

DENNIS MARSDEN

Mothers Alone
Poverty and the Fatherless Family

Revised Edition



Penguin Books

Pelican Press Books, 1973

references on the family, and to Michael Hill for a new light on administrative 'discretion'.

Wivenhoe
October 1971

Introduction

This book is about the lives and living standards of mothers alone; about unmarried, separated, divorced, and widowed mothers and their children. Our society defends the institution of marriage by stigmatizing some of these mothers as less worthy than others: for example, although some are legally entitled to pensions, or to maintenance from their children's fathers, others are entitled to nothing. But in this book I call all these mothers 'mothers alone' or 'unsupported mothers', and their families 'fatherless families', to stress that however they came to their present situation they now have needs and problems in common.

Mothers alone suffer the double deprivations of fatherlessness* and poverty. They are often lonely and socially isolated in their task of bringing up their children without adequate emotional support from their children's fathers or from the community. And, above all, fatherless families are likely to be poor because women are in a subordinate position in marriage and in society. Maintenance payments from the children's fathers are often inadequate; and on average a woman can earn only half as much as a man, while a mother who works will have the additional problems of seeing that her children are adequately cared for.

Society does offer limited financial security to mothers who are alone, in recognition of their value as mothers. They are allowed to stay at home to look after their children, supported by national assistance (or supplementary benefit, or 'social security', as it is now called).¹ With this allowance from the state, and not working or working only part-time, many mothers can be financially less badly-off than if they had to support themselves and their families solely on their small full-time earnings. But their

*For want of a composite word, throughout this book I have sometimes used 'fatherlessness' to include also the mother's lack of a husband.

standard of living on national assistance would still be only half that of the average two-child family in the community.² In fact, in 1966 in England and Wales, out of the 349,360 mothers with their 596,670 dependent children who were in fatherless families, more than one in three received national assistance.³ And it has been estimated more recently that of mothers alone who have no pension two thirds must now be dependent on supplementary benefit.⁴

These figures for dependence on the state reveal that, in a time of increasing prosperity, mothers alone are failing to share fully in the overall rise in living standards.

This small survey of mothers alone is intended to stimulate public debate about the problems of fatherlessness and about how we treat one group among the poor who are dependent on the state. In 1965 and 1966 I interviewed 116 mothers alone who were drawing national assistance in two areas, which have been given the fictitious names of Northborough and Seaston. I wanted to see how the mothers faced their common problems: the mothers were poor in a society with rising living standards; they were unsupported and living alone when most mothers were married and lived with their husbands; they were women in an economy geared to men's work; they were dependants of the state in a society which put a premium on independence, thrift and self-help; they were clients without rights facing a powerful bureaucracy, the National Assistance Board, whose workings were secret; they were poor and had children when rents were high and children were unwelcome; and they were mostly suppliants for maintenance from their children's fathers, in a legal system designed by men and geared to the needs of the middle classes.

I wanted to know what these mothers could afford to buy, and I wanted to ask a question which is, curiously, seldom asked of the poor - how poor did they feel? The deprivations of fatherlessness and poverty are intermeshed, and how the mothers feel will depend not only on their incomes but on their whole social situation. I wanted also to see whether national assistance was properly designed to cover the range of social situations to be found among fatherless families.

What is poverty today?

In a way which this book will explore, these dependent mothers might be said to be living in 'poverty', and the state subsistence level is a sort of 'poverty line'. For although conventional measures of poverty have attempted to compare the living standards of the poor with some hypothetical minimum subsistence level, it seems likely that poor people themselves will compare their living standards with those of relatives, friends or neighbours; so that the amount of cash a person needs for physical well-being, for social activities, and in general to keep up morale will depend intimately on prevailing levels of spending in the community.⁵ The state subsistence level should be a 'poverty line' in the sense that it should express a political decision by the community on what share of our increasing wealth ought to go to the poor.⁶ In other words, the level should indicate the community's view on what standard of living is the minimum to be tolerated in a society as wealthy as ours.

Research like the present survey is necessary because unfortunately the general public, and even the administrators and M.P.s who are periodically involved in re-setting the levels of allowances, can know remarkably little about how these levels are arrived at, how the money is supposed to be spent and how in fact it is spent. There has been very little detailed discussion and virtually no published research which would readily permit us to look at the living standards of particular disadvantaged groups in the population.⁷ There remain large question marks about what should be counted as 'income' in such comparisons, and about the extent to which different groups among the population benefit from hidden incomes such as gifts from relatives, from so-called 'fringe benefits' (meals, pension schemes, housing, etc., subsidized by employers), from welfare benefits, and from the use of the National Health Service. To collect this sort of information on poverty today, we planned a comprehensive national survey of the incomes and resources of all types of households in the United Kingdom, and one of the preliminary pilot studies⁸ was the present survey of fatherless families.

Who are the fatherless?

This survey was also intended to illuminate the variety of social situations covered by the term 'fatherlessness'. For although the term is being used in this book to stress that the families have common problems, it must not be taken to imply that fatherless families are all alike in other ways. Rather, the reality of fatherlessness for mother and children is much less clear-cut and less linked with the mother's marital status than we usually take it to be.

What is a fatherless family? The distinction between 'complete' and 'fatherless' families is blurred because there is no common agreement in our society about how a man who is a father (and a husband) should behave. We might suggest that ideally a father is the principal wage earner, he provides sexual fulfilment for his wife and emotional support for her and the children, he has been traditionally the focal point of authority and decision-making, and he is an embodiment of stability and industry for his children. But many fathers would not fit this description. The role of father is changing, and, assisted perhaps by women's liberation, it will no doubt change more. And at any time there are wide variations between different social groups in the way fathers behave. A man who lives at home with his family may be grossly inadequate in some respects, so that his wife and family suffer the deprivations we tend to associate with the fatherless or husbandless family. Servicemen's and commercial travellers' families, children whose fathers are in hospital or in prison, and children at boarding schools might be counted fatherless (and some of their mothers husbandless) for much of the time. By contrast, in families where the father has gone, someone else may take over his role, wholly or in part, for example as the mother's lover or as a 'second father' to the children.

Clearly fatherlessness is not one situation but a whole spectrum of possible relationships and sets of circumstances. Such variety presents very serious problems if we are trying to devise a scheme of social security for fatherless families which will deal with all these situations simply and equitably. We need a clear perception of who the fatherless are.

The present research - a group of mothers on national assistance

Previous research on fatherless families had been concerned only with mothers of one marital status, or who were unsupported for one reason, for example widows or prisoners' wives.⁹ A sample of mothers on national assistance had the double advantage that it permitted a study of mothers living on the poverty line, but also among the mothers were women of differing marital status who were unsupported for a variety of reasons. Obviously mothers on national assistance are a selective group, the victims of misfortunes and failures of formal and informal support: an examination of why mothers come to be on assistance is an integral part of the present study. Yet such a large proportion (60 per cent or more) of mothers alone become dependent on the state at some time¹⁰ that it is hard to argue that the group of mothers on national assistance is, as a whole, very untypical. The names of 116 mothers were obtained with the help of the National Assistance Board, who contacted for me initially 215 mothers in two areas and who furnished statistics covering this larger group, but whose responsibility for the survey ends there.¹¹

The two contrasting districts of Northborough and Seaston were chosen to provide some check on possible variations in local conditions and in the administrative practices of the N.A.B., the courts, and other organizations with which the fatherless families had dealings. Northborough is a relatively prosperous northern industrial town of 130,000, where a woman can earn as much as £15 a week as a mender or weaver in the textile mills. West Indians and Pakistanis now work in the textile and chemical industries, and immigrant families account for almost a quarter of all births in the town, among them a proportion of the illegitimate births so that a few immigrant unmarried mothers appear in this survey. Seaston is a southern market town of 60,000 near large camps of British and American forces. Several Seaston factories employ women at piece-rates, but the few concerns in the area which pay wages comparable with those of a man are in seasonal trades such as canning. On the

other hand, agriculture around Seaston is a convenient source of casual earnings for women field-workers, who can take their small children along with them. These two areas probably present less serious housing problems for fatherless families than London, which like other large cities tends to draw young unmarried mothers seeking anonymity.

The mothers whom I eventually interviewed were mostly working-class, aged between twenty and forty, although there were also middle-class and older and younger mothers among them. And they were indeed living in a variety of family arrangements. On average they had two dependent children. But they included a sixteen-year-old unmarried mother with her baby living at home with her parents, a fifty-year-old widow with two teenage children and a male lodger, and a separated mother aged forty-three who had eleven children by six different men and who lived with one of her daughters and the daughter's two illegitimate children.

Yet it was striking that on the whole the families tended to be differentiated most clearly by their positions on the age and child-rearing cycle. Thus the unmarried mothers tended to be younger with young children, while in contrast widows tended to be older with older dependent children. Separated and divorced mothers tended to be intermediate, being, as it were, old enough to have married, but not yet married long enough to become widowed.¹² This range of family types challenges us to see fatherlessness and dependence as evolving and changing over time, albeit linked by the common fertility and child-rearing cycle.

The families also revealed a range of relationships not only with the children's fathers but with other men or with kin who performed aspects of the father's role.

Without further introduction than the initial letter asking permission to visit and explain the survey, I called on mothers at home and often interviewed them then and there, for the only deadline was the return of the children from school; there was no man to consult and plan for. As nearly as possible I tried to make the interview a conversation, feeling that this would be flexible in allowing mothers to explore and describe situations

which were complex in detail and emotion. The average interview lasted two and a quarter hours, and I spent more time with the larger families (up to five and a quarter hours in one instance) because they tended to have more severe problems and more complex social histories, and least time with the unmarried mothers, among them six West Indians with whom I had difficulty in discussing the emotional aspects of their situation. After the interview I recorded for transcription the mother's version of her experiences, as far as I could remember in the words she had used.

It was apparent from the mothers' willingness or reluctance to be interviewed, and from their reactions to me in the interview, that they saw me in a number of different roles and, consciously or unconsciously, angled the presentation of their experiences for my benefit. It appeared that those who replied were more likely to feel 'worthy', to have broken completely with their children's fathers and to hold less unfavourable views of the N.A.B. Thus, the widows responded well, but unmarried mothers and separated wives with small families, who might feel the greatest stigma or whose relationship with their children's father might be in a delicate state of balance, were not so willing to be interviewed. The mothers of large families replied most readily, apparently because they were in more desperate need of help. The largest group of mothers, about a third, said they wanted to 'help others', while the next largest seemed to have replied automatically to an official-looking document, perhaps to show they had nothing to conceal. Some mothers greeted me eagerly, and very often they wanted not a single interview but a continuing helpful relationship. They hoped I was a social worker to solve their problems, a source of cash or influence with the authorities, a potential lodger, someone to give advice and discipline the children, a relief from the tedium of an entirely female social circle, or, more nebulously and nearer my real role, someone who would publish 'the truth' of their situation to the wider society.

Some women replied very late, and others not at all, although I was able to trace some of the non-respondents via their friends and they agreed to be interviewed. These were often women who

had had the least happy relationships with officials. They saw me with more trepidation as an N.A.B. 'snooper', as a confidence trickster, a potential seducer, or a disapproving member of the tax-paying public. Thus among the very interesting group of mothers whom I describe later in this book as the 'underclass' scarcely any responded directly and I had to trace them through a chain of social contacts.

Those mothers who moved frequently could not receive my letters. Others who failed to reply, or who replied as much as three *months* late, had piles of letters awaiting reply behind the clock on the mantelpiece, or in a drawer, where mine had waited until they could summon up the energy to drop the card into a letter-box. A further small number of women were proudly independent and unwilling to make any further gesture which might seem like a request for help. It is also doubtful whether women whose relationship with their children's father was in a delicate balance replied at all readily. And finally there were those who valued their privacy: 'It's like that play, have you heard of it, by Pirandello, *Naked*, I feel naked after I've spoken to you.'

To preserve the confidentiality of the interviews I use no names in this book, for even false names would permit a linking together of pieces of information from different parts of the book to build up identifiable individual portraits.

Interpreting what the mothers said

A survey based on 116 interviews from two areas, with mothers describing their experiences to a stranger, is open to a number of doubts as to how far these stories are reliable, typical, and a suitable basis for generalization. Apart from the restriction on numbers, I was not able to interview the children's fathers or the N.A.B. officials with whom the mothers had had dealings. I discuss these questions again in other parts of the book, and in an appendix,¹³ but it is also necessary to say something here about the claims being made for this research and the process of interpreting the evidence.

To produce a representative sample to bring out all the

nuances of situation of all types of fatherless families in the various regions of the country would require initially approaches to about 100,000 households of all kinds, randomly selected from the general population. A survey on this scale would have been far beyond the resources of a private research team, but it would also have been premature in the existing state of our knowledge, and inappropriate for the kinds of insights we were seeking. Large surveys achieve their statistical respectability only with very crudely or easily measured quantities, and at the cost of a loss of fine detail and insight. In the present survey I wanted to illuminate the human situations of poverty and fatherlessness, and while the range of situations among 116 interviews was obviously not complete, it was remarkably broad and sufficient for my purpose. The use of quotations from the mothers' speech is not merely a device to sugar the pill of statistics: the mothers' accounts come nearer to conveying the quality of the experience of fatherlessness.

I have felt more free to generalize from the present survey when several conditions are fulfilled. The first is where the mothers' experiences rest upon some identifiable aspects of the social or economic structure which are common over a wide area of society. Thus, the mothers not only had a common income level from national assistance, but that income level was laid down nationally. The law, the administrative structures of the N.A.B., and (with exceptions which I note) the basic structures of the family may all be said to be fairly similar in other parts of the country too. The second condition is that the stories, drawn from mothers who usually did not know one another, should be mutually consistent. And the third is that they should square with any available national statistics or independent published descriptions.

With regard to the 'subjectivity' of mothers' accounts, I am not seeking the reader's indulgence and credulity, so much as inviting him to engage in interpreting what the mothers said. Sometimes, indeed, we are not interested in objective fact but in the way the mother perceives her side of a relationship with the children's father, say, or with an official. Similarly, while the mothers' tendency to re-interpret past and present experiences

in terms of each other makes the task of accurate objective description difficult, at another level this interweaving of past and present is itself a major theme of the research. Similarly what might crudely be called 'bias' in the interviewing situation was often really a valuable source of evidence. A perception of the roles into which I was being pushed became a way of understanding the mothers' fears, hopes, and needs.

I deliberately invited mothers to recall specific experiences rather than to express general opinions not anchored to any particular incident. And inevitably in what follows some interviews will be given more importance than others. This is not just a matter of numbers, although some experiences will be more typical statistically of the whole group. But there are mothers who have had key experiences – some kind of crisis or an encounter with an official, perhaps – which are more revealing of their whole situation. (For example, we may learn more about the class structure from someone who has been forced to think about class differences because of a move from one social class to another through education: or alternatively there is the analogy with the anthropologist who illuminates social structure by the analysis of one key episode.) Not only have some mothers had intrinsically more revealing experiences, but some are also more perceptive than others, more capable of crystallizing and describing their experiences in words, and more willing to talk to an interviewer. The eliciting of interviews, the selection of material by the mother and by the researcher, and the process of interpretation seem to me to be essentially more subjective and skilled processes than sociology sometimes allows. An excessive use of statistical techniques could therefore mislead as to the essential nature of a case-study approach. However, there is a place for numbers, and I have tried to include in the text the numbers of individuals or incidents upon which my descriptions are based, even at the risk of some tedium to the reader and of charges of attempting to give the text a spurious air of science.

Because the research was originally carried out in 1965–6, there is a possibility that with changing levels of state support the living standards of mothers on supplementary benefits relative

to the rest of the community will today have improved on the position described here. Between 1966 and 1969, for example, more fatherless families became dependent as supplementary benefit scale rates rose by 8 per cent more than the retail price index (which, however, does not relate to the spending patterns of low income groups).¹⁴ But the improvement is debatable: one of the lessons we are too slow to learn is the remarkable persistence of inequalities. The contemporary situation can only be discovered by thorough, continuing research, which is still not being undertaken.

I believe that, unfortunately, until there are major changes in public attitudes and in the structure of social security for mothers alone, the description of their lives presented in this book will remain only too up-to-date.

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Dear

There has been hardly any discussion about families like yours in which the mother is bringing up children without a father. Probably if something was known about their problems more could be done to help fatherless families. For this reason I am making a special inquiry about their difficulties for the University of Essex.

To collect facts I am hoping to visit about 100 fatherless families in Colchester. I would be very grateful if you could agree to help me. If you will help, please post the enclosed card, which has your name and address on it, in the stamped addressed envelope provided. If you do, I will call on you during the next month or two and explain what the survey is about.

Anything you say about your problems or how you have to manage may eventually help mothers in your situation and will be treated in strictest confidence. Your name and address will not be used in any way. We hope to publish a small report which will give the Government and authorities a fuller understanding of the problems faced by mothers bringing up children alone.

Yours sincerely,

Dennis Marsden.

Dennis Marsden.

Please Note: The National Assistance Board is helping me by passing on my letters to families on their lists. This is the only connection I have with them. They ask me to assure you that they have no way of finding out who replies to my letters. They do not see the replies, and I will not pass any information on to them myself.

This questionnaire was used in the Mothers Alone project but the details of precisely how are somewhat vague. Given the level of detail, Marsden does not believe he used this form during the actual interview; there may have been a more condensed topic guide for that purpose. He believes this form may have had several other uses: a way of remembering family kinship structures, and as a data transfer document from team discussions concerning the main poverty survey questionnaire from the Peter Townsend study, *Poverty in the UK*.

Pilot Schedule for Survey of Fatherless Families Receiving National Assistance

Code Number False Name Mr. Campbell
 Date of interview 12th March Time 9:30 Length 4hr
 Others present baby Paul!

First of all could I just check up. I've got four sorts of family where the mother is bringing up children without the father at home.

You are widowed: W Divorced :D Separated: S Unmarried: U
 Other

1. WDS (i) How long have you been widowed/divorced/sepd? 1958...yrs
 (ii) And before that how long had you been married? 1949...yrs
 All (iii) How long is it since you first received national assistance? by not a long yrs now or date
 (iv) Since then have you had it regularly irregularly Yes/no Yes/no

2. (i) Do you live here just with your child(ren) or with others? Who lives here? Are you all in the same household?

Child's name	Relation to mother	Age	S	Hed
			Yes	No
	self	37	1	2
Michael	son	13	1	2
Lynnon	daughter	8	1	2
Paul	son (illegit)	1	1	2
			1	2
			1	2

pay check

1958 → still burth thro' husband's assault

(ii) Have you any other children who don't live here because they're in care, or fostered or have been adopted or go to special schools?

name	Reason for absence	Age	How long

3. For those not living as a primary family group - could you give me an idea of what arrangements you have with the other people who live here?
 Do you pay them board (or do they pay you)?
 Do you share any of the rooms? (Kitchen, toilet, bathroom, living room)
 Is the furniture theirs or yours?
 Do you have meals together? (Which and when)

(ii) Living as a primary family group:

Do you pay rent or do you own this dwelling?

Rented Council: 1 Private unfurnished: 2 Priv. furn: 3 Rent free: 5
rent contr: 4: (see note)

Owned outright (no debts): 6 Mortgage or loan: 7

4. (i) How many rooms 1 up 1 down (iii) Lift
(ii) Which floors

5. (1) Kitchen? No Shared? Yes No

6. Cooking facilities? Solid fuel stove Gas stove ✓ Electric
Paraffin? Oven?

Number of rings 2

If not in the kitchen, where living room.

7. Food storage Larder Fixed ventilated cupboard
Refrigerator Kitchen cabinet ✓ Cellar
Other

8. Piped water Where? Kitchen sink * (H or C) Other
Bath No shared wash basin ✓ in living room cold.

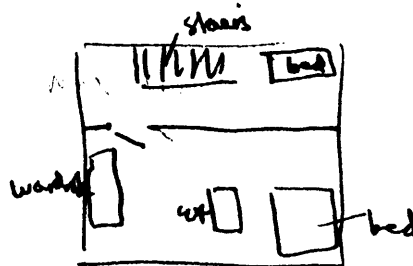
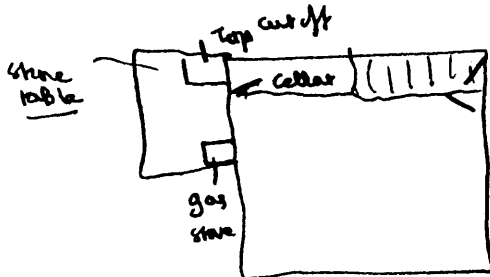
9. If no bath - what do you do in bath or bath at mother's.

10. WC ✓ Shared ✓ With how many 3 Outside 100 yds.

11. Where do you do your washing? Sink or bath Copper (boiler) ✓
Washing machine (type) Launderette "wringing"
Laundry can't afford
Where do you dry your washing In room ✓ living room yard or garden ✓
In machine Drying cabinet

12. Heating How many fires and what type Solid fuel ✓
gas electric can't afford to run it paraffin central

13. Plan of house Showing use of rooms, yard garden, size of rooms
sleeping arrangements (who sleeps where, type of bed), meal-place
State of household repair, condition of furniture, floor coverings



14. Furniture Which of the furniture is yours (mark 0)

Living room:	Dining room (other)	Bedroom	Extras
Table ✓ <i>posed on</i>	Table	Beds ✓	Mother's <i>cloys</i>
chairs ✓	chairs	Drawers	<i>or together</i>
sofa <i>with 2 bought of</i>	sideboard	wardrobes ✓	<i>or</i>
easy chairs <i>with 2 or</i>		dressing table	<i>lin</i>
floor coverings <i>max</i>		floor coverings	<i>corn mat</i>
sewing machine			
iron <i>fixed</i>			
gas boiler			

15. Decorations Who does them

self with paper given by neighbour	How long since
self	Outside
	Inside -
	kitchen <i>this yr.</i>
	living room
	other room
	upstairs

16. Needs and replacements? What sort of items do you need badly now

2 beds *As long as can manage*
 and in the near future *children all mine*

17. How much of this have you had to get W since you lost your husband

DS "you septd from" "
 U baby was born
 All of it. He broke it all up whatever I got, and broke under

18. Is there anything you particularly dislike about this house?
 (e.g. garden, difficulties with other occupants)

Toilet - always having to see chambers and I think you're *conscious of it all the time*

19. Do you expect to stay here long?

at least 6 months *conscious of it*
 Corporation House in 6 months

20. Have you ever tried to find other accommodation? What difficulties
 (because of children, money, mortgage, tenancy)

No, found this herself *very handy for work*

21. Is this where you lived when WDE you were first married
 U you started having the baby

If not where did you live *Middleton near mother*
 and how long have you lived here *6 yrs*

How many places have you had since W you lost your husband
 DS you were septd "
 U you started having the bab

22. Have you ever lived with any (other relatives). How did this work out

No *Prefer to live by self*

M Tues & fri
tues on dinner

goes on Tuesday

2. Wife's Family; ~~husband's family~~ ^{Wife's Father's family}

3/4 hr

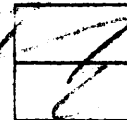
	Earning Occupation	When Dec'd	Live 5-30	Seen 1-2 3-8	Here ASN
(a) Wife's Father Wife's Mother	Business laborer Teacher Middletown			3/4	1 5
(b) Husband's Father Husband's Mother	Fixed	deceased			
(c) Wife's Siblings:-	decd company director brother				Stat Child
Number older : B 4 S= T					
Number younger : B 1 S= 1 or T, Mrs. [unclear]					
Within 5 mins.; or if none, within 30 mins.:-					
1				3/4 hr	
2	Seen very frequently				
3				at mother's sometimes	
4				or going to work nearby.	
5					
6	Never visits brother				
(d) Husband's Siblings:-					
Number older : B S= T					
Number younger : B S= T					
Within 5 mins.; or if none, within 30 mins.:-					
1	Not seen				
2					
3	Children go to mother			Michael Tuesday	
4				Friday	
5				Lynne Friday	
6				Mrs C goes Tuesday to dinner	
(e) If no siblings within 30 mins., are there any other relatives seen at least once a week?					
1					
2					
3					
4					

sister wake up here

3. At what age did you leave school or finish full time education?

What about your husband?

Help from any of these? what kind?



sp. money

boy 5/-

2/6 (bus fare)

Lynn 1/3 2/-

m 1/6

skin shoes

Sally

bedding passed on

older ones mother accumulation

5.

at buses got married

bro 2yrs 2 markers

CHILDREN

Names

Michael	Lynne	Paul	
---------	-------	------	--

6 plates & mugs
anything that do need
mother's clothes
birthdays
mugs
clothes, shoes, crockery

1. Would you say that he/she has any physical or mental disabilities that require special attention?

Yes
No

1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2

Is this as a result of

Birth
Illness
Accident

3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5

On the whole would you say the child's health was

Good
Moderate
Poor

6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8

2. CHILD UNDER 2 YEARS : Did you attend a clinic or see your doctor regularly before the child was born?

No

1	1	1	1
---	---	---	---

How often?

2

How many months before birth?

4 months

3. CHILD UNDER 5 YEARS : Does the health visitor come to see your children regularly?

How often?

No

When was the last time?

4. Has always lived with you, or has there been a separation of, say, three months or more?

No

1	1	1	1
---	---	---	---

Reason?

shouldn't have to do

5. Does he/she go to school?

Nursery school?
Day nursery?

Primary (name)
Special

See med
technical college
grammar
fee-paying
boarding

1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2

6. Child's 11-plus prospects?

Any better with a father there

We'll have them. I'd take school work

If haven't ability
Not very good at all
at that level
I didn't go out of school

7. How many children are there in his/her class?

Number

35
35
2 classes

8. Which stream is child in?

Band of 5

9. How old is his teacher?

26

10. How old is the school?

New

v. old.

11. Has child missed any schooling this year? How much? Reasons?

2 days
absent
carriage
miles
fortnight

baby cut one a year

which nothing no help
no worse if seem a lot more

wants to go in navy

Names	age up	bought first second water
12. At what age do you expect child to finish school?	16	16
15. Has he or she had a holiday last year? No	① 2	① 2
How long? Who with? If not, when was the last?	Melias M... (Health Visitor)	All went away yr before M... to brother's gate... paid for Nov 10

16. Are you able to give them treats on their birthday, or that kind of occasion?
That I don't & Xmas that's all his
You can't give em anything

17. How do you manage when child is ill?
Have you ever had a minder?
That helps you. They're wanting lemonade
& you're trying to keep them with food &
you can't keep them with what they usually have

18. How does child manage when you are ill?
I go to bed when they go to bed
go to bed
Neighbour helped at last birth. Racked
feet up, looked after
3 biscuits
in paper. Gave children
baked fruit made waffles

19. Any day nursery facilities for the child?
Yes Milnsfordge - pay acc to means
wage very variable
but didn't take account of weeks
when no maintenance

20. Questions about children over 15, exams passed, school leaving age, further education, occupation now, comments on finding work, type of work etc.
school dinner
hardest part now a day
A law above husbands

School holidays
worried

Health visitor
16

are you married
I'd be mistful

from church
asked if child like
to go

haven't a chance to get an
pay for pay
children to give them

thought I get

17- 18-
bus fare

15/-

17- 18-
10 10/-

£7 £800

Now can I ask you something about your outgoings, your expenses and how you manage.

House-owners

Did you inherit this house, or buy it?

How did you raise the money for it when you became owners

How much of the mortgage is still to pay? And what kind?

What are you repaying weekly, monthly?

What is the ground-rent? How long is the lease?

What were your rates last half year (house and water)

Have you had any difficulties keeping up with mortgage or loan repayments recently?

How much insurance do you pay on the house?

Hangung director

Rented.

Have you ever been buying a house? (Were you buying one when you lost your husband, separated or divorced) What happened?

Who is the landlord? Council, private, employer, relative

Joseph Haggis

If council, how did you get the house?

If not, are you on the housing list, have you any chance of getting a council house?

Yes but after repaid ~~the~~ wouldn't afford

How much rent do you pay?

11/3

? rent weeks

Arrears £5

Do you get this all from the NAB or only part (what proportion)? Difficult with payments

Who is responsible for repairs?

landlord - only done by order of sanitary authorities

Who is responsible for decorations?

self

Cost of repairs and decorations recently (last yr) Any help from rels.

Do you have to pay rates? How much?

Inclusive

Fuel Bills

Mode of payment (slot, account, stamps) How much was the account last time? Gas Electricity

Bills 5. in arrears

couldn't pay & had to cut it

How much from the meter? G: *£3/7* E: *30/-* And rebate? G: *4/-* E: *and rebate*

How often do you buy solid fuel? *weekly 2 bags* And how much? *13/- 1 unit*

What was the last bill? *glennwood difference*

Other heating (paraffin)

the fire stopped

Telephone?

Bills?

FOOD

Milk

at a cup of tea haven't got any milk
 fetch milk
 a mother's milk
 but I got a pint of milk

They could drink every pint I can get

Total per day in pints

1. Do you have fresh milk (a) delivered 2
 (b) bought at a shop 3 or 4
 (c) from other sources Mum's brother's

Total fresh milk each week

2. What price do you pay per pint of milk (full rate)? 10^p

3. How many welfare milk token books have you (or your milkman) got? 1 welfare 1 NAB book

4. (a) How much milk does your family drink each week in the following forms?

	No. of Tins	Cost Per tin	Fresh milk equivalent	
			Volume	Price
Condensed/evaporated				
Dried Welfare				
" Other brands*				

- (b) *Why do you buy "other" branded dried milk instead of Welfare dried milk? (If bought!)

5. How much milk do the children in your household get at school (total pints per week)? 5 pn

Welfare foods (Only if pregnant or has children under 5)

6. Have you bought any of the following foods at your child-welfare clinic during the last month?

	How much	
Orange juice		bottles
Cod liver oil		bottles
Vit. A & D drops (Adexolin)		bottles
Farex or other fortified cereal		boxes
Vitamin tablets		packets
Marmite		tins
Other (say what)		

Meat

7. (a) Did anyone in the household buy any fresh (uncooked) meat (not sausages) during the last 7 days? Yes no

- (b) If not (i) is this because you are a vegetarian?

(ii) Did you buy meat in any other form, or fish? No/Other/Fish Meats

- (c) If you bought fresh meat:-

When:-	M.	T.	W.	Th.	Fr.	S.	S.	Total
How much								
Animal		<u>lamb</u>		<u>beef</u>				
Cut		<u>beef</u>		<u>beef</u>		<u>sausage</u>		
Price if known		<u>3/-</u>		<u>2/6</u>		<u>3/-</u>		
Who ate the meat and on which days?								
F., M., C.								

Bread and Potatoes

8. (a) What sort of bread do you generally buy?

White	
Brown	
Sliced	
Un sliced	

- (b) How many loaves each week?

large (number)	
small (number)	

9. Potatoes: How many pounds do you buy each week? 1 stone

10. Is there any difference in the amounts you buy when the children are not at school? Bread: More/less by Potatoes: More/less by

P.T.O.

I haven't a 1/2 in school holidays children have meals at home, Mum's up but at food shop in holiday.

Marge

at 3/11 at Christmas

A box of butter Marge sugar lamb's head pop

children won't take it

bread, potatoes, tattie, peas, sausage rolls

17. Can you tell me what sort of food all the members of the family ate yesterday?

Interview
 Mrs & Tues pay all in court
 F.A. by
 going of before NA.

Meals yesterday		Day	M.	T.	W.	Th.	F.	S.	S.
	What did you have?	At home	Elsewhere where?	What did your husband have?	At home	Elsewhere where?	What did the children who ate at home have?	What did the children who ate elsewhere have?	
Breakfast	<p><u>At</u> Boiled eggs tea mangle & bread tea & coffee for kids</p>								
Mid-morning break									
Dinner	<p>Paul & mother steak custard. tea</p>						School dinner		
Tea	<p>Mashed potatoes with pork pie Eggs, bacon & chips bread & mangle baby's mother (fried cheese & pudding!!)</p>		<p>Lyons Fish from shop chocolate biscuits</p>						
Supper	<p>Fish & chips cream sandwich M.C. couple of pasties & sandwiches</p>		<p>from grandmothers during special occasion</p>						

Do any of the children have free school meals
 walking + no mains
 worse off walking

monthly amount 25/-
 get to help them all

store can have more

WU
Carrots

I'm big on veg - ^{potatoes} turnips, carrots
8 jaffas bd 2 lb bananas
2 lb apples
3 lemons - drinks

Fresh Fruit

- 11. (a) Have you bought any fresh fruit during the last 7 days? Yes/No
- (b) If you did, what did you buy and what did it cost? lemon

holidays

- 12. (a) Do you sometimes buy on credit at the food stores, or do you always pay cash? Credit sometimes / Never school holiday
- (b) If you do buy on credit, how high do you let your bills get before you pay them? £ 2 ?

- (c) Do you owe any money now to a food store? epb
- What about the milk bill? About how much?

- 13. Do you know how much you spend on food altogether each week? If you have an idea, about how much is it? £ 200

- 14. If you had more money to spend on food each week, which items do you think you would spend it on?

- 15. What items of food have you cut down on buying as the family got larger?

- 16. (a) Do you grow any food for yourselves? Where?
- Vegetables babe
- Fruit
- Rabbits
- Poultry

- (b) Can you give me an idea of what sort of quantities are involved, and how often, e.g. how many pounds of vegetables and fruit per week in winter and summer, how many animals and eggs?

mother bus fares back

1/- a day gas → 2 if heavy wash
more electric

attempting to economise

Weekly

- 11/3 rent
- 12/- coal
- 10/- gas
- electricity
- 10/6 clothes
- 5/-
- 7/6 milk bus fares
- 5/-
- 1/-
- 2/6

so much debt after

food debts

put by "Thurs & Fri"
part of this bus fare
more fares

1/-
mother's errands

money for errands

mother's price

Knitted & stuffed toys 10
make toys

CLOTHES ~~knitted & stuffed toys~~ Free school uniforms

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about buying clothes and shoes.

1. When you buy clothes and shoes do you pay cash for them or do you sometimes buy them on credit?

Cash	✓
On credit sometimes	No

 Which most often? *very little buyer*

2.(a) If you have ever bought clothes and shoes on credit - either for yourself or for the children, did you buy them from: *Yes before you.*
(i) somebody who came to your house

 Which most often?
(ii) a shop

(b) If (i)

Yes	No
less	about more
	same

(a) do you think you got as good a choice as you would get in a shop?
(b) that the quality was as good?
(c) that you paid
(c) How much do you pay each week (month) for clothes and shoes bought on credit (including payments for clothing clubs)? Amount:

Nil	

Is this the same all the year round?

They're always swapping & making round here 'Have you got a sand so, well I've got a so & so

3.(a) Do you ever buy second-hand clothes and shoes for yourself or the children?

Housewife			
Children		✓	
Husband			

(b) Do you ever get given clothes and shoes for you or the children? If so, who gives them?

Housewife	Yes		
Children		Sisters	
Husband			

Do you make any clothes for yourself or for the children?

Housewife	No		
Children			
Husband			

If yes, on whose machine? *banker gave used, Neighbour give cloth*
learned machine a gift

big want have anything here made

5. Do you put money aside in advance specially to buy clothes and shoes? How much each week? *NB*
6. Can you say roughly how much you have spent on clothes for yourself and the family for which you paid cash during the last three months? *Nil*

Shoes

7.(a) Can you tell me how many pairs of shoes, wellingtons, etc., each child under 15 in the family has today? I should like to know in some detail what kind of shoes they are (e.g. canvas, leather or plastic top, sandal or shoe, wellington, etc.) and whether they fit.

last birthday for birthday make family

Name of Child:	Pairs of shoes, etc. :-				Total
	1	2	3	4	
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

NB IT'S NOT ALWAYS LIKE THIS (Xmas just past + NAB grants)

(b) Do you find that the children grow out of their shoes before the shoes are worn out, or is it the other way round?
Comments:- *He's worn down getting wear out of them*
(c) Can you tell me about how much you spent on shoe repairs for all the family during the last month?

--

Mended them herself with brother's also as borrowed last

we are for children everybody got a tv we've not got one
wanting to one
not essential five
jumble sale for free

8. Now I'd like to ask you about some of the things you have got and about everything except clothes for which you are making regular payments at the moment, or have paid for in the last 3 months.

Did you have any of these with you when husband died/left?

	Do you own it or rent it?	Did you pay or are you paying for it?	Buy it from door to door?	Pay cash?	On credit or H.P.?	Amount paid if regular payments per week/month/Quarter			
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)		
	O or R					£	s.	d.	period
T.V.		once had 9" TV from jumble sale							like one for children but not essential
Wireless/Radio-gram									
Bicycle									
Motor vehicle									
Cooker (elec./gas)						2/6 week			(£50 approx)
Washing Machine									
Water Heater (elec./gas)									
Other (if paying now or within last 3 months)									
Furniture									
Durables (list)									
Non-durables (list)									

9. Do you have any credit accounts anywhere, which you have not just mentioned? Can you tell me roughly how much is owing on them at the moment?
 No
 About £ s. d.

Not food/clothes

10.(a) Are there any things you feel that you or your family ought to have which you haven't got at the moment? What are they?

Durables:
Non-durables:

(b) Which of these things do you plan to get during the coming year?

(c) In order to pay for it/them, will you save up the money, borrow it from a bank or finance company, or buy it/them on credit or hire purchase? About how much do you think they will cost?

Things to be bought	Save	Bank	Finance Co.	Credit	H.P.

can't pay for it
father do

Other items.

There are one or two other items we haven't covered here.

Children's pocket money *5/- from ^{Mrs} mother* *Lynne 1/6* *children earn bit off neighbour*

Sweets toys etc *mother gives 1/6* *odd bits*

Your own smoking expenses? *mother gives sweets oranges* *mother treat her*

Cost of laundry

Any other -payment for children's education directly or indirectly?

Income.

How could I ask about your income?

Are you working? Hours? Occupation?
 Is this regular? No Wage?

Do you usually work, but find yourself unable to do so at the moment? For what reason?

How long is it since you've worked?

What did you do then? Wage? *9-4 + overtime*
£6 10s

What kind of work could you do? Any qualifications? When did you leave school?
Mending

What prevents you from working now? Practical (no baby-sitter, work, or nurseries)

or ideological (shouldn't leave baby) is irregular, *Waste of working when maintenance has 10/- week*

When do you expect to start work again, if you do? *bus fares, the nursery, child minder mind her when Paul goes to school*

What state benefits? F A (Widow's (type)); Unemp; sickness; injury:

18/-

National Assistance: *£3/17/-* *we rent plus rent?* *any discretionary allowance recently?*

Any interest or dividends (stocks, building soc. bank, defence bds, warla

Any other - trade union, friendly soc, private sickness, govt pension, annuity, insurance interest, trust fund

Draws up income periodically (fasc 4- weekly) *3 drawings*

Any maintenance, alimony, separation or affiliation order?

2/10/1-

1030 1011

In last twelve months any maternity benefits or death grant

Yes

Subletting (light and heat included)

No

grandchildren pictures can't afford it

In the last twelve months have you had any income from

odd jobs, inheritance, betting, pools win premium bonds

children 2/6 & 1/6 weekly spent

saved

Have you any savings left (building soc, premium bonds, stocks and shares, property)

Total assets apart from house

Have you had to use any savings in the last twelve months, sell property insurance policies, furniture

Have you had any cash help from relatives/neighbours

At birthdays & Xmas

any help in kind

see clothes, food etc

Is your position about the same as twelve months ago or is it getting better or worse?

Better? diff to compare

How does this compare with when you were married, before your husband died, before you started the baby.

Husband's wage

£22

Own wage

Managing. Any special devices (money in envelopes, saving up, electric stamps)

Any special shopping at special times

cheap cuts of meat belly pork twice 1/6

Any special pinching that's felt (uneconomical to buy a joint)

Ever have a treat, or slip with the economy? When was the last?

do you meet sudden calls (say TV license)

Not had any. Goes into debt w rent, food?

Haven't a man to feed

NAB

Did you try at first to do without the NAB? How long?

pick up of things
you're better put it down

Did you try anybody else?

What made you go to the NAB first? How did you get to know about it?
How did you feel about it?

I'd have gone anywhere but there

What was the first interview like? Did they suggest you should work, sell anything, apply for second-hand clothes

partly at home made it seem worse

Have you had any other special requirements which were met by the NAB since?

School coat, boys jeans & shoes

How do you feel about assistance now?

Don't think a woman should have work

Any way it could be improved? (process of collecting money, cost of visit to office, time, loss of earnings)

Seemed as if she wanted her needs assessed without coming to court visit & NAB visit a nuisance

How much money do you really need? How much of this would be for the child/ren alone?

Always wanted that bit more 2 St is a terrific bit of money
Not compared to other families
Not compared with other families

Is assistance a disincentive to earning

Do you expect to be on assistance a long time? Regularly?

til Paul is 5

How well off are you with respect to the rest of the community, the old people, the unemployed, widows without children

worse than aged

Make good of a bad job

I haven't had time to work

food time depressed

feed for children

junk

but the...

just enough

Fathers

W How did you manage to pay for the funeral?

W Readjustment after the funeral

Husband last wage

U to next page

U Could I ask something about the children's father

U How old was he when your child(ren) was born?

Paul's father

U What was his occupation at that time?

U At what age had he left school?

Don't know

U Was he married or single?

Said he was single

U How long had you known him before you started the baby?

U Had you any knowledge of contraception?

U Any suggestion of marriage? Why not?

Never seen him since

U reactions of relatives, friends neighbours,

Only went out once

U Own feelings

Didn't know
Mother had been alone herself
said if she couldn't help even if
nobody could. 'I don't know what to do'

U arrangements, adoption, factors in keeping baby

no suggestion

U financial, affiliation, paternity order (father's wage?)

Never seen since

U Do you feel NOW THAT YOU did the right thing keeping the baby

U what part did the church play, the local welfare workers

U where did you have the baby

U present relations with father, his family? Know his circumstances

Not seen

U anything in your life that would account for you having a baby

U own background, childhood, happy? broken home?

U Future? marriage, living with man

I wouldn't say

U if abortion had been legal would you have had one? Would you now regret it?

No.

going off

getting coat

1st week

Divorced and separated.

husband in well Y22

Husband's age, occupation, SLA

38

Tuner, window-cleaner, milkmaid

Was the break sudden or gradual abdication (marriage guidance, what help)

Somehow wore off with him never mind

What stage of homebuilding had you reached

No furniture - all broken up by husband

What sort of financial arrangements (which court, how much) Were they enforced, kept up

High court? Husband disappeared Syria

Feelings about suing for maintenance

Feeling it was right

Husband's circumstances then, and now

I 22 then. In London now circumstances not known

Present relationship with father

Never seen

Relations with husband's family

Husband's father killed in accident

How do financial circs. compare with before separation

Better

Had access to his money

Comments on law

Law has not got it right

Why should marriage break up

Future, divorce, remarriage, living with man

it does happen

not advising anybody to do it

nobody to talk to

Secretly

can't tell neighbours

affection

The present.

Help

Does anybody help you with looking after children, cleaning, shopping, errands.

children Michael

Do you help anyone else.

ORP?

If you have money troubles who do you turn to (rels, friends neighbours, bank, employer, pawnshop, secondhand shop)

NB

If you have trouble with children who do you turn to

Nobody (vixen)

T. J. ...

If you have housing trouble who do you turn to

Have you ever been helped by, doctor, welfare clinic, child guidance clinic, child care dept., probation officer, health visitor, Citizens Advice Bureau, WVS, FWA or FSU, Town Hall, Church, MP or councillor, Clubs

Any kind of troubles just now?

NA

NA

Social life.

Ever go out? When, who with? Evenings? Ever meet any men socially?

last night ... in 12 months

step father
want to be with
good man

How many evenings out in the last fortnight?

Holidays

How does this compare with former state

didn't believe in ...

Attendance at church

can't leave him ...

Membership of clubs

N.

Voting habits

✓

son in charge
take interest in background

Reading, what type

TV programmes, What do you feel when you see happy family programmes like Larkins, Coronation Street)

surprised ...

secret every day
before

The present.

Do you have any awkward feelings about your present state (guilt, blameworthiness, pretence of marriage)

Do you feel secure?

How do you manage bringing up the children without a husband?
Worry about them

Look at them differently,

Do you think it will affect boys, girls development (will they be good mothers and fathers, good men and women)

Will boys be the worse for not being able to look up to father

Will girls hate all men

Will boys be manly, or will you coddle him

How about discipline for the children, do you check them

How do you explain father's absence to them

When do you feel the lack of a husband most
children

education

officials,

planning expenses

dress

morale

sexually,

going out, at nights

decorating,

odd jobs,

holidays (bank holidays, what do you do)

I'm going to him

what's a boy

What's your name?

Do you feel as if you fit in with the people you know

Are you ever lonely, bored

What did you do yesterday, a normal day (any visits, or visitors) who did you talk to

How do you feel, health good, fair poor, sleep, apathy, housework

Do you ever feel you can't go on

Thought of putting children in care

Will you/have you become accustomed to it

Relations with family/husband's family Any more dependent

Can you see better times ahead as the children grow? Do you plan ahead

Would more money make you feel better? When do you feel lack of money most? For instance even if you had money for a joint would you feel like cooking one?

How?

Are the children aware of the lack of money? When? How do you know?

Suggestions (possibility of group feeling, group action)

time to see

costly budget
save coal

The following item is an extract from one of the transcribed interviews. It was found in a folder marked “good stories not used”. Marsden confirmed in email that these data extracts were ones he found to be compelling and memorable stories. However, he could not find a suitable place for them in the published research. These extracts serve as a useful reminder that research is as much about what to leave out as what to include.

HS4
Evidences

"My mother was having to keep us. She'd got married again, and well like, she didn't have to go out to work, but she went out to work so that she could give us the money. She was paying the rent, and the coal, and was giving us money for food. He had a good wage but it was during the war and he used to go working up and down and he never used to send us any."

"How I found out was one time when I was putting his clothes in the wardrobe, we had a little wardrobe, and he'd left his suit out, and when I picked it up his wallet and one or two things fell out on the bed, and he'd been going to the Infirmary (well, he never called it the Infirmary, he called it the Hospital). He'd always had this pain and I didn't know what it was for, but this card fell out, this Attendance Card, and I looked at it, and I couldn't believe it, it was for the V.D. Clinic. He was going for treatment for going with other women. And when I saw this card I rushed out, straight to me Mum, she lived at Berrybrow and I saw 'Oh, what's it for, Mum? What's it for? Is it something bad?' She knew, and I said, 'It isn't anything wrong, is it?' And she said, 'I might as well tell you, it is.' And she told me. So after that I went to the doctor, and he was really peeved. He'd tried his best with our family, he'd always been good to us. So he told me to go to a solicitor, well the solicitor said, 'What have you done with your evidence?' and I said that in the spur of the moment my mother had gone up in the air and kicked up a stink, and she had thrown it on the fire. So the solicitor sent me up to the Infirmary, but they wouldn't tell me, they'd tell a solicitor, but they wouldn't say anything to me even though I was his wife. So I decided to go just for a separation. Well, when I got home that night I locked him out, I wouldn't let him in. I couldn't bear to think

of him coming in and loving the children and playing with them. He was all filthy and I'd always been brought up a very clean person, always to wash my body and be nice and clean, but he wouldn't wash, and he came back trying to get in, and I couldn't keep him out, he burst the door open. And he said it was his name on the Rent Book. We were stopping up all night. The next day he went, but he came back again and we were fighting and screaming behind the door, he tried to strangle me. Well, when I came to my neighbour came in. You always have a neighbour, don't you? that you trust to, and confide all your troubles to, and she came and helped me." "When he came back next time I chased him out with the poker. I wouldn't have him back, and it after this that I got my separation. Well there was no point having him there because, even if his name was on the Rent Book, as Mum was paying the rent and the coal, and giving us something to feed and keep us. He wasn't giving us anything, so the solicitor wrote to the house solicitors and got my name put on the Rent Book, and he told me to go on to the Guardians. It wasn't the National Assistance in them days. And after I went to the Guardians one thing led to another and it went on and on, and here I am."

Colin Gubson's Survey - Bedford College

Aims - to study the operation of the courts in respect of maintenance & affiliation orders for deserted & divorced wives and their children. To see how many orders, what type of order, how long they have run, how large they are, what amount the husband is due to pay, whether he does pay, arrears, prison sentences, husband's circumstances, occupation, wife's residence, grounds for order, any other grounds mentioned, number using magistrates' court as a stepping stone to other courts, number of wives on NA (this most probably will be done via direct interview from follow-up of the survey. Trying to get debts (via New office) to fill in Q5. Random sample of courts (US = 600 interviews)

Previous research

Colin Gubson & Miss John report practically no previous research at this point. There is a study by Rawnsley & Curran in SC, which suggests that class diff in divorce proceedings are now non-existent & grounds similar. The Bedford team disagrees, suggesting that in SC legal Aid had only just really got going (started in 5-10-11) & that therefore the divorces in that year were of a particular kind.

Recommendations reading: Pugh, & Nutshell book is concise. But what is the law & what actually happens are two distinct things. Thus, it is a matter greatly up to the local clerk when, and under what stress he will prosecute. Technically he could prosecute for 1 wk arrears. Royal Commission worth reading.

Other legal points - No standard form to fill in for a case. No course history taken.

Some clerks state wife's residence

Some clerks state if wife on NA, but by no means always, & indeed GG suggest that only 1/6 are noted (his figures from Cambridge gave only 10% on NA).

Clerks prefer one description for maintenance - i.e. desertion. Cruelty may have been proved & adultery, but these may not go on the statistics.

Forget if he said that affiliations were defended or undefended. Surprised there were not defended - may be that only those beyond dispute ever reach courts.

NA's coming of itself take out affiliation orders, but could take out a maintenance order for arrears they were paying to. The mother herself could take out an order at some date after a year, providing that during that year a

subsequently the father had acknowledged paternity, say by living with the girl or by giving her money.

C.G. had no pat solution - inclined to defend 'freedom of the individual' in connection with tax number. Actually a court, in making out an attachment of earnings order can require to know a man's gross earnings. C.G. said if a man doesn't want to pay, nothing can make him. A spell, in fact even becomes an economic proposition quite quickly as the arrears mount to £60 (£ burke) or over.

Most divorces are adultery, in all classes (seems obvious why, doctors could be important here).

Max is £7/10/- for wife - v seldom awarded. £2/10/- for child. 1960 Act now permits wife to get children's allowance on the same order as her own.

There are one or two other special types of order - for maintenance are done through the Home Office for husbands living in the Commonwealth, which hardly ever works.

'The Union' would object to any great change in the law. Lady Sumner's Bill had a first reading. At the second reading it was denounced & thrown out. Govt weren't prepared for the far-reaching reforms needed. cited Bedford's work! In Hansard - ask for reference!

Books Nutchell Series - Dwain's Matrimonial Cases, by Pamela Davies (pub. Sweet & Maxwell)

Samuels' Law for Social Workers - useful & simplified!

Pugh - Matrimonial Proceedings before Magistrates.

Willkinson Summary Matrimonial & Guardianship Orders
" Application Law & Practice

Glossary of terms relating to Income

1. N.A. scale rate, basic scale

- J The basic amount which the NAB would have paid the household according to its scales, assuming there were no other form of income whatsoever and no bar to payment of the full amount. Includes the housing cost as this would have been assessed by the NAB. Does not include any discretionary allowances, even if conventionally paid, e.g. 6/- fuel allowance in winter.
- D Basic allowance and rent
- A Basic allowance + rent after deducting share of rent paid by independent member of the household. (other than husband or wife).
- H Basic allowance + housing costs. Housing cost is usually rent, but when there are mortgage payments these have been added without deducting capital payments because these were not always known. Independent children's share of the rent has not been deducted.

2. Poverty line

- J I don't think I've used this without explanation, but it is A-S & T's 140% of NA basic scale. Needs redefinition, but we do need a short way of saying "by comparison with the average level of living as found by A-S & T of those who have been officially adjudged poor by the fact of their receipt of NA". You see what I mean?
- D Hasn't used one, but has taken basic allowances + rent as a measure as defined above.
- A As above
- H As above

Are we comparing families' level of living with the average level of living of those in receipt of N.A. or with the level of basic N.A. allowances plus rent? For large families the latter is likely to be above the former.

3. Regular weekly household incomes

- J Net household disposable income.

The net HDI is the amount remaining after a sum for the maintenance and housing of the non-dependent members of the household has been deducted from the gross HDI. The concept of net HDI is needed to provide a basis for the examination of the income available to the subject household after non-dependents have been eliminated from the picture. I do this by including the gross amounts they pay and deducting the notional amounts they cost, including a per head share of the assessable housing cost.

- D N.A. basic allowances and rent, discretionary allowance, family allowance, court order, net earnings (before deductions by the NAB)

Widows pensions and allowances for children, income from ledgers or independent children (less contributions for rent and other maintenance costs of these children), education maintenance allowances, voluntary payments from husbands and fathers, additional regular cash incomes.

A Regular gross weekly income together with income from other household members.

H As J and D except that 30/- has been deducted from each of the working children's contributions.

4. Household income

J Gross income plus income in hand.

Household income: total income received by the heads of the household (man and wife) from all sources.

D Total income level: regular weekly household income plus irregular cash income, plus welfare and education income in kind plus miscellaneous income in kind.

A Does not use this term as such but equivalent to regular gross weekly income, plus income in kind, plus

H Total weekly household income - same as D and J (apart from treating independent children differently as stated above).

5. Assessable income

J The total amount of household income which would be assumed as paid and would not be disregarded by the NAB.

D Incomes required for calculation of basic N.A. level - family allowances, court order, earnings of mother, bus fares, expenses, etc, widows pensions and allowances for children, income from ledger or non dependent children. (share of rent deducted from both), education maintenance allowance, voluntary payments from husbands.

A. & H Haven't used this as such: wage stop complicates the issue. A has estimated amount of wage stop by subtracting from the basic N.A. allowances and rent the family's "resources": N.I.U.B., family allowances etc. Similarly H has estimated amount of wage stop but without taking disregards into account.

6. Official Income

Assessable income plus total payment received from NA. For non-recipients of N.A. it is the same as assessable income; it is their income for official purposes of seeing if they are in poverty according to the official standard.

D Same as incomes required for calculation of the basic national assistance level together with payments from N.A.

A Regular weekly household income, family allowance, pensions, earnings.

H Haven't used this term as such.

7. Man's income

J Income received by a man on his own account or on account of his position as head of a household de jure even if not de facto. Includes earnings, pensions and benefits, including amounts received by him for dependents, but not amounts which are payable to dependents in their own right, e.g. wives' own pensions or family allowances.

D Not needed for obvious reasons.

A Regular weekly net income plus wife's earnings, his extra earnings, his pension.

H Haven't used this in the same way at all. Family allowances have been included in all components of income and not treated separately. The equivalent sum would be basic wages + overtime or state benefit plus wife's earnings + children's contributions. Just as important as man's income is wife's income, i.e. housekeeping, her earnings, children's contributions and family allowances.

D.M.'s comments on Glossary of Terms.

1. N.A. scale rate, basic scale.

I used basic allowance plus rent (or mortgage interest) because this is the one sum which can be known easily. Complications arise with allowing for relatives in the house because they are not always assessed by the NAB as contributing fully. Thus, two teenage sons who are not steady workers appear to be assessed at 2/6 each, but are probably a liability. I was trying to get at what the mother was entitled to as the head of a national assistance household, and then I was comparing what she actually received (NA plus relatives' contributions etc) against this.

Complications arise where the rent is paid directly, or where the national assistance fatherless family is lodging with another national assistance family. In both instances the family interviewed received no rent, and all ^{their} other incomes must appear proportionately larger if the basic scale excluding rent is used for these families.

2. Poverty line.

I didn't really use the NA 100% line as a poverty base, but merely to calculate whether my families really lived at the 140% Peter and Brian suggest. Their line appears a bit misleading in one way because most of the families on assistance are old people who do better with allowances than fatherless families at least.

3. Regular weekly household income.

My regular weekly household income was slightly more complicated in that I corrected not only for relatives giving money, but also for that proportion of money which the household must spend on that relative i.e. if a family on national assistance received a net income of £2 above NA scale rate, then I split the £2 between the national assistance recipients and the relative (using proportions based on NA scale).

4 Household income.

Seems to be fair agreement here, except for Hilary's estimate of what food costs. I say 35/- merely because it makes nicer numbers to split up for individual meals: breakfast 5/-, lunch 10/-, dinner 20. Quite untenable.

5. Assessible Incomes.

Some room for disagreement here since you can either add in those sums which the NAB knows about and ignores (like education maintenance), or you can leave them out as not affecting assessment. It really depends what we want this figure for. Difficult to take account of bus fares, and this is usually done by inference from what the NAB has assessed i.e. the question which assessible income answers is of the type - did the NAB allow for the fact that this mother spends x on bus fares, out of her wage of y.

6. Official income.

Don't know if this is much use. Can't remember now why I worked it out, although it seemed a good idea at the time. It really means, what does the NAB think this family gets, but it's a rather artificial construct since the NAB doesn't issue figures for this, does it?

Addenda

There isn't a term for this point, but I know John and I have used different conceptions of certain incomes like welfare benefits, cash given for TV, school clothing grants etc. I'm open to conversion on this since the sums are small, but at the moment we're arguing for different principles and the matter ought to be raised at the meeting on Friday.

D.M. 25/1/66

The following item is a draft written on the subjective, or “felt” experience of poverty. In the opening paragraph, Marsden speculates as to whether or not to include this section, or to let the understanding of felt poverty emerge more indirectly. Ultimately, he did include a chapter, “On feeling poor: the social context of poverty” in the book, *Mothers Alone*.

8 'Felt' poverty

I'm not sure whether we need a separate section on how mothers feel poverty. Perhaps the feeling may best come through indirectly, and all this section will be subsumed in the others. I notice that I've already begun to use bits of material in the section on expenditure. My reason for including this title in the section headings is that we can describe objective conditions of life and quantities of this and that, but how do the mothers feel about it? Do they actually feel themselves to be worse off?

It seems obvious, but it's worth saying, that nobody felt the scales were adequate. On the other hand, most of them wouldn't say how much they needed, and the reason for this reluctance appeared twofold. They were already self-conscious about receiving 'charity', though the feeling wore off after a time, and also the long time of pinching and scraping had become a habit of mind. They just couldn't think about wants and needs, they daren't let their appetites be titillated by thoughts of more money and nice food and possessions. As one said, when going shopping her constant thoughts were 'can I do without this, can I do without that'. People were sensitive about poverty in different degrees which was quite unrelated to their needs. Mrs Dufay was one of the most vociferous in complaining of the rates, and telling me how she's rather spend her money on the children than on herself – yet she goes out drinking in town on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, paying a little girl 10/- an evening to look after her four young children, and she told me she daren't wear either of her two new coats at the NAB office because the other mothers will think she's 'on the game'. Mrs Whiteley, however, made no complaint. I think most mothers, while regretting that they had to receive assistance, found payment by order book dignified and much better than going to the office. Mrs Calverley caught the feeling of many nicely when she explained that she wasn't all that sensitive (for instance she wouldn't bother to change the colour of the books, though she had a widow's pension as well as her assistance), but she wouldn't cash her orders at the local village post office. She took them to the GO. And, although, she knew seven people on assistance up her road because she saw the officer going to visit them, and they all knew one another, none of them ever mentioned being on assistance.

Her situation was interesting from another point of view. She knew in one way that she wasn't badly off compared with many (she appears above the NAB rates to me), and the officer told her about all the instances of men on low wages. But as she said, round where she was living there wasn't anybody like that; they were all older people with grown-up working families, and they all had new furniture and the children all had new toys, even though it was a corporation estate. This was her reference group, not the wage-stop families whom she had never met and only half believed in. Miss Brook had felt the lowest of the low when she lived in her slum house sharing a yard with a small shopkeeper with a car. He never spoke to her. But on the corporation estate where she was re-housed many people were on assistance, and only two doors along was a family where the man wouldn't work who were much worse off. Miss Brook found herself giving away toys and sandwiches to the children, and her son would joke about taking his bacon and egg supper along to wave under their windows to make them jealous. Miss Brook was fortunate in having lowly neighbours. Most other families had to confess that they were worse off than the neighbours, and they reacted in various ways. It seemed as if the tougher ones with feelings exaggerated by having to play the role of father in disputes over children with neighbours, quite often fell out with the neighbours. And neighbours were quick to point out 'we're keeping such as you'. At the opposite extreme, the more timorous and deferential withdrew into themselves and the family circle. Mrs Kneeshaw, ever since someone had passed a remark about the smartness of a dress she was wearing 'and her on National Assistance', said she felt awful, as if she wasn't entitled to go out and enjoy herself. She felt safest under the blanket of the dark winter evenings. Mrs Richards and Mrs Calverley too mentioned this feeling that they weren't entitled to be smart – you couldn't strike a balance; if you were smart you were too smart, if drab, you were letting yourself go.

Yet others had a fairly happy relationship with neighbours, or a neighbour, and people helped them. But I felt curiously uneasy about Mrs Campbell. She was somehow too deserving, too willing to be helped. True she scratched and scraped and managed, making all her own cakes and cooking nourishing meals with the minimum of expense. But she was too willing to be helped. The neighbours or the church had thought she might be offended if they'd offered her this or that but she wasn't. Should she have been? I don't know.

So much for poverty and their surroundings. Mothers were also conscious of poverty at different times and seasons. Christmas was awful for some. Mrs Henry had to tell her children Father Christmas hadn't brought any toys for them. Then after Christmas she bought toys in the sales and said he'd remembered after all. Christmas was worse than birthdays because Christmas demanded that everyone should have a present. The most acute feelings of poverty came via the children who couldn't understand, and sometimes resented that they couldn't have what others had got. At the same time the children were acknowledged to be a comfort which offset poverty to a degree: Mrs Savage knew that however badly off she might be now, with two children she would never be as low as in the past. Poverty to these mothers was a constant succession of small nagging worries. Mrs Henry (as so often) seemed to place this exactly when she said she wasn't deprived of anything, but it was the ice cream man stopping outside her window every night and her three wistful daughters looking out that really made her feel poor.

Richer relatives could rub in a mother's situation. Table 5 gives contacts with siblings, showing that six families at least were estranged, possibly with poverty and affluence as a contributory cause. Mrs Ramsden and Mrs Henry had both had far less help from their families after they separated. In Mrs Ramsden's family although she'd been round and seen everyone at Christmas they'd not even given her children the usual presents, possibly because her new poverty made gifts too suggestive of patronage. Mrs Kneeshaw envied her brother and sister's lovely homes, and as with other mothers such feelings chimed in with her pre-disposing shyness to emphasise the hopelessness of her situation. Mrs Rex was well aware that while she couldn't have a joint at weekends, her sister two doors away thought nothing of a chicken mid-week, and one wonders if this wasn't partly responsible for her desire to move and the lack of warmth in her relations with her sister.

Some reaction to poverty have been mentioned: aggression, withdrawal, Mrs Campbell's possible 'pauperisation'. I will return again to the awful loneliness which was the sum of poverty and lack of a husband for a proportion of these women. Other reactions showed up in their health. I've not checked the figures here, and information doesn't seem very reliable, but possibly various forms of 'nerves' would

be the commonest trouble. The widows, oddly, had been ill before their husbands' death. Three out of the four had severe breakdowns. The other women hadn't been so seriously ill, but they mentioned symptoms ranging from hysterical paralysis to insomnia, or overactive thoughts about the future. Mrs Regent had a kind of frenzy the week before I called, smashing furniture. Several talked of suicidal feelings. Mrs Savage was a drug addict. Some of these and other mothers seemed exhausted; they couldn't work any more.

Patterns of expenditure and household management were quite different from family to family. Mrs Whiteley had managed without grants for many years, and budgeted for rent once monthly. She was a careful shopper, avoiding credit HP and clubs. At the opposite extreme was Mrs Savage who spent with a fine disregard of the consequences, on the principle that if you thought about buying a thing you'd never buy it. Mrs Savage spent 6/- a week on the horses and she was won regularly. She'd also had a phase when she did every competition she could lay her hands on. She wrote plays and books in the hope of making money that way. Heavily in debt for HP, she had no compunction about concealing income from the NAB, and managed by a judicious system of luck, support from relatives and borrowing from friends. Mrs Waldie, although she smoked 140 cigarettes a week ('how I've scatted for a cig.') also managed to do two sets of football pools, keep her husband's on for sentimental reasons, at 3/- each. Smoking was a more common reaction than gambling, though here and in Mrs Savage's situation the two went together. Between these two extremes mothers, pinched and scraped or committed indiscretions with HP, were deferential or insulting about the NAB.

When they finally came off assistance, if they ever did, their reactions might be similar to Mrs Garside and Mrs Hughes. Mrs Garside said it felt marvellous, and told me what she was going to buy – she hadn't bought anything last week she said because she hadn't got used to being able to buy things again 'but wait a few weeks..'. Mrs Hughes was a more pathetic instance of what long assistance can do. After years of scraping, when she'd look forward to her children growing up and working, the dream had been achieved only to be shattered almost at once when she found they started wanting to get married: 'I think the children have resented it deep down because they come asking for things and they can't have them. Little things they've

said - they've shown it. Like they've said to me, 'so-and-so mum's buying her a so-and-so. Can't I have one?' I tell you what all the trouble is now. It's courting and getting married. My eldest daughter is always on at me. She wants to get married but she seems to think I've got to pay for the wedding and I can't do it. I just haven't got the money. And I don't want her to get married. I've said to them that I've worked all these years and I think I'm entitled to have them at home till they're 21. It's the future I'm worried about now. I'm worried about what will happen to me when they all leave me. I didn't care at all when my husband first left me. I thought let him go, I've got my children. When they grow up, they'll be working. I used to look forward to it like a dream, and then when my eldest girl got working it was like heaven. But then a bit later on you realise your children, they aren't your own really. You can't keep them at home forever and I think deep down I'd like them to stay the same. I wouldn't want them to get married; I'd like them to stop here with me. But you can't make them do that can you? And they all say they want homes of their own. They won't have me living with them. No, they're not grateful. You can't make them grateful but somehow it's not clicked with them. I think something would have to happen to them. They can't see that I count at all. But I won't live on my own. I don't know what I'll do but I won't live on my own. It worries me at nighttime. I can't sleep. When I'm in bed and I should be sleeping, I'm thinking what will happen to me when they've gone. You see I can't go back to how I was before. I don't want my daughter to get married because I can't do without her wage. As we've been these last few years, we've been able to what I call 'live properly'. We've been able to keep a good table and it hasn't all been chips and beans or slices of toast .. but I don't want to go back to that now. I wouldn't go back to that now'. Mrs Hughes was one of the mothers who had a good word to say for the NAB and their kindness to her.

An Annotated Bibliography of My Research Work

Dennis Marsden - 1998

I have been asked for an annotated bibliography which will provide a context and commentary for *Mothers Alone* and my later work. However, it is relevant to begin with a brief autobiographical note to explain how and why I came into social research, and how I developed my own particular approach to social research and social policy. I hope that in what follows I have been careful enough in treading the fine line between trying to identify the innovative elements in my work and conveying its impact on various audiences, and mere self-aggrandisement!*

The shaping of my approach to social research

My initial research interests were shaped by my early experiences of social mobility from a 'respectable' (Methodist and deeply moral) working-class background via grammar school to a science course at Cambridge (see *Breakthrough* (1968)). Although at Cambridge I received a high quality grounding in scientific method, I found my education deeply unsatisfying as a basis for understanding what was going on in my personal life and the lives of those around me. However, it was only during National Service that I finally abandoned any thoughts of a career in science. I became interested in the early social research of Beatrice Potter (Webb), Charles Booth and Henry Mayhew, and upon leaving the forces I moved to Toynbee Hall in London's East End.

This was the exciting time of the *New Left Review* and the publication of a range of socially concerned journalism and novels which 'rediscovered' working class life and the continued existence of social and economic deprivation. But what particularly drew me to the East End was the published work of the Institute of Community Studies, which had been set up by Michael

* Because I was unsure about the requirements, I have not attempted to reference the various comments which I have included merely to provide a flavour of the reception of my research by different 'audiences'.

Young and Richard Titmuss to research the impact of policies of slum clearance and redevelopment on working class 'communities'. For me, what gave this work its particular appeal and power was that the framework of statistics and policy discussion was brought to life by excerpts from interviews where ordinary people described their experiences and feelings in their own words. These interviews were then sensitively interpreted within a sociological framework, and with an eye to the impacts of social policy and a view to possible policy recommendations.

I wrote a long letter to Michael Young describing how my earlier experiences had shaped my interest in social research, and the Institute gave me a part-time job interviewing on their research on family life and housing. Later, I was given a larger role doing in-depth research on living with mental illness. At the same time, through living at Toynbee Hall I gained further experience of the urban environmental squalor and social problems in the East End. For example, I did supply teaching and school care visiting for 'sink' schools, I went camping with deprived teenagers, I helped in the Poor Man's Lawyer, and I gained further research experience on a small project on the impact of rehousing on the lives of the elderly. For a while I contemplated becoming a social worker, and I received the offer of a place at LSE. But meanwhile in my brief return visits to Yorkshire, along with another working-class school and university friend Brian Jackson, I began pilot interviews for our own 'community study' of Huddersfield.

I can still recapture the rather innocent excitement of those early heady days, when my eyes were suddenly opened to the range of social questions and to what then seemed the enormous possibilities of social research. Yet what has chiefly stayed with me is that I discovered the excitement of depth interviewing – perfect strangers would tell me the most amazing things! At that time, I developed the view which I still hold, that rather than interviews being merely 'illustrative' of theories or numerical data generated elsewhere, often it is depth interviews themselves that generate the major concepts and ideas. And I have since come to recognise that I feel most 'alive' and productive as a sociologist and social analyst while participating in discursive interviews, and again when analysing those interviews.

This fascination with what interviews can reveal has always been a major driving force in my career as a researcher, but there have obviously been other influences. Perhaps because of my

Methodist origins and the early context of my research career – research without any policy focus has always seemed to me a little self-indulgent! Also I have recognised that accounts of individual experience do not ‘speak for themselves’. If such accounts are not to remain at the level of a kind of journalism – even ‘policy journalism’ – the interview subjects must be carefully selected from groups whose backgrounds and experiences can be seen as relevant for the study of the problem in hand. The interviews must also be interpreted *sociologically* in the broader context of policy and society. However, any attempt to use the ‘sociological imagination’ (in C. Wright Mills’s phrase) to move from the level of ‘personal troubles’ to ‘public problems’ or public issues entails several dangers. Sociological interpretations of people’s lives are sometimes comprehensible only to a small professional audience. Yet the alternative of relying on the immediacy of descriptions of personal experience to communicate the impact of policy may run the risk of lacking credibility among professional colleagues, whilst also failing to convince government officials who deal mainly in statistics.

In relation to these dilemmas, my main research publications may be characterised as attempts to use in-depth accounts of people’s lives in the interests of exploring policy issues and communicating them more effectively to a wide and multi-layered audience. This audience includes, along with professional colleagues and students, various policy-making communities, practitioners, the general public and, not least, my informants and people like them.

One further point arises from my mode of developing ideas from a core of interviews with people whose lives are affected by policy. Rather than monitoring policy and other changes in social conditions, keeping my research up to date would really require me to re-interview the same subjects, or to interview new subjects on the same topic. Instead, I have preferred to move on, and to research and publicise new issues as they emerge.

Research prior to *Mothers Alone*

My career in full-time research began when - partly on the basis of my original letter describing the problems arising from my social mobility via grammar school – Michael Young

commissioned myself and Brian Jackson to undertake the research project later published as *Education and the Working Class*. This research was unique in that we chose to study the grammar schools of our home town, and the experiences of the 88 working-class former pupils who had been our contemporaries at school. As well as depth-interviews with these former pupils, we interviewed their parents. This design enabled us to depict something of the lives of these working-class parents, the clash between that life and the grammar school culture, and the resulting strains for both parents and pupils.

Despite the relatively small sample, the book proved to be highly topical and a continuing best-seller, because it was accepted as offering a convincing explanation of the very well established official statistics on working class under-representation in selective and university education. At the same time, academic commentators described the book as enjoyable and compared it with literature. It also received wide publicity and it is cited as having had a large influence in the campaign for comprehensive schools. Hardly surprisingly, this reception confirmed me in my view that the model devised by the Institute and elaborated in our study of grammar schools was an ideal way to conduct and disseminate policy-oriented research that would have a broad impact.

In the event, the book has had a surprisingly long life, and even at the BSA meeting in 1999, it was still referred to in seminars - 'Jackson and Marsden got it right' - and several individuals sought me out to tell me: 'Reading your book changed my life'. (However, I should also report that in another seminar a graduate student was undertaking an almost identical study of upwardly mobile working-class pupils, as if the book had never been written. And when I attempted to intervene to question another speaker's nostalgic picture of the 'close relationship' between the 1960s Labour governments and the policy community I was told flatly: 'No, you are wrong!')

The hardback and paperback versions of *Mothers Alone*

In 1965, following Peter Townsend's appointment as Professor of Sociology at Essex and the award by the Joseph Rowntree Trust of a large grant to study poverty, I was appointed to carry out the pilot study of fatherless families which became *Mothers Alone*. Interestingly, Peter

Townsend had begun his research career with an almost anthropological approach which depended heavily on interviews, carefully observation and a literary gift for communicating experience. However, during his time at Essex he became essentially a quantitative researcher. I vividly remember experiencing a pang of regret when he was (as I felt) 'reduced to' searching the margins of questionnaires for qualitative material to bring greater immediacy to *Poverty in the United Kingdom*. However, I am grateful for his insistence that the core of interviews for *Mothers Alone* should be set in a solid framework of available statistics and policy discussion.

The study of 'fatherless families' was a relatively new area at that time, so almost my only guide was Peter Marris's moving but neglected study of widows and their families (for the Institute of Community Studies). More important was Margaret Wynn's imaginative attempt to generate a new policy label - 'fatherless families' - to cover mothers who shared the situation of bringing up children on low wages with inadequate childcare, yet who had hitherto been classified under distinct administrative categories. After spending several months gazing at the walls of my office, I embarked (with the grudging cooperation of the then N.A.B.) on interviewing a range of lone mothers drawing state means-tested benefits. With hindsight, the sample (120) was large compared with more recent qualitative studies based on samples a third of the size, although the scale brought the advantage of a very basic coverage of all four main marital sub-groups in two different areas. I followed the model of my previous work, beginning from the interviews and focusing on personal experience, but trying to document how these mothers were dealt with by officials and their neighbours. I would have liked to create more of a sense of individual mothers, by linking their experiences through the book or even through providing case-studies, but this idea was abandoned for reasons of confidentiality (not least as a protection against identification by social security officials).

The findings illustrate how these families are viewed and treated according to stereotypes of their supposed past or current relationship with their children's fathers. *Mothers Alone* served a purpose in undermining the stereotypes of marital status and suggesting there were large differences of circumstances *within* the older marital groups, while there were similarities *across* the different groups. However, their social lives and needs do not present the common pattern suggested by the single descriptive label of 'fatherless families'. These mothers were of very

different ages, as were their children. Some were relatively comfortably placed in suburban houses with stocks of furniture, while others were destitute. The mothers had different levels of income from social security. They had very different social and financial relationships with the non-resident father – and other men. They had more or less support from kin, greater or less earning power and ability to work, and so on. *Mothers Alone* was useful in sketching out these new dimensions for the problem of devising social security support. Although clearly, as the Finer Committee found, the task of devising some kind of allowance for one parent families still raises complex ethical and political issues in relation to fairness, work incentives and the ‘liability’ of fathers (and others) to support mothers and their children.

The paperback version of *Mothers Alone* under consideration is actually an extensive rewriting of the first shorter hardback publication. That earlier report was produced under various constraints – notably the demands of questionnaire design and piloting for the main poverty survey, and obstruction from officials in the NAB (soon to become the Supplementary Benefits Commission). My first manuscript languished in the vaults of the DHSS for many months until Brian Abel-Smith prodded the officials into making a not unexpectedly hostile (but nit-picking!) response. Despite this, the report was eventually published in hardback.

That hardback version had a favourable academic reception. For example, the authors of *Motherless Families* later commented ruefully that they would have liked to follow my model of qualitative interviews as a basis for analysis, but complained that they were prevented from doing so by the official preference for quantitative analysis. Excerpts were published in the national press, and I contributed articles to more popular magazines, which brought the gratifying response of letters from lone mothers thanking me for publicising their situation. I also engaged, with the National Council for One Parent Families and other groups, in the attempt to persuade the government to bring in a one parent families allowance. The public attention was sufficient to bring a commission for a paperback, which is the version I have submitted for the doctorate.

This story is relevant to the question of how *Mothers Alone* was related to the relevant literature *of the day*. Re-publication in paperback provided me with the unusual and valuable opportunity of expanding the original discussion to cover developments in a number of fields that usually

remain distinct. At the same time I also attempted to segregate the different levels of discussion, so that the book could still be read by the general public but also by more specialist audiences.

From my background at the Institute of Community Studies I had become interested in the resilience of the family as a system of informal support, and I explored the various ways in which families tended to adjust to the lack of a resident father, for example by substitution of the mother's brother or father. In fact, of course, the non-resident father was not always off the scene, either practically or symbolically. I reviewed the literature about the impact of father absence – mostly from the US but still relevant today – which pointed out that the disadvantages were not necessarily to do with a dysfunctional family structure but mainly with lack of cash. Other relevant areas were the weakness of the legal system, both as a means of burying dead marriages, and for recovering the costs of support from non-resident fathers who were often highly resistant to paying and who sometimes had second families to support. In relation to housing, I identified the problems of local authority tenancy policies, and I suggested the need for refuges for women and children to escape from violent families (this was before Chiswick Women's Aid).

However, probably the most interesting part of this re-writing was the section on social security. I had found myself on the receiving end of a puzzling and decidedly edgy correspondence from Richard Titmuss (the new Chairman of the SBC). He reacted to my findings with hostility and scepticism, and frankly doubted the truth of my reported findings on the antagonistic relationships between social security officials and clients and the high level of various kinds of maladministration. Stimulated by this correspondence, I explored Titmuss's 'administrative utopia', where the SBS would become 'The New Guardians of the Poor', through the structures of administrative 'discretion', monitored by research and fed upwards through the organization for codification into 'rights' to benefits. However, this only led me to specify more closely the conditions that prevented this utopia from being realised. (With hindsight, Peter Townsend was probably right in suggesting that this should have been published separately, rather than tucked away in the rewritten book.)

I agree that the discussion in the 1973 Penguin version of the literature is in need of updating for 1999. (In fact, I considered but rejected the idea as long ago as 1980.) For example, demographic

patterns have changed, with declining rates of marriage and a marked rise in births out of wedlock, cohabitation, divorce, stepfamilies and so on. There have been associated changes in patterns of dependency, governed by the relative value and availability of earnings from employment in relation to social security levels and types of provision. Divorce law has continued to change in contradictory directions – and the disadvantaged situation of divorced women without pensions now looms as a major problem for the next century. There have been improvements in housing in relation to tenancies, and the response to family violence, cohabitation and so on, but there has also been a decline in the stock of council housing and new problems are arising from the curtailment of housing benefits.

More difficult to judge are the changes in the general social status of lone mother families and other one parent families. Such families are growing more common, and perhaps less stigma now attaches to divorce, births out of wedlock, cohabitation, stepfamilies and so on. However, it cannot yet be claimed that such families are regarded as ‘normal’, particularly by children who must still live with the cornflake packet image of ‘the family’ and the possibility of bullying because ‘you haven’t got a Dad’ (or Mum). On a more administrative level, papers at the SPA have charted how these families gained greater acceptability with Finer and other policy improvements in the 1970s and 1980s, only to be re-stigmatised under Thatcher and now to some extent under Blair. At the time of publication of *Mothers Alone*, it was considered a major victory that lone women with children could claim benefit rights as mothers rather than being required to register for employment as workers. However, I originally raised the difficulties of mothers who must later return to work after many years because their children had ceased to be dependent, and I now have more sympathy with the current emphasis on maintaining work opportunities – although with encouragement rather than crude compulsion!

Overall, the increase in the bill for dependency has focused attention on the failure, reluctance or inability of non-resident fathers to provide support for their children, and has brought about the clumsy and parsimonious introduction of the CSA geared to saving the Treasury money (as Jane Millar has shown). In particular, there has been an unpicking of ‘clean break’ divorces which gave (some women) the marital home while loading the costs of maintenance onto the state, the formulae for payments have been clumsy and insensitive, and the CSA has focused on stinging

existing payers for more cash while failing to pursue large numbers of fathers, particularly the self-employed. The setting up of the CSA raised interesting issues (including feminist issues) about whether the family or the state should bear the costs of childcare, but it also provoked a very revealing and at times hysterical response from fathers, the male press lobby and male trade unionists.

Apart from the heightened concern with the so-called 'dependency culture', recent major debates have focused on the disadvantages faced by children with non-resident fathers, following the (confusing) growth of research evidence from sources such as the National Child Development Studies and the Exeter study. These controversies have been further stirred up by so-called 'ethical socialist' male sociologists such as Dennis and Halsey (who seem to bear some kind of grudge against feminism for disturbing patriarchal family structures), and who have not paid sufficient attention to the disadvantages from lack of income and other social influences (e.g. sink housing estates). More recently, women such as Phillips and Morgan have led a further right-wing backlash against what they see as the state's misguided funding or subsidising of lone motherhood, which they predict will have disastrous consequences in undermining 'traditional' masculine roles, with consequent rises in male violence, crime and depression.

Despite the confident statements of politicians concerning the disadvantages of children in one parent families (or stepfamilies), the evidence on the situation of such children is actually extremely complex (see e.g. Burghes; Kiernan). I have been impressed by the reviews of the evidence by Rodgers and Furstenberg who show that father absence appears to have surprisingly little effect on children – since 'psychically' many fathers are hardly present in the home. Lack of finance is important, but so also is the way that mothers react and cope with their situation. Furstenberg argues that a basic obstacle to promoting co-parenting after divorce may be that during marriage it was often mothers who interpreted the children's needs to their father and the father's behaviour to the children, so that it is difficult after divorce to give the father a role that he never fulfilled in marriage. A neglected research area is that there has been little attention to this problem (touched upon in *Mothers Alone*) of how mothers deal with the *symbolic* importance of the father to the children, and the continuing disruptions caused by changed social

relationships with non-resident parents and new step-parents (although see Smart). In this the mother's social skills in particular seem likely to be fully stretched.

Overall, I remain uneasy about the arguments which claim, on the one hand, that disadvantage is entirely caused by deprivation, yet on the other that the cause lies in dysfunctional family structures. It seems to me that there are disadvantages for children in some family set-ups – and indeed the children themselves sometimes play a large part in family disruption (see below, where I outline a research proposal on this topic). The task of research and policy continues to be to move away from very partial readings of the conflicting evidence and from unreal traditional stereotypes, and to try to discover what kinds of family set-ups work. This would need complex evaluations and policy adjustments for different types of families with mothers and fathers as heads, and different kinds of stepfamilies, all with different relationships with non-resident parents and different kinds of social and financial support.

Together these important changes are so large that it is not possible to update *Mothers Alone* simply by providing a review of the new literature. And in any case, as I explained earlier, what really interests me is not just the administrative web surrounding lone parents but how policies impinge on their lives and how they feel. Without another qualitative survey, these questions could not be answered to my satisfaction.

[section related to other research removed]

In conclusion, the most recent part of my teaching career before retirement was partly devoted to exploring and teaching the possibilities - and limitations - of depth-interviewing. Also, in a curious cyclical turn of events, I have been able to share in the current 'resurrection' of studies of marriage and family life. In retirement I propose to continue writing, although of course this will depend on whether there is any readership for things of the kind I have written. A 'sub-text' of this annotated bibliography (which I have not chosen to pursue) is that there have been large changes in political climate, which have at times been reflected in a considerable reluctance to engage with independent policy research of any kind, particularly the work of sociologists.

However – despite my comments on political transvestism – I am encouraged to think that the advent of New Labour must lead to a more sympathetic climate in at least some echelons of the government, the civil service and more general readers.

The origins of *Mothers Alone*

The project developed as a pilot study for the larger project, *Poverty in the UK*, led by Peter Townsend.

Notes in square brackets [] added by Dennis Marsden.

Notes in square brackets { } added by Libby Bishop, ESDS Qualidata.

DM: And so, I was there with this brief, there was a book by Margaret Wynn about fatherless families, and I was there with this brief to do a study of fatherless families. I'd got no idea, I just remember sitting in my little white office, you know, they had these offices with white walls, nothing else much, and, you know, trying to scrabble about and get some ideas. And I thought, in the end, "It's out there. I'll just, I'll just go and do it". Which became kind of, for me, part of the canon of my research ideas. I'd noticed in *Education and the Working-Class*, the survey was actually created by the interviews. It started with the interviews, and the theory was grafted on at the end, but with a few weeks in the Library. So, I got this idea that you generated the surveys out of the people, you generated not the survey, but you generated the, the book, or the project [out of the people].

PT: So does that mean that you went out and did these?

DM: So I then went out and did these.

Samples: preferred, practical, and problematic

DM: Anyway, I had a ready-made sample, although the NAB – National Assistance Board – was sticky about sending letters out. We devised this system of sending out letters, enclosing a letter to send back to me, so that they wouldn't know, and I wouldn't know, kind of thing. But it had been quite difficult negotiations to get this sample. So I just went and started interviewing the sample. And then, rather unethically, we got about a third, which wasn't a very good response, so I got people to tell me about their friends, because it was [only] in Huddersfield and Colchester, and I got people to tell me about their friends who'd also had letters, and went and saw them – cold calling as you might say, nowadays. And retrieved, "converted" as they say in the jargon, don't they, "converted" some of them, so I got a quite respectable two-thirds by the end of it.

PT: Although you don't know, really, what the missing third, who weren't friends, would be like?

DM: But you could extrapolate from the people who were reluctant. I mean, some of them were on the fiddle, or even on the game. Some were frightened that I was an NAB Fraud Officer. Some were simply very private.

PT: What do you mean by "being on the game"?

DM: Well, prostitution – earning a bit on the side by selling their body. So, there was a kind of excitement about [doing in-depth research]. I used to think everything was terribly exciting, you know! Yeah, the longest one I ever did was this woman with 11 children by six different fathers, or seven different fathers.

You'd walk in in the morning, perfectly ordinary house, you know, just another name, and stagger out nine hours later! Well, you'd be there all day, kind of thing, with odd interruptions from neighbours calling round, and you'd think, "Christ!" You know, "People's lives. How amazing!" So there were certain people like that who kind of stood out, You'd got a hundred, I think it was 112 in the end, the sample, which was quite a lot, considering I was travelling away from my young family in Colchester to do half of them in Huddersfield. And the other reason for this, really, was my mum still lived there, so I used to go and stay with her, and do her a bit of good

Dilemmas of informed consent and confidentiality

DM: You can't negotiate informed consent at the beginning, although you think you are, because you don't know where the interview will go.

PT: So you did explain what the interview was about, when you started?

DM: Yeah, the very short "cover story" as we called it.

PT: So what do you think is the proper solution to that problem, then?

DM: I don't think there is one.

PT: Why can't you ask at the end, for them to give their consent or not?

DM: Well, I suppose you can then, yeah. But [in the 1960s and 1970s] I had the view it was a smash and grab raid, it was my data, and there's a whole debate about that. There was never any question of consent, you thought they trusted you, a frank open face and so on, and you'd use the data anonymously, and they did. This was the time when ...

PT: So the key point, really, was the confidentiality, that you didn't reveal their name.

DM: Yeah, assure them of confidentiality.

PT: And that means not using their name?

DM: Not using their name, but also not giving identifying features. Which was what convinced me about the *Mothers Alone* book, that I couldn't do it as I had been doing old people, because they'd be too identifiable.

PT: So another alternative to that might have been to get their consent, mightn't it, at the time?

DM: Well, I did sort of get their consent, but that was kind of taken to be enough, and certainly had been at the Institute, and you didn't sort of labour it in case you actually started ... made people ...

PT: But I was thinking, if you wanted to make a portrait of somebody, you could write back and say, "We want to do this. Is that okay?"

DM: Yeah. It never occurred to me, that.

PT: Because there wasn't that ethical discussion then, was there?

DM: There wasn't, no. It's only come up recently. And it's come up partly as a result of the Feminist debates. Sue Wise, in particular, made me aware of the power of the interviewer to set the terms, to take the story, to write the story, regardless. And then Liz Kelly, of course, who goes back to her interviewees and gives them right of altering what they've said, and commenting on what they've said, which is kind of a big frightener, if you think you've got a good piece of data, and then people don't want ...

PT: That's the idea of this interview, incidentally! (LAUGHS)

Audio-recording (or not), memory (researcher's and subject's) and transcription

DM: But it was that thing, you while you're doing it {an interview}, you're obsessed, and you had to keep it in your head until you could get home and spill it out. {Marsden did not tape record these interviews.} Sometimes, if I wasn't too tired, I'd do it the same day, but quite often I'd wait and do it in the morning.

PT: Really? Fascinating. You'd remember a whole interview and then note it all down?

DM: Well, did I, you see? I thought I did. I only knew that it was better in the morning because I don't function very well at night time. So I'd have a skeleton of notes, and I'd have a visual image of the person, which was, you know, quite ... I can still remember how some of them looked. I was thinking, the reason why I'm a bit fuzzy, it's 40 years, isn't it, almost. All this is 40 years ago.

PT: Yeah, it's a long time ago.

DM: That's why the details of the little jobs ... But I can still remember some of those ones I did for Peter. So I must have some sort of memory, and a visual memory that goes with it.

PT: So you can remember what they looked like. I mean, that's amazing, actually.

DM: Yeah. Yes. Not very well, not many.

PT: When you see the quote, you know who it is.

DM: I think I still would, yeah. I still would, yeah. I mean, I learnt a lot of things. I had another woman who was very frightened, because she was a victim of a sado-masochistic man, and she described, quite chillingly, how she sat by the fire and he was asleep, the man was asleep – her husband – on the other side of the fireplace, and she was, of course, divorced by then, but she said she used to plan whether she could murder him and get away with it, because he was such a bastard to her. She once tried to have a bath, he used to come and sit on the end of the bath, he was kind of lusting after her. And she tried to have a bath by herself once, and she said, “He banged and he brayed that door”, he says, “You’ll never have a bath without me being there again”, he kind of bashed the door in.

So she was ... you know, there were certain key characters that I wanted to, to write in more prominently. But the NAB objected that they would recognise them, which was true, in a way. The other thing in writing that was that Peter Townsend was very good in helping me with, he wanted the statistics at the front, of course, being Peter, he was making that ... epistemological shift [from qualitative to quantitative research], you might almost say. Except it’s doubtful whether he was totally in another mode before, but he was impressed by the power of numbers in convincing officials and politicians, which is ... you know, he was quite right about that, although I think a lot is lost from the other sort of stuff. So he helped me a lot with it, and he convinced me – this was the time when weren’t talking yet about myths – and I still was, I think, of the persuasion that it was like the truth, emotionally. And he said, you know, “It isn’t. You think so, but really, people’s memories are very fickle, and they re-write ...” So he was into that, which maybe ...

Interviews: questionnaires, flexibility, boundaries, interactions

PT: Now, what about flexibility?

DM: Well, you had to have a form of interview which, I remember now, this was another thing that I haven’t said about *Education and the Working-Class*, I did have a full list of questions worked out, with possible probes, as if it was a questionnaire, so that it was in my head. But, of course, people didn’t answer in the right way. Their lives didn’t fit my preconceptions and so on, so we never used that stuff. But what I did use it for – and it’s amazing how it comes back – sometimes I had notes with me about main topics, and the big danger with being a flexible interview is, you miss out a whole area of life like money, or sex, or marriage or something. You get out and you suddenly find you’ve lost it! So I had a check-list at the end. You know, “Can I just look through this and check that I haven’t missed any anything out?” But then going back home and ... That was another point at which you might have lost it all. I went down my list of questions and tried to restructure the interview, and order them. I didn’t stick rigidly to that either because quotes, actually, can make either four or five things, so you run with the quote, but try and keep it to the structure of the questions that you’re interested in.

PT: But in terms of the actual interview, flexibility means what?

DM: It means being prepared to let your respondent dictate what is the topic of interest, and let it run if you find something interesting. You don't know why it's interesting, but you think, "That's a good quote". You can't imagine how it can possibly go in the final version, but somehow it will. So you run with the quote and let the interview go to its full length.

I think it's pretty unscrupulous in some ways, now. Because it's not part of the bargain. I remember watching Bob Weiss interview in Los Angeles in the Hilton, or wherever, some big hotel, anyway, in the American Sociological Association. He did a paid session, he got us to pay to go in, except we wangled our way in, and he did an interview. He said, "Right, we're going to do an interview now", to the audience. "What's it going to be about?" It's a wonderful relaxed style. Like somebody would ask a question and he'd think carefully and say, "Yeah, I have a problem with that too!" But he kind of said, "Right, we're all here at this Conference, what are we going to do a thing about? It can't be too challenging, we'll talk about earthquakes because it's an earthquake zone. Our thoughts about it". So we kicked that around a bit, went out and grabbed some character who was walking by in the corridor, hauled him in front of this audience, and began to interview him. And he then, as we realised later on, he – I'm coming back to the point - we realised, later on, that the opening of the interview had set the terms of what was going to be discussed, and being a so shrewd man, at one point, this young man had not just come about earthquakes, he'd come because of getting married shortly, but they decided that was off limits. "We're not going to do anything really personal".

And then Bob Weiss deliberately introduced a question about his forthcoming marriage. And the guy said, "Hey, I thought we weren't going to talk about that!" And I thought, "Oh, he's dropped a brick there". And he said he'd done it deliberately to show that the interview was conducted within a certain framework of what was allowed to be said. And we hadn't done that, we never did that in those interviews, and become much more aware, since the Feminist stuff, about the way the interviewer sets the parameters...

...

DM: But yeah, I think you would say, "But this is what you said", or "This is what they say about the Scheme", or "I've talked to people". I've always believed in that, I've always actually fed back to respondents what other people have said, you know, and said, "What do you think of this?" Or "You said, earlier on, this ...; it doesn't seem to square with what you say now", which is a more aggressive, it's not more invasive or more intrusive, I don't know what the word would be. But I was very interested, in *Mothers Alone*, for example, putting different cases to people, and saying, "This is how other people react. What do you think of that?" Which was actually a very effective technique, I think, but dodgy by some kinds of criteria, where you're merely supposed to reflect and echo, and all those kind of counselling nicey nicey skills! I mean, Jean and I have never believed, we've

talked about it a lot more since, but it's not so much we've developed new ways of doing it, it's we've developed rationales for what we always did, as it were.

Gender dynamics during interviews: who can interview whom?

PT: Yeah. And gender comes in afterwards, doesn't it? How does it ... ?

DM: Well, they were all women, of course, and, you know, I was a bit miffed later on when the Women's Movement started, in the early seventies, claiming that only women could interview women....

PT: You don't accept the idea that only women could interview women?

DM: Well, how could I, you know? I mean, I'd had women in writing and saying, "You've absolutely caught my story". You know, that *Mothers Alone* had illuminated their life. So that was ...

No, another one was structured around the structure of the estate and stigma, those kind of ideas were in the book, and the power relationships, the inequalities where you haven't got a man in the house, so neighbours come and burn their rubbish in your dustbin and you can't do anything about it, those kind of things.

PT: But do you think that you would have had different perspectives at all if the gender idea had been around?

DM: Yes. I mean, I might not have done it...

...

PT: No. Yeah. Okay. But you don't want to say anything more about the Feminist ideas about research? Because I think it's quite interesting.

DM: Oh well, yes, I mean, I've taken them on board really, that whole debate. Certainly since I've met Jean and got heavily into - I mean, we've written a piece about interviewing, you know, and power in the private sphere and gender difference. But I still was innocent of gender, because the next book I wrote was about men [only, and when the book was re-published], and I had to re-write the language, yeah.

PT: Yes. But, just on this point about interviewing, I feel there's more you could say that's useful about the difference between women interviewing women and men interviewing women.

DM: I was aware of gender in a sense that there's a passage early on in *Mothers Alone*, I remember, which is a page about perceiving ourselves in different roles, being received in different roles that, for example, the women who divorced her husband, the violent husband, welcomed me, in a way, as ... she wanted advice. She saw me as somebody who might come along and help her look after her boys, she was

having trouble with her boys. So there was that one. Then there was another woman who said, she made a big spiel about how she was missing sex, and kind of eyed me thoughtfully [- as I thought]. So there were different sorts, and other people who saw me as a National Assistance Board snooper. But there weren't particularly gendered roles, although I suppose they would be gendered, they'd be seen as gendered now.

PT: Because, from a Feminist point of view, surely you would argue that there were sort of secret and intimate things that they couldn't say to you.

DM: Oh yeah, yeah.

PT: Do you think that's true?

DM: I think there would be, except that I was astonished – and this is interesting. You plan a study like that, and I was aware that it was delicate, that these were all divorced, or mostly divorced, or they were unmarried mothers, and so there was that sexual element, they had a sexual past which they now hadn't got, or which they might have, because they were banned. There's a big bit on cohabiting. So I thought that I would go in, and go in softly, with some of these more factual details about income and National Assistance, and to my astonishment, found myself talking about intimate details of their lives. Like the woman who was talking about the sexual brutality of her husband, or other people talking about their sex lives, or people talking about what a bastard their husbands were.

That's an interesting one that got away, that Peter, in the big Poverty Study, did originally have an idea of investigating the distribution of income within households, and there was a question which was never followed. Jan Pahl's stuff [on *Money and Marriage*], it was actually in there and very interesting, but just an idea that got away I think, and then subsequently Jan Pahl took the kind of families I was looking at, on the basis that women felt much ... I mean, I've got that in *Mothers Alone*, people who were divorced, even though they got less money, felt much richer because they'd got control of it. So control of money is an idea that she picked up on.

But I was aware that I was playing the role. I used to think, with middle-aged women, that I played the role of the long lost son or something like that, I appealed on that level, but whether I did, I don't know. There wasn't a great deal of reflection, at least in sociology, about the interviewer relationship, because there wasn't much, certainly in social policy, there wasn't much of that kind of research done. And all the big studies ...

PT: So what you really would argue is that if you're a reflective man, then you can usually obtain as much ...

DM: You sound like a BBC interviewer! "So what you're really saying ..."

PT: Sorry!

DM: I think it's to do with, for some reason, I think it must be my background, in a sense. Because in personal relationships as well, the relationship with Jean, that I don't pretend to be super intuitive, and indeed, compared with her I'm kind of Martian, really. But I did, I had been watchful, the idea that I was on the fringe of life watching, somehow or other stood me in good stead as an interviewer. Although it didn't confidence-wise, but somehow or other, because needs must, I had to shift, I had to earn my living to keep the family, and that was what I was interested in. I had to get myself to interviews, psych yourself up and go. But once you're there, you're kind of super aware. As I say, it's the interview, I think the survey is creative in the interview situation, so you've got to be some kind of hyper aware, and flexible.

PT: So what do you mean by being super, or hyper aware?

DM: Well, it's that thing about, I don't know who puts it, "You've got to be the still small voice on your shoulder". You're two people – you're the person who's asking the questions, but while they're answering, you're trying to take that on board, but you're also listening, trying to work out the next question – which is very difficult, I think. You must be experiencing it now, perhaps!

PT: Absolutely!

...

PT: You were talking about Lorna McKee's article.

DM: She describes the difficulties women sometimes have in interviewing men, partly in terms of men taking, they have to be careful to maintain social distance in case they're sexual advances. They get sexual advances. Also men talk a lot, difficult to interrupt, difficult to keep to the point. But women do that too. When I was younger, more attractive, presumably, *Mothers Alone*, there were women who made vague references about how they were missing it, and needed a man and so on, which I may have over-interpreted as being a sort of veiled advance. So I think gender is an important influence, but I think it works in different ways in different relationships. In the latest article we wrote was about differences within masculinity and femininity, trying to correct the view that all women were Stepford Wives and men were hollow men, but there are a range of possible masculinities/femininities, which has implications for emotionality, sexuality.

Diverse ways of using qualitative material in analysis

PT: The first interviews were more experimental, is that what you're saying?

DM: Well, except I never used to go back and revisit. But I was very struck that, doing that *Mothers Alone* study, the first version [draft] of it was quite different from the others, because I wanted to bring the people out much more, you know, and to have [fictitiously] named individuals, who could be linked through the text, so that they

became people, rather than isolated quotes that couldn't be linked elsewhere with some kind of [label], "A divorced woman said ..."

I felt that the whole book was really based on about, I don't know, less than a dozen people. It is about, in Stakhanovite terms, Peter's amazing study, *Family Life of Old People*, was based on 212 interviews, I think, which is quite ... I mean, people get away with a dozen interviews now, for books? I talked to somebody under {name of famous discourse theorist}, who was going to do a study of divorce, based on three people! {Name of famous sociologist} said, "Oh, I might talk to some people, two or three people", when he was writing his book on intimacy. It's just incredible that, in those days, you had to do something which was going to be vaguely on the edge of statistical respectability...

Developing theory

PT: How do you feel about the book, looking back again?

DM: I think it was good. I think it was ... Sorry, I get emotional, you know! It became my Ph.D., when I nominated a work for my Ph.D., later on. But what was interesting was, the first, the first version of it, the hardback version, doesn't have much of a theoretical framework at all.

It [the final paperback version] has some ideas which were, I think, quite good, about relative deprivation. I did a diagram which represented the way that the women were relatively deprived. Because they needed the money at the weekend, but they got paid on Tuesdays, so they'd got no money by the weekend, so they were out of phase with their neighbours in quite a vivid way – you know, the things about the mothers going hungry, to feed their families – those kind of things were all in there, and the different status. And the Afro-Caribbeans being different, you know, because they worked until they had about three children, and then all the Afro-Caribbeans had big families, and the reason they were on Supplementary Benefit was partly because they didn't have the kinship networks in England that they had back in, you know, so that was kind of intriguing. And it was in hardback, so I then got the chance to re-do it in paperback. And this has happened twice now, because I've done it with *Workless* as well. I then re-theorised it, or theorised it properly, for the first time.

Part of the reason for that was that I had - not a row, exactly, but a contretemps with Titmuss. You see, what had happened to Titmuss was that he had, by this time, moved into government and moved to be Head of the Supplementary Benefits Commission. And he was making very big claims that the Supplementary Benefits Commission, compared with the NAB, was a sensitive, caring bureaucracy, a sensitive bureaucracy, which gave out - what's the word? Oh, I don't know – proportional justice, or something like that, there's some phrase for it. He said, all the administration had become sensitive and caring, and outreaching. It had a Research Department that would reach out, find need, look at the patterns of discretion and turn them into rights. He had this view about discretion to rights. And so he was Chairman. First of all, we gave the SBC, as it became, a copy of my

study, to let them look at it before it was published. Nothing happened for two years. They sat on it and tried to hope it would go away, because it was quite damning about the behaviour of the officials. And then, when Titmuss got in, they managed to prise it out of them, and then it came back with the usual kind of nit-picking objections about sample size and so on. But Titmuss then sent me a series of letters about how could I claim that this was going on, you know, when all the changes had been made? And it wasn't exactly acrimonious, but it was a bit distant. I knew Titmuss vaguely, but not very much. I'd met him odd times with Peter. And so that stimulated me to re-write that bit. I mean, I dealt with the Civil Servants first, then it came out as a hardback. And then when Titmuss got in, he began to go through it with a fine toothcomb, and I decided I'd have to really re-write it.

So there are some quite substantial chapters which, looking at the American evidence on single-parent families, and the evidence that it's financial deprivation, rather than single-parentness *per se* – an argument which is still going on – and arguments on housing, where I think I predicted that single-parents would need a refuge, which became Battered Wives Refuges. So '71 that came out, just at the time the Refuges opened, in fact. So all the means-tested bit was re-written. So the theory was put on afterwards, but derived from the research. It wasn't the other way around, as quantitative research tends to be.

PT: And this dispute, what was Peter's role in that scene?

DM: Peter was too busy really. I don't know if he was really heavily involved in that, because he, himself, had parted with Titmuss. I mean, this was the times when Titmuss stayed still and the whole world moved left. He played what appeared to be a reactionary role, but a rather patrician role in the LSE troubles, didn't he, and things like that. But there's a fair amount, it's quite an interesting correspondence in its way, because of what it reveals about Titmuss's vision, I've great admiration for Titmuss's vision, but it was not sociological in the sense that it didn't have a perception of social class and the workings of bureaucracy. It was a humanistic perfectability model of the Welfare State, but an elitist model, basically – you know, the top 10,000 making policies - well, like CPAG was at the beginning, wasn't it, it was a kind of central organisation for information. It was, it was aimed at government, that approach, and it didn't really do good studies of the bureaucracy. It was just too hopelessly sanguine about officials and the public really.

PT: So the framework was in terms of class and the State and bureaucracy?

DM: Yes. No, it hadn't been at the beginning, because, of course, I didn't know the bureaucracy. They wouldn't let me anywhere near the bureaucracy when they realised I was ... I was treated ... Yeah.

But it wasn't [just] bureaucracy, I theorised it in terms of bureaucracy, but it was also theorised in terms of family, and one of the bits I was, in retrospect, sort of proud of, was the way families were reconstituted in different ways for single parents. That, for example, one sort would be the young mother who had a baby in

her teens, and her parents became the child's parents, in effect, and the young woman kept on her single status, went out to work and so on and behaved like a single woman, and then you got disputes about responsibility for the child. And another case where a woman had had a child, and she had a brother, and he became the father. So there's a diagram, a page of diagrams of that, about re-ordered families, which is, I think, an interesting model of it.

PT: You didn't come across family systems, did you? I suppose that's later that influence came in isn't it, because that's got quite a lot of that kind of thing.

DM: Yeah. I mean, different literatures were hermetically sealed. There's what they called "trained incompetence of academic specialisation", which, as you know, as you're observing, yourself, still goes on!