% of the RAF house-owners were also owner-occupiers.

#### Length of Residence

The population divided almost equally into those who had lived in their current area for five years or more and those who had moved to their district during that time. It should be noted that there was a hard core of long-term residents; nearly 20% of naval families had lived in their present area for 12 years or more. Amongst the different ranks, it was the senior rates who were the most settled in their areas (see Table 11).

TABLE 11: RANK AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCE

	Under 1 year %	1-4 years %	5-11 years %	12+ years %	Nos
OFFICERS	16.1	38.5	36.4	9.1	143
S. RATES	9.0	32.8	33.4	24.8	323
J. RATES	20.4	44.8	16.0	18.9	202
ALL	14.3	37.5	28.8	19.7	

### Area and Accommodation Moves

Much of naval family life seemed to revolve around the conundrum of accommodation; service separation could be minimised by continued residence within married quarters accommodation and a preparedness to move, or mobility could be minimised by house purchase and an acceptance of greater service separation. Either option may however, appear as less than satisfactory. In the combining of domestic and occupational rhythms, the home-owning household was one where the family stayed put and the husband commuted, often irregularly and over long distances. Alternatively, families in married quarters were more likely to follow the serviceman's postings and were more frequently on the move. Since house-purchase was a growing feature of naval life, and a prime ingredient in the immobility of wives and families, recent studies and reports (Oglesby, 1974; Troup, 1972; Hogg, 1979), had suggested that naval families were losing their geographical flexibility as they buy into the private house market. Table 12 demonstrates the relative fixity of the house-owners in their areas, but also points to a substantial minority of married quarters' occupants who would appear to be permanently settled. Service accommodation may assist family mobility, but still does not guarantee it.

TABLE 12: ACCOMMODATION TYPE OF LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN AREA IN YEARS

	Under 1 %	1-2 %	3-6 %	7-11 %	12+ %	Nos
Married Quarters	35.5	29.0	21.3	3.6	10.6	169
Private House or Flat	6.7	13.3	35.2	22.9	21.9	489
Other	13.3	13.3	20.0	0.0	53.3	15
All	14.2	17.2	31.3	17.5	19.7	

Examination of the length of time spent in each married quarter revealed this transitory pattern. The average time spent in a married quarter was 19.5 months and this did not seem to increase with age. The highest level of stability over all other ranks and officers was achieved by the families of senior ratings; members of this group had on average lived 25 months in their married quarter. But few would consider them a static population.

An analysis of the 1981 Small Area Census statistics for St. Budeaux, in Plymouth, illustrated the particularly transient nature of married quarter estates. Of the 760 residents in the selected area who were at least one year old, 52.8% had lived elsewhere a year ago, and, in the age-bracket 16 to 24 years, the figure was 55.8%. Transience was then a factor to add to youthfulness in the characterisation of this type of housing.

Although naval families seemed a settled population in their areas, they regularly moved house. Analyses of residential changes revealed that 77.8% of the population had switched accommodation within the last 5 years, and only 7.5% had lived in the same house or quarter for 9 years or more (see Table 13).

A comparison of the 2 columns in Table 13 suggested that job-related moves accounted for only a fraction of all house moves. House-purchase and a subsequent ascent through the housing market are common strategies of social improvement and domestic capital accumulation in the civilian community (Pahl, 1984; Saunders, 1978; Forrest, 1983). Doubtless this was also true for the naval community.



TABLE 13: LENGTH OF TIME RESIDENT IN AREA AND ACCOMMODATION

Length of Time in years	Resident in area %	Resident in Accommodation %
Under 1	14.1	26.4
1 - 2	17.2	28.3
3 - 4	20.2	23.1
5 - 6	11.1	7.9
7 - 8	9.1	6.9
9 - 11	8.5	(
		( 7.5
12 or more	19.8	(

No of respondents = 670

A pattern of mobility could be detected in the analysis of the periods of time people had spent in their present areas amongst the differing age cohorts within the questionnaire survey. In relating length of residence to age, examination of the youngest group shows them to be clearly split between natives and migrants as younger women appeared to have recently moved with husband's draft or elected to stay in their home towns. Moving to the next age cohort, even the migrants appear to have become more settled. Also a large proportion of brides appear to have moved to new areas to be with their husbands, but as time passed were unlikely to continue moving. By the time naval wives had reached 30, nearly 54% had been resident in their areas for 5 years or more (see Table 14).

TABLE 14: WIFE'S AGE AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN AREA

	Under 1 %	1 - 2 %	3 - 4 %	5 - 6 %	7 - 8 %	9 - 11 %	12+ %	Nos
Under 25	25.4	37.3	12.7	3.2	1.5	1.5	18.7	134
25-29	19.0	16.3	27.7	17.9	7.1	1.1	10.9	184
30-34	9.6	11.0	25.7	8.8	16.2	14.0	14.7	136
34-39	7.5	10.5	15.0	16.0	9.0	15.8	26.3	133
40-44	1.9	9.6	17.3	9.6	13.7	13.5	34.6	52
45+	3.2	6.5	9.7	0.0	16.3	19.4	45.2	31
All	14.0	17.3	20.1	11.2	9.1	8.5	19.7	670

Family Size

The average number of children born to the service families of Western Area was 1.5, and varied from 1.8 for officers to 1.4 for ratings. This calculation included childless couples and was perhaps less useful than one that concentrated on households with children. Here the national average was 1.9 children; the equivalent for naval servicemen was 2.0, ranging from 2.2 for officers to 1.9 for other ranks.

In wider society recession appears to had been a factor in the decline of fertility amongst manual workers. Despite the availability of rented accommodation, the benefits of house purchase loans and the security of occupation, the fertility of naval families matched that of civilian families. Their fertility appears unaffected by any

special occupational factors. Table 15 illustrates this argument and demonstrates that having more than two children was relatively rare in the sample of naval wives.

TABLE 15: FAMILY SIZE

	Nos of children in each family						All
	0	1	2	3	4	5+	
Nos	155	142	273	84	15	5	674
%	23.0	21.1	40.5	12.5	2.2	0.7	100

Examination of family size showed a marked clustering around the mean and was illustrative of the tremendous popularity of the two-child family. Given the relative youthfulness of the sample many were yet to start their families and others were only at the outset of family building, the figures for completed family size may show this to exceed the national average. This was hard to assess from the survey, as women over 44 years of age were few, and represent only officers' wives; 31 wives fell into this age group and their average family size was 2.32. However, examination of the family sizes of those 35 years or over provide some indication of what the completed figure would be for a wider range of ranks (see Table 16).

TABLE 16: FAMILY SIZE FOR WOMEN OVER 35

	Nos of children in each family						All
	0	1	2	3	4	5+	
Nos	14	27	109	51	10	5	216
%	6.5	12.5	50.5	23.6	4.6	2.3	100

Over three-quarters of married personnel were parents. The age spread of naval children was wide, but biased towards the younger groups; 19.2% were 15 years old or more, compared with 41.2% who were 5 years old or less. This is further detailed in Table 17.

TABLE 17: THE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN'S AGES IN NAVAL FAMILIES IN YEARS

	Under 1	1-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	18+
Nos	83	142	197	137	134	135	92	105
%	8.1	13.9	19.2	13.4	13.1	13.2	9.0	10.2

#### Children's Ages

Given the different career structures of ratings and officers, the ages of children varied considerably with rank. Senior rates were the most likely to have school-age children, and to be most vulnerable to the problems of mobility and educational disruption. In contrast, junior rates were likely to have pre-school children and to experience intermittent absences, absences which occur when caring for children may be most onerous.

Having children coincided with house purchase, (see Table 18). The majority of infants lived in private housing, and, by the time children were 6 years old or more, only a small percentage continued to occupy married quarters. From then on change was undramatic, with only a small difference between this group and those in their teens. The pattern was confirmed by analyses of the age structure of the naval housing estate at St. Budeaux as contained in the census.



Here the population was heavily biased towards the childless and households with infants. St. Budeaux was almost evenly split between households with and without children, and 74% of all children 0-15 were under school-age. This figure was very illustrative of the homogeneity in age structures found on naval housing estates.

TABLE 18: ACCOMMODATION TYPE AND CHILDREN'S AGES IN YEARS

	Under 2 %	3-5 %	6-11 %	12-17 %	18+ %	All Children %
Married quarters	40.9	31.0	14.8	13.7	1.0	22.0
Private housing	57.3	66.6	83.7	84.6	94.3	75.9
Other	1.8	2.5	1.5	1.7	4.8	2.1
Nos	225	197	271	227	105	1025

### Children's Education

Looking firstly at pre-school children, it was found that just under two-thirds of all the 263 pre-school children regularly went to groups or people outside the immediate family (see Table 19).

TABLE 19: PRE-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

	%
Play group	33.8
Mother and Toddler Group	21.3
Nursery School	10.6
Friend on regular basis	4.6
Childminder	3.4
Relative on regular basis	3.0
Creche	1.9
Other	0.4
No-one	36.1
Nos	263

The clear favourites were play groups and mother and toddler groups. Frequently these were connected, with children attending mother and toddler groups until they were two and a half or three, when they could be registered and left unaccompanied by parents at a play group. Together, these two organisations catered for over half of the pre-school infants in naval families. The figures in Table 19 also marked the relative unpopularity of the more informal types of help with the care of small children, as few went regularly to relatives or friends.

Officers' wives were keener to use outside sources of child-care for their infants than were the wives of senior ratings, who in turn were more likely to use outside support than the wives of junior ratings. The highest scores of non-participation were found in the families of the lowest ranks of junior ratings, where 58.3% of infants were solely in the care of the immediate family, and did not have regular outside contact; at the other end of the scale were the children of sub-lieutenants, with only 16.7% of these pre-school children in this position. Middle class women are the greater users of infant care agencies, and officers' wives illustrate this well; their young children experience both the most formal and informal contact outside the family.

There were substantial differences between the social contacts of small children in private housing and those in married quarters; those in married quarters were less likely to be regularly entertained outside their homes (see Table 20).

TABLE 20: PRE-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ACCOMMODATION TYPE

	Married Quarters %	Private Housing %	Other %	All Children %
Play group	35.5	33.3	28.6	21.3
Mother and Toddler Group	12.9	27.0	0.0	33.8
Nursery school	4.3	13.5	28.6	10.6
Friend on regular basis	4.3	4.9	0.0	4.6
Relative on regular basis	2.2	3.7	0.0	3.0
Childminder/other	2.2	4.9	0.0	3.8
Creche	4.3	0.6	0.0	1.9
None	45.2	30.7	42.9	36.1
Nos	93	163	7	263

Possibly, the differences related to the greater proportion of under two's on married quarters estates. But, whilst there were more very young children here, a smaller proportion attended mother and toddler groups, and fewer used informal sources of help. Mothers on married quarters estates seemed to be rearing their children with considerably less reliance on community networks than those in private housing.

Turning now to the school-age children of naval families, the survey found that 54.6% of all children were attending an educational establishment, and their educational distribution is given in Table 21.

TABLE 21: THE DISTRIBUTION OF NAVAL CHILDREN IN EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

School/College	Nos	%
Infant, primary and junior	284	50.7
Grammar	16	2.9
Secondary modern	14	2.5
Comprehensive	116	20.7
Private independent day school	15	2.7
Private independent boarding school	94	16.8
Further Education or 6th form college	16	2.9
Other	5	0.9
	560	100.0

The 1984 Accommodation Report indicated that naval children were more than twice as likely to be privately educated than the children of civilians; it found that 74% of the school-age children of sailors and marines attended state schools in Britain and 15% private schools, a further 2.7% being educated abroad and the rest attending special schools. The 1985 survey of Western Area found an even higher proportion (19.5%) being schooled within the private sector. Closer examination revealed one of the sharpest breaks between officers and ratings, although senior ratings sent their children to private establishments more frequently than civilian parents; 46% of officers' children attended schools in the private sector, 12% of senior ratings' children and no children of junior ratings (see Table 22).



TABLE 22: CHILDREN'S EDUCATION BY TYPE OF ESTABLISHMENT, GENDER AND FATHER'S RANK

	Prim'y %	State Sec'y %	Private Sector %	F.E. & 6th Form %	Other %	Nos %
<b>Officers</b>						
Boys	29.9	13.0	53.2	2.6	1.3	77
Girls	35.5	19.4	37.1	3.2	4.8	62
All	32.4	15.8	46.0	2.9	2.9	139
.....						
<b>Senior rates</b>						
Boys	53.6	28.4	14.4	3.1	0.5	194
Girls	54.3	32.0	9.7	3.4	0.6	175
All	54.0	30.1	12.2	3.2	0.5	369
.....						
<b>Junior rates</b>						
Boys	67.9	32.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	28
Girls	83.3	16.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	24
All	75.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	52
.....						
Children of all ranks	50.7	26.1	19.5	2.9	0.9	560

The Royal Navy has attempted to ease the incompatibilities of stable education and frequent service moves by offering to pay school fees, or to make a contribution towards them if the fees are beyond the allowance limit. Eligibility was universal, and the differences therefore indicative of variation in family values. Also, over the

last 5 years the use of the private sector had grown for all, matching the trend in wider society, (MOD, 1984a).

Although educational values may have varied between officers and ratings, in one area they were similar. Not all children of officers or senior rates had the same chance of being privately educated; gender appears to have played a large part in the decision. Whether you were a child of an officer or a senior rate, you were one and a half times more likely to be privately educated if you were a boy, than if you were a girl.

The naval justification for the boarding school allowance was that it facilitated mobility, but did the parents of those in boarding school move? Over 50% of those in private schools had moved 2 or more times in the last 5 years, a figure much higher than the 35% of children in the state sector. Despite their greater house ownership, private education appeared to facilitate parents' geographical mobility (see Table 23).

TABLE 23: CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND THE NUMBER OF TIMES PARENTS HAVE MOVED

	Primary %	State Secondary %	Private Sector %	FE College and Other %	All %
Never	23.4	41.7	27.5	37.5	29.5
Once	25.5	22.9	21.1	20.8	23.8
2/3 times	41.5	20.8	41.3	25.0	35.4
4+ times	9.6	14.6	10.1	16.7	11.3
Nos	282	144	109	24	559

Children in private schools were also less likely to have a mother engaged in full-time housework. Concentrating on children of school-age, over half had mothers in paid occupations, and 40% had mothers engaged in whole-time housework. Here private schooling was a factor; mothers of children in private schools were marginally more likely to be in paid employment, and significantly less likely to be occupied by full-time housework (see Table 24).

TABLE 24: CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND MOTHERS' EMPLOYMENT

	Primary %	State Secondary %	Private Sector %	FE Colleges and Others %	All %
Housewife	46.5	42.5	24.8	25.0	40.3
Unemployed	4.6	2.1	3.7	0.0	3.6
Employed at Home	4.2	2.1	6.4	0.0	3.9
Employed Outside Home	43.0	52.7	55.0	75.0	49.2
Other	1.8	0.7	10.1	0.0	3.0
Nos	284	146	109	24	563

#### Educational Attainment

The level of educational attainment found amongst naval wives is described in Table 25.

TABLE 25: THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF WOMEN  
MARRIED TO NAVAL SERVICEMEN

	%
Degree	1.8
Higher education below degree level or further education	8.4
'A' Level or equivalent	10.2
'O' Level or equivalent	33.1
CSE other grades, or commercial or apprenticeship	21.7
Foreign and other	3.6
None	21.1
No. of respondents	669

When examined in the light of their husband's rank, officers' wives clearly possessed higher qualifications (see Table 26).

TABLE 26: THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF WOMEN  
MARRIED TO NAVAL SERVICEMEN AND HUSBAND'S RANK

	Officers %	Senior Rates %	Junior Rates %	All %
Degree	21.0	2.5	0.0	5.7
Higher education below degree or further education	21.7	6.5	6.5	9.7
'A' Level	11.2	4.3	9.0	7.2
'O' Level	28.0	36.8	44.2	37.2
CSE or equivalent	6.3	12.7	23.1	14.4
Foreign and other	6.3	3.7	2.0	3.7
None	5.6	33.4	15.1	22.0
No. of respondents	143	323	199	665



Also women with at least 'O' levels were more likely to be in some form of paid employment, in contrast to those without qualifications or with CSE or equivalent qualifications as their highest attainment (see Table 27).

TABLE 27: THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF WOMEN MARRIED TO NAVAL SERVICEMEN AND PRESENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS

	Full-time Housework %	Unemployment %	Paid Employment %	Other %	Nos
Degree level	39.5	2.6	57.9	0.0	38
Higher education below degree level or further education	41.5	4.6	52.3	1.5	65
'A' level	34.7	8.2	55.1	2.0	49
'O' level	37.7	4.9	55.0	2.4	247
CSE or equivalent	54.2	4.2	41.7	0.0	96
Foreign and other	40.0	0.0	56.0	4.0	25
None	48.6	6.8	42.6	2.0	148
All	42.8	5.1	50.3	1.8	668

Pattern of Employment

Successive reports from Seebohm (1974) to the M.O.D.'s Survey of the Wives of Service Personnel (1984b), have documented the problems women married to service personnel experience in securing and maintaining jobs and careers. The discrimination of employers and mobility to new postings were identified as the commonest reasons for any occupational disability. Table 28 details the current employment status of the women who replied to the questionnaire.

TABLE 28: EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF WOMEN MARRIED TO NAVAL PERSONNEL

	%
Full-time housework	42.9
Unemployed	5.1
Paid employment at home	2.8
Paid employment outside home	47.4
Other	1.8
No. of respondents	673

Overall, 50.2% of naval wives reported themselves as being in paid employment. This figure was higher than that claimed for naval and marine wives in other reports; the M.O.D. Accommodation Report (1984a) found 43% of naval wives in paid employment and the M.O.D. Survey of Wives of Service Personnel (1984b), found 48% of naval wives within paid jobs. Of the 50.2% of women in paid employment in the 1985 survey of Western Area, 22.8% were full-time and 27.4% part-time workers. It should be noted that compared to the other armed forces, naval wives experienced the highest rates of paid employment; only 33% of women married to soldiers and 45% of women married to airforcemen were found to be in paid work, (1984b). Also the involvement of naval wives in paid employment was comparable with the national situation, where 47% of married women in Great Britain were in paid employment, according to the OPCS Monitor (December 1985). This figure was considerably lower than the 60% derived from the Martin and Roberts (1984) study and used in comparison by the M.O.D. Survey of Wives of Service Personnel. But the discrepancy between levels of women's employment found in these two major surveys illustrates the

problematic nature of distinguishing between those in paid work and those out of it. These problems may be general (Kumar, 1985), but are particularly acute when the issue is married women's employment or unemployment.

In discussing unemployment Popay has argued that "female unemployment was neither as visible or perceived as important as male unemployment" (1985, p186). D.H.S.S. benefit data count only those in receipt of benefit through unemployment. Many married women do not qualify for benefit and were unlikely to register or describe themselves as unemployed, even when they were looking for paid employment. In 1981 the General Household Survey attempted to gauge the numbers and types of people looking for employment although not registered as such. It found that while 6% of men and 16% of unmarried women were in this category, 41% of married women were. Hence common tests of eligibility severely reduced the numbers recorded and the broad category of unwaged work, readily available for married women in the position of housewife, further eroded the visibility of their unemployment. The survey of the Western Area found 5.1% of naval wives to be unemployed. This was comparable with data available on the national picture; Census data described 5.0% of married women as "economically active and seeking work". Superficially, then the figures concur, but the Census definition may have cast a broader net amongst those not presently in paid employment and both were likely to be the tip of the unemployment iceberg.

Nevertheless, the situation for naval wives may differ from the 25% of respondents in the M.O.D. Survey (1984b) who identified themselves as without employment but seeking paid work. Women married to naval servicemen were able to participate more in the labour market as they opted for house-purchase and immobility. As the MOD Survey (1984b) reported, over 50% of wives of R.N. personnel stated that they would remain in their current location if their husband was posted within the UK compared with 17% of their R.A.F. counterparts and 12% of Army wives. Similarly 20% of the wives of R.N. personnel stated they would remain in their current location if their husband was posted overseas, compared with less than 10% of their Army and R.A.F. counterparts. Naval wives, compared with other service wives, and as a whole, were then much more likely not to move with their husbands and to experience more service separation in their marriage, but were more likely to be in paid employment.

However, one place where unemployment amongst navy wives was extensive was in the married quarters estate of St. Budeaux. Census data here showed that 62.1% of married women were economically inactive, with a further 22.4% in paid work and 15.5% seeking such work. For those working, the breakdown was 15.5% in full-time employment and 6.9% in part-time employment. Female unemployment appeared to be a problem of major proportions on the naval estate.

Length of residence in any area encouraged the move from housework to paid employment (see Table 29). Similarly the newly arrived were those dogged most by unemployment. This problem



abated with length of residence although it did not disappear. However, it would be a mistake to then argue that employment was not an issue amongst naval wives; there may be a difference between finding employment and finding suitable employment and unemployment may breed rapid resignation to housework, or prompt the start of a family. These women would then disappear from any count or calculation of the unemployed.

TABLE 29: EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF WOMEN MARRIED TO NAVAL SERVICEMEN AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN AREA IN YEARS

	Housework %	Unemployed %	Paid Employed %	Other %	Nos
Under 1 year	50.5	11.6	37.9	0.0	95
1 - 2 years	48.3	3.4	45.7	2.6	116
3 - 6 years	48.6	5.2	43.3	2.9	210
7 - 11 years	38.1	3.4	57.6	0.8	118
12+ years	28.6	3.1	66.9	1.5	133
All	43.0	5.1	50.1	1.8	672

The wives of homeowners were much more likely to be in paid work than the wives of non-homeowners. This trend was consistent across all ranks. Therefore it was not merely dependent on the age of husband or the immaturity of the children. For some groups home-ownership seemed to be a key variable; senior ratings' wives and able seamen's wives were twice as likely to be in paid work if home-owners than if not.

This relationship can be interpreted in a number of ways and the interpretations probably work in combination. Women may find it easier to work from a settled home. As home-owners tended to move less often, this enabled women to develop their own working lives. Alternatively it could point to the vital part played by female wages in facilitating home-purchase. As such, it is unlikely to be a statistical accident that the highest percentage of female full-time employment was to be found amongst the wives of able-seamen house-owners. Here 54.6% of wives were full-time employees. If prolonged female paid employment is a major ingredient in working class house-purchase, this may be allied to the strategy of having smaller families.

The main types of employment engaged in by naval wives are listed below (Table 30).

TABLE 30: THE EMPLOYMENT PATTERN OF WOMEN MARRIED TO NAVAL SERVICEMEN

	%
Clerical	29.5
Semi Skilled	13.4
Sales/Shops	12.3
Nursing and allied work	11.2
Unskilled	8.6
Teaching	6.0
Other	19.0

\* Source MOD 1984b

On examining the reasons for relinquishing paid employment, childbirth dominated the list (see Table 31). However, marriage marked a sharper break for naval wives than for women married to civilians with 23% of the women surveyed having ceased employment on marriage. Also, it demonstrated their vulnerability to changes in their husband's posting; over a fifth gave their husband's job change as a reason not for their change of occupation, but for their exit from the labour market.

TABLE 31: REASONS FOR LEAVING LAST JOB FOR WOMEN NOT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

	%
Ill-health	3.6
Marriage	23.0
Childbirth	45.4
Husband's job change	21.5
Dissatisfied with work	3.6
Problems of combining work and family	5.7
Redundancy	3.9
Other	7.5
No. of respondents	335

When these reasons and the type of job previously held were run together, as in Table 32, some variation was detectable. Although none was immune from the occupational relocation of their menfolk, the least vulnerable were women who were themselves in the forces and skilled workers, although marriage for these two groups still marked the crucial divide. For those in higher occupational groups, childbirth was a more significant event. This could be construed as indicative of their greater career commitment. But it also relates to

the nature of their jobs; although identified as career occupations and akin to professions, they contain a large element of part-time, casual and temporary work, for example in supply teaching and the "bank" system for nurses. Hence distinctions of employment between female workers should not be over-emphasised.

Also attitudes towards giving up employment could be related to the nature of the job itself; employment for women was not all of a piece. More shopworkers left through dissatisfaction and found it harder to combine the responsibilities and demands of home and work; more semi- and unskilled workers left through redundancy and ill-health. Outside employment could be considered a burden as well as an opportunity.

TABLE 32: REASONS FOR LEAVING LAST JOB AND TYPE OF JOB

Registrar General's Classification	I & II %	III N cler. %	III N shop. %	III M %	IV & V %	Armed Service %	All %
Ill-health	1.7	0.9	3.7	5.3	11.3	0.0	3.7
Marriage	16.7	22.0	14.8	42.1	18.3	38.2	23.1
Childbirth	55.0	47.7	51.9	26.3	35.2	50.0	45.4
Husband's job change	23.3	23.9	18.5	15.8	22.5	14.7	21.3
Dissatisfied with work	0.0	1.8	11.1	5.3	4.2	8.8	3.7
Problems of combining work and family	6.7	4.6	14.8	10.5	4.2	2.9	5.9
Redundancy	1.7	3.7	3.7	0.0	8.5	0.0	3.7
Other	5.0	8.3	3.7	5.3	9.9	5.9	7.4
Nos	60	109	27	19	71	34	320

Cler. = clerical

Shop. = shopworker



Analysis of the reasons for leaving the labour market showed very different patterns for migrant women as opposed to the longer-term residents. For women who continue to live in their home towns, starting a family and the difficulties of combining this with outside employment dominate their list of reasons, and getting married, or their husbands' being drafted away, were mentioned less often. This pattern was reversed amongst the mobile.

### Conclusion

From the survey data a number of conclusions could be drawn about the demographic and social characteristics of naval wives. Naval servicemen and their wives appeared to have married at ages younger than civilians and their wives and this was especially so amongst ratings and women married to ratings. Along with youthfulness, the data suggested that they may have slightly larger families than their civilian counterparts. Also the bulk of these women, over 90% of them, were in their first marriage.

Turning to where the women were living, most were clustered in and around naval communities, with the wives of junior ratings more polarised between those areas close to the heart of naval centres and those furthest away. The data suggested that after one or more moves to a new area naval wives had become settled in their new districts and then they moved house much more frequently than they moved area.

House-ownership was an important ingredient in the social situation of naval wives. They were much more likely to live in

private housing than either civilians or other service wives. This supported the view that younger naval wives were less likely to have lived in married quarters accommodation than older wives and that, when they did, they were moving more quickly into the private house market. A number of implications could be drawn from this. The movement from married quarter to private house would alter the relationship of women to their homes and alter the structure of their neighbourhoods. Furthermore the service estates appeared to be populated by couples, both young and transitory. And it was on these estates that women seemed to be caring for their children with the least outside support.

The patterns of employment found amongst naval wives appeared similar to those found in the wider population and concentrated into a comparable range of occupations. These rates of employment were higher than those reported by women married to men in other branches of the military services. However, the jobs and careers of these women were vulnerable to the changes that accompanied their marriages and the drafts of their husbands; many women, currently not in paid employment had exited from the job market at those times.

In broad terms the survey described many young wives, living away from wider kin and home towns, either on married quarters estates or private housing. A number of these women would also be living without the regular presence of their husband and it is to this issue that the discussion now moves.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PATTERN OF SERVICE SEPARATION

Naval Servicemen are intermittently but routinely absent from home; sea service is obviously central to their occupation. The major themes of this study explore elements in the consequent social situations and the life styles of their wives. This area has attracted research interest for a number of reasons and from a number of quarters.

There has been academic interest in how home and work are connected, in how the exigencies of this type of occupation frame family life (Finch, 1983; Clark et al, 1985; Hollowell, 1968; Thompson et al, 1983). Research sponsored by the armed forces has as its prime concern the implications of separation for the retention of personnel; in a recent review of international literature (Toulson and Diack, 1986), all the research projects cited evidenced a major link between family influences, particularly spousal attitude, and retention decisions. Most studies in this area have adopted the reference points of psychology and almost all focus of the impact of periodic separation on the wife and her capacity to "cope" with what is universally recognised as an anomalous, and even abnormal, situation; Solheim (1984) epitomised their social position when he described them as single married women.

In the analysis of the effects of separation there have been some attempts to relate it to particular patterns of separation (Stewart, 1985; Clark et al, 1985), but such attempts have been limited and most have agreed with Hunter in the general importance of the "cyclical pattern of husband separation as the major stress in the life style of the wife," (1982, p3), whatever the particular cycle is. However, before the reaction of wives to separation and its consequent impact on their life style can be discussed, it is important to detail what the pattern of separation, as found in the questionnaire survey, was.

#### Types of Service Separations and Their Incidence

There was no easy answer to the question, 'how much separation was there?', since absence from home amongst naval servicemen did not form a simple or single pattern. Some sailors were away through deployment on sea-going ships, others for training, and more had been drafted to a distant shore establishment and to where their families were often reluctant to move.

Along with their different reasons for absence, the patterns of leaving and homecoming were variable. Some sailors were home every day, others had returned intermittently for weeks, or regularly for weekends, and more returned irregularly for parts of weeks or the odd few days. In some naval families, the husband was an occasional visitor, and this can be evidenced by the 14.1% of wives who excluded husbands from the list of regular household members. Furthermore, whatever the particular rhythm of a husband's coming and going, any



pattern was vulnerable to sudden change, with altered service demands. Viewed in the long-term, few naval families could be said to have a domestic rhythm at all.

Within Western Area, 40.6% of respondents had husbands drafted to ships, the rest having husbands attached to shore establishments. Another picture of the spread of absence was given in the M.O.D. Accommodation Report (1984a). At the time of that survey, 15.9% of naval servicemen were unable to live with their wives and families because they were on board ship. Junior officers and junior ratings were the most affected, as 23.7% of sub-lieutenants and 18.2% of leading seamen were away. Less than 7% of the most senior ratings and officers were in this position. However, these proportions probably underestimated the numbers at sea, given that they included marines.

A shore posting does not guarantee residence at home. Apart from those on board ship, a further 16.1% of personnel were not living with their families Monday to Friday. This group seemed to exhibit the reverse pattern of those on sea service, as here it was the most senior officers and ratings who were absent; 43.5% of Captains and 23.2% of Fleet Chiefs were attached to establishments, but intermittently at home. Therefore an examination of the overall rates of absence flattens out distinctions between the ranks, with home absence hovering around the 20-30% mark for ratings and 30-40% mark for officers.

A longer-term perspective on absence was taken in the 1985 survey of Western Area. To assess the extent and types of absence

experienced by naval families in the previous five years wives were asked to detail how much time husbands had spent either in a sea-going ship, in a shore establishment but not able to live at home Monday to Friday, or in a shore establishment and able to live wholly at home. If they had been married for less than five years, the pattern since marriage was requested. The average sailor, if one exists, has spent one year eight and a half months in a sea-going ship, one year eight months at home, and a further seven and three-quarter months absent during the working week; for the remaining eleven and three-quarter months, he has not been married. Examination of the profile of naval absence (see Table 33) demonstrates the ubiquity of absence, as only a fraction (12%) of the naval populace has lived almost wholly at home for the past five years.

TABLE 33: DISTRIBUTION OF TIME IN DIFFERENT SERVICE CONDITIONS DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS

	In a Sea-going Ship %	Working Week Absence %	At Home %
None	18.5	47.9	20.9
Under 6 months	6.2	11.9	6.0
6 - 11 months	8.4	16.0	11.3
1 year to under 2	17.3	11.3	19.0
2 years to under 3	28.8	7.5	22.0
3 years to under 4	14.5	3.8	8.7
4 years and over	6.3	1.7	12.0
Nos	664	664	664

Table 34 demonstrates that officers were the least likely and senior rates the most likely to have sailed in the past five years, or since their marriages. Similarly, 55.7% of senior ratings had been on ship deployment for two years or more, as had 41.8% of officers and 46% of junior ratings. The figures for junior ratings were harder to interpret as they included the recently recruited and still in training, and the recently married.

TABLE 34: TIME SPENT IN A SEA-GOING SHIP AND RANK

	Officers %	Senior Rates %	Junior Rates %	All %
None	26.9	15.7	16.5	18.5
Under 1 year	13.1	14.7	15.5	8.4
1 year - under 2	18.4	13.8	22.0	17.3
2 years - under 3	29.8	31.8	24.0	28.8
3 years - under 4	7.8	16.7	16.0	14.5
4 years +	4.2	7.2	6.0	6.3
Nos	141	318	200	659

Turning to the other group of absentees, those away for the working week (see Table 35), it was clear that officers predominated. Whilst half of the ratings had been weekend husbands, over two-thirds of officers had been in this marital situation. Also they were much more likely to have adopted this pattern as a regular feature of their occupational and domestic routines.

TABLE 35: TIME SPENT UNABLE TO LIVE AT HOME MONDAY TO FRIDAY AND RANK

	Officers %	Senior Rates %	Junior Rates %	All %
None	37.6	50.0	51.5	47.8
Under 1 year	27.7	24.8	33.0	27.9
1 year - under 2	12.8	11.3	10.5	11.4
2 years - under 3	11.3	7.5	4.5	7.4
3 years - under 4	7.1	4.4	0.5	3.8
4 years +	3.5	1.9	0.0	1.7
Nos	141	318	200	659

Although 81.5% of married naval servicemen had been to sea in the past 5 years different branches of the service had markedly different chances of doing so. Amongst ratings, those in the Medical branch or connected to the Fleet Air Arm were the most infrequent sailors and amongst officers, those in the Instructor or Medical branches were the least likely to have been to sea.

It has been suggested in past research (Seebohm, 1974) that the pattern of separation changes over time; younger ratings and officers spend more time sailing, with time increasingly spent ashore as naval



careers develop. The domestic consequence was that the least mature and practised naval wives experience most time on their own. This summation of career consequences, however, does not give adequate recognition to other absences outside sea-time as, when these were included, any straight-forward relationship disappeared.

Analyses based on the simple distinction of home and away would conceal wider differences in the types of separation. Broadly, the chance of being deployed on a sea-going ship does diminish with age; but focusing on those that had been to sea, it was only the over-40 group, and therefore largely officers, that had not experienced long-term sailing in larger numbers. The 35 to 39 year cohort supplies the most prodigious sailors; 63.5% had spent the last two or more years sailing, and 28.2% had spent more than three years sailing. (see Table 36).

TABLE 36: TIME SPENT SEA-GOING AND HUSBAND'S AGE

	None	Under 1 yr	1 yr - under 2	2 yrs - under 3	3 yrs - under 4	4 yrs +	Nos
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Under 25	27.1	27.1	18.7	12.5	10.4	4.2	96
25 - 29	12.2	13.8	22.0	30.6	13.3	8.1	173
30 - 34	12.2	15.8	14.4	34.5	18.7	4.3	139
35 - 39	12.9	9.4	14.1	35.3	18.8	9.4	170
40 - 45	31.9	10.6	23.4	21.3	10.6	2.1	47
45 yrs+	58.3	11.1	11.1	19.4	0.0	0.0	36
All	18.4	14.6	17.4	28.7	14.5	6.2	661

Outside the youngest group, there were small differences in ever having experienced a mid-week absence; but substantial age differences divide those for whom it was a regular feature, and those for whom it was an irregular feature, of their working lives. Stark illustration of this was provided in the comparison of the 6.4% of men in their late 20s, the 18.9% of men in their late 30s, and the 44.5% of men over 45 years of age, who had been "weekending" for two years or more. Although the incidence of weekday absence did not increase with age, the chances were greater that, when it did occur, it was a long-term feature of marital life. In part, this counter-balances any diminution of sea-time, and made the "weekend marriage" a common life style amongst mature couples.

TABLE 37: TIME SPENT UNABLE TO LIVE AT HOME MONDAY TO FRIDAY AND HUSBAND'S AGE

	None	Under 1 yr	1 yr - Under 2	2 yrs - Under 3	3 yrs - Under 4	4 yrs +	Nos
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Under 25	59.4	34.4	4.2	2.1	0.0	0.0	96
25 - 29	49.1	34.1	10.4	6.4	0.0	0.0	173
30 - 34	46.8	27.3	16.5	5.0	3.6	0.7	139
35 - 39	44.7	24.1	12.3	10.0	7.1	1.8	170
40 - 44	38.3	23.4	14.9	14.9	6.4	2.1	47
45 +	4.17	8.3	5.6	13.9	13.9	16.7	36
All	18.4	14.6	17.4	28.7	14.5	6.2	661

TABLE 38: TIME SPENT UNABLE TO LIVE AT HOME MONDAY TO FRIDAY  
AND WIFE'S AGE

	None	Under 1 yr	1 yr - Under 2	2 yrs - Under 3	3 yrs - Under 4	4 yrs +	Nos
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Under 25	57.9	34.6	5.3	2.3	0.0	0.0	133
25 - 29	47.8	34.1	11.5	5.5	0.5	0.5	182
30 - 34	49.2	21.6	17.2	9.0	3.0	0.0	134
35 - 39	42.7	25.2	10.7	9.9	9.2	2.3	131
40 +	37.9	18.3	12.2	13.4	9.8	8.5	82
All	47.9	27.1	11.3	7.4	3.8	1.7	662

It was interesting to speculate on why long-term partial absence increased with age. It may be a consequence of naval wives having become more settled and reluctant to accompany their husbands to postings further afield. It could be that the financial benefits of separation allowances were more attractive than togetherness for the more seasoned couple. Or it may be an index of marital disengagement as the desire to be wholly together becomes less strong as people mature. Whatever the reasons for weekday absence, it must be considered as a distinct marriage pattern to be set alongside, but not confused with, that contingent on sea service.

Additional light was shed on the pattern and nature of service separation by the Accommodation Report (1984a). Examination of the reasons given by servicemen for living at least partly away were instructive. The Accommodation Survey counted 11,277 sailors and marines as unable to live regularly at home; these amounted to 32% of all personnel. Of these, 57.5% gave service reasons as the main explanation. The rest stated that they were absent because of "urgent personal reasons" (12.6%), or that the living arrangements were their "own choice" (29.6%). When recalculated as global figures, this suggests an element of voluntarism in the mid-week absence of 13.4% of all naval servicemen. It could be that these servicemen had in some ways a greater element of choice in their domestic arrangements. It was possible for them to lived partially or almost wholly away from home without the civilian concept of separation entering into their marriages; if you were called away to service you may not have had to choose to leave; service life offers means by which couples can disengage their marital lives without entering into legal separation. Also it indicates the great difficulty of combining occupational mobility with private housing. It should also be re-emphasised that sailors and marines choose these domestic arrangements more frequently than do their counterparts in the R.A.F. or Army.

#### Distance from Home and Visiting Patterns

Within Western Division, families lived on average 54.5 miles from the serviceman's duty port. When the median rather than the mean was considered, the distance fell to 8 miles. The two respondents whose husbands were serving in the Falkland Islands were excluded from this analysis, as it was felt the thousands of miles involved would



skew the figures. Even so, the range of distances was wide; Table 39 shows over half the men as living on the doorstep of their duty stations, and 15% over 150 miles away. When global figures were broken down by rank, officers appeared the most widely scattered group, although the majority of all groups lived within the easy daily commuting distance of 25 miles; 59.1% of officers, 72.8% of senior ratings and 74.3% of junior ratings were in this position. The figures also suggest that ratings lived more central to ports, whilst officers inhabited the wider surrounding suburbs.

TABLE 39: DISTANCE FROM DUTY STATION AND RANK IN MILES

Miles	Officers	Senior Rates	Junior Rates	All
0-9	35.9	51.6	68.7	53.3
10-14	23.2	21.2	5.6	17.0
25-49	4.9	7.6	4.1	6.0
50-99	8.5	4.4	2.6	4.7
100-149	8.5	2.2	3.6	4.0
150-199	4.2	4.1	3.1	3.8
200-249	9.2	3.8	4.6	5.2
250+	5.6	5.1	7.7	6.0
Nos	142	316	195	653

The Accommodation Report was also concerned with the broad visiting patterns of military personnel, and found that where men were not living with wife and family from Monday to Friday, one-third visited every weekend, one-third less than every weekend, but at least

once a month, and another approximate one-third less frequently than every month. Frequency was linked to seniority, and the variation, for instance, amongst those who visited every weekend was wide: 80% of the most senior officers and 20% of able seamen accomplished this. The least contact with home was maintained by junior ratings, a third of them visiting their wives less than once a month.

To add the finer detail of the frequency of visiting home to the broad picture of time spent at home and away, wives were asked how often their husbands had returned home in the previous month. Here, Table 40 describes domestic contact during part of January and February 1985. A few husbands had been away from home on duty nights and these were included in the "other" category. Table 40 then summarises the highly variable and sometimes erratic nature of husband's absence for women married to sailors.

TABLE 40: WHEN HUSBAND RETURNED HOME IN LAST MONTH AND RANK

	Every- day %	Part Week %	Every Weekend %	Once a Fort- night %	Once Only %	Not at All %	Other %	Nos
Officers	30.8	14.7	23.1	4.2	7.7	13.3	6.3	143
Senior Rates	44.0	13.0	11.5	4.0	8.4	13.6	5.6	323
Junior Rates	38.1	17.3	8.9	4.4	12.9	12.9	5.4	202
All	39.4	14.7	13.2	4.2	9.6	13.3	5.6	668

## Conclusion

Analysis of the survey data demonstrated that service separation was a common experience for almost all naval wives, since only 12% of husbands were reported as not having spent some time working away from home during the past 5 years. And for a large minority of women this pattern of occupational absence had been total; a fifth of all husbands had spent the last 5 years of their working lives wholly absent from home.

However, although it could be said that almost all naval wives had experienced service separation, there was considerable variation in the nature of this separation and hence in its likely consequences for the marriages and lifestyles of naval wives. It was found that over 80% of the women surveyed had husbands who had been away on sea deployment and over half had husbands who had been away during the working week. Over time the chance of sea deployment diminished, especially amongst the officer group. Amongst the older age groups of ratings, however, those who had been to sea had spent considerable amounts of time away.

With age there was an increased likelihood that naval servicemen would be absent during the working week and there was a significant group for whom the "weekend marriage" had formed a consistent feature over the previous 5 years. These analyses suggested that there might be differences in the marriage patterns of women with husbands "weekending" and those with husbands away for longer periods of time on sea-going ships and submarines.

Another perspective on separation was gained in the analysis of where wives were living in relation to their husbands' duty stations. Although most were living clustered in or around ports or establishment towns, a substantial minority (15%) were living over 150 miles away.

In addition to looking at separation over a longer time period, women were questioned about the recent pattern of their husbands' presence within the home. Here there was no common cyclical pattern characteristic of other occupational groups, for example men working in the oil industry, and great variation was found between households.

This chapter has attempted to give an overview of the patterns of service separation experienced by women married to naval personnel. Having examined the incidence and structure of service separation, the implications and social consequences such separation had for the marriages and lives of naval wives will form the focus of succeeding discussions.



CHAPTER SEVEN:

SERVICE SEPARATION: HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS & HOUSEHOLD ROUTINES

Having charted the nature and extent of husband absence amongst naval personnel, the task now becomes to detail the impact service separation has upon the lives of women married to such servicemen. It is intended that this analysis will be sensitive not only to the global issues of husband presence/husband absence but also to the varying patterns of service separation that naval wives experience. A broad distinction has been drawn between "weekending" and long term separation; most wives had experienced both at some time in their marriages and some wives had experienced them in combination, as when their husbands were serving on ships operating out of distant ports. Patterns of separation were often short-lived and hence any patterning was irregular and unpredictable.

Furthermore, discussion of the pattern or patterns of separation could be considered misnamed or unbalanced, for such terminology tends to conceal the problematic nature of reunion or at least to relegate it to a position of secondary importance. The analysis of life experiences amongst naval wives will focus not only on what wives do and how households are managed when husbands are away but also on their activities and experiences when husbands return home.

Past studies of service separation have concentrated on the reaction of wives. Here the favourite approach was to detail the levels of emotional distress amongst wives and to assess their

relative resourcefulness in dealing with the problem of husband absence. In the following discussion, the reactions of wives to service separation are regarded as important, but only as the starting-point for analysis. The task of sociology is to chart their behaviours as well as their emotional states, to link their reactions to social structure and to assess the consequences of husband absence for the relationships of wives both within and beyond marriage.

In tracing out the social impact of service separation on the lives of naval wives, the first area at issue is the nature of their marriage and their domestic relationships. Here separations and reunions are examined for their influence on patterns of housework, household decision-making and money-management, and their consequences for domestic power and domestic status. Furthermore, the relations between husband and wife are central to, but not the sum of, domestic structure since children supply an additional dynamic to the changes contingent on separation and the adjustments of reunion.

An area allied to concern with the domestic consequences of service separation relates to the social identities and self-images that women develop within these marriages. Their perceptions of lone wifeness, their assessment of their own marriages and "normal" civilian marriages and their views of themselves are relevant. They mark another way in which social structure touches biography.

The social consequences of service separation for naval wives ripple beyond the small pool of the marital relationship. It affects their relationships to the cultural and physical context that

constitutes their homes and influences their other activities, particularly in the fields of employment and leisure. These wider consequences of service separation remain the province of later chapters. Here the discussion is focused on marriage and household relationships and the views naval wives have of themselves and their domestic personnae.

### The Attitudes of Wives to Service Separation

Universally wives who had experienced service separation regarded themselves as being involved in an unusual, odd and difficult marriage. Most would have agreed with the statement of Mrs Middleton.

"It's not an easy marriage or like married life in civilian life."

But beyond the widespread agreement that such marriages were unusual, how can the attitudes and reactions of wives be characterised? One way would be to catalogue their emotionality and levels of distress and difficulty. Such an approach would draw on the frameworks of past research. Morrice et al (1978) had posited the existence of the "Intermittent Husband Syndrome" amongst oil wives in Aberdeen, composed of a triad of symptoms in anxiety, depression and sexual difficulty. Stewart (1984) went on to confirm its existence amongst the wives of Aberdeen-based submariners.

However, the analysis of the transcripts of sailors' wives describing their marriages seemed to suggest few consistent patterns of reaction or any clear "syndrome". Not only was there great variability of reaction, but also women recalled events and described their lives with truly mixed emotions. To impose a consistency, to

typify a reaction would seem to do violence to the range and ambiguity of their expressed feelings. Women that described the black despair of their husbands' departure also described the peace of time to oneself when he was away; women described the loneliness of his absence and the disruption of his return; they recounted their longing for their husband's homecoming and the anti-climax of their reunion.

"I decided that I wasn't going to get depressed. I wasn't going to sit in all the time, although I did a lot... But again, when he did come home, it was such an anti-climax. I mean you miss them so much, your letters are really soppy and that sort of thing and when they come home its like being with a stranger." (Mrs Hodge).

"The majority of evenings I hate it. I don't like not seeing my children in the evenings (they are at boarding school), not having them around and the same with him; I miss not seeing him... When he's home I hate it because it causes havoc in the house; he's untidy and there's all the washing up that I'm not used to doing." (Mrs Robinson)

Their attitudes and reactions did not seem to form a single or coherent set. Perhaps a kaleidoscope of feelings is to be found amongst people in all social situations, but the circumstances of sailors' wives would appear to heighten this; challenge, excitement and thrill are the other sides of insecurity, disruption and lack of routine. In Oakley's impassioned account of the "war between love and the family" she contrasted the passion of the love affair with the duties and loyalties of humdrum marriage and family life. She implied that part of the passion of a love affair were the tensions and the frustrations. Allied to this some women argued that naval marriages were more painful, but they were also more romantic.

Furthermore, a number of the problems reported by the women in the interviews would be misclassified if they were described as



emotional problems, although emotions do attach to them. In the 1976 report to Lord Spencer on army welfare, the most commonly reported problems of army wives were not problems of nervousness, sleeplessness or depression, but boredom and loneliness. Also in the naval wives' study wives commonly reported themselves as isolated and their time under-occupied when their husbands were away. To classify boredom and loneliness as emotional problems is to imply that they exist primarily in the minds and attitudes of women, whereas it could be argued that these women felt bored and isolated because they were isolated and had only limited range of outlets for their energies.

One way in which the reactions of the women to service separation could be described is in the pattern of a normal distribution. At one extreme Mrs Wood claimed to feel frightened much of the time her husband was away and a number of women recalled instances of panic,

"I sat... I was in the first block of flats on the estate, on the middle floor, and I could see down the dockyard and I watched the ship sail out and that was it. I phoned my friend and said, 'it's no good, you'll have to come round. I can't cope with this.' It had just sailed round; it had just sailed out of sight. In the evening I phoned my dad up and said, 'you'll have to come and fetch me.' I did not even make 24 hours. I did not make 5 minutes." (Mrs Mitchell).

and worry,

"Little things you blow out of proportion and you really do start to panic. I mean one ring would not turn off on the cooker, I'm hopeless when it comes to cookers, I almost burnt the place down. But little things when he is away, I do tend to blow them out of proportion. (Mrs Hodge).

and desolation,

"He went away on the Saturday night. The ship sailed about 7.00, but he had to be aboard for 5.00. I stood

on the harbour and watched the ship go away and I just went back and cried. I felt so empty and lost in a place that I didn't know and I knew nobody."  
(Mrs Stanton).

At the other extreme there were women who were very enthusiastic about their naval marriages and the attractions of service separation.

"Its my ideal state of marriage. I have my freedom during the week to do what I like and potter around in the evenings and go to bed early. I don't have to have a set meal at a set time. I get a lot done. I have my peace and my quiet, which I find is essential for my sanity and at weekends I have all the companionship and warmth, and someone to share them (the children) with, to take them off my hands." (Mrs Shelley).

"Its great being married to a sailor because you get time when you are on your own and its nice when you meet them again when they come home. Its a steady job and its quite good money." (Mrs Bailey).

"Once they've been away for 6 months, when he comes home, its just like a honeymoon." (Mrs Gray)

But the bulk of the women interviewed and many of the comments on the questionnaire agreed most with Mrs Middleton when she said,

"Its not much fun without them, but its something you learn to accept... Its a frame of mind."  
(Mrs Middleton).

Having described the range and diversity of emotional reaction to separation, the task is then to examine the sociological basis and significance of this. What was quite clear from the interviews was that the impact of service separation for wives was not one of "coping" or "not coping". Whatever their problems, all the wives interviewed had "coped", but many did not enjoy the situations they had coped with; many felt that they should not have had to cope alone. The dominant attitude was one whereby they had gritted their teeth and got on with life. Their comments often contained a sense of injustice

not incapacity. The issue is then not whether wives "coped" but the recognition and analysis of the situations and concerns that wives coped with. Thus discussion is reorientated to concern with responsibility, control and support. As one woman astutely observed when one of her children was hospitalised with a serious illness,

"What irritated me more than anything was that, instead of saying 'I'm not going back because the child is really ill,' he said 'I'm not coming back because my wife unfortunately cannot cope,' which really angered me. It wasn't that I couldn't cope; I didn't think that he should go back, one, because she was away in hospital and, two, I thought he should stay until his daughter was on the road to recovery." (Mrs King).

Therefore what is at issue in this analysis of the domestic repercussions of service separation is not the resourcefulness of wives but questions about power and responsibility within the home.

#### Domestic Power and Responsibility

Analysis of domestic decision-making have long been recognised as problematic. Distinctions have been drawn between the big but rarely-made decisions that set the tone and contours of family life and the more trivial and regular decision-making that is the stuff of everyday living. It has been argued that as the magnitude of the decision increases so the powers of husbands increase and the powers of wives diminish (Gillespie, 1971; Edgell, 1980).

The domestic controls of husbands and wives also relate to wider debates about the nature of power and ultimate power, about decision-making and non-decision-making (Bacharach and Baratz, 1963). Wives may be delegated power only so long as their decisions fall within guidelines predetermined by husbands. In the terms used by



Safilios - Rothschild, it is men who have the power of orchestration and women the time-consuming duties of implementation (1976). In addition, the deferential framing of marital relationships suggests that wives subjectively edit and limit their decisions in the areas within which they could be said to have power (Bell and Newby, 1976).

There appears to be a measure of agreement over the difficulties of the area but there are problems with this agreement and the thrust of its argument. In part it suffers from the same optical illusion that gender creates in discussions of the metaphysical divide between the public and the private. As Imray and Middleton noted (1983), it is not that some areas and activities are private and these are both socially invisible and female, but that what women do is trivialised and privatised; conversely it is argued that it is not that men engage in activities that are intrinsically public and socially important, but that men endow what they do with cultural kudos and social importance. Therefore it is not that men make important decisions, but that the decisions men make are deemed to be important.

The same critique could be directed at discussions of domestic decision-making where decisions may be trivialised because they are the province of women. To repeat the distinctions between types of decisions is to diminish domestic decision-making and to deny the cultural importance of daily home-making and the social centrality of what women do; the assumption that the exercise of daily domestic power is not real power reinforces the subordinate status of women.



Within the interviews the distinction was even parodied by one of the women who claimed,

"My husband makes all the big decisions; he decides we shall have world peace. And I make all the small ones, like what we'll spend our money on." (Mrs White).

Also there is another issue. If it is accepted that wives have the power to implement and to control daily decisions - to what extent can these powers be escalated? When does implementation spill over into orchestration? and to what extent can wives act to re-define their own domestic contexts, especially when husbands, the putative orchestrators, are away? Here deference to husbands' wishes may be empty mouthing, the paying of cultural lip-service to masculine authority and de facto power in the household may be held firmly in the grip of women. The consideration of these points indicates the difficulties of moving from what sailors' wives say they do to analyses of domestic power. Nevertheless, such a move will be attempted.

Husband absence was reported as having increased the domestic power of wives. They described themselves as in control of decision-making in the home. They commented that their husbands did not, or could not make such decisions and were sometimes ignorant of how everyday things in the house operated.

"I think I make most of the decisions, because, with him being away. I don't think he could make a decision; I think he is very poor at making decisions."  
(Mrs Stanton).

"I run the home. He doesn't even know how to run the central heating. If he wanted to alter it and switch it on earlier, he doesn't know how to." (Mrs Perry).

Some wives thought that it was part of a personal irresponsibility bred into ship-board life. For others it was linked to the logistics of his being away for, if decisions were to be made, the wife was the only person there to make them. Whatever the reason it was clear that patterns of decision-making were structured by the social facts of occupation, which went beyond individual wishes or cultural prescriptions.

"It doesn't matter whether he is at sea or here (laughter), I do everything. Well, moneywise and that, I take care of everything. You can't run a home from sea." (Mrs West)

"Are there any decisions you wouldn't make in his absence?"

"No."

"Does he like or dislike that?"

"He hasn't got a choice." (Mrs King).

However, most women did not discuss this issue in terms of power and control, most discussed it in the language of responsibility and duty. Some women went as far as seeing their husband "living the life of a single man" and themselves heading a "financially secure one-parent family." (comments of Mrs King). In many of the questionnaire statements and interviews there was a great sense of the totality and the loneliness of their responsibilities.

"I think the other thing is having the responsibility. I'm sure one-parent families must have the same thing, I mean total responsibility for everything. I know that when he came home I could almost feel a burden being lifted. I knew that if somebody needed something or something needed to be done, it didn't have to be me." (Mrs White).

Some felt that whilst husbands could escape to sea, they could not; they were always there. But within their descriptions there was

a sense of pride in what they did, in keeping the domestic boat afloat.

"He always said, 'well I earn all the money in this house,' but I says, 'yes, but who keeps it all together.'" (Mrs Bennett).

The women had a great awareness of their own self-sufficiency and independence and a number spoke of their greater self-reliance, compared with the wives of civilians; being a sailors' wife was not for women with dolls' house mentalities. They described the inevitability and usually the ease with which they took over the house, making decisions and performing tasks that they thought in "normal" circumstances would be undertaken by or with husbands. Among the domestic concerns and incidents dealt with single-handedly by the women interviewed were sorting out insurances, mending household appliances, handling the court appearance of a child, organising essential building repairs, dealing with major problems in the children's schooling and health, and buying, selling and moving house. Also it should be noted that the scope of these concerns was enlarged by the movement of naval personnel into private housing where, in addition, alternative sources of support for lone wives were less forthcoming.

Husband absence seemed to increase the household authority of wives and the handing back of what many women clearly recognised as the reins of domestic power was considerably harder. Even for those who felt most burdened by their husband's absence, his return was universally described as intrusive and disruptive. Their descriptions of intrusion and disruption focused on his reintegration into



household routines and to the transformation of patterns of power and responsibility. Their comments were about tasks and activities and these in turn linked both to the exercise of power and to the status and importance of the husband within the home.

"You've got to get used to them being home again, because I'm so used to being on my own and doing what I want to do and watching what I want to watch on the telly and its very hard to say 'no, you're not having that, I want the other side on.'" (Mrs Tucker)

"Well yes, you get so used to them not being there. You become terribly independent and when they come home it's 'where's me tea love', and 'have you washed my socks yet?' You find it difficult; at first its good fun because its lovely to have them back, the first week, then you start resenting picking up the socks again and picking up behind them. It gets a bit sort of ... you're not your own person anymore, you've got to get used to that, being able to change from the independent Mrs Walker to being the doting Mrs Walker, 'yes sir, no sir, 3 bags full sir,' Mrs Walker." (Mrs Walker).

For all the women, the readmittance of their husband into the household and its routines required a conscious effort. All were aware of the lack of synchronisation and all were sensitive to the significance of gendered activities within the household. Separation altered the domestic division of labour and this division and its alteration carried meanings about the place, contribution and worth of men and women in the home.

"After 6 months apart I find it very difficult to... when he came back from the Falklands, we wanted to change the plug on the bath, it didn't quite fit, and I asked him to do it, I thought I'd better involve him because I'd been doing bits and he was getting a bit funny because he wasn't doing anything. It's easier for me to get up and do it myself. If I want to change a bulb, its easier for me to do it myself and then he gets upset because I'm not involving him. He feels that ... he likes to know that I need him and because I've been doing it for so long on my own, I just continue to do it on my own and then he feels a bit unwanted." (Mrs Hodge).



"It was difficult for him to get adjusted because he still can't accept the fact that I am quite capable. The ballcock went in the loft, in the tank in the loft, and he blew his rag when I went up there to fix it and I told him how it should be done. Its like I said to him, 'who does it when you are not here, you can't leave it,' he gets cross about things like that. I suppose he thinks I should hand over completely, but you don't. You become an independent item and he doesn't like it; he'll just have to live with it though, won't he." (Mrs Lawrence).

A number of women, like Mrs Stanton, described their oscillation between dependence and independence when their husbands were home and away.

"I manage better when he is away than when he's at home because you've got to get on and manage when he's away, whereas when he's home you think, I can't do that, I'll wait for John to do that. I think that it makes you self-sufficient. You help yourself, you get on and do things when they're away and when they are home, you let them do it." (Mrs Stanton).

Sometimes the oscillation changed into subterfuge as helplessness became a stance which some adopted to smooth the way in their husbands' readmittance. For many women the return to a traditionally gendered division of labour was the means by which their husbands' inclusion within the household was effected. To have not returned to this domestic mode of relationships would have signalled his exclusion and household redundancy.

"I often feel like I have a split personality because when he is away, I deal with everything, the odd jobs. When he comes home, I have to become helpless, saying well that wants doing and that wants doing. I think that helps him in a way, because, if I kept doing everything, his ego couldn't stand it for very long. He's the man of the house and he has got to feel like it at times. I often think about it ... I'm all helpless one day and thoroughly independent and do it all on my own the next." (Mrs McDonald).

However, to reiterate the opening issues of this section, perhaps the greater measure of choice and control exercised by women when their husbands were away was more apparent than real. There was always an element of being answerable to the returning husband for decisions that had been made and having to explain suggested the delegated nature of their power.

"You've had two and a half months of being responsible and looking after the children or looking after the house etc and suddenly, the other one comes home and says, 'should you have done that? Is this alright?' and your sort of going behind them, strangling them, saying, 'I've done it for two and a half months and I can cope well and those things are fine.'" (Mrs Thompson).

"I can't say I resented him being there (on his return), but I resented him upsetting the apple cart. He'd keep asking questions; have you done this and have you done that? There were always questions I hadn't asked, but I had survived successfully on my own." (Mrs Middleton).

There were some women who did not adjust to their husband being home. Mrs Young's husband had been away sailing or in a distant shore establishment for the bulk of their married life. She described how she found it hard to include him in any household activity and how she had become intolerant of any criticism; when he was home, he was regarded as something of a stranger and certainly an outsider, and she described how she and her two daughters colluded in his exclusion. Mrs Goodman noted a similar difficulty but the dynamics of her household leaned more towards antagonism rather than withdrawal.

"Things he finds wrong, I don't, and the whole situation becomes difficult when he comes home, but if he's been away for a few weeks like now, I stand there and say, 'when are you going back to sea again?' It sounds awful to people who don't know and newly married wives say, 'how could you say that about your husband?' I say, 'you wait, when he's been away for a little while and he comes back. After a few days, you'll be pushing him to

get out the door. I think it's because when he is away I'm boss and what I say goes in the house; when he's home he's the boss." (Mrs Goodman).

Reunions then presented the women with as much difficulty as separations. And, for some, instead of separations straining the marriage toward dissolution, it could be argued that they remained married because of, rather than in spite of, the separations they experienced.

#### Money Management and Service Separation

Along with the division of domestic labour, patterns of money management were an important aspect of the distribution of power within marriage and the home. In global terms separation affected the domestic economy of naval personnel. Wives frequently commented that they spent less when their husbands were away and long deployments were times when they could save. In addition, the financial benefits of overseas and separation allowances increased the household income at these times. But, to speak of household income is in many ways deceptive since this approach assumes that all household members have access to and share the benefits of that income and this is by no means always the case; "breadwinning" implies primary control of the domestic purse and a primary status within the household. Hence any discussion of women's expenditure is only concerned with a system of budgeting within an overall framework of control.

Of the women interviewed only five were in full-time and nine in part-time employment; most women and their children were then chiefly or wholly reliant on the man's income. Although many women had



considerable access to and control over this income, this did not obviate the fact that it was still his income and therefore its use was entirely dependent on his agreement. As Hunt argues,

"The breadwinner's control of family funds does not seem to be greatly affected by the form in which the houseworker has access to money ... In each case the wage earner had the final say as to how money would be spent, or more often in these inflationary times, how money would not be spent." (1978, p558)

There were also some particular and occupational dimensions to this issue. It could be argued that marriage to a sailor rendered wives less powerful, since a husband at sea is not directly touched by the penury of his wife and children and the poverty of his home. During the interviews women recounted stories and incidents of women left penniless when their husbands sailed and two women had been in this situation themselves. For Mrs Shelley it was described as a banking problem, but, for Mrs Goodman, it seemed integral to her husband's conspicuous display of domestic power.

"He's very reluctant to hand over any of his money to me. I think he likes to feel that he doesn't just give his money to me generously. He likes the idea of a fight. He doesn't feel that it's worth it if I haven't had to fight. He doesn't like the idea of just handing it over. He feels much more of a man if I've literally had to get down on my knees and say, 'please I need some more money from you.'" (Mrs Goodman).

Nevertheless, in another sense, sailors who wished to have their households managed and their children cared for may have to surrender more financial control to their wives to facilitate this. As naval wives commonly described themselves as taking over in their husbands' absence, a crucial task in this process was bill-paying, and to manage this, they would have to have considerable access to their husband's income. Here the arguments tread back to an assessment of the capacity of lone wives to move the boundaries of their domestic powers



and an assessment of the relative strength of the de facto control of women who are present in the home against the broader authority of men who are absent.

Given the constraint of husband absences, could there then be said to be a typical pattern of money management within the naval household? Any pattern was influenced by naval pay regulations in their past and present form. Up until 1981 an allotment system was in operation whereby naval personnel could make an allotment to their wives, payable through a post office order book. Having deducted accommodation and any other charges, the pay office organised cash for her and cash for him.

When this payment system was abandoned, all personnel became salaried and paid via bank accounts and this is likely to have altered their intra-household transactions. With the increased use of bank accounts the nature of money management is transformed and the financial transactions between husband and wife may become less tangible and harder to characterise. It becomes less about wresting money from a husband's hand on Friday night and becomes more about standing orders into another account or agreement to draw monies to a particular limit; what is affected is the regularity and the performance of intra-household exchange and these in turn influence and are influenced by the nature of the married relationship.

Pahl (1980, 1983) has been in the forefront of those attempting to conceptualise and study the accessibility of incomes and the allocation of resources within households. She has described 4 broad

allocative categories: the "allowance" system where wives receive 'house-keeping' monies, the 'whole wage' system, where wives manage the finance and allocate pocket money to other members, the 'shared management' system where incomes are pooled and access equal and the 'independent management' system, where responsibilities are divided and separately managed. But in the use of these categories to characterise the dominant forms of household management within naval families, some problems were encountered. Intra-household exchanges were conducted within the overall framework of gendered power and deference that influence all decision-making and its reportage. These problems surfaced in the difference between putative access and the actual use of accounts, in the implications these systems had for the mechanics of monetary manipulation and the amount of money involved, and in the instability of the patterns of money management being used.

Fifteen of the women interviewed had joint accounts with their husbands, which would suggest a 'pooling' system. As this constituted half the respondents, the proportion is similar to that found in Pahl's survey (1983). Here the case of Mrs Atkins is typical,

"No, we've never used the allotment system; we've always had a joint account. Everything is in joint names, well most things, apart from these I've opened when he hasn't been here, but it really is a joint venture and everything goes into the joint account. I take out what I need." (Mrs Atkins).

It should also be pointed out that Mrs Atkins had experienced very little separation in her marriage and had always worked as a nurse, part-time if not full-time. However, having given the proportion, there was considerable variety in how joint accounts were used; 2 women claimed not to use their joint accounts and did not

possess cheque books to them; a number of women, like Mrs Macdonald divided money within a joint account.

"He has an allowance for the month and I have an allowance for the month and the rest of the pay goes towards the bills. I look after that section because I look after the bills, so if he overdraws his part of the allowance, it's got nothing to do with me. Although it's all in the same account, it hasn't got anything to do with me. He has to sort that out himself." (Mrs MacDonald).

This suggests that 'pooling' systems may contain principles of 'allowance' and 'whole wage' allocation. Also a joint account may run alongside personal accounts.

The 'allowance' and the 'whole wage' system may also be hard to distinguish when monies go through bank accounts and depend on amounts handed over rather than any more visible mechanism. As all but 3 wives were responsible for bill-paying, the system could be interpreted as a 'whole wage' system for which wives were made an allowance. But even where separate personal accounts were in operation, wives may still exercise considerable control over their husband's expenditure.

"Every month I sit down and do his bank and say that's how much you've got to spend. Whereas before I'd just say that's alright and he'd go way over the top. I trust him now with his cheque book. I was a bit wary before to give him his cheque book because he was so flippant with it. But if I say to him now, 'you've got £10 now, that's it, that's all you've got, he will spend that as he wants to spend it.'" (Mrs Hodge).

Also 2 wives described how their husband's personal account was used as a de facto joint account with him using a cheque book and her using the cash point card.

The vast majority of the women interviewed claimed that they were responsible for bill-paying. Pahl suggests that "when money is short ... managing the family's income should be seen as one of the chores of the household, rather than a significant source of power for the spouse." (1980: 319). Pahl is describing the wife's management of the 'whole wage' system as burdensome when the wife is managing limited means. But this was the way in which all the women in the survey described bill-paying - as a necessary chore, as an extra worry, as part of their housekeeping responsibility.

"I pay the bills. I get fed up sometimes because he dips out, walking round quite confident that he's alright and it's this sucker here that's doing all the slogging, but I suppose somebody's got to do it. When he comes out of the Navy he's going to have to do it."  
(Mrs Lawrence).

As "housekeepers" their attitude to money was that of economising, of managing it on behalf of others, almost irrespective of monetary arrangements and the structure of accounts. But sailors' wives retained considerable control in this area and had developed systems to ensure that their control was not dependent on the whim of their husband. Many women described an increase in control of the domestic purse with length of marriage and none described its lessening. They recalled instances which had led them to take the household finances out of their husbands' hands, typically their being faced with bills which they could not pay whilst their husbands were away.

"When we first got married he had the money and he went away and the electric bill came in and I hadn't got any money to pay for it and I said 'I'm not doing that again.' So that was when he put the money into my name and it works well." (Mrs Stanton).

"Not now. It was a problem until we had a joint bank account, because he went off and left me for 6 weeks when all the bills came in and I didn't have any money.



There was some problem about his pay. I couldn't ...  
No, that's right, because I did not have access to his  
money then I could not pay the bill. So then we opened  
a joint account." (Mrs Shelley).

Or more dramatically still Mrs Goodman, who asked Family Services  
to contact her husband to inform him that the electricity was about to  
be cut off, a move designed to ensure maximum embarrassment.

"It didn't go down too well, so when he came home I told  
him he ought to sort out the finance a bit better than  
that, because that's the way I'm going to deal with it  
each time. So now I pay the bills and I know they are  
paid. It's taken him 10 years. He's reluctantly handed  
over and realised that there isn't any other way when he  
is at sea, because it only gets us into problems."  
(Mrs Goodman).

Another decisive factor in the wife's increased control was the  
move to private housing. Here there was more to be financially  
managed and nothing was debited directly by the Navy through the  
husband's pay cheque, as it was in service accommodation.

Although wives had described their increased control of household  
finances and access to husband's income often associated with the  
opening of a joint account, the issue is more complex than this.  
There had been considerable fluctuation in the organisation of the  
household budget and more than the present 15 households had at some  
time or another organised their money through a joint account. A  
number had found the jointness of decision-making and finance  
problematic when it occurred within the context of separation. Joint  
accounts here required either considerable planning and communication  
or a margin of disposable income if money problems were to be avoided,  
since the 2 parties were in effect living apart but drawing on the  
same account.

"We have a cash book and in the cash book we ... if I  
draw £50 out of the bank account then I debit it from

the cash book and he debits it from the cash book ... Everytime we write a cheque we debit it, so we work on a total joint thing. When he had gone away he has allocated himself £x, he takes so much with him and then, if he does take anything out, he writes it in his letter and then I (debit it). But it does, I admit, it does cause a few problems if mail gets dropped in the sea, or things like that." (Mrs Mitchell).

"I assume that he is not going to draw more than a certain amount a month. I have to assume that he has to tell me if he has drawn many large cheques, that that's what he always does." (Mrs Shelley).

Even with the aid of budget accounts and cashplans which many of the naval households used, systematic planning was not always feasible, even if it had been desired. A number of women had abandoned the joint account or had opened a parallel personal account, preferring the certainty of what they regarded as their own money in their own account under their own absolute control. Here the commonest attitude was knowing where you stood financially and confining any spendthrift ways on the part of their husband to his own account. Their preoccupations were not with amounts so much as security and certainty, the basis of rational household management, the basis of "housekeeping".

"We do (manage our finances) at the moment by a joint account but, that is, in the next couple of months we're going to change that. So much is paid into the bank for the house running, so much is paid into the account for myself and so much is there for Phillip, because at the moment we are both using the same account and, if Phillip has been away for 3 months, I haven't got a clue how much he's spent until I get the statement at the end of the month, and you can't always account for that. So you're invariably £10 or £15 overdrawn." (Mrs Walker).

Alternatively an agreement had been reached about who would control the joint account, and what everybody's and everything's allocation should be.

"I always had control of the joint account which paid the bills, but you had the problem that if he did have

the joint cheque book, you didn't know what he had written, so we started ... he has so much money in his personal account. He has a personal account in the Giro, so he can't overdraw, so I send him some money and I have the joint account and I do what I like with it."  
(Mrs Whittaker).

Discussions of household finance always contain 2 major caveats: firstly, whatever the monetary arrangements are, the husband always retains ultimate control when it is solely or primarily his income; secondly, when wives discussed financial arrangements, their money was often indistinguishable from housekeeping money and this framed their attitude towards and use of it. But, within these parameters it was wives who largely administered the household budgets and all the women who were in private housing did so. There was widespread awareness of their de facto and administrative powers and recognition of how wide-ranging powers of implementation could be.

"I make him an allowance, although he is not aware of that. He's kept man on his own money (laughter)."  
(Mrs Shelley).

"He's not getting much at the moment because our accounts are in such a mess. The Barclaycard's up and the cashpoint account's at its limit, so I haven't been giving him much. But he hasn't been spending it, so he doesn't need it." (Mrs Whittaker).

But, then again, this de facto control depended on agreement and self-imposed limits and as Mrs Bailey commented,

"I tell him how much he can spend and then he spends 4 times as much." (Mrs Bailey).

Although control of the domestic purse by women was seen as essential in a separated marriage and as yet another hallmark of their capability, bill-paying was at root a responsibility and the comments of the women interviewed were very like those of the "breadwinning wives" researched by Stamp (1985), who were more aware of their obligations than their choices.



The potential for domestic control was increased by husband absence. But outside issues of domestic power, the women interviewed also noted significant changes in domestic rhythms that accompanied such absence.

#### Household Routines in Separation and Reunion

Along with issues of domestic responsibility and control a thread that ran through the comments of wives in the interviews was that separations and reunions entailed different routines and all described the importance of their own adaptability. For many it was not separation or reunion which posed the problem, but the constant readjustment between the two.

"You notice it for about the first couple of weeks and you get used to it and then they come home and you adjust again. It's just different routines. It's just the fact of getting used to being by yourself again, and then you get quite upset when they come back and ruin it all." (Mrs West).

"I've kept a diary and worked out exactly how long he'd been home and that was just under 3 years out of 7 years of marriage. You just get used to it. But I don't mind. I can't get used to him being home every night, but I suppose I will do." (Mrs Bennett).

A problem area was then the oscillation between their husbands being home and away, and these adjustments were often experienced as awkward, if not painful. This in turn raised the question of what were the differences in the life style of women when husbands were home and when they were not.

One of the most reported effects of separation was in the variable running of household timetables. Meal-times, and especially the timing of the evening meal, were different; mothers were more likely



to eat earlier in the evening and with their children who, in the absence of their husbands became the basis of the women's timetables.

"We eat earlier in the day, which suits the children better because you ... they have got time to do their homework, or something after eating, otherwise they have to wait for their food and there is not necessarily a great deal of time, because he never used to finish at a particular time." (Mrs White).

"How is your routine different when he comes home?"

"Meals. When he is here we don't generally eat until about 7.00 at night and have a dinner at the table whereas when he's not and the kids are at school its not such a formal meal. They'll be in the kitchen and I'll be in front of the telly." (Mrs Goodman).

It is not just the timing of meals that altered, but they often required less preparation and formality in their construction and serving when their husbands were away. There was less pressure to produce the "proper meal".

"She (her daughter) might have a bag of chips in the car." (Mrs Walker).

"They get frying pan meals and whatever they want for dinner. The only time I really do a cooked meal is on a Sunday. Its just slap meals really." (Mrs Francis).

Also 2 women amongst those interviewed claimed that they did not eat a meal at all, living only on snacks. Also, along with meal-times, the evening routines of many women changed, both because there was less to do in the evenings and they could be more flexible in what they did do.

"There is more set routine on the whole (when her husband was home). Tea is at 5, the kids are in bed at half past 7 and that sort of thing, whereas its more flexible ... I mean the kids might still be in their pyjamas at 10 o'clock if they are behaving themselves, as I clean round them, if they are behaving themselves, or they are both sat in the bath while I'm doing my hair or something, you know. Whereas you tend to do things in a more set routine when they are home." (Mrs Mitchell).

"I think my life is very different when he is away to when he is home because I find that when he's away I have more time to do things. I'll sit down at 8.00 and knit or bring my sewing machine down and I'll sew or go out and do the garden. But I find just having him around there's a bit more work to do and I won't dream of bringing the sewing machine down and sewing. I knit still, but I find that I have more time when he is away." (Mrs Whittaker).

"You haven't got quite so much washing and cleaning to do because you tend to be able to keep it ... when the children go to bed, pop around and pick up the odd toy. You do it then, whereas when Phillip is home, 'do the dishes later love' sort of attitude." (Mrs Walker).

These quotes illustrate 2 major ways in which the presence of a husband altered the activities of women and their social time: they had less housework and they did not have to put effort into making housework appear unobtrusive and uncompetitive with the attention they devoted to their husbands.

There was both a practical and ritual element in women's reportage of their husbands' contribution to household tasks; they were missed in their making of morning tea, or evening coffee, filling dishwashers, mowing lawns, taking children to the paper shop on Sunday morning. These were rituals that husbands fell into when home and undoubtedly they helped smooth the way for their reintegration into the folkways of the household. The presence/absence of a husband also meant they had more/less time for social contact outside the family, and especially for friends. This issue is more fully discussed in Chapter Nine.

One area that seemed to present few problems to the women interviewed, but featured in other surveys on husband absence, was the significance of the woman's employment in the comings and goings of

husbands. Taylor et al (1986) noted that oil wives in paid employment experienced more marital conflict than those not so engaged. Solheim also identified this as a problem area in his study of Norwegian oil workers and their wives and suggested why this should be so. He found this issued cause particular difficulty for the "more 'modern', companionate type of family" since "when the husband does involve himself in the domestic sphere and internal family relations, it is still on the implicit basis of the wife being present in the home most of the time." (1984, p.6 and 7). The rhythms of offshore commuting dovetailed more easily into a "traditional" and segregated family system and into a marital structure where wives were not in outside paid employment, since many returning husbands resented the limited accessibility and availability of their working wives.

The main reason that it did not feature as an issue for naval wives was because of the particular occupational rhythms of their husbands. For naval servicemen, unlike oil workers, time at home was not coterminous with time on leave; when they were ashore they were working ashore and in an occupational rhythm akin to that of the civilian shift-worker. Therefore, for those women in paid employment, linking their work routines with those of their husbands in itself presented no problems. However, husband absence was influential on employment in another way. Almost all the women with children and without paid employment, 17 in number, expressed grave reservations about their resumption of paid work. They described husband absence as a hindrance to any paid employment - there were practical difficulties and above all else there was guilt and an extra sense of responsibility about their children. Although some women



thought that his absence gave them an incentive to get out of the house, fill their time and meet other people, many more dismissed the possibility.

"Then again I don't think its fair on Simon if I go out to work and have to leave him with anybody; with him not being here, I don't think it fair that I should go out and leave him. He hasn't got either of us then." (Mrs Perry).

"I wouldn't consider working when he is away because if they are ill or anything." (Mrs Stanton).

"You always have to think about what you would do if they were ill, things like that. You have not got the fallback of knowing that, if I'm at work all day, well perhaps my husband would cook the dinner. You have still got everything to do when you got home, which puts me off working, as I don't have the need to work." (Mrs White).

#### Separation and Relationships with Children

An analysis of the impact of service separation on domestic relations would be incomplete if it concentrated solely on the transactions between husband and wife. Departures and reunions occur within a wider family context and here relationships with, and the activities of, children are crucial.

As an area of study, the sociology of the family has been attacked for reifying and idealising family relations within a nuclear form. This has undoubtedly brought an important advance in scrutinising married relationships, debunking familistic myths and promoting a greater awareness of sexual divisions. But it has also brought its own limitations in that it has diminished the importance of relationships with other kin and has done little to rectify the continued social invisibility of children. Within sociology the importance of childhood relates to the processes of socialisation;



children are socially significant as preparatory adults. As Qvortrop pointedly comments "Children are not human 'beings' in sociological literature, but only human 'becomings'." (1985, p.132).

The feminist recasting of the area has done little to alter their standing. They retain their residual status, confirming the housewives' domestic identity in the additional responsibilities and the emotional ties of motherhood and they have a nuisance value in the organisation of adult lives. The residual status of children is reinforced by a concentration on the relationship between husband and wife. Here children attach to the wife and she acts as an arbitor between the husband and all that constitutes his home.

Naval wives did seem to act as domestic diplomats, easing the way for everybody. On reunion women described themselves as smoothing out any wrinkles in their relationships with children, since separation and reunion entail changed routines and these changes affect all members of the family, not just wives. There are changed domestic timetables and the possible application of new household rules.

It is true that women do carry the prime responsibility for children and naval wives were not exceptional. They spent considerable time caring for them single-handedly. But, given this, it is interesting to note what contribution they thought their husbands were making to childcare and what they missed when he was away. Women appreciated their husbands as another person in the home for their children to talk to, to deflect attention away from

themselves, as someone who backed them up and bolstered their authority and as somebody else who could discipline them.

There were also other issues within this area, largely neglected in the study of husband absence. Throughout past analyses, as in wider sociology, children had a different ontological status to that of adults, which went beyond their subordinate position; they were not social actors in the way that adults were. It may be acknowledged that familial tasks and identities change with the introduction of children, but it is frequently forgotten that children alter the social structure of the family. They break the dyad of husband and wife, adding a triangular dimension and a new source of emotional complexity to the domestic scene. Children are more than social baggage or additional domestic responsibility, they are active in the drama of the household.

Allied to these past analyses are conceptualisations which adopt a unitary view of married women (Oakley, 1974, 1982), where the identities and tasks of wife and mother embrace in the activities of "housewife". Such unitary assumptions ignore Bernard's observation (1972) that sexuality and maternity may be antagonistic in Western society and the further conclusion that wifeness and motherhood may be in conflict not in harmony. The potential for conflicting loyalties in service families was however recognised by Macmillan (1984). She described the army wife's dilemma in the choice between accompanying her husband but sending her children to boarding school or remaining with her children but experiencing service separation.

Another aspect of these issues was explored by Tiller (1961) and Gronseth (1959) who described how women, separated from their husbands by the exigencies of sea service, turn to their children for emotional support and lavish all their affection upon them. They suggested there was a pathological side to this reaction and alerted the reader to the underworld of competing loyalties within family life. The returning father altered the emotional structure of the family and provided scope for new emotional alliances. Some husbands found themselves competing with their children for their wives' attention.

"The week after he came home, that used to be a dreadful week, trying to adjust to having him ... and of course they (the children) have had only me and now there was someone else vying for my time, and of course he wanted a lot of my time when he first came home. But they did not want to give me up and they found that very hard, especially when they were very young, and even now the youngest will come and sit between us if we sit down. He will always come and sit between us." (Mrs White).

By contrast, some women found themselves pushed to one side in the homecoming.

"You've had them all these months and you've looked after them and given them everything and suddenly daddy's home. There's poor mum, the one whose been with them through thick and thin, whatever she says is stupid and daddy's marvellous." (Mrs King).

The children themselves were actors within this family dynamic, influencing interaction between husband and wife.

"Weekends (when her husband is home) he is more naughty; he tries to see how far he can go with him ... Sometimes he'll speak to him on the phone and other times he just won't; especially if he's been away a long time, I'll say 'do you want to speak to daddy' and he says 'no' and he (her husband) gets ever so upset, but I can't force him to." (Mrs Perry).

"When Nick came home she wouldn't go with him to the shops or park, not unless I was there. He felt very shut out and hurt." (Mrs Jones).



"The children tend to be very reserved with him. They like to make the first move ... He tends to sweep them off their feet and they don't like it." (Mrs Young).

Other children were reported as looking forward to the return of their father for the presents this would entail. And there were the changes that it brought to the patterns of parental control; some children experienced its relaxation, but more commonly they were reported as apprehensive about the return of the family disciplinarian. This issue of parental discipline could be a source of tension, if not conflict, between parents. Tension surrounded both what the household rules were and who should impose them.

"The youngest one, she's a monster when he goes away. I think that what it is is that he is very strict as a lot a naval men are because they live under that kind of thing and they bring it home with them unfortunately. He tends to be a bit over strict. I think therefore when he's away all hell lets loose because they know that I'm that much softer than their dad." (Mrs Goodman).

"Because he is away he tends to spoil them when he comes home, whereas I feel that I've got more control over the children when he isn't here than what I have when he is here." (Mrs Stanton).

"All the time he was correcting him and in the end I said, 'pull your finger out', I says, you're correcting that child when he doesn't need correcting. Everytime he moved he got told off and in the end he was looking at him as if to say, I'd wish to Christ you'd go away and leave me alone ... When he comes back and he starts correcting them over trivial things, I resent somebody else correcting my children, because I have to be both mother and father to them when he is away." (Mrs Campbell).

"He'd flash up at them and be cross, whereas I'd have to tell him to leave it out. That is the way my children are and I'm not having you picking on them. Gradually he'd come round, and still have a moan every now and again but that's being in the navy, that's being a regulator. They've got to be a bastard at work and they don't switch off." (Mrs Lawrence).

"I'm with the children all the time; I know what they are doing and I found that there was a lot of conflict; he'd do something and it would be wrong and I'd fly.



But then, looking back, it was because he hadn't been there and the children change so much in between time."  
(Mrs Whittaker).

This type of conflict, it could be argued, occurs in all families since the presence of children inevitably alters relationships between husband and wife, but separated marriages offer an ideal climate for misunderstanding and antagonism, where parents could have different expectations of children and where a sense of usurped authority amongst adults could flourish.

Separations and homecomings transform household rhythms for all members of the household and the issues go beyond the simple parting and reintegration of husbands and wives. There is much for children to adapt to beyond the mere presence/absence of their father, and they themselves entered the dynamic of how separations and reunions were experienced by husbands and wives.

#### Separations and the "Homecomer"

The impact of service separation has so far been discussed in relation to domestic decision-making and money management and the contribution of children to household and marital relationships has been noted. Within this discussion problematic aspects of separation have been implicitly assumed to impact more on wives. Although the reactions of men to departure from and return to their homes lie beyond the scope of this study, the social situation of husbands could not be passed without comment.

Within the context of separation husbands are as problematic as wives, though less attention has been paid to the capacity of men to

"cope" with separation from their families. The problem has always been formulated as that of wives and children unless it is the particular problems of returning war veterans, (Hill, 1945 and Bey, 1974). But even here the literature is concerned with practical problems of their return and written in the vein of advice to wives and local practitioners.

It is Schuetz who turned a more sociological eye onto the intimate meanings that suffuse everything that is home and the adjustment intrinsic to absence from and return to it. Schuetz began with a classic account of a sailor's homecoming - that of Odysseus on the shores of Ithaca in Homeric legend. Odysseus fails to recognise his native land because of long absence and because Pallas Athene has misted his eyes. He is also, initially, unrecognisable to his own family. For Schuetz this is a lyrical but perceptive account of the experiences of all homecomers; home is not as they remember it and they are not as they are remembered.

The symbol system of home is constructed out of all that is familiar and intimate, the quintessence of the taken-for-granted. To return home is to stand outside social time; it is an attempt to re-establish the unchanged, a world nevertheless elaborated and transformed in memories. The notion of coming home is then self-contradictory since

"the home to which he returns is by no means the home he left or the home which he recalled and longed for during his absence. And for the same reason, the homecomers is not the same man who left. He is neither the same for himself not for those who await his return." (1945, p.375).

In this analysis, Schuetz is noting the effort that is required to reconstitute routines and recurrent relations with the people and things that make for home and that separations are never cyclical. One can never return to how things were; the home, the homemaker and the homecomer are always changed by social events and the passage of historical time. These problems attach to all homecomings, but are perhaps most redolent in what a number of women described as their husbands' reaction to their increased capabilities and the rapid changes of growing children.

So far separation has been discussed in a global sense. However, this is misleading, since the experiences of separation varied with the pattern and type of that separation.

#### Types of Separation

As has been previously described, absences can be distinguished broadly into those that stretch into weeks and often months, usually associated with sea service, and what are largely weekday absences, where men return for the weekend, more commonly found when men are attached to distant shore establishments or training stations. What is important here is not just the length of these separations but the patterns they form and impose on household relations and routines. Most of the women interviewed had experienced both types of separation, although their experiences of each may have been brief and episodic.

When asked to compare "weekending" with longer-term separations, the overwhelming majority of women thought long-term separation

preferable to "weekending" and "weekending" preferable to short and less predictable stints at home and away; 17 of the women stated a preference for long-term separations, 4 for "weekending" and the remainder thought there were pluses and minuses with each. It was frequently said that long-term and weekday separations were completely different experiences. Longer term separations enabled women to establish their own routines and would be matched with a longer stay at home.

"I find I'd rather them just clear off and go to sea for like 4 months and go abroad and then come back, rather than come back and forth at weekends. The kids have been hassled and they have come home weekends and disrupted the kids." (Mrs Campbell).

"I'd rather have the long time away if I could, because when they go, they go, and you know that for that length of time they are away. So the first week is hell, the second week is getting better and by the third week you've got into your own routine. I write regularly and I do what I like and get on with it." (Mrs Whittaker).

"A longer time away is better because you get into your own routine. When Michael was away from January to July you think it's going to last forever. But you tend to plan without them being there and you think that you've got X amount of time and you know that once that's over there's a good chance that they're home for a while." (Mrs Tucker).

However, there were also some problems; it was the longer term separation that required independence and greater responsibility on the part of the women.

"You have to take on responsibility for everything if they're away for 6 or 8 or 10 weeks. But if they are only away for a week then you haven't got to; its not the same at all. Of course the other thing is that he is at the other end of a telephone, but when he is at sea he is not. He's a submariner, so if he was away at sea, he was away and that was it. There were none of your letters home or things like that. It's a complete cut off." (Mrs White).



And when he was away for a long time, it was on Sundays that they missed their husband most, when everywhere was shut and everyone else was in a couple.

"I still hate Sundays and Bank Holidays. I think it's because the families are there and even about the street all the husbands are out doing the garden or working on the car, painting the house and you're just sat there thinking Richard could be doing that or we could be doing it together." (Mrs Whittaker).

The pattern of "weekending" meant that women were involved in weekend marriages. In part the pattern was similar to that outside service life, given the significance of the civilian weekend, but there were other problems and irritations for wives in this arrangement. Time and time again they noted its disturbing influence, here referring not only to household routines and responsibilities, but also to themselves. The weekend marriage was sometimes experienced as an emotional rollercoaster, whereby the week and the weekend entailed rapid mood change, which the women found <sup>e</sup>w<sub>^</sub>aring. Changes in routine were short-run and the weekends became cluttered as women found they had more work to do in tending to their returning husband and his washing.

"If you are actually having weekending, in the end you begin to think that there is nothing worse than weekending, because it is quite tiring having someone weekend, especially if they have no facilities where they are living and they are doing things like bringing all their washing home. Now, it sounds trivial, but if you have between Friday night and Sunday night to wash and iron 6 or 8 shirts, it doesn't become trivial anymore." (Mrs White).

Women tried to cram the weekends with shopping and do necessary odd jobs around the house and there was also the desire to keep the weekends free so they could "be together" with their husbands, since his weekday absence made the weekend a special time. It threw the

weekend into sharp relief and seemed to be a time when women made extra efforts in a number of directions.

"I think you've got to be very sensible. You have to say to yourself in your own mind that your routine must go to pot when they come back. But I think you spend your time with him you don't do any housework like you do during the week. If the place gets in a tip it doesn't matter because you're only seeing him for a couple of days. I think you have to get your priorities right." (Mrs Middleton).

Along with this a number of women involved in protracted weekend marriages commented that what they didn't have was time to argue with their husbands. These were women inured to service life, who tried to promote a holiday atmosphere in these weekends. For others the weekend marriage created considerable tension and widened the scope for argument.

"The weekending is very tiring; you work yourself up for them coming home on Friday, sitting there at 8.00 thinking, he left at 5.00, where is he? And when he comes in the relief is so great, but he comes in looking miserable because he's just had a 3 hour drive. He doesn't smile and you don't smile. It takes to Saturday lunchtime to get used to each other again ... and Sunday lunchtime you're thinking about him going back it all goes miserable again, he's going away." (Mrs Whittaker).

"Friday night was usually appalling in the beginning, but its OK now; Saturdays you're coming round; Sundays are lovely and then they are gone again. Having talked to other naval families, one of the first things they say is has the rowing stopped yet? They all seem to go through it." (Mrs Middleton).

It was frequently reported that it was not so much separation that they disliked but its elements of unpredictability. For Schuetz (1945), the success and failure of homecomings lay in the re-establishment of recurrent relations, the establishment of the routines of separation. Of the 4 women who preferred "weekending", for 3 it constituted a marriage structure well-practised and so routinised that it was not experienced as separation and reunion at

all, and for the remaining woman it meant that her husband was only at home for short times and his presence could be tolerated for that length of time.

Another aspect of the emotional structure of separation was in the sense of presence and absence quite apart from its physical form. Women had different senses of their husbands' absence. Letters were sometimes written daily, tapes were exchanged and their husbands' photographs prominently displayed when he was away.

"We've never actually made it policy in the family to make divisions, like daddy's home or daddy's away; daddy's there all the time as far as we are concerned. He just happens to be ... he could be working at some other place and could be away; it doesn't have to be the Navy, it could be any firm, or he could be not seeing them because he is commuting to London and not getting home until after they've gone to bed." (Mrs Robinson).

#### Service Separation and Women's Identities

The final impact of separation on the household and domestic relationships to be noted concerns the self-image and identity of the women themselves. Snyder's work on the wives of submariners based in the Western Pacific identified this to be a problem. She described how they are locally dubbed as "WestPac widows", suffering "the stereotype of vamp and superwoman" (1978: 10). Stereotyped as "vamps", they are locally thought to be out to bed other women's husbands. This local image affected their relationships outside the family, with friends and in the community.

The stereotype of "superwomen" is an attitude that the women adopted for themselves. As Snyder argued, "it is important to the



women and the boat wives to maintain a guise of strength and self-sufficiency", (ibid, p.10). Time and time again in the interviews with naval wives the women commented on their own self-reliance and maturity, and none described it as a "guise".

"I can't explain really. You just get so independent, so used to doing things for yourself and everything and doing everything the way you want to do it." (Mrs Perry).

Clark et al (1985) have argued that there is little evidence that oil wives, with time, accustom themselves to their situation; they concluded that the greater adaptation of veterans is consequent on the disgruntled leaving such employment or leaving/being left by their wives. A similar conclusion could be drawn from this research in view of the survey design, since the sample excluded those who had left their jobs or marriages. In the comments of wives a number made the point that, although they had few practical problems with separation, husband absence was not any pleasanter now than it had been at the beginning of their marriages. Furthermore, the social situation of lone wives is of course unchanged by its longevity or the passage of time.

Nevertheless what changed in their reaction to separation over time was their attitude, as they described how they learnt the stance of fierce independence and personal capability. Social situations shape attitudes and strategies for dealing with those situations, as Goffman so vividly described in his account of the formation of social selves amongst the inmates of an asylum. As the social selves of inmates were forged by the rules of the asylum so the social selves of naval wives were forged by the experience of husband absence. For Goffman, these inmates learnt "to practise before all groups the amoral arts of shamelessness" (Goffman, 1968: 155). As mental



patients learnt to dissemble, so sailors' wives learnt to cope on their own. Women who enjoyed their own company, relished organising their own time, managing their house and caring for their children single-handedly, made the happiest naval wives.

However, there was a large caveat to this. These qualities forged in separation may not synchronise with the qualities of wifeliness anticipated by husbands on their return. A returning husband is faced with the matrifocality of his home, from which he may feel excluded and an increasingly capable wife, whom he may find emasculating. Some wives admitted duplicity in feigning helplessness when their husbands were at home, but many reported some tension on this point.

The capability of wives may present a problem for husbands and some wives viewed the change within themselves with mixed feelings. Whilst recognising its survival value, some saw it as a hardening and "unnatural" process.

"Without someone to back you up, you have to be really forceful. I don't like that part of me. I'm out for what I can get. In some respects, it's a good thing, but as I've been on my own so much I've definitely hardened since I've been here, and in a lot of ways I don't like it." (Mrs Hodge).

"There's a couple living across from me who have been in and out together; I mean I wasn't like that at 21. I was married with a child and had to cope on my own and that's what makes you hard. And when your husband comes home, he sees a person who can cope with everything, which is not what you want to be; you want to be like the other wives who can't do this and can't do that." (Mrs King).

Mrs King has contrasted herself with other women, whom she regarded as normal wives. This in turn raises the question of the

extent to which sailor's wives are able to construct alternative models of wifehood.

### Service Separation and the "Normal" Marriage

Women who were interviewed who had experienced considerable service separation contrasted themselves throughout their discussions with what they believed "ordinary" wives and "ordinary" marriages to be. This concept pervaded their thinking, obvious in Mrs King's comparison of herself and her neighbour and a comparison more easily drawn when women were resident in private housing. Aspects of their marriages were indeed different, but it could be argued that the idealisation of normal marriages and conventional families feeds false comparisons, and supplied them with a hook upon which to hang all their private miseries and their marital problems.

"They all say you get on so well, you seem to accept it. I don't always accept it. I regret that I haven't had the ideal sort of family life." (Mrs Robinson).

It was assumed by some that things would all be different and troubles dissolved by a 'normal' and unseparated marriage. The descriptions of the women often included an 'if only' line of argument. This is perhaps to be expected amongst the replies of respondents, but it is much less acceptable when implicit in analyses of the area. The ideals of normal marriage form a powerful symbol system whose cultural grip influences all. Therefore, despite there being widespread recognition of their difference from many civilian wives, there were clear limits to the extent to which a different style of marriage could be constructed.

The message of Berger and Luckmann (1966) is that one cannot construct a social reality on one's own. To attempt to do so is to breed potential conflict with one's husband and to attract the disapprobation of neighbours and community. This was especially so in private housing where women lacked the social support of others in the same situation. Hence their commonest reaction to the anomalies of being lone wives was the stance of the staunch independence and of solitude; these were the lines of least resistance available to women married to absentee husbands. Hence to claim that the problem for wives is the crisis of separation and their reaction to it, is inadequate. There is an ambiguity in their social situation and this cannot be resolved by the right attitude.

### Conclusion

Husband absence affected the household relationships of naval wives in a number of ways. It influenced the exercise of domestic power and the experience of domestic responsibility. Whatever the strength of the broader limits of control, set by "breadwinner's" income and male authority, naval wives wielded power on the ground, de facto administrative control, as they largely paid the bills and organised their homes.

Separations and reunions also transformed domestic routines, altering timetables, the nature, timing and composition of meals and the ways in which women organised their time and undertook "housework". These changes often related to the wider context of household relationships since separations and reunions were often not dyadic adjustments but involved a complex interplay with the reactions

and behaviours of children. The presence of children in the home altered the responsibilities of wives, introduced a potential for conflicting loyalties and sometimes provoked tension between husbands and wives. Children as well as wives were subject to shifts in household timetables and with the changing nature of parental authority their reactions were crucial to the wives' experiences during husband absence and reunion.

The changing nature of domestic relationships, powers and routines also transformed the social personae of wives. Naval wives placed a special premium on their emotional strength and fortitude and their practical capabilities. Following this, Snyder has described them as "independent dependants" and this description also sums the ambiguity of their social situation and their marginality in the wider conceptualisation of wifhood. This theme of anomaly is continued in the exploration of their wider social relationships. And it is to the wide contexts of housing, neighbourhood and employment that the thesis now moves.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE HOUSING CAREERS OF NAVAL WIVES

Service separation has been shown to influence the domestic power, household relationships and self-conceptions of naval wives. So far the analysis has assumed a static view of marriage to a sailor. Differences have been noted but these have not been given any sequential relationship. This chapter will attempt to remedy the omission as it seeks to chart the marriage careers of women married to naval personnel.

The framework for this attempt at sequential analysis derives from the typical housing careers experienced by naval wives. Other pathways in their life course could have been chosen, but housing has a special importance. For all women housing creates a context for family life and an arena for marriage. But, for women married to naval servicemen, it encapsulates key dilemmas in their lives. They often have to choose between being with their husband, moving when he moves, and having a settled home, established friends and a stable local and educational environment for their children. They have to choose between the convenience and lesser responsibility of the married quarter and the investment potential, the greater control and privacy gained through private housing. It must also be stressed that, for naval wives, these choices were ever-present, permanent options in their life course, not a particular decision or stage in their career. Each new draft rekindled these issues and called for new compromises.

Conflicting aspirations and irreconcilable loyalties were always there in the marriage careers of naval wives and surfaced in the choice of housing. But, having chosen, the consequences were legion. Housing situation influenced other pathways in the life course of the naval wife, particularly patterns of employment and childbearing. Married quarters and homeownership brought more than differences in tenure and different rules of housing access: neighbourhoods differed, as did the scope for home-making and the chores of home-maintenance; it affected the cost and ease of moving; it altered the married relationship and incidence of weekday absence, and brought broader responsibilities to women who were privately-housed.

Past studies of 'tenure pathways' (Payne and Payne, 1979), of the movement through 'transit tenures' to 'destination tenures' (Madge and Brown, 1981) suggests that there are two main pathways within civilian housing. These pathways lead either to council housing or to private ownership and traffic on them moves only one-way. Madge and Brown (1981) and Holme (1985) both noted the lack of movement between council housing and private housing, notwithstanding the sale of council houses. As Hamnett argues

'the housing system seems to act as a social marshalling yard with only two main tracks and one main set of points. Most newly-married couples are shunted down one track or the other within three years of marriage.' (1986, p18)

Within the Navy, two pathways may be identified, but one predominated. On the major track the early and mobile years of marriage were spent in married quarters, adjacent to the husband's

port or duty station, and the later years in private housing, where couples commonly remained, fixed in tenure and in area. Very much a minority pathway was trodden by those who remained in service accommodation until the husband had left the Navy, when they moved into council housing. The desire to privately own dominated; only 12% of naval personnel did not intend to buy their own homes (MOD,1984a); home-purchase is actively encouraged by naval authorities and their loan schemes linked to long-term service commitment; and houses were bought by naval servicemen for owner-occupations not as investment properties. Therefore the issue for officers and ratings was not if they are going to buy their own homes, but when they were going to buy them.

There were some exceptions to these sequences, but these were minor, rare and without systematic pattern. In one couple, who were both nurses, the husband had joined the navy when his wife had had a child, was ill and unable to work. On the husband's enlistment, they had sold their house and moved into married quarters, although they have now re-entered the private market. Another women said they would remain in married quarters until he 'came out' and then they hoped to buy a property, possibly with a business attached, with his gratuity. Alongside these slight deviations from the pathways, there were also the occasional short-lived episodes of letting and of returning to mother. One woman relinquished married quarters to live with her mother whilst her husband completed a sea draft. Occasionally private homes were let while wives accompanied husbands on a distant or foreign tour of duty, and another woman, partially disabled, said she

had spent a number of years 'moving in and out of my own house', alternating between married quarters and her own property.

#### Getting Married and First Homes

Marriage for almost all the women meant leaving their home town. Of the women interviewed, only three could be said to be living in their areas of origin, two in Plymouth and one in Somerset. Most women had met their husband when he was home on leave and staying with parents or relatives, although some had met at College or as WRENS. But where the women came from made little difference to their attitudes and their experiences. The native Plymothians did not tell a different story from any of the other women. Marriage to a sailor had created a major break in their lives and almost invariably involved moving into different accommodation and to a completely new area.

Furthermore, housing constituted an important institutional pressure towards marriage rather than cohabitation; four of the women interviewed said that they had lived with their husband prior to marriage, but these living arrangements had been short-lived, the commonest reason being that they did not make financial sense. Mrs Johnson made a typical comment that, along with pregnancy, rents were a major consideration.

'In a bed-sit it was, sharing a house with some students, and that was alright but the rents were high, so that was another reason for wanting to get married quickly as well. You were just wasting money on living together in such a high-priced flat. It was ridiculous really.' (Mrs Johnson)



Holme (1985) has argued that it is the aim of each newly-formed couple to set up an independent household. Service accommodation permits this. But beyond the key to one's own front door, marriage for service wives frequently entailed a move to a new area. For some women marriage clearly offered the possibility of adventure away from the parochialism of their home towns, an escape from an unhappy home or from the poor opportunities of a declining area. A few women remained with their parents on marriage, but this was described as a temporary arrangement usually pending the availability of accommodation, or in one case to finish a nurse's training. These arrangements were not only seen as temporary but also as largely unsatisfactory.

'I was about six months with my mum, so I didn't feel married, although I was married.' (Mrs Hodge)

This first move could be daunting but exciting,

'It was my first move. Although I'd been to London for the day, I'd never really gone outside Wales. It was a big thing for me to give up my job and make this move, somewhere I had never been before. I never knew what it looked like. I'd been down here for the day when he was in the Gulf. I did not know what it was like.' (Mrs Hodge)

It could be rosy,

'I loved it. It was our first home together. He was working on land so he was home every day.' (Mrs Chambers)

It could also be a disappointing, or even a frightening, experience especially if it coincided with a husband's sea draft,

'When I went to live with him we went off to Scotland. Within five days he went off for five weeks patrol. He was a submariner which meant that after five days of me going into Scotland, where I'd never been before, settling into a new house and he was away for

five weeks and you can't write to them. So dead silence for five weeks. It was pretty awful.' (Mrs Goodman).

'It came as a shock... He was there for a weekend and then he went off to sea, so really it was an absolutely devastating shock. It was terrible being left not knowing a soul in a strange town, having been in a big community in Portsmouth where I knew everybody... I suppose, when I think about, I don't know why I went up there. I should have stayed with my mum until he came back.' (Mrs King).

But she did not. She moved to Scotland, instead, moving as most brides did, to be with their husbands symbolically if not physically. It is an irony that the draft to the distant port so frequently prompted the marriage and was so often accompanied by service separation.

The popularity of married quarters may be declining, but all but one of the interviewees had lived in such accommodation, however briefly.

### Married Quarters

When discussing married quarters, many respondents mentioned their convenience in mobility, when moving could be a frequent experience, made even more frequent when bursts of training interspersed varied drafts. Many women catalogued these moves during their interview. Mrs White recalled some of her experiences of moving,

'We came here (Plymouth) to married quarters for nearly nine months, between six and nine months, then we moved to Portsmouth for six months, married quarters again. Then we moved up to Blackheath Village, while he was at Greenwich, for six months, in a rented house. Then we moved up to Faslane, where we started off in married quarters, for I think less than

six months, but that sort of time, while we found ourselves a house, which we bought and we stayed there for two and a half years.' (Mrs White)

Mrs Stanton recalled a time when she had three houses in eight months; Mrs Tucker claimed to have had thirteen addresses during her sixteen years of marriage; and Mrs Francis described how every two years she and her family had moved between Portsmouth and Plymouth, in alternating drafts, since all her husband's sea drafts were in Plymouth and shore duties in Portsmouth. Such mobility would not be possible with other types of tenure. As Courgeau concluded in his French survey.

'If ... (people) become tenants, their mobility increases. It increases further if they are accommodated by their employer. However, when they succeed in becoming the owner of a residence, their migration propensity will decrease to one seventh of the mobility of a tenant.' (1985).

The convenience of married quarters was also mentioned in another context. Mrs Middleton described how she and her husband had used married quarters as temporary housing whilst they looked for the right property to purchase and Mrs Atkins had used service accommodation as

'...somewhere to come to initially. And its the best place to buy a property from because you have no pressure on you from the other end, pushing you to get out.' (Mrs Atkins).

If their convenience was their biggest plus, their biggest minus was the lack of control they afforded occupants over their domestic environment and their lack of scope for creative home-making. The decor was never quite right,

'Their colour schemes are pathetic. I mean in the bedroom we had really sickly yellow and orange

curtains and the carpet underfelts had been painted to the skirting boards ... There was still thick blue coming through the walls because dark colours were in fashion and the same in the lounge ... I didn't think much of the colours and the carpets are terrible; I mean, we've still got stains all over them.' (Mrs Hodge).

Also repairs were a constant source of irritation. Married quarters were hard to personalise; they had no cultivated gardens and little scope for the DIY enthusiast, common now in civilian society; and there was always the thought of the out-muster, where damages had to be paid for and your improvements or attempts at stylish decoration could be included in those damages. The out-muster was a sore point with many wives,

'We do like to have our own decorations and not grey walls, but you get told off if you put blue tack up, and one of the things that really gets to me is pompous men with egg down their ties and cigarette burns and dandruff coming into your house and telling you if you've got it clean enough to go out.' (Mrs Wood).

The bureaucratic supervision of their housecraft could be humiliating, because as Mrs Wood went on to say,

'Its not just a house, it's your home.'

Many women echoed the sentiment that these homes were never really theirs and they were then loath to spend the time or the money in making quarters more homely,

'Its little things that really make your home, but you can't do them because you are always thinking that's going to cost me. Why should I invest in something that's not going to be mine at the end of the day. And I think this has gone a long way to us moving out and getting our own little place so that we can do what we like.' (Mrs Hodge)



Having reported these views, it must also be said that, however grey and flowerless married quarters looked on the outside, the inside of the flats and the houses were no different from those visited in private housing. Almost all bristled with new furnishings, electrical goods, new carpets, pictures and plants. Holme (1985) notes a similar phenomenon in her comparisons of council housing accommodation in Bethnal Green and the privately-owned suburbia of Woodford. All suggest how high are the standards of amenity, comfort and aesthetics expected by many women of their homes today. One could argue that it is not merely the cleanliness or tidiness of a house that reflects on a woman's housecraft, but its entire look. When many adorned their homes with new, fashionable furnishings the pressures within the tight-knit community of the married patch become immense. Contemporary brides carried an idealised image of their home which service accommodation was unable to match. Mrs Hodge was such a young bride,

'When I moved in I had this fantastic picture of everything and it was going to be really great.'

but instead she found,

'In the spare bedroom there was a bleach mark and I said to the woman, "you'll change this carpet won't you". I didn't mean it rudely. "No", she said, "that carpet has a span of sixteen years." The underfelt was all torn and the cooker was burnt. There was new mattresses, but they all had their polythene on them; the headboards were all stained. Actually the bed did break and we then brought my bed from home down. The chairs are very uncomfortable, very square, horrible green, cigarette burns all over them; a good unit, solid, but it didn't do a lot for me. The firegrate stood out a bit and I didn't quite like that.'

Many described how they had grown up in comfortable private homes and how service accommodation could never match this. But attitudes

to housing did depend on previous experience and the quality of the housing itself. Smaller naval developments were described as more neighbourly and the houses on them often praised for their quality and roominess. Some of the wives, especially once they had children, had secured accommodation on these estates, which also merged more easily into the surrounding civilian housing and population. This they universally regarded as an improvement on the poorly planned, 'concrete jungles' of the large estates, so often built with all the design faults of the 1960s.

'I was really thrilled with the house. I didn't have any children, so it was really nice and just so. It was my ideal home.' (Mrs Stanton)

'My first married quarter was in Scotland, which was lovely; it was a lovely married quarter. It was a new place; they'd just started the squadron there, so everything was all nice.' (Mrs Lawrence)

'The first quarter I ever had was nice. It was an old-style house, which we preferred and asked for, because we had the dog as well. We had no choice because we had a dog, we had to have an old style quarter. But once I got to Gosport and saw them (the main naval estate there), I was glad anyway, because I preferred that to the new ones. It was very roomy with a nice little garden and in a quiet cul-de-sac. I was very pleased.' (Mrs Tucker).

Mrs Tucker had, on a later deployment of her husband, moved onto the larger estate in Gosport, into what she regarded as inferior housing and where, as she put it, she could not settle. It should also be noted that these more fulsome accounts of married quarters come from women in their mid to late 30s and married for at least ten years.

The large estates of service accommodation were singled out for special criticism, as people described their ugliness, their relative unfriendliness and their poor local reputations. Hamnett (1983) has described the polarisation of British housing into inner city public housing and suburban owner-occupation. Council accommodation, so often now in the form of flats, has increasingly become occupied by poorer residents, with employment backgrounds concentrated in the unskilled and semi-skilled sectors of the job market, if they are in paid employment at all, and the housing itself increasingly delapidated and left in disrepair. Owner-occupation has spread to more highly paid and skilled manual workers, is more likely to be in the form of houses, to constitute 'nice areas', and to be subject to the more or less constant processes of house-improvement and gentrification. Along with this trend has come the falling status of council accommodation and the concept of 'sink estates'. The position of married quarters may not be central to this trend, but attitudes towards them are inevitably touched by these processes; as housing they still have to be fitted into a hierarchy of residential status, a hierarchy of which many ratings' wives were acutely aware.

'Really, in a sense, naval families are spoilt in married quarters, though we lived under strict rules. Because I've got two children, I will always have a three bedroomed house; I will never be put into some grotty top-floor flat. But, if I'm ever on the council list, chances are that, that is what I will be put into afterwards. So I've decided no way was I going to go down the hill; I'm working my way up not down.' (Mrs Goodman).

Thus spoke a woman pleased to have climbed the ladder through service accommodation into the private house market. In a 'property-owning democracy', not to own becomes increasingly stigmatised, allied with council housing and, in the mind of the



public and many of the occupants, regarded a place from which the successful move. Also the stigma of location and tenure rubs off to stigmatise the occupant. In the 'ideology of tenures' (Harloe, 1985), those not in private housing are picked out as socially deficient.

'People seem to have this set ideal of what naval wives are. They think you are not supposed to have any intelligence and, when you lived on Rowner, they class that as being horrible with dirty quarters, loud-mouthed women and wife-swapping parties.' (Mrs Tucker).

More minor issues, concerning married quarters, were also mentioned. Some ratings' wives were over-conscious of their husbands' rank and 'rank-pulling' was a source of some annoyance, although many others claimed not to have encountered this particular form of status-consciousness. Also mentioned was the intrusive aspect of living cheek by jowl with the Navy.

'All the time you see uniforms coming by all the while, and naval cars and that sort of thing. When we were in Torpoint, I never really felt totally relaxed.' (Mrs Wood).

'Another aspect was that we were never away from the Navy. We were always there. We would go for a drink and there would be a chap on the same ship who knows my husband and they'd talk about work... He likes company away from it all, no hassle. Just home in his own home, away from the Navy.' (Mrs MacDonald).

Different tenures put women in different relationships to their homes and located women in particular neighbourhoods and communities. Officers' wives were more positive about their neighbours in service accommodation than were the wives of ratings. Whatever the other drawbacks, married quarters meant possible company and this company was often highly valued, especially when their husbands were away and



especially when they had small children to care for and to entertain. The more marginal the naval community, the more important the social side of married quarters became, as Mrs White described in her move into quarters in Scotland,

'It is out on a limb and, when you move into married quarters, you do tend to get to know people, even if they are not living in the same bit as you are. You probably get to know other people who work with your husband, because they try quite hard there, harder than anywhere else, in fact I think, probably because of the lack of contact that you have with your husband while he is away. Its a much more wives-get-together sort of place than anywhere else I've lived.'

Ratings' wives also valued the greater guarantee of friendship on the naval estate, with the gearing of so many estate activities to lone wives and their children, but their comments also revealed a more equivocal side. They described the social claustrophobia and cliquishness of married quarters, the other side of close-knit communities, a view not expressed by the wives of officers. Also ratings' wives had encountered more variable social standards on these estates and they reported more caution in their relationships with neighbours.

'A lot of them are very rough, especially the women and the language; its disgusting.' (Mrs Hodge)

They disliked the greater opportunities the naval estate ostensibly offered for infidelity amongst wives,

'There's a lot of goings on in married quarters. When husbands' away, there's a lot of messing around, which I don't agree with, but you see a lot of that.' (Mrs MacDonald)

And they disliked how the reputation for philandering amongst wives rubbed off on and stigmatised the other residents,

'It was the reputation that the women had got up there. You all get tarred with the same brush, if they can do it, because of the comings and going up there. I don't know if its still the same, and that I don't like.' (Mrs Lawrence).

Life in naval quarters was commonly associated with the mobile first years of the naval marriage. Occasionally wives mentioned the excitement of frequent moving, such as Mrs Harris who described herself as having 'itchy feet', ever eager to move to new places and to meet new faces. But such enthusiasm was rare; most mentioned the problematic side of mobility. For instance, it was not uncommon for wives to do the packing and moving whilst their husbands were away at sea. Others described the unsatisfactory nature of transient and situational friendships and described the strain of always having to start again in the building of a social circle. Mrs Shelley saw the capacity quickly to make local friends as an essential part of being a naval wife,

'The navy wives, I think, are a special breed in that, because they move around so much, they have to be sociable and I don't mean that they have to go knocking on everyone's door and saying, come and have coffee with me and talk in a loud voice. But they have to be adaptable and prepared to make friends they can confide in fairly soon and the fact that you are a navy wife is a sort of passport to being able to be on the same terms.' (Mrs Shelley)

And this passport has much easier currency within quarters accommodation than within private housing.

However, whatever their feelings and attitudes about moving, most emphasised the importance of being with their husband, and this

feeling was unsurprisingly strongest at the outset of their marriages. Although some women spent long and regular holidays with parents and relatives while their husbands were away, few did as Mrs Chambers did, which was to give up quarters for an entire sea draft and return to live with a parent.

'He joined a ship again then and I spent about six weeks totally on my own, did not like it, so went back home to mother. I had very good support from my family. We gave up the quarters and went back to Penzance... He was not keen on me going back to my mother. He wasn't entirely happy about living in somebody else's house. But he was away in any case and only home at weekends, so it didn't really affect him.' (Mrs Chambers)

In choosing whether or not to move with husband, other factors were also weighed in the balance: the type of draft was important, with women less likely to move when this was to sea rather than to shore; the proximity of the draft and the feasibility of commuting were assessed; some expressed a reticence about moving to a particular place, although there was no consistency in the listing of places they would not move to; and children made a large difference to the picture. Irrespective of where they were housed, children and their schooling, especially their secondary schooling, consistently weighted any decision in favour of staying put. But, above all else, the purchase of their own homes seemed to be the single most important factor in a naval families' decision to stop moving. Amongst the older couples in quarters, there had been a clear recognition of this consequence and a rejection of this housing option.

'He wants to buy a house, but I won't because, if I buy a house, I'm settled, I married him to be with him. I know his job takes him away, but the way I

look at it is that, whilst I'm in quarters, we can be with him, and his ship can be out, but he can come in for one day and we'll be here.' (Mrs Stanton)

Mrs White, who was now in private housing, also clearly recognised the choices that confront naval families.

'So, if you want to move all the time, then you don't buy your house. And, if you buy your house, you just can't afford to move.' (Mrs White).

### The Decision to Purchase

The bulk of naval families decided to buy houses adjacent to naval centres. Some had considered buying a distant and home-town property, but this was usually dismissed with wives claiming that they were the ones who had been against the idea. Mrs Stanton's comments sum the feeling of all on this.

"He wants me to buy a house at home (North Wales). But I said no, the children have got no father; its bad enough that he's away with his job anyway. I say its bad enough, but its not; that's his job and when I married him I knew that that was his job but I don't want to be in North Wales and him down here.'

Nevertheless, there was a minority who had chosen to live far away from any establishment and amongst the interviewees were two women currently resident in the Midlands. They had both chosen to live in their locale because their husbands spent so much time at sea.

'It doesn't matter where you live when he is at sea, so long as he can get home.' (Mrs Middleton).

Both thought that their area was in a central position between likely drafts and enjoyed good road and rail communication. Neither had any intention of moving again in the foreseeable future. Also, in both cases a parent or parent-in-law was within one hour's drive and



one of the women mentioned the financial benefits of separation allowance.

When those interviewed were asked about why they had decided to buy a property, undoubtedly the commonest answer was that, however cheap and convenient quarters were, they were still a financial drain and a waste of money, since they could never be considered an investment. Mrs Thompson, here, expressed the common sentiment.

'Its an investment and we thought it rather silly, even though naval accommodation is cheap. Our friends are paying £130 a month for a really nice house (in naval quarters), but its £130 and you're not getting anything back at the end of the day.' (Mrs Thompson).

It should also be remembered that the large numbers who have taken advantage of the home loan scheme were making a simultaneous decision, in deciding to take on the responsibilities of home-ownership and in making a career commitment to the Navy. Beyond this, a further decision was tacitly being made, and this was the decision to accept more extensive separations.

Apart from the issue of investment, the question of why they decided to purchase was often greeted with a certain blankness, a blankness that is a hallmark of the questioning of 'normal' behaviour. For many, there was a naturalness and inevitability that surrounded home purchase, especially when the couple had themselves been brought up in private housing. All comments voiced their desire for what they saw as the security, privacy and the comfort of their own home.

'We wanted a house of our own, with our own belongings and our own bits and pieces.' (Mrs Atkins).

'We didn't always want to stay in quarters. We wanted a home of our own. I think when you start having children, you feel you have to start having roots.'  
(Mrs Jones).

'I mean that I was brought up living in my own house and I've always wanted to live in my own house.' (Mrs White).

And for those who had been brought up in council housing, the chance to buy their own home was seen as a step up in the world and one not to be turned down lightly.

### Home-ownership

Home-ownership involved the naval family and, more particularly, the naval wife in a different life style. It may have brought her desired comforts and privacy, but home-ownership was not an unmixed blessing. It also brought a greater weight of responsibility to the naval wife and the creativity of home-making could easily become the burden of home-maintenance.

As Goldthorpe et al (1960) noted so long ago, the privacy of one's own hearth is a major ingredient in a privatised existence within a suburban landscape. Forrest adds another dimension by describing house purchase as part of the 'process of debt-encumbered privatised consumption' (1983, p210), that characterises contemporary society. McDowell (1983) links the growth of home-ownership and increased female involvement in conspicuous consumption to entrenched patriarchal assumptions that infuse planning policy, neighbourhood structure and the conceptualisation and marketing of the suburban idyll. For McDowell, home-ownership is a key battalion in the reinforcement of sexual divisions.

Within the interviews women linked their attitudes towards house purchase to a concept of maturity; it was part of growing up and spending their money more wisely.

'We lived there (married quarters) for about four and half years, but for about two years we did not bother to buy any furniture or anything, because they provide it all and it makes you lazy. We just went to discos and pubs and spent our money that way. That's a disadvantage. It makes you lazy and you get in a rut.' (Mrs Brown).

Not all families who moved to private housing were fully prepared for the ensuing extra financial costs. Rent is not a simple equivalent of mortgage; there are rates, insurances and running repairs to be faced. Some women saw this financial burden as considerable.

'Every time the postman comes you think, please don't let it be another bill, because it is a lot more financially ... takes up an awful lot more money than living on a naval estate. Our mortgage alone is almost twice what the naval wives would pay for their own house and that's just your mortgage. I mean what they would run their house on, bills, rent and everything would be just about my mortgage. So, yes, its a lot more stressful and sometimes, if I'd have known what the situation would have been like, I'm not sure I would have agreed to moving.' (Mrs Walker).

But for this woman, once having 'moved up', whatever the difficulties, she could not return to married quarters.

'Now that I am here, I wouldn't go back, I couldn't go back. I suppose a lot of it is what people would think - they couldn't afford to run their own house, it was too much. I suppose a lot of it in that sense is my sense of pride won't allow me to go back.' (Mrs Walker).

Along with the spread of home-ownership to increasing numbers of skilled manual workers has grown the fashion for DIY improvements and self-provisioning. Pahl (1984) has described how this is more than

home-centred hobbies for today's married man, but a strategy of personal capital accumulation in the housing career of 'doing up' and 'trading up' properties. Even without this intent, time, effort and informal skills play a vital part in keeping down the costs of routine maintenance. Within the civilian family a substantial part of house maintenance might be done or organised by the husband. But their regular absence within the naval home meant that these extra responsibilities devolved more completely onto wives. Consequently, private ownership had put these women into a different relationship to their homes and had often transformed their relationship with their husband.

House-ownership meant more chores and more house maintenance for naval wives. One woman described a tense stage in their marriage when they had bought an old property in need of renovation. She spent months in chaos and each leave was absorbed in frantic repair-work. She now looked back on the era as disastrous. Many of the women described their skills in painting and decorating, but this could pall after a time.

'You don't realise when you buy a house how much work there is involved. See, it's still not decorated or anything, because he's been away so much. I used to do all the decorating, but I don't now, can't be bothered.' (Mrs Lawrence).

Apart from extra cost and the potential for extra work, home-ownership brought a greater range of decision-making to many wives and was often described as necessitating her greater control over finances and household management. She gained more power, a greater measure of control, but this was sometimes experienced as



burdensome, an extra pressure. Mrs Walker, who had two pre-school children, and a largely absentee husband, had found the strains of house ownership considerable.

'Your money is taken out for your rent before your money is given to your husband and then quite a lot of wives are given allotments and the husband pays the actual bills. But here, because Paul is away so much of the time, and, because you never know what bill is going to turn up, you know your roof might fall in or something stupid like that, you have to be prepared for those sorts of things. And we felt, to do that, I needed to be the one that took all the money responsibility. There are times when I can't stand it here and I hate it. I hate the pressure that it puts on you being a naval wife as well, having to be the one that knows where the money is, how much money there is and trying to juggle the books and everything while they are away, sometimes it puts an awful lot more strain on you than you really need.' (Mrs Walker)

Mrs Walker expressed the most difficulty in this area. However, while most women acknowledged the problem, they considered it outweighed by the long-term financial gains and sense of security that they felt they derived from home-ownership.

Also frequently noted was the change in community life style that accompanied their move into civilian housing. Some liked their remoteness from the Navy and the advantage of your neighbour always being there rather than away at sea or returned to parents. But others were less enthusiastic about the heterogeneity of this community, often without a huge pool of mothers and young children for company, where neighbours were more diverse and where being a lone wife was something of an oddity.

'Married quarters are more friendly but, then again, it is not your home and you have to buy a house eventually ... Everything is geared to you, Clubs for

you. But here it is nice if I speak to my neighbours once every three months. Its not that we don't get on. Its just that they are very very private, with their own life and, to be perfectly honest, if you live in your own house, the less you see of your neighbours.' (Mrs King).

'Do you miss anything about naval quarters?'  
'Yes, I miss my friends. I never see anyone out here, because I'm on the older end of the estate here, so I'm surrounded by, or seem to be surrounded by, a lot of old people.' (Mrs Mitchell).

Once money had been spent on house improvements, friends established in the area and children content in local schools, families were loath to move, especially if this move was to a new area. House-ownership brought settlement and, in its wake, separation. A higher proportion of naval personnel than other servicemen were living in privately owned accommodation; loan schemes were available to them and not to other services. Housing situations as well as their assessment of the inevitable separations of sea deployment mean that naval wives are less likely to accompany their husbands than the wives of other service personnel (MOD, 1984b).

During the interviews, the bulk of wives described themselves as settled and established. They viewed moving as too much of an upheaval, too much of an expense, and too damaging for the children's education. However, such fixity may not be then a permanent feature of the naval marriage; two of the maturer women with children away at boarding school or on the point of leaving home, thought that their settled existence might be coming to an end, since they were once more contemplating moving and accompanying their husband.

House careers link into other pathways in an individual's life course. For naval wives mobility and type of housing were related to their patterns of employment and the timing of their decisions to have children.

#### Housing Career and Employment

As has been previously stated, marriage to a sailor frequently entailed a move to a new area. This further entailed job loss for naval wives.

'Did you consider staying in Portsmouth?'

'Yes, momentarily. But that just wasn't on because I had married my husband to be with him. There was no good reason, apart from the job, to stay there and that wasn't a sufficiently good reason for me.' (Mrs Shelley)

And this was despite the fact that her previous job was described as a well-paid one in personnel management. However, the consequences of such moves were more than temporary unemployment; they could herald a complete exit from the job market. It was not just a matter of interrupted careers and changes in employment, but often an inability to find suitable or any paid work. This consequence for naval wives cannot be laid solely at the door of economic recession; women married for over ten years recalled this problem as frequently as the more newly-married women did. It was also commented on by the Seeborn Committee concerned with naval welfare, which reported in 1974.

The survey had identified the connection between marriage, husbands' postings and ceasing employment (Chapter 5), but the interviews described the circumstances of their close connection. Women whose jobs were organised in career structures noted the



disrupting effect of any move other than one which was career-related. Ratings' wives with addresses on the large naval estates suffered an additional handicap; time and time again they described in their inability to find paid employment the prejudices of local employers and their discrimination against, and at times hostility towards, those wives living on 'the married patch' who were in paid employment.

'I couldn't get a job, because I moved to Portsmouth. I was in the civil service for nine years so I wanted a transfer, if possible, to Portsmouth, and they offered me a job two grades over what I was doing for £10 a week less. So I told them I wasn't going to accept the responsibility for less money. I tried to get a job, but I couldn't because there was a drive on getting youngsters, school leavers into work and as soon as you mentioned where you lived, they looked at you and said "navy wife", "yes", "not interested", because you were liable to be on the move.' (Mrs Bennett).

'I stopped working as a WREN and I haven't worked since; there are no jobs in Scotland ... I went up there probably to try and get a job ... I was told it was a small place and they have no jobs. All the wives wanted jobs.' (Mrs King).

'I tried to get a part-time job and that was for ages, especially being in the Navy, being a naval wife and a mother as well. It was very hard to get a job, because they always thought that with naval personnel, moving around a lot.' (Mrs Johnson).

'Of course, when you are married with children, and a naval wife, getting a job is practically impossible, because you say your address, they don't want to know, because they don't want to employ someone who might up and leave in two weeks time or three months time. They want people who are going to stay. I got a job within a couple of weeks actually of being here (a private house in Plymouth).' (Mrs Goodman)

'We lived on Rowner, and, if you said you lived on Rowner, you were looked down upon. At that time I wasn't nursing. I went back to work again and I was a tax officer in the Inland Revenue. They were fine and they'd say "where do you live" and once you said you were a naval wife on Rowner, it was like you had the plague.' (Mrs Tucker)



These factors combine to ensure that marriage and its contingencies in mobility and housing tenure marked a sharper break in the occupational careers of naval wives than those of women married to civilians. Such findings would appear to contradict a common interpretation of empirical findings about women and work. The Martin and Roberts' study of women's employment typifies the approach in arguing for the irrelevance of marriage as a variable in their occupational involvement. Contemporary women typically cease full-time employment on childbirth and re-enter the job market later on a part-time basis; marriage in itself appears to be without consequence. Their survey found 'no difference between the standardised proportions of married women and unmarried women working' (1984, p14). Once the 'different age distribution and the presence of children and the age of younger or youngest child' had been eliminated as factors, 'married women are just as likely to be working as non-married women' (ibid, p14).

In some ways the naval estate might be supportive of women, but neighbours were little help to the wife seeking paid employment and were not a substitute for the daily presence of a husband and the proximity of kin. Mrs Chambers was the one woman to return for a number of years to live with her mother but was also one of the few women in the survey to combine marriage to a sailor, motherhood and employment.

'I went back to work then and took three years of evening classes on shorthand and typing, which has given me a good secretarial job now. I don't think I would have been able to do it if I had been here. Mother babysat whilst I did it. I wouldn't have been able to ask people to babysit if I'd stayed in Plymouth. I feel you can ask family some things that you can't ask strangers.' (Mrs Chambers).

The wives of ratings frequently said that the employment opportunities were easier once they had moved into private housing and were settled in an area. The figures quoted in the Armed Forces Accommodation Report (1984a) supported these inferences. The report found that the wives of house-owners were much more likely to be in paid work than the wives of non-house-owners; the figures were 50% and 30% respectively, and was a trend consistent across all ranks. This relationship could be interpreted in a number of ways and the interpretations probably worked in combination. Women may have found it easier to engage in outside work from a settled home and female wages facilitated home-purchase. Also, for one woman, moving to private housing enabled her to be self-employed and to work from home.

#### Housing Career and Children

Unemployment was so often the lot of the wife on the naval housing estate and another disconcerting ingredient in the lives of naval wives to be added to the new home, strange place and husband at sea. The most commonly reported response to this loneliness and joblessness was to have a baby. After her move to Scotland, Mrs King described how

'The following year I had a baby. The main reason why I had a baby was because I had nothing else to do... It was probably sixteen months after we were married that I had a baby.' (Mrs King).

After describing her employment problems Mrs Bennett commented

'I suppose I was bored and he said why don't we have a baby and that was it, we did.' (Mrs Bennett).

Again this raises problems with the generality of the findings of the Martin and Roberts' Study and with their conclusion that

'the presence of children and the age of the youngest child are by far the most important determinants (my emphasis) of whether or not women work.' (ibid, p15)

Such statements contain misleading implications for the complexity of motivation behind female fertility. It also raises issues on the sequencing of events and the motivational background to change.

Unemployment may propel women into early motherhood. In her follow-up studies of women made redundant Coyle noted the 'striking ... number of younger women who had babies after redundancy.' (1983, p82). For a number of the women interviewed children filled an occupational hollow, absorbed time, eased loneliness and were an entré into a day-time social life which was female and child-centred. The social life of naval housing revolved around the day-time activities of women and children and the passport into this society was a baby. The childless, whether they were employed or unemployed were unable to enter these circles of sociability. The pressures towards child-bearing were manifold. They might hang round a positive attraction,

'On the estate I used to see lots of women pushing prams about, and I used to think, that looks nice.'  
(Mrs Young)

They might heighten feelings of exclusion as Mrs Hodge experienced during a wives' get together,

'They were all talking about their families and their kids, what they got up to, and so-and-so sent them flowers and again I start to feel sorry for myself. So, really, rather than being a help to me, they make me feel worse. I go home and think, I haven't got kids to go home to.'

On the estate child-bearing could also be well-orchestrated,

'There was seven of us at the same time; the boat came home, and we all fell and I was the last one to fall.'



All the others had had boys so we were convinced that we were going to have a boy and I had the only girl.' (Mrs Bennett).

But whether they were planned or not, children meant that you were 'in'. It meant that you were available in the day, that you could participate in the many mother and children activities, to which many of the activities in the naval community centres were geared and they enlarged the area of common ground.

'As soon as I had the baby and left work, my whole life was just completely different altogether. From only knowing two or three people on the estate, in fact, people who I had known through work were married to servicemen and the few odd people that I knew. We lived in a block of flats. I didn't know anybody from the estate at all and within a few days practically, one of the girls in the flats had a little child, and within a few days I knew hundreds of people.' (Mrs Walker).

'It was easier once I'd got the children because before I had Mark, in the block of flats where I lived, there was sixteen flats, but they were only two storeys, but none of the girls ever spoke to each other. If you hadn't got a child, you weren't included within those groups ... once I'd had Mark, everybody seemed to mix in with you.' (Mrs Campbell).

The relationship between unemployment and child-bearing has a further consequence and this is in the interpretation of unemployment figures for married women. Enumerating the unemployed in this group has always contained anomalies and inaccuracies. Coyle (1983) found large numbers of women in her survey who, although eligible for benefit and available for work were neither registered nor claiming. Popay (1985) has also argued that the circumstances of married women's employment reduces their entitlements and has noted that fewer married women identify themselves as unemployed, even though they may be actively job-hunting. Morris has noted how young unemployed women may withdraw 'into the domestic role, and notably motherhood, as providing



the most secure base for identity' (1986, p16). Motherhood may have its social advantages over unemployment and may initially seem for naval wives to resolve the paradox of being a married woman whilst often living as a de facto single person. And, of course, these women would then disappear from any count of the unemployed.

Many studies have charted how the two tracks of public and private housing divide the population within the early years of marriage and how this division is interwoven with different patterns of family-building (Ineichen, 1979; Madge and Brown; and Holme, 1985). As Ineichen has argued,

'Whereas children are likely doubly to disadvantage owner-occupiers, by removing the wife's earning power as well as providing an extra mouth to feed, the acquisition of dependent children may be the quickest and surest way of obtaining a council flat.' (1979, p219).

Through this logic a wider familial strategy is linked to housing career.

However, the relationship of naval families to their housing situation is not the same. For civilians the comment that 'Access to ownership is by economic capital; access to council tenancy is by human capital' of Payne and Payne (1979) may be true, but for naval personnel, neither is true. Married quarters were secured through occupational enlistment although numbers of children and, for officers rank, did play a part. Also the loan scheme, open to naval personnel over 25, diluted the effects of sheer market forces.

Nevertheless, these same strands of family-building, wives' employment and type of housing were linked together within the naval family. The outcome or typical life course was a particular mix of these factors, and the particular mix marked the uniqueness of the housing careers of naval families. They indicated the ways in which housing was both the context and the outcome of styles of family living, influencing the relationships formed by, and the responsibilities that devolved on, wives.

### Conclusion

The forms of service separation are linked sequentially in the lives of women married to naval personnel, are associated with particular patterns of housing and linked to other strands in their life courses.

The early years of marriage were associated with mobility, married quarters accommodation and separations that tended to be for longer periods of time as they were more likely to relate solely to sea deployment. The bulk of naval families moved, with the passage of family time, inexorably into private housing. This move brought a new range of domestic responsibilities for naval wives, the putting down of roots within an area and an increased chance of involvement in a weekend marriage. The nature and sequencing of housing, service separation and marital careers were interlocked with the women's capacity to secure employment and were a probable influence on their family-building decisions.

Having examined the impact of service separation on domestic

relationships, housing patterns and its sequencing into typical career paths, the scope of analysis moves to a wider frame. The broader frame encompasses the relationship of naval wives to their neighbourhoods, their wider support structures and their relationships with other women.

## CHAPTER NINE

### NAVAL WIVES: SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND LEISURE PATTERNS

Contemporary marriages are built around the popular desire of marital companionship and the widespread belief in the privacy of the marital relationship. In the gendered application of these rules, married women become defined in domesticity and homeliness and are assessed within a normative frame fixed on their qualities of nurturance and their skills in housecraft. The thesis has taken the sociocultural framing of marriage and examined it in a particular context, amongst women married to naval servicemen, in marriages punctuated by husband absence and in the circumstances of lone wifeness. So far this exploration has dwelt on the domestic and household consequences of marriage to a sailor. The point of analysis now moves to the impact of domestic structures on the wider relationships of naval wives and especially their relationships with other women.

Gluckmann in his introduction to the second edition of Bott's work, Family and Social Network (1971, pxix), describes society as 'an interweave of loyalties and allegiances'. Relations between husbands and wives are part of the fabric of this interweave. However as Bott sought to trace the consequences of networks for marital relationships, the following analysis takes the reverse tack to note the consequences of marital relationships for the social networks of wives.



One consequence of privatisation is that wives have lessened contact with other people as they cultivate their gardens and guard their hearths, a social situation epitomised so well and so starkly by Gavron (1960) in her treatise on 'the captive wife'. Another facet of this framing of wifeness lies in the type and nature of the relationships that women do have. The division between the public and the private affects the extent and the way in which wives relate to other people. The construction of marriage and parenthood bind married women firmly into the world of 'kinder and kuche', if no longer 'kirche'. But the following analysis will focus on the consequences of being a married woman for other activities and relationships, more specifically, befriending and neighbouring. Also it will examine the contacts of, and the social support experienced by, the married women in the study. It could be argued that wives, often without husbands, have either a greater opportunity to form, or a greater need of, these outside relationships. This constitutes a vital area to be explored.

#### Marriage and Support Structures for Wives

Holme's study (1985) of young couples in the area of East London notes a change since the post-war era recorded in Family and Kinship in East London (Young and Willmott, 1962). People were no longer 'vigorously at home in the street', but secluded within their increasingly comfortable homes. Whether they were in the suburbs of Woodford, or in the council flats of Bethnal Green, the young mothers Holme studied were more reliant on their husbands for support, since wider kin were less available and it was generally felt that paternity was now a more active and participatory role. Holme found that

'In Bethnal Green husbands were mentioned as helpers and advisers as often as mothers. In Woodford husbands took top place for over half the wives.' (1985, p140)

Also, their involvement was regarded as significant despite the continuance of a traditional division of labour, where women shoulder the bulk of household chores.

McKee and O'Brien's collection of readings (1982) is an attempt to restate the importance of as well as the nature of fatherhood in modern society; here Richman details the significance of pregnancy and childbirth to husbands and McKee the role of men in the 'spirit of support', the 'moral context' of child care whatever their level of practical help. Men expect, and are expected, to be involved in child-rearing if not household chores (Oakley, 1974; Edgell, 1980) and more may be expected of them at times of minor crisis, such as childbirth or during a wife's illness. If it is increasingly assumed that husbands will be the ones to step into the breach, what happens to these wives and families when husbands are not there? During the routine and regular absence of naval servicemen, to whom do their wives then turn?

Moreover, there is another issue which surfaces in the discussion of the support structures of naval wives and this concerns the sociability of their contacts. Decades ago Duvall, in a study of World War II servicemen and their wives, noted that,

'of all the problems they face with their families, -in-laws, children, financial affairs, recreation, work, fatigue, boredom, - the most frequently mentioned is that of loneliness.' (1945, p77).

Times do not seem to have changed, as it featured regularly in the comments of naval wives made during the interviews,

'He bought me a budgie, which is fantastic company ... When he was away, I'd come home from work and I'd lock the door and I'd sit down and I'd think that's a nice calendar with a pretty looking cat, or what shall I do tonight. I'd talk to myself or to the television just to hear the noise ... So having the budgies is great because I can shout at them; its something that moves and I actually talk to something as well.' (Mrs Hodge)

'At 6.00pm when everybody's husbands were at home and I was on my own and the kids were in bed, you're shut in and have got nothing apart from the TV.' (Mrs Francis)

and at the end of the questionnaires,

'But for my work, I would certainly have an extremely lonely existence.'

'Probably one thing that really does affect naval families more so than any other service is (as was the case with me, especially in the beginning) the terrible loneliness.'

'A naval life is a hard and a tough one. Most of the time I'm very lonely when my husband is away at sea. I have to rely on my children, although they are very young. The area I live in is a pretty quiet area and sometimes I will not see people I know for days. I get very depressed and lonely. People seem to want to keep themselves to themselves and don't want to mix. As my children are so young, I feel tied down and long for good friends, who I can visit regularly and they also can visit me. But this isn't to be, I always feel lonely and cut off from others.'

Duvall, like many of the women in the naval survey, went on to stress the importance of social participation, of being active and outgoing, in keeping loneliness at bay. Naval wives placed a premium on 'being busy' and 'keeping yourself occupied' as a strategem during bouts of husband absence. It even featured in the media reportage of the marriage of Miss Ferguson and Prince Andrew. Prince Andrew had

been advised by his ship-board colleagues on the problems of naval marriages and on the importance of wives keeping busy; consequently both were reported as keen that Miss Ferguson should continue her career.

These comments reflect on both the companionship marriage offers to women and its occupational undertones. Women miss their husbands as someone to talk to and share affection with and as someone with whom they can share household responsibility. They also miss their husband as someone who structures their time and fills their day with wifely tasks and activities. In his absence, 'being busy' is given new meaning and takes diverse forms, ranging from outside employment, involvement in social activities, to friendship groups, housework, house-maintenance and child-care. The homespun advice offered to Prince Andrew and the initial comments of the wives seem to make simple sense, but a closer examination revealed a different set of realities and a number of dilemmas for the naval wife. Alongside the problem of maintaining employment, discussed in the previous chapter, many naval wives also experienced difficulty in forming and sustaining friendships. These genuine difficulties then combined and served to narrow the options available and the women's means of busying and entertaining themselves.

As an initial inroad into these issues, the questionnaire survey attempted to tap a number of dimensions in the companionship and support experienced by naval wives. They were asked to indicate who they turned to for company and friendship, and help and support, when



husbands were away. It was recognised that such questioning was exploring their attitude and their emotional response to outside contact, as much as assessing who helps. All survey questions rely on the murky world of meaning and understanding and the answers here were assumed to describe an emotional as well as a social structure.

### Companionship and Help

When asked about whom they relied on for companionship during a husband's absence, children and friends led the field (see table 41). Although, overall, friends received the highest number of positive responses, when looking to the group who offered a lot of company, naval wives voted most emphatically for their children.

TABLE 41: SOURCES OF COMPANY & FRIENDSHIP DURING A HUSBAND'S ABSENCE

	Some help %	A lot of help %	Overall %
Mother	29.5	29.7	48.5
Father	24.4	19.0	35.9
Mother-in-law	19.9	6.9	22.8
Father-in-law	14.1	4.0	15.4
Children	19.4	60.6	62.9
Other relative in own family	25.3	10.7	30.4
Other relative in husband's family	12.4	2.6	12.9
Friends	49.6	49.7	81.3
Neighbours	45.0	23.2	57.2
Naval wives group	2.4	1.2	3.0
Estate warden	0.2	0.0	0.1
Officer	0.3	0.0	0.3
No-one	2.7	6.1	7.0
Other	5.6	5.7	9.3
No of respondents	589	505	668

This relationship became stronger when childless women are excluded; 77% of wives surveyed had children and 98% of these women identified their children as companions. The interviews went on to examine the more ambiguous consequences of caring for children in the context of husband absence. Children made extra work. They were a tie, restricting participation in and contact with wider society, but they were also a means of befriending other women, a source of new routines, where time was more fully absorbed and purposefully spent and they stemmed feelings of excessive loneliness and inconsequentiality. One respondent seemed to sum up these contradictions when she argued that children made the separations harder work, but easier to bear.

While children were mainstay companions, when asked who could be relied on for practical help and support during a husband's absence, children ranked alongside parents, falling behind the assistance afforded by friends and neighbours (see Table 42). Parents and parents-in-law featured more strongly in the question of help rather than company and, in the table on help as well as the table on companionship, there was the same graduation from mother through father and mother-in-law to father-in-law. Throughout blood relations were more important than those acquired through marriage. Not only were in-laws mentioned less frequently but, when they were, their emotional and practical support was seen to be moderate rather than considerable. Such tables can be taken as barometers of social distance within the modern family. Also emotional closeness to one's family appeared not to rely on physical proximity and daily contact, as many mentioned the telephone in supplying the vital link.

TABLE 42: SOURCES OF HELP AND SUPPORT DURING A HUSBAND'S ABSENCE

	Some Help %	A lot of help %	Overall %
Mother	21.8	32.5	39.2
Father	19.1	24.4	31.7
Mother-in-law	15.6	8.1	18.2
Father-in-law	11.0	4.6	12.1
Children	26.4	20.2	35.0
Relative in own family	18.3	8.4	20.6
Relative in his family	9.9	2.1	9.5
Friends	46.1	40.4	64.4
Neighbours	41.3	24.4	50.0
Naval wives group	0.7	0.7	1.1
Estate warden	2.9	0.7	2.9
Community Officer	0.4	0.0	0.3
No-one	9.5	13.7	16.8
Other	2.6	5.1	5.5
No of respondents	545	431	660

Respondents showed almost no reliance on formal agencies or organisations either for companionship or practical help. Also, over twice as many naval wives identified themselves as practically, rather than emotionally isolated; 16.8% relied on no-one for help and 7.0% relied on no-one for friendship when their husbands were away. To underline the position of this minority, more claimed they relied on no-one 'a lot' rather than 'a little'. Such answers may not make sense grammatically, but encapsulate a sense of independence or isolation. Two examples of these divergent reactions have been taken from questionnaire comments.

'My biggest worry is that something will happen to me whilst my husband is away and my children will have to fend for themselves. This is not as groundless as it may seem, because, when I look at it coldbloodedly, there is no-one (if my husband is at sea) who would notice for days, since my mother never phones me and my parents-in-law phone infrequently. If they received no reply, they would assume I was out.'

'When jobs need doing in the house which males usually see to (eg plumbing, decorating, etc) you have to learn to do them yourself or they will never get done. The household bills rest on your shoulders but you learn to cope. I've just accepted it as a way of life.'

The 'other' category in sources of company and friendship was dominated by 'myself' with dogs, cats and canaries as runners-up. For 'other' sources of help, 'myself' again featured large, assisted this time by paid repair men.

#### Some Sources of Variation

Analysis of the dimensions of contact showed officers' wives to be the most self-reliant; they were much more inclined to have identified no-one or 'myself' when asked for their sources of support (Table 43 and Table 44). In addition, officers' wives claimed more reliance on friends for practical support than the wives of ratings, and the gap in their assessment of their own and their husbands' families is less extreme.

Married women in the outer reaches of Western Area, away from any semblance of a naval community, and away from the South West, more frequently claimed family members, both their own and their husbands, as personal supporters. For them children featured less because, being on average younger, fewer had children and their relationship with friends was inclined more toward sheer companionship and less toward practical help.



TABLE 43: HELP AND SUPPORT DURING HUSBAND'S ABSENCE AND RANK

	Officers %	Senior Rates %	Junior Rates %	All
Mother	36.4	34.2	49.5	39.2
Father	27.9	29.4	38.4	31.7
Mother-in-law	22.1	15.5	19.7	18.1
Father-in-law	13.6	9.8	15.2	12.2
Children	35.7	45.6	18.7	35.2
Relative in own family	11.4	19.6	28.8	20.6
Relative in husband's family	9.3	8.9	11.1	9.6
Friends	72.1	64.6	55.6	64.6
Neighbours	52.1	50.6	48.5	50.2
No-one	21.4	15.5	14.6	16.6
Other	7.9	4.1	6.1	5.5
Nos	140	316	198	654

TABLE 44: COMPANY AND FRIENDSHIP DURING HUSBAND'S ABSENCE AND RANK

	Officers %	Senior Rates %	Junior Rates %	All
Mother	51.1	40.9	58.7	48.5
Father	33.3	32.2	44.3	36.0
Mother-in-law	28.4	19.4	24.4	22.7
Father-in-law	16.3	14.1	17.4	15.5
Children	66.7	73.4	44.8	63.1
Relative in own family	26.2	26.6	39.8	30.4
Relative in husband's family	14.9	10.6	15.4	13.0
Friends	85.8	81.6	79.1	81.5
Neighbours	65.2	57.8	51.2	57.4
Other	11.3	9.4	7.5	9.2
None	12.1	5.3	5.5	6.9
Nos	141	320	201	662

One could speculate that answers to questions about support may have reflected current lifestyle and the immediate situation rather more than any long-term pattern of support. When respondents' answers were assessed in terms of last month's pattern of separation, few items varied. However, both for emotional and practical help those with husbands constantly at home, or more or less permanently away, claimed the most support. Reliance on no-one was much more prevalent amongst those with husbands partially away. This suggests the ambiguous position of the part-time wife, unable to structure their lives either independently or around a resident man.

#### Assistance at the time of Childbirth and Illness

To further elucidate the pattern of domestic support, wives were asked who they looked to when anticipated and unanticipated events confound domestic routines. They were asked who helped during the time surrounding the birth of their last child and, if they had children, who coped with the household affairs when they were last ill in bed. Husbands dominated the scene at the time of childbirth and even more so when women were confined to bed with illness (see Table 45).

Also, there was some indication that the importance of husbands at these times had increased in recent years. Nicholson's study (1980) of the friendship and kinship patterns of a naval housing estate offers something of a historical comparison, since the fieldwork that forms the basis of this study was undertaken in 1971-1972. Nicholson's findings can be compared with those of the 1985 study.

TABLE 45: ASSISTANCE AT THE TIME OF ILLNESS AND CHILDBIRTH

	Illness %	Childbirth %
Husband	31.2	68.9
Mother	11.4	39.6
Father	2.5	9.2
Mother-in-law	3.7	12.9
Sister	1.2	5.1
Other relative	1.9	3.7
Friend	6.6	6.3
Neighbour	8.1	8.0
Welfare Agency	0.6	0.8
No-one (Not ill in bed)	15.3 (35.9)	6.1
No of respondents	516	512

TABLE 46: THE HELP AND ADVICE OF HUSBAND AND KIN AT TIMES OF ILLNESS  
AND CONFINEMENT

Situation	Proximity of Wife's kin	Persons asked for help/advice	
		Own kin %	Husband %
Confinement	local	64.7	35.3
	non-local	66.1	56.5
Illness	local	47.1	41.2
	non-local	40.3	44.8

(from Nicholson, 1980)

No of respondents = 84

Concerning confinement, not only were husbands mentioned more frequently in the 1985 survey, but support from wider kin was less evident. A similar gap had appeared when the issue of illness was considered. In 1971-72, wives resident on the married quarters estate investigated by Nicholson were receiving similar levels of support from their own kin as they were from their husbands when they were ill (see Table 46). When data from the 1985 study was examined stark differences appeared in the reported help from husbands and help from other kin; in 1985 husbands were identified nearly three times more often as giving assistance when wives were ill and bedfast as were their mothers. The findings on childbirth and illness could be taken as a measure of the greater involvement of men in the domestic consequences of these events; they could also be taken as an indication of the greater dependence of women on their husbands as their prime source of support.

However, perhaps these changing figures are not measuring a historical dimension at all, but the differing sample structures and housing situations of the two groups studied. To pursue this point, the replies of the women were broken down further by age. The age of thirty-five amongst present naval wives seemed to mark a watershed in the pattern of assistance that accompanied childbirth, with the oldest group getting the least support from almost all sources and the youngest group, the most (see Table 47). This may be a product of the memory playing tricks with recall, as the oldest group are the least likely to have experienced recent childbirth. However, the birth of a child is a significant and well-remembered event in women's lives and



such differences may mark a genuine change in support over time. Also, it should be remembered that the older women in the sample were more likely to be officers' wives, a not insignificant factor.

TABLE 47: ASSISTANCE DURING THE TIME OF CHILDBIRTH AND WOMEN'S AGES IN YEARS

	Under 25 yrs %	25-29 yrs %	30-34 yrs %	35-39 yrs %	40 + yrs %	ALL %
Husband	77.4	69.7	78.4	65.3	53.1	68.9
Mother	45.2	40.2	42.2	40.5	29.6	39.6
Father	8.1	16.7	5.2	6.6	7.4	9.2
Mother-in-law	19.4	15.9	10.3	9.1	12.3	12.9
Sister	9.7	3.8	5.2	4.1	4.9	5.1
Other relative	12.9	3.0	0.0	3.3	3.7	3.7
Friend	4.8	5.3	8.6	5.8	6.2	6.3
Neighbour	9.7	7.6	9.5	8.3	4.9	8.0
Welfare Agency	0.0	0.8	0.0	6.8	2.5	0.8
No-one	3.2	3.0	1.7	9.1	14.8	6.1
Nos	62	132	116	121	81	512

Relatives were much more important than friends when children were born, than when illness struck. The level of support from friends and neighbours was almost identical in both sets of circumstances, whereas conjugal support doubled and wider familial help trebled for childbirth, but not for illness. Possible reasons for this include the surprise element of illness, more rarely associated with childbirth when the assistance of others can be planned, the level of disruption engendered, and the ritual element in, and social significance of, the emergence of another family

member. In both instances, mothers were mentioned three times more often than mothers-in-law and the recourse to any welfare agency was sufficiently unpopular as to be almost non-existent.

Only a minority of naval wives, 6.1% or twenty-nine of all respondents with children, had been socially unaided when their last child was born. However, coping with illness appeared to be a much more solitary experience and one where local friends and neighbours did not step into any familial gap. Also, the 15.3% may be an under-estimate of the unsupported as a number of women altered 'have not been ill in bed' to 'cannot be ill in bed' and pointed to issues involved in the social construction of being ill.

Husbands who were ratings were much more likely to have helped their wives at the time of childbirth than officers, but this was balanced out for officers' wives by a greater involvement of their mothers, mothers-in-law and sisters. It is often implied that it is a working class trait that matters of childbirth are left to the women. Such ideas remain almost as a sociological curse laid down in the familial literature of the 1960s which still pursues us to this day. Lummis (1982) has been critical of the stereotyping of Victorian and Edwardian fathers as uninvolved in daily family and domestic life, but no-one had looked more critically at fathers and families of the immediate post-war era. Furthermore, conjugal help was even more marked for the more junior of junior ratings' wives and this may reflect a change in contemporary thinking, as well as a class dimension.

Much of the above discussion has centred on the greater involvement of husbands as the mainstay of wives in times of family pressure. And yet for naval wives, they seemed to be part of a conflicting set of trends. Gluckmann notes the relevance of Bott in describing contemporary levels of mobility and his comments have a particular relevance to naval couples;

'if we think of a family moving from the country to the town, away from their relatives and long-term neighbours, husband and wife are likely to be isolated from those who formerly helped them and provided friendship from day to day and they will be under pressure to depend on each other and to help each other more and more.' (1971, pXVII).

For Gluckmann it is not that families are more 'joint' or 'symmetrical' but that such couples are forced to be more reliant on one another in these circumstances.

For naval wives this scenario contains an extra and contradictory element. Any greater involvement of the husband in familial care was enacted against a background of service separation and it could be argued that the incidence of separation had increased with the greater emphasis on sea-time and the growth of 'weekending' as naval personnel moved more readily and quickly into private housing. These contradictory trends could widen the gap between expectation and performance, the difference between the two leaving wives in reality isolated and unsupported. Following the wider pattern, wives may be led to expect more from their husbands, or may have no-one else to turn to, at a time when naval authorities, despite some provision for paternity leave, make more demands on servicemen in the drive towards 'efficiency'.

A final point to be remembered in these types of discussions is that the types of care experienced by a woman during illness and childbirth may vary with the identity of the carer; as help from a husband supplants help from one's kin, and especially one's mother, the basis and the nature of the help may change. It is dangerous to assume that help from one's husband is somehow qualitatively the same as help from one's mother.

### Visiting Patterns

A final aspect in assessing the contacts of women married to serving sailors tackled in the questionnaire survey was whom they visited on a social basis and who visited them. One caveat to this analysis was that the questionnaire was administered during cold winter weeks at the end of January and beginning of February, which may have dampened some women's enthusiasm to go out and about. Some even pointed out the atypicality of their answers and emphasised the attractions of their own warm fires, as opposed to company, at such a time. Hence the 12.0% who had had an outing with no-one and the near 19.0% who had been visited by no-one may have over-estimated any general pattern.

Examination of the extent of social outings suggested comparable levels with/to friends, and with their husbands, with over one third of women in both categories (see table 48). It also suggested that women were marginally more likely to go out to visit parents and in-laws than entertain them at home and friends and neighbours appeared as more frequent callers than family members. Here again



civilian friends and neighbours were only slightly more frequent visitors than naval ones.

TABLE 48: VISITS DURING THE PREVIOUS WEEK

	Visit From %	Visit to or With %
Husband	-	37.5
Mother	15.2	19.2
Father	10.0	13.3
Mother-in-law	5.8	8.7
Father-in-law	3.1	4.6
Sister	8.5	11.1
Brother	6.8	4.6
Other relative	9.5	9.0
Naval friend	30.2	32.8
Civilian friend	36.0	37.9
More than one friend	23.2	23.5
Naval neighbour	18.0	16.0
Civilian neighbour	25.3	18.9
Other non-relative	4.6	3.3
No-one	18.9	12.0
No of respondents	672	667

Analysis of visiting patterns by rank revealed no sharp differences. Senior ratings' wives were marginally less likely to have been out with anyone and claimed fewer outings with almost all named categories. When home visits were examined, it was officers' wives who had the fewest callers. Superficially there appeared to be no clear decline in contact patterns with increased length of residence in an area. But if those resident for twelve years or more were excluded, as this figure included many younger women who had never moved away from their home towns, the pattern became one of falling contact with family and naval friends and fewer outings with

husbands. Furthermore, this trend was uncompensated for by increased contact with civilian friends. It is important to note that those who were resident in their area for seven to eleven years had the fewest contacts, with a fifth having had no outside visits and a quarter no visits at home. They were sharply contrasted with those settled longer in their area, suggesting that former migrants rarely developed the community contacts of the immobile.

These findings parallel those related to civilian women and leisure. Deem (1986) noted in her study of the leisure habits of women in Milton Keynes that the majority of women in their twenties and thirties spent most of their leisure time at home, kept there by housework and childcare. Also Dixey and Talbot (1982) identified the age-zone of being in one's thirties as the most stay-at-home time for women. This was the group whose social life was most likely to have atrophied. In addition, for naval wives, this time would also tend to coincide with the move into private housing.

The questionnaire survey detailed the extent of social contacts and support experienced by naval wives and suggested ways in which these were related to age, family structure and housing situation. This also raised a potential problem in that there seemed to be a greater reliance on husbands for support, despite the possibility of his routine and regular absence. The interviews confirmed the importance of wider social contacts for naval wives in friendship groups and neighbour relations, both in practical support and in the constant effort to stay busy. They demonstrated a widespread recognition of the importance of these social outlets.

'I found that when Edward first went away, although I had the children and the time was going quickly, I needed things outside to make it go even faster. We moved here last August and Edward then started going away and has been away a lot this year, so I had to make my own friends. Because I did not know anyone here at all, it was all up to me. I became involved in things like Mother and Toddlers and now I am a staff member of the Youth Club and I got involved in being in pantomimes, so I've tried to get myself involved in a lot of things.' (Mrs Thompson).

Mrs Thompson, along with many commentators in the area, has stressed the greater necessity for outside contacts amongst intermittently lone wives. Her comments exuded a self-assured confidence, a bright optimism, about the ease with which lone wives could fill their leisure hours when husbands were away and the importance of so doing. Also it has been suggested that wives without resident husbands have a greater opportunity to structure their own leisure time. Finch argues that the

'pattern (of periodic husband absence) may be one where it is easier to devise coping strategies, precisely because one's husband is sometimes completely out of the way. In these circumstances, wives are freer to devise strategies to meet the needs of their children and themselves, without having to take account of a husband's working timetable on a day-to-day basis.'  
(1983, p69).

Husbands do structure the daily lives of their wives, but even when menfolk are absent women may not be able to escape wider patriarchal controls, controls exercised with particular force within the context of leisure.

Current literature in this field has focused on the teenage years of girls as the most problematic time (McRobbie and Nava, 1984; Lees, 1986). It is implied that the patriarchal rules of association fiercely applied to unattached girls lose their relevance for married

women whose daily lives become tied to husbands and childcare responsibilities. But naval wives who want a social life, and especially one active in the evenings in areas frequented by men, may encounter the adult version of these same rules (Whitehead, 1976). Moreover, Deem noted that other women friends were essential in out-of-home leisure activities for married women; going with a friend compensated for 'shyness, lack of confidence, fear of travelling alone on public transport and absence of motivation.' (1986, p23). The extent to which women support one another in sustaining a social life and how this is interpreted within communities of naval wives is another important dimension. Relatedly, the interviews were to detail not only the importance of sociability and neighbourliness, but also the vulnerability of these relationships.

#### Friendship and Neighbourliness

Thus far social contacts have been treated in an unproblematic and matter-of-fact way. In keeping with the general phenomenological critique that simple questions on friendship patterns do not recognise the constructed nature of the social universe, it is widely recognised that defining friendship is particularly problematic (Paine, 1969). As Allan (1979) noted, friendship is a personal relationship in three important but distinct ways; it is a relationship between individuals, it is private and it involves a cultural construct of the person as he/she really is. Factors that claim idiosyncrasy are then triply built into an already socially structured relationship. Hence it is unsurprising that people exhibited some vagueness about who fell into the different categories of sociability and, during the interviews,



some women challenged the terms used, claiming for instance that they might have lots of acquaintances or associates, but few friends. Also different women may not have meant the same thing when they discussed friendship, neighbours and neighbourliness.

However, these issues are not just matters of conceptual debate and rigorous defining, vagueness and varying 'rules of relevance' also have a behavioural import. Abrams (Bulmer, 1986) discussed neighbouring relations as the basis for maintaining social intimacy and constructing social boundaries. He argued for a firm distinction between friends and neighbours since their linkage brings the unwarranted assumption that neighbours will be neighbourly. Developing the earlier work of Mann (1960), he noted that neighbourliness is but one type of relationship that can flourish between neighbours, hostility and indifference being equally prevalent. Abrams emphasised this distinction when he described neighbouring as friendliness without the further involvement of friendship;

'... there is a world of difference between any mode of friendliness and friendship; that the former, but not the latter is the conventional idiom of neighbouring and that unlike the latter it involves distances as well as closeness.' (1986, p28).

The good neighbour is then someone who helps and then withdraws. Abram's own Street Studies go on to detail the poor relationships that can result from excessive neighbourly zeal and its consequent sense of privacy invasion. Finally, he argues that neighbourly relations are founded on exchange and reciprocity, requiring neighbours to be sensitive to equivalence in their exchange.

### Friends and Neighbours on the Naval Estate

Naval estates are close communities. They are residential neighbourhoods, where the population is linked through common occupation and a community peculiarly homogeneous in age and household structure (see Chapter 3). Car access is limited for the wives of ratings on the larger estates (on St Budeaux 61% of the households did not own a car) and caring for young children places strict limits on the daily mobility of mothers. Such considerations place the women, as well as the men in the same metaphorical boat. Such an area could be seen as conducive to community fellowship and ripe for community action and projects. And so it was, as many of the women surveyed did form, or had formed, close friendships with their naval neighbours. There was also the provision of local services through naval centres where enthusiastic community leaders promoted activities amongst local residents and especially amongst naval wives and their children.

On naval estates the distinction between friends and neighbours was easily eroded. As Nicholson (1980) commented, most young wives made rapid and close ties with those on 'the patch' and it was vital that they did so, if they were to stave off loneliness while husbands were away, given that most of them were unable to travel far afield. A further breakdown of the distinction between friend and neighbour occurred because they were women; the home is a natural place for intimacy and it is also the prime leisure arena for married women with children. Therefore the rules of privacy invasion were more laxly applied and, where they survived, referred to the quality of the relationship rather than to physical distancing.

'You tend to live with each other, because, if your husbands are both away, everything every minute is "where are we going tomorrow? what are we doing tomorrow?"' (Mrs Walker).

'I used to find if he was away for a long time, I'd need to go out and have a long chat with somebody every now and again, just to get the talk out. You just need to talk.' (Mrs White).

'You get that those whose husbands are away are all welcome down for coffee, if you are lonely or whatever ... Another thing is that, if you're ill, you'll get that the majority of people, if they find that you are ill, they'll all be knocking on your door and asking, "can I do anything? can I go to the shops for you?"' (Mrs Gray).

Friendships amongst naval wives then took the form of shared meals, chats, coffees and help with child care; friendships were about day-to-day support and chatter. They rarely involved the husband and particularly flourished when he was away. But it would be a mistake to think of the participation of women in such grouping as inevitable. Some women had considered and rejected close neighbouring.

'I try to remain out of it because they are always moaning or complaining or borrowing or wanting you to look after their children and all this.' (Mrs Lawrence).

'I never really joined in because I have always worked. I prefer to work... On Rowner, they had women's afternoons and things or tupperware parties, and that really wasn't me, but it was there if you wanted it. We used to sometimes go swimming at the social club, but there wasn't anything at the club that I went to. A couple of times I went to give things a try, but it wasn't my sort of thing.' (Mrs Tucker).

Some women identified themselves as anti-social, but others described how they had learned to befriend, either for the sake of their children,

'You could sit at home with your own children and not go out the door, if that's how you want it. Nobody's going



to bother. You have to make the effort. If you don't make the effort of your own behalf, you do it for your children. You do an awful lot of things that you never would have done for your children.' (Mrs Jones).

Or for their own sanity and emotional survival,

'It was six months before I went actually went into anyone else's flat. It was just a quick hello in the corridor, you know. Yes, I was hopeless. I never went anywhere. But now I've decided that the way to survive in navy life is to get in as many things as you can on as many days of the week as you can. So, I go onto the naval estate most days and then between that and now I've gone back to work, I get that as well. Before, it was dreadful.' (Mrs Mitchell).

'A married patch can be very very lonely. You've got to really go out of your way to speak to people. Because, otherwise, you could stay in your quarter and no-one comes to you. You've got to make the first move.' (Mrs Francis).

Nevertheless, although naval wives did form themselves into a relatively close community, one fostered by proximity and circumstance, this situation was not an unblemished good. Abrams contrasts traditional neighbourliness with its modern form, where geographical mobility, diversity and alternative services have created choice and social distance in localities. Hence,

'Most neighbourhoods today do not constrain their inhabitants into strongly-bonded relationships with one another. Those that do are either exceptional or regrettable.' (1986, p94).

Ross (1983) echoes Abram's perspective in describing the historic neighbouring relations amongst working class London women as survival networks, not patterns of sociability, as women that remained aloof also had to exist without the safety net such links provided. The circumstances on naval estates were less dire, the choices open to women broader, but the logic of such networks remained the same;



participation contained both costs and benefits; exchange had to be reciprocated; networks were a force for local standards in appearance and behaviour; and 'Like all forms of intimacy, women's neighbouring relations generate tension and anger.' (Ross, 1983, p15).

There is also a class dimension to this debate. Allan, in his review of the literature of friendship, noted a clear uniformity in that 'working class respondents consistently claim fewer friends than their middle class counterparts.' (1979, p69). These differences are accounted for in the subtleties of class culture; the middle class's apparent skill in sociability rests on their enthusiasm as 'joiners', their capacity to let relationships 'flower out' beyond their initial contexts and activities and a greater class willingness to apply the term 'friend' to one's social contacts. A further contemporary twist has been added with urban renewal and the destruction of established working class areas where locality and kin formed the matrices of working class sociability. With the erosion of traditional neighbourhoods, 'Modern neighbourhoodism is in its purest form an attempt by newcomers to create a local social world...' (Willmott, 1986, p95) and it is the middle classes who have the cultural predisposition toward such contemporary neighbourliness.

The naval housing estate is clearly an example of a modern neighbourhood, since there are no cumulative attachments of long residence or family ties. Also life there demands great skill in befriending and managing personal relationships. In the interviews it was always the wives of ratings who mentioned the problematic side of

neighbour relations on the 'married patch' and had had the most difficulty in the management of these relations. This was despite the fact that many since marriage had come to value the regular company of other women, the exchange of small services and inconsequential chatter.

Reciprocity was an important element in good neighbouring, and this reciprocity was stretched to cover personal availability and accessibility as well as services.

'It was a case of you come to me Monday night teas, I'll come to you Wednesdays, so that we weren't all cooking one meal for each of us, like one person would cook for three and then the next time it would be one of the other three's turn. If anyone was dead bored at 2.00 in the afternoon we could just come over ... Yes, it can be a pain when you want a day on your own, but at the same time its worth putting up with that and when you are absolutely at rock bottom, that friend is invariably there for you.' (Mrs Walker).

'It's swings and roundabouts really... you feel that by helping out, if you ever need the help yourself, there is always someone who says "I'll do you a favour back, I'll help you".' (Mrs Francis).

Nevertheless, whatever the value of local groups, many ratings' wives claimed to have developed a wariness in their dealings with neighbours and frequently cited past incidents of 'being used'. Many related specific incidents which had led to reticence and these demonstrated the penalties of openness and the costs of involvement.

'In many cases I hold back a little bit more now than I used to. I used to be very open, open my house and say come round for coffee and I used to end up entertaining people with all their kids. But, when I wasn't being asked back, I used to think, look here, my house isn't a coffee shop... There's some that will always play on you and I find now that I take a little bit longer before I'll commit myself too readily.' (Mrs Jones).

Reciprocity rested on similar standards and attitudes. Concern over this issue was not mentioned by officers' wives, but was frequently commented on by the wives of ratings. A number described the social diversity of the ratings' estates, how women arrived with different backgrounds, bringing different expectations and standards. This had led to antagonisms and misunderstandings. Also there were status considerations in ensuring that the person you befriend was 'respectable'. One ratings' wife summed it up when she declared how important it was to 'comb carefully through your friends'. And some reserve was necessary to be able to do this.

'I've learned from experience that people come from all walks of life and everybody's got certain problems and if you get too involved with those problems, you could become stuck, you know. You get too involved and that friendship seems to fall apart... There was one girl who used to come in saying that her husband was beating her up and things like that, and that her husband had thrown her little boy out of the top window of the flats and really he had fallen out. You get that situation where you don't know what to think, whether you should help her out, or if you're interfering. So, you just don't know what to do for the best, so, I just shut myself away now.' (Mrs Johnson).

However, distant friendliness was a stance hard to sustain within the close networking of a naval estate and for many it was also unsatisfying. Nicholson (1980) noted that the naval wives in her research rapidly formed close ties with their neighbours, relationships which easily became overloaded and either dissolved in bitterness or were resolved by frequent moves. Such transience meant that the close situational links that were formed did not last. Close friends, some time or other would move on.

'I found that any friends I did have on the estate have moved on and got their own houses or been drafted away to other places, so now I'm totally friendless.' (Mrs Goodman).



And it is worth underlining that the friendships formed were situational. The two women who were native to Plymouth described themselves as being in the same social position as those who had arrived from up-country. They had lost contact with friends from their days before marriage and were dependent on the estate for company.

The other side of social support in the close-knit community was cliquishness, gossip and jealousy. Almost all ratings' wives who had lived on naval estates identified malicious gossip as a major deterrent to participation in any organised grouping. Jealousy over husband's pay or draft or scandal about the activities of other women were also disruptive forces.

'I tried to go back to work when my first boy was a bit older and, but, with baby-sitting problems I found that people weren't very reliable. For some reason they were jealous, because I decided to get up and do something instead of going round people's houses drinking coffee all day. They reported me to the Welfare for neglecting my child, which wasn't true and I just didn't like that and they were saying that my husband was sending me out to work to earn money.'  
(Mrs Johnson).

Another element in the pattern was the jealousy ever-present in a pattern of sociability that relied heavily on best-friending; exclusivity in friendship always contained avenues for triangular rivalries. As one woman resident on her naval estate for nearly ten years explained.

'Speaking for this estate, its a very close-knit estate, because it's close together. You usually find that after you've been here for a while, although you know practically most people on the estate by sight, if not by name, you've got one or two friends who you identify with. You'll go round their house for tea or coffee. You tend to stick to those one or two friends



which is fine. Usually it is one person that you'll stick to and be friendly with, the be-all-and-end-all of everything, a best friend. The rest are associates, but not best friends, which is fine until number three comes along and tries to join the group. All of a sudden one is talking about one and the other is talking about the other and before you know it, nobody is speaking to one another... It tends to split up and all of a sudden you've got uproar.'

(Mrs Smythe).

Women might befriend other women with husbands on the same ship and this was encouraged by the dissemination of ship lists amongst women on naval estates. It gave them something specific in common and eased the demands of friendship since it united them in the same domestic rhythm. However, again this was seen to have its disadvantages as it tightened the network and increased the scope for back-biting. Mrs Francis identified naval quarters as supportive,

'...providing your husbands are not on the same ship' because you get so many different tales. If one husband hears a rumour on board about where the ship's been or what's been going on on board, he writes and tells his wife; the wife adds her little bit to it and delights in going around and seeing the other wife because she may not like her a great deal and adds a bit more. It could become a vicious circle... And say if your husband is on the same ship and he's written home and said to me (say your husband's called Fred) "guess who Fred went off with last night?" If I really wanted to be vindictive I could go up to her and say, "I hear your husband was off last night".'

(Mrs Francis)

A teenage social life is predicated on having fun, on going to pubs, discos and dances. But once women are in regular relationships or married, and especially if they have children, it is assumed that both they, and what could be construed as their leisure, will have become more home-centred. Almost all the women interviewed were thus restricted in their activities. As Mrs Shelley commented,

'Night-times are taken up with putting the children to bed and collapsing.'

But it is more than the practical consideration of other commitments, it is assumed that when women attend an evening venue that is not in the mould of the evening class or the slimming club, that they will be accompanied by their boyfriends or husbands. To attend without such chaperoning calls into question their virtue. But what happens when your husband is not regularly there. One solution is to do as Mrs MacDonald did in preparing for her 'proper' marriage; she withdrew from social activities while her fiancé/husband was at sea.

'I was getting restless and he'd say, "well, we're not married yet, you can still go out", because I used to go out four nights a week ice-skating and then we were engaged and I stopped that completely. I used to stay in every night, because I believe that's the proper thing to do, if you're going to do the right job, you do it right from the start.' (Mrs MacDonald).

Another had felt odd in being married but without a husband in a social milieu distant from the Navy,

'I used to go down the pub on Thursday and play darts and there never used to be many there, but they were all holding hands... You sort of walk down the street and there's a couple with a baby and there's a couple here, my Mum and Dad's a couple, my sisters with their husbands.' (Mrs Hodge).

And this ambiguity did not go away,

'One of the biggest problems of being a naval wife is that you're like a part-time one-parent family. If I was a one-parent family, I could go to the pub and have fun and nobody would bat an eyelid, because I'm single and can do whatever I like. But as a naval wife, you just can't because you have got a husband.' (Mrs Goodman).

Socialising was then confined for many women to the safe daylight hours and involved only other women. Going out at night was described by many ratings' wives as always redolent with the

potentiality for sexual encounter and temptation, and many had dismissed this as too risky. Only one woman interviewed regularly went out in the evening while her husband was away. Most did not venture out in such circumstances because there was the risk of sexual entanglement,

'I did something, I didn't do anything, but I got close to do something that, thinking about it, I would have probably very much regretted. I think again that this was through loneliness... Then it dawned on me how easy it was just to go out one night, have a few drinks, find a good-looking man. They are all smart down here with the latest fashions, pick up a nice bloke, come home, get all your affection and then say goodbye.' (Mrs Hodge).

But there was also another risk and this was not in what might happen, but in what others would say,

'I for one, personally, would never dream of going into town or anything like that without my husband. I would never want to become a target for scandal or insinuations and I think you leave yourself open if you do this... It doesn't work. Someone will stitch you up. Someone will get to your husband and say, "I saw your wife down the clubs". It comes back. They make themselves a target.' (Mrs Smythe).

And the real rub is that these risks rebounded to shape the relationships between the women themselves.

'There's a few girls up here who go out when their husbands are away and get involved with other men, all that. Once you find out about it, they think that you have been talking about them behind their backs. Its a very sticky situation to be in... Its very, very awkward and then you get the case of the girls you get to know. They say, could you baby-sit for me tonight and then they end up bringing a man home and its not their husband and you get that situation. Then you get scared that if their husband finds out and wants to know who has been having the children.' (Mrs Johnson).



Day-time socialising could also lead onto invitations to 'go out with the girls' at night and this was seen as a safe enterprise only so long as husbands were at home.

'My mates would go to the night clubs and we can't see any good reason for not dancing with the men, but it's always I'm a married woman, finish the evening I'm going home to my husband you go back to your wife or your barracks, wherever you're going. Having a husband at home is a form of safety. There's no way someone is going to say, "yes, we're coming in for coffee". You've always got a good excuse, whereas when they're away, you could always say that they are home, but there is always that temptation. No matter how steely-eyed you go out, just think you'll go out for a drink and a dance and come home, but you might have one too many and who knows what you might do.'  
(Mrs Goodman).

Lone women have long been regarded as something of a moral threat and for centuries treated with suspicion. Tunstall (1962) described how fishermen discouraged and disapproved of wives socialising when they were away sailing, beyond their wives' visits to mother; Bernard (1966) discussed the moral suspicion that surrounded the wives of Greek sponge divers, as those women were left unguarded by men; and Snyder (1978) offered a graphic account of the stereotypically sexually aggressive and morally lax grass widows of the West Pacific fleet who inhabit the naval bases on Hawaii.

The suspicion that surrounded lone wives permeated all their relationships. In discussing the social lives of women married to naval servicemen the issue went beyond husbands' attempting to control their wives' fidelity by choosing their friends and delimiting where they could go. It went beyond interaction in public settings which 'exaggerate the ever-present element of sexuality in male/female



relationships' (Whitehead, 1976, p183), where men regard the women who go to these places as fair game. Patriarchal assumptions were active in influencing the relationships between women themselves and were a divisive element within the community, reducing fellow-feeling and heightening suspicion.

Whitehead raised the issue of whether

'Female personal networks are indeed a potential basis for feminine solidarity, and structures within which alternative ideologies may develop.' (ibid: 196)

In her Hertfordshire study she found little support for this proposition; the 'secret world of mothers and sisters' rarely took the part of a wife against a husband and so rarely do friends. Whitehead found that young women were prevented from forming wider social groups and were the butts of teasing and sexual innuendo if they went to places frequented by men. Confirming Whitehead's study, this project found limited evidence of wives 'fighting back' against their situation and certainly not through group action. It was ironic that in the application of patriarchal rules about the proper place of women that, in the absence of a husband, it is the women themselves, using the ancient weapon of calumny who guarded each others' morality on behalf of men. And women who did not tow the patriarchal line were singled out for special criticism and social rebuke.

There was also the wider suspicion of such women which surfaces in the literature. In 1945 Duvall appealed for an end to 'the cheap sensationalising of the delinquencies of servicemen's wives', (1945, p81); in 1984 Solheim noted the coolness of local communities towards

lone oil wives; in 1986 Taylor et al commented on the poor reputations of oil wives in Aberdeen. Others have approached the same ground, although more obliquely; Morrice et al, as part of the same Scottish study described a typically distressed oil wife where

'one of her complaints was that she now avoided social contacts because of anxiety, though previously she had enjoyed company and was "popular with men". She talked of her obligations to her husband her son, but also of how they were preventing her enjoyment of normal social pleasures. All she could do was sit cooped up within four walls, with her "nerves upset" and wait for his return.' (1978, p12)

However, what Morrice et al failed to conclude was that this was the normal and required behaviour of faithful wives without husbands. Other reactions which might have relieved her unhappiness were also likely to have attracted social disapproval.

Furthermore, this preoccupation influenced the daytime relations of naval wives, since a number of those interviewed described their reservation that it was not always possible to restrict socialising to this safe time period.

#### Returning Husbands and Friendship Patterns

Even if strong links had been established with friends whilst husbands were away, and some women described how they practically lived with their friends at these times, on his return, these intense relations might be instantly dropped. Most women acknowledged the tacit rule of naval estates that women with returning husbands should be left alone for a time.

'You had an unwritten law in the married quarters that you were friendly and you went round each others' houses, but when the husband came home you didn't.'  
(Mrs King).

'You find that wives whose husbands are away you get to see a lot, but, once husbands are home, you don't see them because they want to spend so much time with their husbands, so friends come and go.'  
(Mrs Goodman).

'If someone's husband had been away and came back, you wouldn't see her very much. If Bernard was home we might have got together as couples, but I think you respect their privacy more when their husbands are home.'  
(Mrs Whittaker).

'As soon as her husband's home, she'll exclude the friends that she has had while he has been at sea. They tend to pick up friendships and drop them the minute their husbands are home. You know, oh, "you can't come round for tea today because he's home tonight". They tend to drop and pick up very easily.'  
(Mrs Smythe).

Most women accepted this and some went on to describe the domestic presence of their friends at such a time as invasive,

'My husband would come home and there would be people sitting around and he would want his tea, read his paper or watch the news and he wouldn't be able to do it. This would drive him round the bend.'  
(Mrs Lawrence).

However, a few recognised that returning husbands disrupted friendships, and could cause resentment, and were determined to maintain their social circle even if they could not devote the same amount of time to it.

'If like your husband is home and their husband is away, for the first couple of days, maybe the first week, then you don't see much of them at all... But the only way that you can be a friend is to be there when they (husbands) are not there and also not forgotten when they are there. So, we've always, all of us, made a point of getting back in with the girls. Just because your husband is there, doesn't mean to

say that you can't have a cup of coffee with your mates. Even if its not going to be the whole day, at least its a cup of coffee, "how are you? can't stop" sort of attitude.' (Mrs Walker).

Nevertheless, there were problems about the scheduling of your day because, whatever your intent, his timetable had now to be incorporated into your routine. And this might mean that your domestic rhythm was out of kilter with that of your friends.

'Your husbands are home at different times and, if you've got a friend and their husband's away and your husband's at home, so you haven't got that extra time that the other girl's got, or they are on different jobs and they come home at different times...' (Mrs Johnson).

When husbands did come home, and especially if they were weekending, it was primarily a time to stay at home and, although some women described their past irritation with this most now accepted the situation. There were the occasional ship-board functions and some couple-based or family-based leisure, but this was limited. They were limited by responsibilities of childcare and a lack of inclination.

'You tend to get lazy about it, I suppose, and plus the fact that when he travels home weekends, he's tired and doesn't feel like going out. He doesn't mind having people round, but not going out. He likes to be home the short time he is at home, which is fair enough.' (Mrs Perry)

'He is away all week, so when he comes home, you feel that you want to be on your own and nobody else must come into the house and we are not going to see anybody and nobody's going to come round. But I think we have graduated from that. We allow ourselves a bit of freedom. We are not quite so insular as we once were.' (Mrs White).

When you remember that many women only had a social life when accompanied by their husband, this meant that many women did not have a social life at all.



'You can only have a social life when the boat comes in. What irritates me is that there is only a social life when they are home and never when they're away. Where we lived before for a while, the neighbours had quite a nice thing going. We had a few parties and we went to each others houses and when he went away, I was no longer invited. That hurt.' (Mrs King).

In organising leisure activities the weekend had special significance and many women identified Sunday as the most difficult day, when they missed their husbands most, when everywhere was shut and when you couldn't call on others, because husbands would be home and it would therefore be intrusive.

#### Private Housing and Friendship Patterns

For many of the women interviewed, a social life was harder to sustain within the social setting of private housing.

'They're old opposite, that way, they are all older people. They're middle aged next door with teenage children, so, sort of, nobody's in my generation. I miss the knock on the door and "are you busy? can I come in for a coffee?" I do miss that. I never thought I'd say that until I... its never particularly appealed to me, people nipping in and out for coffees all the time. But I do miss that.' (Mrs Mitchell).

Many contrasted the hot-house intimacy of the naval estates with the privacy and relative isolation of owner-occupation and one woman wondered wistfully,

'whether a few acquaintances who stab you in the back are better than no-one.' (Mrs Goodman).

By and large, those in private housing with husbands away claimed fewer contacts than those in naval quarters and this situation was

found by women in other comparable circumstances. Solheim identified rural oil wives in Norway as the most isolated since

'there is usually a very strong control concerning what are legitimate activities for a single married woman. With the exception of very close kin, she will usually not visit friends and neighbours except to see other women when they are alone too.' (1984, p8).

Solheim thought that the urban environment offered more opportunities for the out-going. However, the study of naval wives does not support this second proposition. Consequently, most naval wives had developed a stance of stoic independence. In both the questionnaire replies and the interviews naval wives commented on their extra maturity, their self-reliance and their self-containment. Mrs Johnson perhaps put it best when she stressed the important of 'being your own person' and 'living inside yourself', since social contacts were transitory, interrupted and so easily tarnished.

#### Community Efforts and Naval Wives

Naval estates are also drawn into being communities in another way. Many estates contain a community centre whose staff and running costs are financed by the MOD. These centres provide a meeting place and provide services for, and sponsor activities amongst, local naval residents. Many of these activities are aimed at young women and their children. Regular weekly activities include, on St Budeaux, a mother and toddler group, a slimming club, an afternoon tombola, a wives group as well as a baby clinic, brownies, cubs, a youth club and majorettes. The community centres also organise creches and play groups. These activities are only open to naval residents and it could be argued that they contribute to the separation and isolation

of naval families from the wider civilian community, but they do offer a greater provision and opportunity for wives to mix and socialise than most civilian settings.

When Nicholson investigated a naval estate in the South of England, she noted that 22% of her sample were ignorant about the existence of a wives club. In those days husbands permission had to be obtained before 'welfare', the Navy's in-house welfare organisation, could visit, check that a wife was settled and give her local information. Some husbands and wives in the 1985 survey were still chary of contact with 'welfare', whose proper title is now Family Services. They were fearful that such contact might lead to the acquisition of a 'welfare pack' in the serviceman's record, which would then damage career prospects and chances of promotion. Such consequences were denied by those involved in Family Services, but the fears and reticence linger on. Hence most wives in the past had to make their own way through local services and contacts, if they made it at all.

In recent years and especially since the Seeborn Committee (1974) on naval welfare reported, more strenuous efforts have been made to promote local involvement and conquer the isolation of young wives and its attendant social problems. A main area had been in the establishment of a volunteer network of Helping Hands on estates. These are experienced naval wives who, after a limited training, contact newcomers on their estate, give them a local information pack,

organise introductory coffee mornings and help in minor crises. One Helping Hand described the service they offered as,

'really like being good neighbours, like, I suppose, it was in the old days, when they were sort of in and out, when big families lived together and helped one another.' (Mrs Rogers).

As an amateur and self-help organisation, it did not attract the same level of suspicion as contact with Family Services and small problems could be dealt with in this forum without their being cast into the despised mould of welfare problems. Also Family Services could be left to its main tasks of crisis management and attempting to balance family wants and naval requirements. Those who had had to call on Family Services were often full of praise for its handling of a matter, but the organisation attracted more criticism when it ventured into the realm of preventative welfare; this seemed best left to Community Officers and Helping Hands, operating on a day-to-day basis on and through the estates.

Nevertheless, there were some problems here as well. A concern mentioned in the recruiting and running of a volunteer service of Helping Hands was confidentiality; to be part of an estate, but stand aside from its network of gossip, demanded a particularly strong sense of discretion. Another problematic aspect was that all the activities seemed to be aimed at women as young mothers. Many women had reported feeling out of it when childless on the 'married patch', claiming little common ground with baby-centred social groupings and little seemed to be offered to this group. Also these services were largely restricted to those living on the estates. To move into a civilian



environment, especially if this was far from quarters accommodation, and if you were without access to a car, was to move into a social and informational vacuum. And finally, there was the oft-repeated comment on apathy, although one Helping Hand took a more realistic view.

'A lot of people aren't forthcoming. Now, I go up and introduce myself, but they wouldn't. We've organised groups and everything else to try to get them to come to coffee mornings, enrol in this, that and the other. It does not work. You'll get some who won't want to know... and you'll get others and all they need is a little encouragement.' (Mrs Rogers).

There are good reasons for women's reticence; all the problems in managing neighbouring relations attach to these organisations; there is the inevitability that clubs in a close-knit community are avenues for gossip and cliquishness; also they could attract the already-mentioned stigma of catering for women alone. These elements were as much part of the communities as caringness and social support and the reluctance of women to throw themselves into such a social set-up should not be dismissed in the glib assumptions of apathy, since this diagnosis fails to recognise the costs of participation and involvement.

There was also another historical dimension to community relations on naval housing estates which was demonstrated in recollections of the Falklands War. This was a time of intense neighbouring, when women whose husbands were away and in danger formed tightly-knit groups. The extremity of the situation overturned all normal rules of domestic privacy and bred personal openness.

'They had everything in common, that's what it was, everything in common. They all had their husbands at sea, being shot at, with the risk that they might not come back. They all felt that they were able to express it and not look a fool or whatever.' (Mrs Smythe).

At community centres there were meetings where the wives of a whole ship's company could meet to discuss the news, swap information, and bolster each other's morale. A feature of these meetings were the closer relations of officers' and ratings' wives, groups who in normal circumstances did not meet. Such was the tremendous feeling of shared plight and commonality that it was decided to establish a branch of the women's self-help organisation, Cope, on the naval estates and it was hoped that it would thrive in the new atmosphere of openness and sisterhood. What united, however, also divided and a few women said they had experienced some antagonism between women with husbands involved in the Falklands and those with husbands who were not. And, when the men started to return home, this new community spirit vanished like snow in summer.

'The community spirit we developed during the Falklands War went completely as soon as the men started to come home. While the Falklands was going on you had wife going to wife next door to make sure that she was alright. Everyone was watching out for each other to a certain extent and that went. As soon as hubby came home, it was forget the girl next door. I've got him home now, I'm happy.' (Mrs Smythe).

It also meant that community initiatives started at this time came to nothing as the cessation of hostilities brought a return to normality in life on the naval estates.

## Conclusion

Service separation affected women's relationships with their husbands, their homes and their family lives. This facet of their marriage also influenced their relationships with other people. As naval wives, the women were at times lone wives and this made them potentially more reliant on others for practical help and companionship. Many of the women surveyed were conscious of this but ambivalent about this consequence, since alternative patterns of contact and support were not without their problems.

The research findings confirmed the heavy reliance of women on their husbands at times of illness and childbirth. This reliance of naval wives on husbands was perhaps surprising considering that it would frequently be enacted against a background of service separation. It is also suggestive of a gap between the greater dependence of contemporary wives on their husbands and the actual assistance that may be forthcoming. Such findings may contain but conceal the greater isolation of married women today. It also pointed to the plight of many naval wives, young women living far from kin in an unfamiliar area and reliant on a husband who may be at sea for months at a time or working in a distant shore establishment.

This picture was partially balanced in the warm accounts of friendships with other naval wives that were given by a number of the women interviewed. There was a widespread recognition of the sociability and helpfulness of naval wives, especially in service accommodation. Friendships amongst naval wives resident in married

quarters were most likely to be uncritically described by officers' wives. These were women also more likely to be 'joiners' and to have fewer problems in regulating their friendships with neighbours.

Whatever their need for outside company and practical help, ratings' wives were more reticent about their friendship groups, their neighbours and about leisure activities that did not include their husband. This reticence was more marked in women living on the larger naval housing estates. These women were less inclined to participate in organised events and informal intimacy posed a number of problems: there were difficulties in achieving reciprocity; it was hard to benefit from the supportive network of the estate whilst distancing oneself from its melée of gossip and cliquishness; and it was not easy to sustain these relationships through the changed routine of a husband's return. As well as informal relationships, participation in an evening social life contained pit-falls for the naval wife, in which she might find herself embroiled in infidelity and an object of social disapprobation.

Although considerable efforts were made to enhance the community properties of estates these were limited by the above factors and suggest that untarnished community spirit may only thrive when the drama and urgency of war override personal reserve and neighbourly criticism.



## CONCLUSION

Part of the popular conceptualisation of marriage is the assumption of communality within the household. This communality takes a number of forms, from the exchange of services, the performance of household tasks and acceptance of domestic responsibilities, to the commitment of the partners to each other and the companionship of the couple. Central to this conceptualisation is the assumption that the married partners will share a common residence. Nevertheless, for occupational or custodial reasons this may not always be the case. Husbands may be regularly or occasionally away from home and their absence may stretch from weeks to months to years. Consequently a number of women, in a variety of circumstances may experience lone wifehood.

Marriage is a prime influence in the lives of all women and it is a key process in their gendering. The centrality of marriage to the processes of gendering is seen in the close relationship between the structure of domestic power, the allocation of chores and the assumption of responsibility within the home, and the wider construction of gender. Hence the relationship between husband and wife is archetypal to wider relationships between men and women. The centrality of marriage in the lives of women goes beyond the bounds of household and family, as it is intrinsic to their social identity and influential on all relationships that they enter into.

All marriages contain elements of incorporation, and incorporation implies some ambiguity in the relationship of women to

husband's employment. This ambiguity has particular force within the context of husband absence and lone wifeness. Here the lives of married women are structured by their husbands' occupation or status, while they are radically excluded from its daily dealings. This ambiguity is further linked with the anomaly of being a married woman without a husband, a social situation for which there are few behavioural guidelines.

As marriage impacts deeply into the lives of women so does husband absence. It is influential in the articulation of all areas of domestic living and beyond. Hence husband absence is not adequately conceptualised as the simple separation of husband and wife and its consequences are not limited to that relationship. Husband absence is not a uni-dimensional phenomenon; it is multi-dimensional and its manifold consequences reverberate throughout the experiences of lone wives.

To explore these manifold consequences a research project was undertaken in the area of husband absence, choosing the lives of women married to Royal Navy personnel as its subject. The results of this survey are relevant on a number of levels of analysis. The findings provide detailed case study information on the lives of women married to service personnel. They also contribute to a body of data and theory on the social situation of all lone wives. In addition, the conclusions drawn about lone wives provide an unusual perspective from which to view the marriages of women with permanently resident husbands. The analysis contributes to our understanding of "normal" marriages both through similarities and through contra-distinctions.

The findings provide data on the unity of marital forms, the application of the rules of marriage to unusual circumstances and the social repercussions of this for wives.

Husband absence transformed a number of features in the lives of married women. The contours of the naval marriage were formed by the contingencies of husbands' career. But within this structuring, service separation tipped the balance of domestic power in favour of wives. This extra power and wider control was twin-faced; women claimed they made more of the decisions and shouldered more of the responsibilities. It contained both opportunities and burdens. Also the powers and responsibilities that women took on either willingly or begrudgingly when their husbands departed, they also resented handing back when he returned.

Husband absence altered the context of family life. It changed the circumstances of all household members and demanded adaptation. Within this changed context, women took on a more complete responsibility for their children and these changes wrought in relation to their children had both practical and emotional sides to them. Only they could engage in active day-to-day parenting and many felt it essential to be more accessible to their children because their fathers were not there. Naval wives made a large emotional investment in their children, children being the prime companions of these lone wives and foci of affection when husbands were away. Naval wives could be specialist mothers and children the hub of new household routines developed between mothers and their children. Also the experiences of lone-parenting could be sources of considerable

friction when husbands returned. Here there was a huge potential for changed routines, different household rules and unaccustomed contact with father figures and all these could generate marital and domestic tension.

Husband absence altered the women's relationship to, and activities within, house and home. Service separation often meant that women had more to manage as they were largely responsible for bill-paying and property maintenance. It also influenced the minutiae of household routines that are the sub-structure of marital life. Husband absence meant less housework, fewer "proper" meals, and a more flexible domestic timetable. Thus, although women frequently reported that they had more to manage, many also had less to do. As household routines shifted during a husband's absence, they altered again when he returned. Hence the reunions, the reintegration of husbands, however warmly anticipated, were often as difficult for the women as were the departures.

Husband absence altered the women's experience and pattern of employment. Mobility, associated with the draft system of the Royal Navy was, or had been, a feature of almost all marriages examined in the survey. Such mobility had reduced job opportunities and made career-building impossible. Residence on a naval estate further prejudiced their chances of employment as employers were repeatedly described as discriminating against naval wives because of their assumed mobility. The issue of discrimination was largely resolved by a move into private housing, and reduced mobility, consequent on home-ownership, also made paid employment more of an option. As



frequent moves punctuated the lives of women so the decisions to leave the job market altogether and possibly to start a family often followed in their wake. Also influential were the felt responsibilities of lone-parenting, a factor which dissuaded many naval wives with dependent children from considering the resumption of paid employment. With fathers away it became a special duty to stay at home, to always be there.

Husband absence altered relationships with friends and neighbours. Naval wives regarded their husbands as their prime source of social support and the findings suggested that their level of dependence on husbands had increased in recent years. Initially this seemed to be a rather ambiguous finding contradicting the widespread experience of service separation. On further consideration, however, the ambiguity seemed not to lie in the finding but in the contemporary circumstances of lone wives. Their situation was reflective of both changes in the conceptualisation of the marital partnership and the break with kin that early mobility had effected in the lives of the women surveyed. It was symptomatic of the social void within which many naval wives lived and this was further evidenced in the contact patterns of the women and the frequency of reported loneliness.

This issue was further explored in an analysis of the wives' relations with friends and neighbours. It had been surmised that naval wives might not only have a greater need for outside support but also greater opportunities to develop it; husbands away meant fewer calls on their time and life on a naval estate, especially, would place women of similar ages and similar circumstances in close

proximity to one another. Naval estates were also places where the authorities made strenuous efforts to promote community spirit and camaraderie amongst wives.

Life in private housing and amongst the civilian community was largely antithetic to the fostering of non-familial means of social support for wives. Service accommodation did have the advantage as here neighbouring was much more intense, help in time of need more forthcoming and company more available. But even on the estates there were severe limits to these supportive processes and activities: women without children were largely excluded from the organised activities and the social circles; the population of these estates was highly mobile and hence many relationships likely to be transitory; the intensity of friendships and the penalties of "over-involvement" introduced elements of fragility into relationships; returning husbands and new domestic rhythms disrupted contact patterns; and the closeness of the networking also heightened the scope for gossip, calumny and the exclusion of those who did not fit. Though many recognised the value of good friends and neighbours, only a few of the women had these relationships in balance and were happy with their lot. Many seemed to be in social limbo, fighting shy of the close embrace of the naval community and estranged and lonely amongst their civilian neighbours.

Husband absence altered the self-conceptions of wives and influenced the way in which women were socially regarded. Whatever the extent of their external sources of support, naval wives were above all independent and self-reliant women. They were proud of

their capabilities but also cognizant of its uneasy relationship with being married and a wife. Maturity, practicality and resilience were prized qualities and seen as essential if women were to survive family life and manage homes while husbands were away, but these qualities were hard to encompass within conventional definitions of marriage. The femininity of wives is in part predicated on their helplessness, and a capacity to manage without a husband was often felt to undermine his masculinity and his place within the home. To prevent feelings of emasculation wives frequently feigned helplessness when their husbands returned and their withdrawal from traditional male activities in the home signalled both a relinquishing of household responsibility and a recognition of their husbands place in the household and the marriage. Such duplicity was seen by the women as instrumental in the re-creation of their married lives.

Lone wifhood was an anomalous status and altered the standing of women within the community. Local perceptions of naval wives stereotyped the women as feckless and sexually available. They were often the targets of other people's prurience and other men's advances. This image was heightened if they attended evening venues in mixed-sex company. Slurs on their virtue were not only forthcoming from outside but also from within the naval community and amongst other wives. Hence most socialising was confined to day-time activities and undertaken only in the company of other women and their children. Lone wifhood was more of an obstacle than an asset in their wider social participation. The image of Penelope purposelessly tending her loom whilst parrying the blandishments of drunken suitors is an image as poignantly relevant today as it was to the sailors'

wives of an Homeric era. Furthermore, naval wives were sensitive to accusations of being unable to cope if they were to seek outside help and were concerned not to "impose", especially on civilian neighbours.

The above discussion sums the marital consequences and social situation of lone wives. But within this broad picture there were sources of variation. The circumstances of those resident on married quarters estates contrasted with those of women resident in private housing. The different tenures brought different levels of responsibility to wives and placed women within different types of communities. Owner-occupation increased the domestic burden for wives as it increased their scope for housecraft, while locating them in less supportive neighbourhoods and social environments.

Different housing situations were not just a source of diversity amongst the population studied, they were sequentially related within the lives of the women. Hence both service accommodation and private housing were experienced by the vast majority of naval wives and those resident in married quarters regarded it largely as a staging post. Related to housing situation and family time was the incidence of different types of separation. The consequences of long-term separation seemed distinct from those of week-ending and the women held different attitudes towards them, with the weekend marriage being seen as a particularly disruptive and unsatisfying social arrangement. The more problematic character of weekending suggests that it is not a simple Bowlby-esque separation that creates the difficulties for wives, since months away were often easier to cope with than the recurrent comings and goings of a weekend husband.



The sequencing of those changes also related to the self-development of naval wives, as the experiences of husband absence encouraged them to grow into women different from the ones their husbands had married. This analysis also underscores the dynamics of household relationships and the dialectics of naval marriage; recurrent separations do not constitute a cycle of events, they necessitate and encompass development and historical change.

Some variation was also to be found when the wives of officers were compared with the wives of ratings and husband absence seemed to be, or to have been, more problematic for women married to ratings. This reflected their relative youthfulness and greater likelihood that on marriage they would have moved straight from their parents' home to one with their husband. All women who had spent some time living independently before marriage found the initial years of marriage to a sailor less traumatic than those who had not, and this was more likely to be the pattern for officers' wives. Furthermore, ratings' wives were more likely to be resident on large estates and to be less adept in managing the female culture of befriending and neighbouring relations. It was ironic that it was characteristically the younger and more vulnerable ratings' wives who were most equivocal about their neighbours and contacts with other women.

However, throughout it was clear that these sources of variation were either minor or largely developmental in nature. The analysis of the life situation of naval wives is fundamentally a study in common experience. As the exigencies of marriage unite all married women, so do the experiences of husband absence, as their biographies are woven

into a single story, cross-cutting class and particular stage in family time.

Past research has emphasised the stressfulness of separations within marriage, a stressfulness experienced primarily by wives. Such an assessment has, however, a theoretical shallowness since it offers a one-dimensional and unbalanced framework within which to examine a complex and multi-dimensional set of issues. Many women experienced problems consequent on their husbands' absence and re-entry into the home, but many of these problems flowed not from psychological dependence, but the wider social construction of wifhood and the social ambiguity of being a wife without a husband. In assessing the stressfulness of their own marriages, many women seemed to be answering the question with both a yes and a no; they recognised its extra responsibilities and greater potentiality for loneliness, but also its freedoms and romance, as more separated relationships could remain uncloyed by hum-drum routine, bread and butter trivia and interpersonal boredom. These burdens and opportunities were part of the same marital package and hence where individual women placed their particular emphasis also varied.

The experience of stressfulness seemed to diminish with time. Many of the personal stories recounted by the women were redolent with the difficulties of their early years of marriage and contained numerous accounts of how the excesses of initial despair had been overcome or curbed, of how they had learned to befriend, of how they had become skilled in elementary house-maintenance and of how they had learned not to panic and become more self-assured. Nevertheless, for

most women it was still not the most comfortable of marriages, and here false comparisons with "normal" couples were an ever-present temptation.

Past accounts of stressfulness were also unbalanced since the stressfulness was essentially seen to devolve on women. Although the research for this thesis has focused again on wives, it is also recognised that separations within marriage may be problematic for men. There is a vacuum of knowledge about how men construct their married lives within the framework of their own intermittent absence. This omission mirrors the assumption that the domestic behaviour of men is trivial by comparison with their occupational activities and identities. The invisibility of men in the home is the other side of the invisibility of women in public places. Their construction of husbandhood and fatherhood in terms of their own absence, their attitudes and behaviour towards their wives, their negotiation of exits and entrances into the home and the integration of their occupational and domestic lives remain intriguing questions.

The thesis has sought to address issues in the lives of women that emanate from husband absence and the broad significance of lone wifeness. Being a wife without a resident husband is a social limbo in which an alternative definition of wifeness is essential but its construction is so hard to accomplish.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALLAN, G A (1979). A Sociology of Friendship and Kinship, George Allen and Unwin.
- ALLAN, G A (1985). Family Life, Basil Blackwell.
- ANDERSON, M (1980). The Sociology of the Family, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- ANDERSON, M (1983). 'How much has the family changed?', New Society, 27th October.
- ANDERSON, N (ed) (1957). Studies on the Family Vol. II, Gottingen.
- BACHRACH, P & BARATZ, M (1963). 'Decisions and non-decisions: an analytic framework', American Political Science Review, Vol. 57.
- BAKER, S et al (1968). 'The impact of father absence III: problems of family reintegration following prolonged father absence', Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 37, p269.
- BALDAMUS, W (1982). 'The role of discoveries in Social Science', in Field Research: a Sourcebook and Field Manual, edited by Burgess.
- BAMFIELD, V (1974). On the Strength: the Story of the British Army Wife, Charles Knight & Co.
- BARKER, D L & ALLEN, S (eds) (1976). Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage, Longmans.
- BARNES, J A (1979). Who Should Know What? Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- BARRETT, M & McINTOSH, M (1982). 'The family wage', in The Changing Experience of Women, edited by Whitelegg et al.
- BARRETT, M & McINTOSH, M (1982). The Anti-Social Family, Verso.
- BEECHEY, V (1977). 'Some notes on female wage labour in capitalist production', Capital and Class, No. 3.
- BEECHEY, V (1979). 'On patriarchy', Feminist Review, Vol. 3, p66-82.
- BELL, C & NEWBY, H (1976). 'Husbands and wives: dynamics of a deferential dialectic' in Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage, edited by Barker & Allen.
- BELL, C & ROBERTS, K (eds) (1984). Social Researching, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- BENNETT, F (1983). 'The State, welfare and women's dependence' in What is to be Done About the Family, edited by L. Segal.



- BENNHOLDT-THOMSEN, V (1981). 'Subsistence production and extended patriarchy' in *Of Marriage and the Market*, edited by Young et al.
- BERCKMAN, E (1973). *The Hidden Navy*, Hamish Hamilton.
- BERGER, P & BERGER, B (1983). *The War Over the Family: Capturing the Middle Ground*, Hutchinson.
- BERGER, P & KELLNER, H (1980). 'Marriage and the construction of reality' in *The Sociology of the Family*, edited by Anderson.
- BERNARD, H R (1966). 'Kalyrnian Women', Paper presented at the 3rd Mediterranean Social Anthropology Conference, Athens, Greece.
- BERNARD, J (1972). *The Future of Marriage*, Yale University Press.
- BERNARD, J (1981). *The Female World*, Free Press.
- BEY, D R (1972). 'The Returning Veteran Syndrome', *Medical Insights*, Vol. 4, p42-45 and 49.
- BEY, D R & LANGE, J (1974). 'Waiting wives: women under stress', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 131, March.
- BLOOD, R & WOLFE, D (1960). *Husbands and Wives: the Dynamics of Married Living*, Glencoe.
- BONNETT, S (1968). *The Price of Admiralty: An Indictment of the Royal Navy 1805-1967*, Robert Hale.
- BOSS, P G et al (1979). 'The corporate executive wife's coping pattern in response to routine husband-father absence', *Family Process*, Vol. 18, p79-86.
- BOSS, P G et al (1980). 'The relationship of psychological father-presence, wife's personal qualities and wife/family dysfunction in families of missing fathers', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 45, p541-549.
- BOTT, E (1971). *Family and Social Network*, 2nd edition, Tavistock.
- BOULDING, E (1950). 'Family adjustments to war separations and reunions', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 272, p59-69.
- BOYNTON, K R & PEARCE, W B (1978). 'Personal transitions and interpersonal communication among submariner's wives', in *Military Families: Adaptation to Change*, edited by Hunter and Nice.
- BROWN, A & KIERNAN, K (1981). 'Cohabitation in Great Britain', *Population Trends*, Vol. 25, Autumn, p4-10.
- BROWN, G & HARRIS, T (1978). *Social Origins of Depression: A Study of Psychiatric Disorder in Women*, Tavistock.

- BULMER, M (1986). Neighbours: the Work of Philip Abrams, Cambridge University Press.
- BURGESS, E W & LOCKE, H J (1953). The Family: From Institution to Companionship, American Book Company.
- BURGESS, R G (1982). Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual, George Allen & Unwin.
- BURGOYNE, J (1986). 'Recent changes in gender-based patterns of employment, partnership, and family formation: some theoretical and methodological implications of this challenge to conventional conceptualisations of the family life cycle', BSA paper, Loughborough, 1986.
- BUSFIELD, J (1974) in The Integration of a Child into a Social World edited by Richards.
- BUSFIELD, J (1983). 'Gender, mental illness and psychiatry' in Sexual Divisions: Patterns and Processes edited by Evans and Ungerson.
- CALLAN, H & ARDENER, S (1984). The Incorporated Wife, Croom Helm.
- CARTER, E A & BOWEN M (eds) (1980). The Family Life Cycle: a Framework for Family Therapy, Gardner Press.
- CASHMORE, E E (1985). Having to: The World of One-Parent Families, Counterpoint, Unwin.
- CHESTER, R (1985). 'The rise of the neo-conventional family', New Society, 9th May.
- CHRISTENSEN, H T (ed). Handbook of Marriage and the Family, Rand McNally.
- CLARK, D et al (1985). 'Work, Marriage in the off-shore oil industry', International Journal of Social Economics, Vol. 12, Pt. 2.
- CLARKE, L & NGOBESE, J (1975). Women Without Men, Institute for Black Research, Durban.
- CLOSE, P & COLLINS, R (eds) (1985). Family and Economy in Modern Society, Macmillan.
- COHEN, G (1977). 'Absentee husbands in spiralist families', Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 39, p595-604.
- COMER, L (1974). Wedlocked Women, Feminist Books.
- COOPER, C & SLOAN, S (1985). 'The sources of stress on the wives of commercial airline pilots', Aviation, Space and Environmental Medicine, Vol. 56, No. 4, p317-321.
- CORBIN, M (1978). The Couple, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

- COURGEAU, D (1985). 'Interaction between spatial mobility, family and career life-cycle: a French survey', *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 1, September.
- COYLE, A. (1983-84). 'An investigation into the long-term impact of redundancy and unemployment amongst women', *EOC Bulletin* No. 8, Winter.
- CRETEKOS, C J G (1971). 'Common Psychological Syndromes of the America Army Wife', a paper presented at the 124th Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, Washington.
- CUBER, J F (1945). 'The family adjustment of veterans', *Marriage and Family Living*, Vol. 7, p28-30.
- DALLA COSTA, M & JAMES, S (1975). *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Falling Wall Press.
- DAVIDOFF, L et al (1976a). 'Landscape with figures; home and community in English society', in *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, edited by Mitchell and Oakley.
- DAVIDOFF, L et al (1976b). 'The rationalisation of housework' in *Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage*, edited by Barker and Allen.
- DECKER, K B (1978). 'Coping with sea-duty: problems encountered and resources utilised during the periods of family separation', in *Military Families: Adaptation to Change*, edited by Hunter and Nice.
- DEEM, R (1986). 'My husband says I'm too old for dancing; women, leisure and life cycles', BSA. Conference paper, 1986, Loughborough.
- DELPHY, C (1984). *Close to Home*, Hutchinson.
- DENNIS, N et al (1956). *Coal is Our Life*, Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- DERR, C (1979). 'Marriage-family issues and wife style across naval officer career stages: their implications for career success', Technical Report No. 2. NP 554-79-003, Office of Naval Research.
- DIXEY, R & TALBOT, M (1982). 'Women, leisure and bingo', Trinity and All Saints College, Leeds.
- DOBBASH, R E & DOBASH, R P (1977-1978). 'Wives: the "appropriate" victims of marital violence', *Victimology*, Vol. 2, p426-442.
- DOUGLAS, M (1970). *Purity and Danger*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- DOUGLAS, M (1972). 'Deciphering a meal', *Daedalus*, Vol. 101, p61-81.
- DURKHEIM, E (1952). *Suicide*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.



- DUQUIEM, A (1984). 'The importance of marital status for women's lives,' unpublished PhD thesis, Plymouth Polytechnic.
- DUVALL, E (1945). 'Loneliness and the serviceman's wife', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 7, p77-81.
- DUVALL, E (1977). *Marriage and Family Development*, L B Lippincott.
- EDGEELL, S (1980). *Middle Class Couples: a Study of Segregation, Domination and Inequality in Marriage*, George Allen and Unwin.
- EISENSTEIN, Z R (1979). 'Some notes on the relations of capitalist patriarchy', in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, edited by Eisenstein.
- EISENSTEIN, Z R (ed) (1979). *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press.
- ELDER, G H (1978). 'Family history and the Life Course' in *Transitions: the Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective*, edited by Hareven.
- ENGELS, F (1972). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Lawrence and Wishart.
- EVANS, M & UNGERSON, C (eds) (1983). *Sexual Divisions: Patterns and Processes*, Tavistock.
- FAGEN, S et al (1967). 'The impact of father absence in military families II: factors relating to success with coping', Technical Report, Walter Reed Medical Centre.
- FINCH, J (1983). *Married to the Job: Wives Incorporation in Men's Work*, Allen and Unwin.
- FINCH, J (1984). 'It's good to have someone to talk to; the ethics and politics of interviewing women', in *Social Researching*, edited by Bell and Roberts.
- FINER, M (1974). *One-parent Families: Report to the Committee*, Cmnd. 5629, HMSO.
- FIRESTONE, S (1972). *Dialectic of Sex*, Paladin.
- FORREST, R (1983). 'The meaning of home-ownership', *Environment and Planning D, Space and Society*, Vol. 1, p205-216.
- FRANCES, A & GALE, L (1973). 'Family structure and treatment in the military', *Family Processes*, Vol. 12, p516-522.
- FRICKE, P H (ed) (1973). *Seafarer and Community*, Croom Helm.
- FRICKE, P H (1974). *The Social Structure of Crews*, Department of Maritime Studies, Wales Institute of Science and Technology.



- GAMARNIKOV et al (eds) (1983). *Gender, Class and Work*, Heinemann.
- GAMARNIKOV et al (eds) (1983). *The Public and the Private*, Heinemann.
- GAVRON, H (1966). *The Captive Wife*, Harmondsworth.
- GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY (1984, 1985 & 1986). HMSO.
- GILLESPIE, D L (1971). 'Who had power? The Marital Struggle', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol 33, p445-458.
- GITTINS, D (1982). *The Fair Sex*, Hutchinson.
- GITTINS, D (1985). *The Family in Question*, MacMillan.
- GLASER, B G & STRAUSS, A L (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Aldine Publishing Co.
- GLICK, P C (1977). 'Updating the life cycle of the family', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 39, February, p5-13.
- GOFFMAN, E (1968). *Asylums*, Harmondsworth, Pelican.
- GOODE, W J (1970). *World Revolution and Family Patterns*, Free Press.
- GOLDTHORPE, J H et al (1969). *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, Cambridge University Press.
- GRAHAM, H (1983). 'Do her answers fit his questions? Women and the survey methods', in *The Public and the Private*, edited by Gamarnikov et al.
- GREER, G (1985). *Sex and Destiny: the Politics of Human Fertility*, Picador.
- GRONSETH, E (1957). 'The impact of father absence in sailor families upon the personality structure and social adjustment of adult sailor sons', in *Studies on the Family Vol. II*, edited by Anderson.
- GRONSETH, E (1959). 'Reactions of seamen's wives to frustrations resulting from the absence of their husband', Mimeo, Institute of Social Research, Oslo.
- GRONSETH, E (1962). 'Parent roles, socialisation and personality development in Norway - a review of research on sailor and other families', Mimeo, Institute of Social Research, Oslo.
- GONZALES, S de (1965). 'The consanguineal household and matrifocality', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 67, p1541-1549.
- GONZALES, V (1970). *Psychiatry and the Army Brat*, C C Thomas.
- GRACE, G L & STEINER, M B (1978). 'Wives' attitudes and the retention of Navy enlisted personnel', in *Military Families: Adaptation to Change*, edited by Hunter and Nice.

- GUTMAN, H (1976). The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, p1750-1925, Basil Blackwell.
- HAMNETT, C (1983). 'The new geography of housing', New Society, 8th December.
- HAMNETT, C (1986). 'Who gets to own?' New Society, 25th July.
- HAREVEN, T K (1978). Transitions: the Family and Life Course in Historical Perspective, Academic Press.
- HAREVEN, T K (1982). Family Time and Industrial Time; the Relationship Between the Family and Work in a New England Community, Cambridge University Press.
- HARLOE, M (1985). Private Rented Housing in the United States and Europe, Free Press.
- HARRIS, C C et al (eds) (1979). Sociology of the Family: New directions for Britain, Sociological Review Monography, 28.
- HARRIS, C C (1983). The Family and Industrial Society, Allen and Unwin.
- HART, N (1976). When Marriage Ends, Tavistock.
- HARTMANN, H (1979). The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union, in The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism, edited by Hartmann and Sargent.
- HARTMANN, H & SARGENT, L (1979). The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism, Pluto.
- HASKEY, J & COLEMAN, D (1986). Cohabitation before marriage: a comparison of information from marriage registration and the General Household Survey', Population Trends, Vol. 43, Spring.
- HILL, R (1945). 'The returning father and his family', Marriage and Family Living, Vol. 7, Spring.
- HILL, R (1949). Families Under Stress: Adjustment to the Crisis of War Separation and Reunion, Greenwood Press, Harper and Row.
- HILL, R & ROGERS, R (1964). 'The Developmental Approach' in Handbook of Marriage and the Family, edited by Christensen.
- HOGG REPORT (1979). The Joint Commanders in Chief Study, October, MOD.
- HOINVILLE, G & JOWELL, R and associates (1978). Survey Research Practice, Heinemann.
- HOLLOWELL, P G (1968). The Lorry Driver, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- HOLME, A (1985). Housing and Young Families in East London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- HOMANS, G C (1949). 'The strategy of industrial sociology', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 54.
- HUNT, P (1978). 'Cash transactions and household tasks: domestic behaviour in relation to industrial employment', *Sociological Review*, p555-571.
- HUNTER, E J & NICE, D S (eds) (1978). *Military Families: Adaptation to Change*, Praeger.
- HUNTER, E J (1982). *Families Under the Flag: a Review of Military Family Literature*, Praeger.
- IMRAY, L & MIDDLETON, A (1983). 'Public and private: marking the boundaries', in *The Public and the Private*, edited by Gamarnikov et al.
- INEICHEN, B (1979). 'Housing factors in the timing of weddings and first pregnancies', in *Sociology of the Family: New Directions*, edited by Harris et al.
- ISAY, R A (1968). 'The Submariners' Wives Syndrome', *Psychiatric Quaterley*, Vol. 42, p647-652.
- JANOWITZ, M (1960). *The Professional Soldier: a Social and Political Portrait*, Free Press.
- KIERNAN, K (1983). 'The Structure of families today: continuity or change?', OPCS Occasional Paper, No. 31..
- KOMAROVSKY, M (1962). *Blue Collar Marriage*, Random House.
- KUHN, A & WOLPE, A (1978). *Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- KUHN, T S (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, Vol. II, No. 2.
- KUMAGI, F (1984). 'The life cycle of the Japanese family', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 46, February, p191-204.
- KUMAR, K (1985). 'The social culture of work: work, employment and unemployment as ways of life', in *Work, Employment and Unemployment*, edited by Thompson.
- LAING, R D & ESTERSON, A (1970). *Sanity, Madness and the Family*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- LAND, H (1979). *The Family Wage*, Eleanor Rathbone Memorial Lecture.
- LEES, S (1968). *Learning to Love*, Hutchinson.
- LEONARD BARKER, D (1978). 'A Proper Wedding' in *The Couple*, edited by Corbin.



- LEWIS, M (1960). A Social History of the Navy 1793-1815, Allen & Unwin.
- LITWAK, E (1965). 'Extended kin relations in an industrial democratic society', in Social Structure and the Family: Generational Relations, edited by Shanas and Streib.
- LOWN, J (1983). 'Not so much a factory, more a form of patriarchy: gender and class during industrialisation, in Gender, Class and Work, edited by Gamarnikov et al.
- LUMMIS, T (1982). 'The historical dimension of fatherhood, 1890-1914', in The Father Figure, edited by Mckee and O'Brien.
- LUND, D A (1978). 'Junior officer retention in the modern volunteer army', in Military Families: Adaptation to Change, edited by Hunter and Nice.
- MACANN et al (1984). 'Telephone screening as a research technique', Sociology, Vol. 18, No. 3, p393-401.
- MACMILLAN, M (1984). 'Camp followers: a note on the wives of the armed forces', in The Incorporated Wife, edited by Callan and Ardener.
- MADGE, J & BROWN, C (1981). First Homes: a Survey of the Housing Circumstances of Young Married Couples, Policy Studies Institute.
- MANN, P (1954). 'The concept of neighbourliness', American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 60.
- MARTIN, B (1984). 'Mother wouldn't like it; housework as magic', Theory, Culture and Society, Vol. 2, Pt. 2, p19-36.
- MARTIN, J & ROBERTS, C (1984). Women and Employment: a Lifetime Perspective, DE/OPCS.
- MASON, J (1986). 'Gender inequality in long term marriage; the negotiation of domestic and social organisation by married couples aged 50-70', BSA Conference paper, Loughborough.
- MCCUBBIN et al (eds) (1976). Families in the Military System, Sage.
- MCDONOUGH, R & HARRISON, R (1978). 'Patriarchy and relations of production', in Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production, edited by Kuhn and Wolpe.
- MCDOWELL, L (1983). 'City and home: urban housing and the sexual division of space', in Sexual Divisions: Patterns and Processes, edited by Evans and Ungerson.
- MCKAIN, J L (1976). 'Alienation: a function of geographical mobility among families', in Families in the Military System, edited by McCubbin et al.



- McKEE, L (1982). 'Father's participation in infant care', in The Father Figure, edited by McKee and O'Brien.
- McKEE, L & BELL, C. 'His unemployment: her problem; the domestic and marital consequences of male unemployment', BSA Conference paper, Bradford.
- McKEE, L & O'BRIEN (eds) (1982). The Father Figure, Tavistock.
- McROBBIE, A & NAVA, M (eds) (1984). Gender and Generation, MacMillan.
- MILLER, B C et al (1982). 'On methods of studying marriages and families', Journal of Marriage and the Family, November.
- MILLETT, K (1970). Sexual Politics, Ballantine.
- MILLS, C W (1959). The Sociological Imagination, Oxford University Press.
- MITCHELL, J (1975). Psychoanalysis and Feminism, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- MITCHELL, J & OAKLEY, A (eds) (1976). The Rights and Wrongs of Women, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- M.O.D. (1984a). Report on the Armed Forces Accommodation and Family Education Survey 1983, D/Stats (S) 4/84/3/1.
- M.O.D. (1984b). Survey of the Wives of Service Personnel.
- MORGAN, D H J (1981). 'Berger and Kellner's Construction of Marriage', Occasional Paper No. 7, Department of Sociology, Manchester University.
- MORGAN, D H J (1981). 'Men, masculinity and the process of sociological enquiry', in Doing Feminist Research, edited by Roberts.
- MORGAN, D H J (1985). The Family, Politics and Social Theory, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- MORRICE, J K et al (1978). 'The Intermittent Husband Syndrome', New Society, Vol. 43, No. 796, January.
- MORRICE, J K et al (1981). 'Psychosocial problems in the oil industry', Update, Vol. 22, Pt. 1, p27-34.
- MORRICE, J K et al (1985). 'Oil wives and intermittent husbands', British Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 147, p479-483.
- MORRIS, L D (1986). 'The life cycle and the labour market in Hartlepool: generational change in recession', BSA Conference paper, Loughborough.
- MOUNT, F (1982). The Subversive Family, Counterpoint, Unwin.

- MURCOTT, A (1983). 'It's a pleasure to cook for him': food, mealtimes and gender in some S Wales households', in The Public and the Private, edited by Gamarnikov et al.
- MURGATROYD, M (1985). 'The production of people and domestic labour revisited', in Family and Economy in Modern Society edited by Close and Collins.
- MURPHY, M J (1983). 'The life course of individuals in families: describing static and dynamic aspects of the contemporary family', OPCS Occasional Paper, No. 31.
- MURPHY, M & SULLIVAN, O (1986). 'The rise and fall of the family life cycle', BSA Conference paper, Loughborough.
- MURRAY, C (1981). Families Divided: the Impact of Migrant Labour in Lesotho, Cambridge University Press.
- NICHOLSON, P J (1980). Goodbye Sailor: the Importance of Friendship in Family Mobility and Separation, Northpress Ltd.
- NOCK, S L (1979). 'The family life cycle: empirical or conceptual tool', Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 41, February, p15-26.
- NOCK, S L (1981). 'Family life cycle transitions: longitudinal effects on family members', Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 42, p703-713.
- OAKLEY, A (1974). Housewife, Allen Lane.
- OAKLEY, A (1982). Subject Women, Martin Robinson.
- OAKLEY, A (1982). 'Conventional families', in Families in Britain, edited by Rapoport et al.
- OAKLEY, A (1984). Taking it Like a Woman, Flamingo, Fontana Press.
- O'BEIRNE, K (1976). 'Waiting Wives', US Naval Institute Proceedings, September, p29-37.
- OGLESBY, A (1974). 'The effects of geographical mobility on the naval rating's family unit and its consequent effects on re-engagement, MA Thesis, Southampton.
- PAHL, J (1983). 'The allocation of money and the structuring of inequality within marriage', Sociological Review, Vol. 31, No. 2, p237-262.
- PAHL, J M & R E (1971). Managers and their Wives, Harmondsworth.
- PAHL, R E (1984). Divisions of Labour, Blackwell.
- PAINE, R (1969). 'In search of friendship', Man, Vol. 4, p 505-524.
- PARKER, T (1985). Soldier, soldier, Heinemann.

- PARSONS, T (1964). *The Social System*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- PAYNE J & G (1979). 'Housing pathways and stratification: a study of life chances in the market', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 6, No. 2.
- PEARLMAN, C (1970). 'Separation reaction', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 126, Pt. 7, p70-74.
- PEDERSON, F A (1966). 'Relationships between father-absence and emotional disturbance in male military dependents', *Merril-Palmer Quaterly*, Vol. 12, p321-331.
- PINCHBECK, I (1981). *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*, Virago.
- POPAY, J (1985). 'Women, the family and unemployment', in *Family and Economy in Modern Society* edited by Close and Collins.
- POPPER, K (1962). *Conjectures and Refutations*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- PURCELL, K (1978). 'Working women, women's work and the occupational sociology of being a woman', *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, Vol. 1, p153-163.
- QVORTROP, J (1985) 'Placing children in the division of labour', in *Family and Economy in Modern Society*, edited by Close and Collins.
- RAPOPORT, R N & RAPOPORT, R (1982). 'British families in transition', in *Families in Britain*, edited by Rapoport et al.
- RAPOPORT et al (eds) (1982). *Families in Britain*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- RIENHARZ, S (1979). *On Becoming a Social Scientist*, Josey Bass.
- RICH, G W (1978). 'The domestic cycle in modern Iceland', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 4, February.
- RICHARDS, M (1974). *The Integration of the Child into a Social World*, Cambridge University Press.
- RICHMAN, J (1982). 'Men's experiences of pregnancy', in *The Father Figure*, edited by McKee and O'Brien.
- RIENERTH, J G (1978). 'Separation and female centredness in the military family', in *Military Families: Adaptation and Change*, edited by Hunter and Nice.
- ROBERTS, H (ed) (1981). *Doing Feminist Research*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- ROSS, E (1983). 'Survival networks: women's neighbourhood sharing in London before World War I', *History Workshop*, Issue 15, Spring.



- ROSSER, C & HARRIS, C C (1965). The Family and Social Change, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- RUBIN, L (1976). Worlds of Pain, Basic Books Inc.
- SAFILIOS-ROTHSCHILD, C (1969). 'Family sociology of wives family sociology? A cross-cultural examination of decision-making', Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 31, May.
- SAFILIOS-ROTHSCHILD, C (1976). 'A macro- and micro-examination of family power and love: an exchange model, Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 38, May.
- SAUNDERS, P. 'Domestic property and social class', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Vol. 2.
- SCHRAM, R W. 'Marital satisfaction over the family life cycle: a critique and proposal', Journal of Marriage and the Family, February, Vol. 41, p7-13.
- SCHUETZ, A (1945). 'The homcomer', American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 50.
- SCOTT-BROWN, A (1974). Stress and the Naval Child, Journal of the Royal Navy Medical Service, Vol. 14, p75-82.
- SEEBOHM (1974). Report of the Naval Welfare Committee, MOD.
- SEGAL, L (ed) (1983). What is to be Done About the Family, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- SIEBER, S. 'The Integration of Fieldwork and Survey Methods', in Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual, edited by Burgess.
- SHANAS, E & STREIB (eds) (1965). Social Structure and the Family: Generational Relations, Prentice-Hall.
- SHARPE, S (1976). Just Like a Girl: How Girls Learn to be Women, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- SHEEHY, G (1976). Passages, Dutton.
- SMITH, P (1978). 'Domestic labour and Marx's theory of value', in Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production, edited by Kuhn and Wolpe.
- SMITH, S (1986). 'The Wife's Sentence', New Society, November.
- SNYDER, H I (1978). 'The effects of husband's sea-time upon the role-playing behaviour of the submariner's wife', Anthropological Inquiry Service, Office of Naval Research, N170-835.
- SOLHEIM, J (1984). 'Offshore commuting and family adaptation in the local community', paper read at the International Conference on Oil and the Environment, Bergen, Norway.



- SPANIER, G B et al (1979). 'An empirical evaluation of the family life cycle', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 41, p.27-38.
- SPENCER (1976). *Report on Army Welfare*, MOD.
- STAMP, P (1985). 'Research note: the balance of financial power in marriage: an exploratory study of bread-winning wives', *Sociological Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3, August.
- STANLEY, L & WISE, S (1983). *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- STEWART, C E (1985). 'Clyde submarine base: the effects on the family unit and its relationship within a service environment', unpublished thesis, Strathclyde.
- TAYLOR, R et al (1985). 'The psycho-social consequences of intermittent husband absence: an epidemiological study', *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 20, No. 9, p877-885.
- THOMPSON, K (ed) (1985). *Work, Employment and Unemployment*, Open University.
- THOMPSON et al (1983). *Living the Fishing*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- THOMSON, E & WILLIAMS, R (1982). 'Beyond wives' sociology: a method for analysing couple data', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 4, November.
- THORNE, B & YALOM, M (1982). *Rethinking the Family*, Longman.
- TILLER, P O (1961). 'Father-separation and adolescence', Monograph, Institute of Social Research, Oslo.
- TOULSON, P K & DIACK, G J (1985). 'A review of the military family', in *TTCN Nations (the Technical Co-operation Programme)*, September.
- TOWNSEND, P (1979). *Poverty in the UK*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- TROST, J (1977). 'The family life cycle, a problematic concept', in *Le Cycle de la Vie Familiale dans les Societies Europeenes*, edited by Cuisenier.
- TROUP (1972). 'Unity' A Report by the Troup Working Party, April, MOD.
- TRUSTRAM, M (1984). *Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army*, Cambridge University Press.
- TUNSTALL, J (1962). *The Fishermen*, MacGibbon and Kee.
- VOYSEY, M (1975). *A Constant Burden*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- WALBY, S (1983). 'Patriarchal structures: the case of unemployment', in *Class, Gender and Work* edited, by Gamarnikov et al.

- WANTANANBE, H (1986). 'A survey of attitudes amongst adolescents from civilian and military families', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Vol. 14, No. 2.
- WHITEHEAD, A (1976). 'Sexual antagonism in Herefordshire', in *Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage*, edited by Barker and Allen.
- WILLMOTT, P (1986). *Social Networks, Informal Care and Public Policy*, Policy Studies Institute.
- WILSON, G (1984). 'I know while he is in prison he's safe', *New Society*, 1st November, pl72-174, Vol. 70, No. 1142.
- WOELFEL, J C & SAVELL, J M (1978). 'Marital satisfaction, job satisfaction and retention in the army', in *Military Families: Adaptation to Change*, edited by Hunter and Nice.
- YOUNG, K (ed) (1981). *Of Marriage and the Market*, CSE Books.
- YOUNG, M & WILLMOTT, P (1962). *Family and Kinship in East London*, Harmondsworth.
- YOUNG, M & WILLMOTT, P (1973). *The Symmetrical Family*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- ZARETSKY, E (1982). 'The place of the family in the origins of the welfare state', in *Rethinking the Family*, edited by Thorne and Yalom.
- ZELDITCH, M Jr (1982). 'Some methodological problems of field studies', in *Field Research: a Sourcebook and a Field Manual*, edited by Burgess.

APPENDIX A

Faculty of Social Science

**Department of Social and Political Studies**

Acting Head, 1984-85: R.J. Mawby, BSc, MSc, PhD.

Phone ext: 5521

Reply to:

Our ref:

Your ref:

Date

As you are doubtless aware, the demands of life in the Royal Navy sometimes lead to frequent family moves and periods of family separation. As you may already be aware from reading Flag Officer Plymouth's Temporary Memorandum on the subject, a small team at Plymouth Polytechnic, supported by Devon County Council and the Royal Navy, is examining how far and in what ways naval family life differs from its civilian counterpart.

To do this we need as broad and balanced a picture as possible. Therefore it is essential that we obtain an accurate account of naval family structure and family experiences. To ensure accuracy we must first of all find out the shape of naval families, where service personnel are living, their relationship with wider kin, their experiences of moving and separation, and their occupations, hence questions about husband's rank and wife employment. Each individual reply is essential in building the comprehensive picture, vital to the planning of better family services.

To enable us to examine these issues and compare naval families with British families generally, we have attached a questionnaire. This questionnaire is being sent to 15% of Western Division personnel, who have been randomly chosen. Although the questionnaire looks long, you will find it very quick and easy to complete, as most questions require you merely to tick a box or boxes. As some husbands may be temporarily away from home, and to produce consistent answers, we would be most grateful if wives would complete the questionnaire.

We shall of course treat your reply in the strictest confidence - indeed there is no means of identifying you or your completed questionnaire. Your answers will not be seen by anyone other than the named researchers and no comments will be relayed to your employer or any third party in a way that could be attributable to you personally.

/We enclose an envelope



NAVAL FAMILIES RESEARCH PROJECT

---

Questionnaire January 1985

Research Team

---

Mrs. E.J. Chandler

Dr. D. Dunkerley

Mrs. L. Bryant

Department of Social and Political Studies  
Plymouth Polytechnic  
Drake Circus .  
Plymouth

## NAVAL FAMILIES RESEARCH PROJECT

---

### Instructions

1. As many husbands will be temporarily absent from home, we would like wives to fill in the questionnaire. This will ensure consistency of answers.
2. Please answer all the questions in order.
3. Almost all the questions require you to tick a box or boxes to indicate your response. If you don't find the exact answer that fits your case, tick the nearest one or write in your own answer.
4. Feel free to write any comments or explanations on the back of the questionnaire.

---

Again, we want to assure you that all the answers you give are absolutely confidential. None of the questionnaires, once filled in will ever be seen by anyone attached to the Royal Navy.

As this research is about how often naval personnel have to move and the effect this has on family life, we'll begin by asking you about where you live now.

1. Where are you living at the moment?  
 name of city/town.....  
 name of county.....

	6
--	---

2. How long have you lived in this area ?  
 PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

under 1 yr		0
1-2 yrs		1
3-4 yrs		2
5-6 yrs		3
7-8 yrs		4
9-11 yrs		5
12 yrs or more		6
		9

7

3. At the moment, what type of accommodation do you live in ?  
 PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

married quarters		0
privately rented flat		1
privately rented house		2
mobile home (rented or owned)		3
privately owned flat		4
privately owned house		5
other (please specify)..... .....		6
		9

8

4. Apart from yourself, who else regularly lives here as a member of your household ?  
PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BOX OR BOXES

husband	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	9
all of your children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	10
some of your children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	11
your step children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	12
mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	13
mother-in-law	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	14
father	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	15
father-in-law	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	16
other relatives please specify..... .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	17
other non-relatives please specify..... .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	18

5. How long have you lived in your present accommodation?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

under 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	19
1-2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	
3-4 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	
5-6 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	
7-8 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	
9 years or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	



6. How many times have you moved in the last 5 years, or, since your husband joined the Service, or since your marriage (if these are less than 5 years) ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

never	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
once	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
twice	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
3 times	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
4 times	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
5 times	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
6 times or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
		9

20

7. How far is your husband's base port or duty station from home ?  
PLEASE PUT ONE FIGURE IN EACH BOX  
IF LESS THAN 1 MILE ENTER 1

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

miles

21/22/23

8. During the last 5 years, or since your marriage if this is less than 5 years, how much time has your husband spent  
PLEASE ENTER ONE FIGURE IN EACH BOX

in a sea-going ship

years

months

24

25/26

in re-fit or shore establishment but able to live at home Monday to Friday

years

months

27

28/29

in re-fit or shore establishment but NOT able to live at home Monday to Friday

years

months

30

31/32

Now we would like to ask you some questions about where your parents live.

9. If your parents are alive, where do they live ?  
city/town.....  
county.....

33

10. How long have they lived in that district ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

under 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
1-2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
3-4 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
5-6 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
7-8 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
9 years or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

34

11. If your parents-in-law are alive, where do they live ?

city/town.....  
county.....

35

12. How long have they lived in that district ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

under 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
1-2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
3-4 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
5-6 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
7-8 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
9 years or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

36

To help us look at moving and family life, we would like to know something about your age and how long you have been married.

9

13. What was your age last birthday ?  
PLEASE PUT ONE FIGURE IN EACH BOX

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

37/38

14. What was your husband's age last birthday?  
PLEASE PUT ONE FIGURE IN EACH BOX

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

39/40

15. How many years have you been married ?  
PLEASE PUT ONE FIGURE IN EACH BOX

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

41/42

16. Was your husband already in the Royal Navy when you married him ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
no	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
	<input type="checkbox"/>	9

43

17. Is this your first marriage ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

yes		0	44
no		1	
		9	

18. What educational qualifications do you have ?  
PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BOX OR BOXES.

degree or equivalent		0	1	45
higher education below degree level		0	1	46
G.C.E. "A" level or equivalent		0	1	47
G.C.E. "O" level or equivalent or C.S.E grade 1		0	1	48
C.S.E. other grades or commercial or apprenticeship		0	1	49
foreign and other (please specify).... .....		0	1	50
none		0	1	51

To help us understand how navy life affects moving we need some information on your husband's position in the Navy.

19. What is your husband's rank ?

Admiral/Vice-Admiral		0	1	52/53
Captain		0	2	
Commander		0	3	
Lieutenant Commander		0	4	
Lieutenant		0	5	
Sub-Lieutenant to midshipman		0	6	
Fleet Chief		0	7	
CPO		0	8	
PO		0	9	
Leading Rate		1	0	
Able Rate or below		1	1	
other please specify..... .....		1	2	
		9	9	

20. If he is a Royal Navy rating, which branch is he in ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

Seaman/regulating sailmaker		0
Communications		1
Marine Engineer		2
Electrical (Control Ordinance, Radio)		3
Supply or Secretariat		4
Naval Airman		5
Air Electrical/Air Engineering		6
Medical		7
Other please specify..... .....		8
		9

54

21. If he is a Royal Navy officer, which branch is he in?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX.

Seaman		0
Weapons/Electrical		1
Marine Engineer		2
Supply/Sekretariat.		3
		9

55

22. At the moment is he stationed in a ship ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

or in an establishment ?

in a ship ?		0
in an establishment ?		1
		9

56

23. In the last month, how often has your husband returned home ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

every day		0
part of each week		1
every weekend		2
once a fortnight		3
once only		4
not at all		5
		9

57



Next we move on to asking you a few questions about your children, if you have any. If you don't have any children, just answer no to question 24 and move onto question 30.

24. Have you any children ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	58
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	
		9	

25. If you have children, please write the number in each age group.

	Boys	Girls		
under 1 year	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	59
1-2 years	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	60
3-5 years	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	61
6-8 years	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	62
9-11 years	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	63
12-14 years	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	64
15-17 years	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	65
18 yrs or older	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	66

<input type="text"/>	67
<input type="text"/>	68
<input type="text"/>	69
<input type="text"/>	70
<input type="text"/>	71
<input type="text"/>	72
<input type="text"/>	73
<input type="text"/>	74

26. If you have children ,who helped you at home in the time surrounding the birth of your last child ?  
PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE  
BOX OR BOXES

2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
---	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

husband	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	6
mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	7
father	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	8
mother-in-law	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	9
sister	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	10
other relative	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	11
friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	12
a neighbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	13
welfare agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	14
no-one	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	15

27. If you have children, who helped you at home when you were last ill in bed ?

PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BOX OR BOXES

husband	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	16
mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	17
father	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	18
mother-in law	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	19
sister	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	20
other relative	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	21
friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	22
a neighbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	23
welfare agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	24
no-one	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	25
have not been ill in bed	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	26

28. If you have pre-school children, do they go to a

PLEASE TICK BOX OR BOXES

mother-toddler group	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	27
play-group	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	28
creche	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	29
childminder	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	30
nursery school	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	31
relative on a regular basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	32
friend on a regular basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	33
none of these	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	34
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	35

29. If your children are of school age, please indicate how many currently attend which type of school?

	Boys	Girls		
infant/primary/junior			36	44
grammar			37	45
secondary modern			38	46
comprehensive			39	47
private/indep. day school			40	48
private/indep. boarding school			41	49
further education or sixth form college			42	50
other please specify..... .....			43	51

30. During the past week have you had an outing with, or gone out to visit any of the following  
PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BOX OR BOXES

For example: visit to the cinema, shared shopping trip, visit friend for coffee

husband		0	1	52
mother		0	1	53
father		0	1	54
mother-in-law		0	1	55
father-in-law		0	1	56
a sister		0	1	57
a brother		0	1	58
other relative (please specify).....		0	1	59
a naval friend		0	1	60
a civilian friend		0	1	61
more than one friend		0	1	62
a naval neighbour		0	1	63
a civilian neighbour		0	1	64
other non-relative (please specify).....		0	1	65
no-one		0	1	66

FOR OFFICE USE

3				
---	--	--	--	--

31. During the past week have you been visited in your own home by any of the following  
 PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BOX OR BOXES  
 Please include those who visited you for even a short time

mother		0	1	6
father		0	1	7
mother-in-law		0	1	8
father-in-law		0	1	9
a sister		0	1	10
a brother		0	1	11
other relative (please specify)..... .....		0	1	12
a naval friend		0	1	13
a civilian friend		0	1	14
more than one friend		0	1	15
a naval neighbour		0	1	16
a civilian neighbour		0	1	17
other non-relative (please specify)..... .....		0	1	18
no-one		0	1	19

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE TICKED ALL THE PEOPLE WHO CAME TO SEE YOU OR YOU VISITED OR YOU WENT OUT WITH.



As well as questions on contacts, we would like to ask you about who you turn to for help and support.

32. When your husband is away who do you rely on most for company and friendship? PLEASE SCORE EACH RESPONSE IN THE BOX ALONGSIDE: A SCORE OF 2 MEANS A LOT, A SCORE OF 1 MEANS A LITTLE AND A SCORE OF 0 MEANS NOT AT ALL.

mother			20
father			21
mother-in-law			22
father-in-law			23
your children			24
other relative in own family			25
relative in husband's family			26
friends			27
neighbours			28
naval wives group			29
estate warden			30
community officer			31
no-one			32
other (please specify) .....			33

33. When your husband is away, who do you rely on most for practical help and support? PLEASE SCORE EACH RESPONSE IN THE BOX ALONGSIDE: A SCORE OF 2 MEANS A LOT, A SCORE OF 1 MEANS A LITTLE AND A SCORE OF 0 MEANS NOT AT ALL.

mother			34
father			35
mother-in-law			36
father-in-law			37
your children			38
relative in own family			39
relative in husband's family			40
friends			41
neighbours			42
naval wives group			43
estate warden			44
community officer			45
no-one			46
other (please specify) .....			47

Finally we would like to ask you a few questions about any employment you have now, or had in the past.

34. Are you  
PLEASE TICK  
ONE BOX

a full-time housewife		0	48
not presently in paid employment but seeking work		1	
doing paid work at home		2	
doing paid work outside the home		3	
other (please specify)..... .....		4	
		9	

IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY DOING PAID WORK, PLEASE MOVE ONTO QUESTION 38.

35. If you are a housewife or unemployed, what was your last job (please be as specific as possible)

job.....  
 industry/organisation.....  
 never had a paid job.....

49

36. How long ago did you leave this job ?  
 PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

under 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	50
1-3 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	
4-6 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	
7-8 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	
9-11 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	
12 years and over	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	
		9	

37. Why did you leave your last job?  
 PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BOX OR BOXES

ill-health	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	51
marriage	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	52
childbirth	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	53
husband's job change or posting	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	54
dissatisfied with work	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	55
problems in combining work and family	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	56
redundancy	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	57
other (please specify)..... .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	58

38. If you are presently doing paid work inside or outside the home, what is your job ?

job.....  
 industry/organisation.....

59

39. How long have you been doing this job ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

under 1 year		
1-3 years		
4-6 years		
7-8 years		
9-11 years		
12 years or over		

40. Is your job full time (over 30 hours a week) or  
part-time ?  
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

full-time		
part-time		

Thank you very much for your help and co-operation in  
the completion of this questionnaire.

If you would like to say how you think being attached  
to the services has affected you and your family,  
please write your comments below.



APPENDIX B

Faculty of Social Science  
**Department of Social and Political Studies**  
Head, 1985-1987 A N Lee, BSc, MSc  
Phone (0752) 264759

Reply to

Our ref

Your ref

Date

Some time ago, in February 1985, you were contacted in connection with a questionnaire-based survey, conducted by researchers at Plymouth Polytechnic. Much information on the extent of separation, mobility and sources of support was gained from the replies that many naval wives returned. If you are amongst those that did reply, your co-operation has been much appreciated.

To explore further the special qualities of family life in the services, the researchers would like to discuss the particular experiences of service life with a small number of randomly selected naval wives. At a later date service personnel themselves may be talked to on this topic. Presently, your name has come "out of the hat", and, if you agree to be contacted, we would like you to send your name direct to the research team at the Polytechnic.

We would again stress that, as with the anonymity of the questionnaires returned, the confidentiality of any information given in discussion will be fully respected by the researchers involved, and the identities of those agreeing to take part divulged to no one.

To facilitate this, a reply slip can be removed from the bottom of the letter, and a pre-paid envelope is also included for your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

-----  
I agree to be contacted by a member of the research team at Plymouth Polytechnic.

Name .....

Address .....

.....  
Tel No: .....

APPENDIX C

## Interview Schedule

### A. Early Marriage

When were you married?

How did you meet your husband?

Have you been married before?

What did you expect marriage to a sailor would be like?

When you were married were your expectations confirmed?

### B. Children

Do you have any children?

How many?

How old?

What school/s do they go to?

Were they planned?

Any particular reason why had them then, not earlier/later?

Since children born:

How did they change your life?

How did they change your relationship with your husband?

How did they change your relationship with other members of your family?

When grown up and left home how will this/has this changed your life and relationships?

If no children - would you like them?

What difference do you think they will make to your life?

When would be an appropriate time to have them?

### C. Housing

Where did you live when you first got married?

How many times have you moved?

Where have you lived?



Why did you move?

If live/lived in married quarters

- advantages?
- disadvantages?

If own home - when did they first buy a house?

Why?

- advantages?
- disadvantages?

D. Separation

How much time has your husband spent away from home since your marriage?

Away for long periods or "weekending"?

Has he been away recently?

How does your daily routine differ when home/away?

Do you spend more time doing housework when home or away?

(i) Do you go out more when husband at home/away?

Are most of your friends naval or civilian?

Do you entertain/go out more as a couple or on your own?

Have you kept friends since before your marriage?

Have you made new friends?

How have you made them?

(ii) What decisions in home would be described as your husbands and what yours?

Does this vary between your husband being home or away?

(iii) Who has responsibility for the family finance?

How are finances organised

- allotment?
- joint bank account?

Does this vary if at home/away?

If a housewife - was this the same as when your were employed?

(iv) What sort of relationship does your husband have with the children?

How much is he involved in their activities?

Who disciplines them?

How does your relationship with the children differ when your husband is at home or away?

How do children react to his going/coming back?

How does your husband react to children when going away/coming back?

Do you/your husband have the same relationship with all the children?

(v) Has being separated from your husband altered your outlook?

Do you have any problems when away?

Are there any particular problems when husband returns?

How are departures organised?

How are reunions conducted?

#### E. Over Time

How do you think your relationship with your husband has changed since you were married?

Are you closer or more independent?

How has your relationship with friends changed?

How has your relationship with parents/brothers and sisters changed?

Why do you think these changes have occurred?

How do you think your life will change in future?

How do you think your life will alter when your husband retires?

#### F. Employment

Do you have a paid job?

If employed: What is your present job?

What is your working day?

Does it fit easily into your domestic routine?

Does it create any problems?

What is the attitude of your husband towards you working?

If housewife: What was your last job?

Why did you leave?

Will you return to employment at some time?

G. Is there an aspect of being married to a sailor that you think is important that I haven't covered?

APPENDIX D



## Biographical Detail on Women Interviewed

### Junior Ratings Wives

Mrs Hodge                      Aged 20 and married for 3 years.  
No children.  
Employed in secretarial work.  
Resident in married quarters.

Mrs Lawrence                      Aged 39 and married for 17 years.  
Two children; boy aged 17 and girl aged 15.  
Self-employed in home-knitting.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Johnson                      Aged 23 and married for 4 years.  
Two sons, aged 4 and 18 months.  
Involved in full-time housework and no previous  
paid employment.  
Resident in married quarters.

Mrs Walker                      Aged 24 and married for 5 years.  
One daughter aged 4 and a son aged 9 months.  
Involved in full-time housework and previously  
a clerical assistant.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Gray                      Aged 24 and married for 2 years.  
One daughter aged 18 months.  
Involved in full-time housework and no previous  
employment.  
Resident in married quarters.

Mrs Perry                      Aged 31 and married for 5 years.  
One son aged 4.  
Involved in full-time housework, previously a  
nurse.  
Resident in married quarters.

Mrs Goodman                      Aged 31 and in her second marriage for 10  
years.  
Two daughters aged 13 and 10.  
Employed as a cleaner.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Tucker                      Aged 35 and married for 16 years.  
Two sons aged 12 and 14.  
Employed as a nurse.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Bailey                      Aged 27 and married for 5 years.  
No children.  
Employed as a bank clerk.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Campbell                      Aged 28 and married for 6 years.  
One son aged 5 and two daughters aged 3 and 1.  
Husband present                      Involved in full-time housework and previously  
in interview                      employed as waitress.  
Resident in married quarters.

Senior Ratings Wives

Mrs Francis                      Aged 36 and in her second marriage for 14  
years.  
Husband present                      Two boys aged 16 and 5, and two girls aged 3  
in interview                      and 1.  
Employed in casual labour on a farm.  
Resident in married quarters.

Mrs Mitchell                      Aged 25 and married for 5 years.  
One son aged 4 and a daughter aged 18 months.  
Employed part-time as a nurse.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Young                      Aged 37 and married for 15 years.  
Two daughters aged 9 and 7.  
Employed as night nurse through the bank  
system.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Bennett                      Aged 35 and married for 8 years.  
One daughter aged 6.  
Employed in home-knitting.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Jenkins                      Aged 40 and married for 18 years.  
Two daughters aged 17 and 14.  
Employed as optician's receptionist.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Stanton                      Aged 34 and married for 10 years.  
Two daughters aged 5 and 7.  
Involved in full-time housework, and previously  
as a bar-maid and childminder.  
Resident in married quarters.

Mrs West                      Aged 28 years and in her second marriage for 2  
years.  
No children.  
Employed as a bank clerk.  
Resident in married quarters.

Mrs MacDonald                      Aged 30 and married for 12 years.  
No children.  
Employed as a type-setter.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Chambers

Aged 39 and married for 20 years.  
Two sons aged 19 and 17 and a daughter aged 11.  
Employed as medical receptionist.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Atkins

Aged 38 and married for 16 years.  
Two daughters aged 15 and 12.  
Employed as a nurse.  
Resident in private housing.

Officers' Wives

Mrs King

Aged 33 and married for 12 years.  
Four daughters aged 10, 8, 6 and 1.  
Involved in full-time housework and previously  
in WRENS.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Wood

Aged 28 and married for 6 years.  
Two daughters aged 2 and 6 months.  
Involved in full-time housework, and previously  
a nurse.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Middleton

Aged 32 and married for 5 years.  
One daughter aged 2. .  
Employed as a part-time health sister.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Harris

Aged 29 and married for 4 years.  
Two sons aged 2 and 1 month.  
Involved in full-time housework and previously  
as a clerk in a Building Society.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Robinson

Aged 39 and married for 17 years.  
Two daughters aged 13 and 11.  
A full-time degree student and previously a  
primary school teacher.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Thompson

Aged 28 and married for 5 years.  
One son aged 2 and daughter aged 1 year.  
Involved in full-time housework and previously  
a nurse.  
Resident in private housing.

Mrs Jones

Aged 34 and married for 15 years.  
Two daughters aged 13 and 10.  
Employed in part-time work in a hospital and  
casual labour in a shop.  
Resident in private housing.