

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE
OF
FAMILY AND SCHOOLING:
HOW IMPORTANT IS FAMILY STRUCTURE?

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Abstract.

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The thesis examines the extent to which 32 young people perceived that their family structure (intact nuclear, reordered nuclear, single-parent) influenced their experience of family and schooling. Through attempting to listen to the young people's voices on family, schooling and home-school issues, the thesis questions whether commonly used categories of family structure inform understanding of these young people's experience of family and schooling.

The thesis is an ethnography, with a broadly symbolic interactionist framework, of one mixed ability tutor group in a large urban comprehensive school in central England. Fieldwork was conducted over two years, from September, 1996 to July, 1998. The main period of data collection was from November, 1996 to July, 1997, when the young people were in Year Nine. The main methods of data construction were interviews and informal conversations with the young people and observation of their experience of schooling.

The literature review examines the large body of British quantitative research on outcomes (health, emotional and behavioural, and educational) according to family structure, and the much smaller corpus of British qualitative research focusing on the processes of family structure. It is highlighted that few British qualitative studies aim to access the voice of the child, focusing instead on adults' experience of family reordering or adults' perceptions of children's experience of reordering.

The thesis examines the diversity in experience of family reordering of young people in reordered nuclear and single-parent families, the similarities in experience of reordering across these two categories of family structure, and the experience of family reordering of young people in intact nuclear families. The thesis assesses the extent to which family structure was important in the young people's relationships with the following family members: mothers, fathers (natural resident, natural non-resident and step), siblings (natural, step and half) and the extended family. The thesis develops a model for the young people's experience of family, Networks of Conflict: Networks of Support.

The thesis examines the extent to which family structure, or other factors such as gender and school-related factors, were important in the young people's experience of the following aspects of schooling: friendship groups, behaviour, views on school, attainment and attendance. The thesis explores the extent to which family structure influenced parental involvement in their children's schooling and school intervention over home-related issues. The extent to which the school's Health, Home and Community (HHC) curriculum tapped into the young people's expertise on family is examined.

The thesis concludes that, overall, commonly used categories of family structure do little to inform understanding of the experience of family and schooling of these 32 young people; the boundaries around the categories of family structure are permeable.

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Chapter 1: Introduction.

1.1. The Thesis.

This thesis is about young people's experience of family and schooling. It explores the extent to which the young people in the sample perceive that their family structure (intact nuclear, reordered nuclear, single-parent) influences their experience of family and schooling. Through attempting to listen to the young people's voices on family, schooling and home-school issues, the thesis questions whether commonly used categories of family structure (intact nuclear, reordered nuclear, single-parent) inform understanding of these young people's experience of family and schooling.

The thesis is an ethnography, with a broadly symbolic interactionist framework, of a sample of 32 young people in one mixed-ability tutor group in a large urban comprehensive school in central England. Fieldwork was conducted over two years, from September, 1996 to July, 1998. The main period of data collection with the young people was from November, 1996 to July, 1997, when they were in Year Nine. Whilst the research methods used were eclectic, the main methods of data construction were interviews and informal conversations with the young people and observation of their experience of schooling.

1.2. Choice of Research Subject.

1.2.1. Personal Reasons.

Personal reasons developed my research interest in the family. Contrasts can help shape questions. I have taught in different countries - Britain, Canada, Argentina and then Britain again. Living in different cultures made me question the extent to which there were cross-cultural variations in the family. In turn, this heightened my awareness of

potential diversity in family life within Britain. I also noticed, over eleven years' teaching, that students often brought the subject of the family into class discussions centring on topics such as 'conflict' or 'problems'. This made me interested in young people's views on family life and I increasingly questioned whether young people thought that their family life impinged on their educational experience.

By 1994, when I came to Oxford University to do a Master's degree in the Governance of Education, I wanted to explore the subject of the family systematically. In 1994-5, I developed my interest in family through my Master's dissertation on home-school relations in two secondary schools. By 1995, I had focused on family structure for the doctoral thesis, because the relationships between the demographic changes in family and the ideological debate over the family made me question how young people perceive their experience of family structure.

1.2.2 Changes in Family Demography.

To weave the backcloth to this thesis and to set in context the subsequent consideration of family ideologies in 1.2.3, this section will present key demographic shifts in the family in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century. It will explore one of these changes, the growth in lone-parent families, in most detail, because this change is at the centre of the ideological debate on family. The section will then assess what the implications of these demographic changes are for the family structures young people grow up in.

There has been a wide range of demographic changes in family. One change is that the proportion of households with two adults and dependent children has dropped, from 38% of all households in 1961, to 25% in 1996-7 (Social Trends, 1998:41). The number of first marriages has dropped. In 1995, for instance, there were 192,000 first marriages, which was half the number in 1972 (Social Trends, 1998:50). The divorce rate has risen.

It rose steeply in the first half of the 1970s, because the 1969 Divorce Reform Act made divorce much easier to obtain. It then peaked in 1993, and the Office for National Statistics estimated that, should rates continue at the 1993-4 level, two out of five marriages will end in divorce (Social Trends, 1998:51). The number of remarriages has risen, constituting 36% of marriages today, in contrast to 17% in the early 1970s (Utting, 1995:15). There has been a growth in the number of cohabiting couples. For instance, the percentage of first marriages preceded by cohabitation was 7% in 1971-3, 19% in 1977-9 and about 26% by the early 1980s (Elliott, 1991). The number of births outside marriage has increased. In 1996, one third of all live births took place outside marriage and there were four times as many live births outside marriage as in 1971 (Haskey, 1998). The proportion of single-person households has almost doubled between 1961 and 1996-7 (Haskey, 1998).

There has been a steep rise in the proportion of single-parent households with dependent children, from 2% of all households in 1961 to 7% of all households in 1996-7 (Social Trends, 1998:42). In 1996, lone-parent families with dependent children constituted about 21% of all families with dependent children. This was nearly three times the proportion of 1971 (Social Trends, 1998:41). Most lone-parent households are headed by lone mothers (Social Trends, 1998:45; Cockett and Tripp, 1994:5). However, the one-parent family is often a transitional family structure, after the break-up of one relationship, before a new live-in relationship or remarriage. In the early 1990s, about 15% of lone mothers ceased to be lone parents each year (British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), cited in Social Trends, 1998:45). If this rate were maintained then, according to the BHPS, most lone mothers would only be lone parents for around four years. Nevertheless, four years is a significant period in the lifespan of a dependent child. Furthermore, the transitional nature of the single-parent family suggests that far more children may experience a single-parent family than the statistics on numbers at any one time suggest.

The demographic trends described above carry implications for the structures children experience as family. In 1996-7, four fifths of children lived in a household headed by two adults (Social Trends, 1998: 46). This is a smaller proportion than in 1971, when nine tenths of all children lived in a two-adult household. In 1991, there were one million dependent children, natural and step, living in half a million stepfamilies (Social Trends, 1998:46). Utting (1995:7) calculates that 8% (1 in 12) of dependent children live in stepfamilies and that, by the age of 16, about 6% of children will have lived in married-couple stepfamilies and 7% in cohabiting stepfamilies. There are approximately 2.3 million children in lone-parent families (Utting, 1995:22). In 1992, 168,248 children experienced their parents' divorce. This was double the 1971 figure (Utting, 1995:21). If current trends continue, 25% of children born today will see their parents divorce before they are 16, compared with 20% in the 1970s (Utting, 1995:21).

The above illustrates two interrelated factors. First, children growing up at the end of the twentieth century experience a diversity of structures as family. Second, many children experience change in their family structure. The reality of children's experience of diversity and changes in family type is at odds with some dominant ideologies of the family.

1.2.3. Ideologies of the Family.

Ideologies (Seliger, 1976; Eatwell, 1993) of the family are many and varied. They tend to privilege the intact nuclear family as the natural, normal and ideal family form (Jagger and Wright, 1999). Other family structures, in contrast, are seen as deviations from the norm. The model of the intact nuclear family is usually patriarchal, heterosexist, white and middle class. Metaphors used for the intact nuclear family, such as the 'glue' or the 'building blocks' of society, as described in Utting (1995), emphasize its perceived role as a central institution within society.

When the normative status accorded to the intact nuclear family is set against the demographic trends outlined in section 1.2.2, there is a gap between the ideal and the reality. It is out of this space that the perceived crisis in the family has emerged. With such a large discrepancy between the real and the ideal, it is unsurprising that the family has become an emotionally charged issue generating heated ideological debate on both the right and the left. In this debate, both demographic trends and research evidence on family structure have often been used selectively.

There was an escalation of panic over lone-parent families in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Wright and Jagger, 1999; Mann and Roseneil, 1999). In the panic over lone-parents, concern over public spending and concern over perceived moral decline are enmeshed. Lone parents are expensive to the state. For example, benefit payments to lone parents rose from 6% of all benefit expenditure in 1980 to 11% in 1997; in real terms, this represents a growth from two billion to 10 billion, at 1996 prices (Social Trends, 1997). With elliptical logic, some ideologies on family link single-parenthood, rising crime and unemployment, arguing that if there were fewer single-parent families, then the crime rate would be likely to fall. This is based on the claim that the positive role model of the father in two-parent families helps to reduce boys' potential criminality.

The New Right sees family breakdown both as the cause and as evidence of a breakdown in moral values in society and, in the case of single parents, as the underlying cause of a culture of dependency and the creation of an underclass (Green, 1990; Murray, 1990, 1994). Murray's (1990, 1994) writing on the underclass has been important within the debate on family (MacDonald, 1997; Mann and Roseneil, 1999). In Murray's (1990) view, single-parent families, illegitimacy, unemployment and a fecklessness which shuns the work ethic are distinguishing characteristics of the underclass, which consists of the 'other kind of poor people' (p.3). In Murray's (1990) opinion, single parents transmit the values of the underclass intergenerationally.

Heath's (1991) paper on the underclass used the 1987 British Election Survey and the 1989 British Social Attitudes Survey to compare attitudes of members of the underclass with attitudes of respondents living in employed family units. In interesting contrast to Murray (1990), Heath (1991:10) found that the two groups demonstrated similar attitudes towards family, except that members of the underclass had particularly positive attitudes towards children and were more aware than respondents in employed family units that marriage can bring financial security. They were also less inclined than respondents in employed family units to think that single parents are less able to bring up their children than parents in households headed by two adults. Furthermore, Burghes and Brown's (1995) study of 31 single mothers found that over one third of the sample had hoped for a traditional family life. These studies contrast with the values of the underclass, as expressed by Murray (1990, 1994).

Whilst the New Right does not believe in economic intervention to support families, it does believe in moral intervention in people's lives (Fox Harding, 1999). From a New Right perspective, government policies should support the intact nuclear family in order to maintain societal stability and morality (Jagger and Wright, 1999). In 1993, John Major announced the 'Back to Basics' campaign, aiming to strengthen society by strengthening traditional family life. Conservative ministers such as Redwood, Portillo and Lilley were vocal in their affirmation of the perceived naturalness of two-parent families and in their condemnation of lone mothers (Fox Harding, 1999). The importance of the traditional nuclear family in maintaining morality and stability within society has also been the subject of a number of publications, some of which verge on the strident, by the right-wing Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) (eg Davies et al., 1993; Dennis, 1993; Dennis and Erdos, 1993; Morgan, 1993, 1995). Melanie Phillips' (1997) writing on the importance to society of the traditional nuclear family is in similar vein to Murray's (1990, 1994) and to the IEA's (eg Davies et al., 1993; Dennis, 1993; Dennis and Erdos, 1993; Morgan, 1993, 1995) writing, except that she also points to a crisis in family within the middle class, in contrast to Murray's (1990, 1994) focus on the underclass.

In contrast to the right, Old Labour traditionally saw lack of income as a major cause of poverty, and poverty as at the root of social problems. Consequently, Old Labour believed in economic intervention to alleviate poverty (Wright and Jagger, 1999). However, New Labour has moved from Old Labour's position, towards the New Right (Frazer, 1999). Under New Labour, state benefits to lone mothers have been cut and the welfare-to-work programme developed, which emphasizes claimants' responsibility to find work and the role of paid employment as the route out of poverty (Wright and Jagger, 1999).

New Labour's approach to the family is characterized by ambiguity. On the one hand, New Labour professes to acknowledge diversity in family forms. On the other hand, New Labour affirms traditional family values. The word 'family' appeared in the 1997 Labour Party Manifesto 36 times (Wright and Jagger, 1999:26). Whilst the Manifesto made reference to diversity in families, its text underlined New Labour's commitment to strengthening traditional family life (Wright and Jagger, 1999). Blair, in his approach to family and community, draws on political communitarianism (Frazer, 1999). Blair, like political communitarians, underlines the importance of the family in maintaining community, as is exemplified by statements such as:

I have no doubt that the breakdown in law and order is intimately linked to the breakdown of a strong sense of community. And the breakdown of community... is to a crucial degree consequent upon the breakdown of family life (speech of 25.6.93. and 15.10.93., as Shadow Home Affairs spokesman. Cited in Utting, 1995:6).

Etzioni, who is often considered the founding father of political communitarianism, has influenced Blair. Etzioni (1993) champions the intact nuclear family and its importance within a society based on community, albeit at times with an over-reliance on rhetoric and an under-reliance on research evidence. His capacity for attempted emotional manipulation through language is evident from the following:

... changes in parenting partners means, at best, a deep disruption in a child's education, though of course several educational disruptions cut deeper into the effectiveness of the educational coalition than just one. The discussion presumes, somewhat optimistically, that new partners are prepared to get involved in the first place. (Etzioni, 1993:16)

The ideological debate over family has seen other shifts apart from that of Old Labour to New Labour. Halsey, traditionally Old Labour, has become an important figure in the debate on family (MacDonald, 1997; Mann and Roseneil, 1999) and there are similarities in Halsey's views on family and those of right-wing Murray (Mann and Roseneil, 1999) and the IEA. Halsey (1993a) and two other well-known socialists, Dennis and Erdos (1993), have written for the IEA. Indeed, Green (1993, 1993a) in his general foreword to two IEA publications on family, highlights the example of Halsey to comment on the fusion of views on the family across the political spectrum. From a position of Christian ethical socialism, Halsey (1993, 1993a) draws on communitarian notions of family. With interestingly selective use of research evidence, Halsey (1993, 1993a) strongly argues the case for the intact nuclear family, claiming, for instance, that children in reordered families tend to be disadvantaged in terms of health, emotional and behavioural, and educational outcomes, in comparison with their peers in intact nuclear families. In his article in *Children and Society* (1993), Halsey qualifies, albeit in passing and with a degree of tokenism, the above evidence by acknowledging that not all children in intact nuclear families have positive outcomes, and not all children in reordered families have negative outcomes. However, in the IEA publication (Halsey, 1993a), the qualification was omitted.

Presenting selective evidence, as above, especially when in a position to influence others, can help stereotype and potentially stigmatize children who live in families which deviate from the perceived norm of the intact nuclear family. Unsurprisingly, lone-parent families are likely to be most stigmatized. Stereotypes of family can serve to disadvantage children who may be otherwise well-adjusted. This is even though

reification of the intact nuclear family is at odds with the reality of the diversity of families described in 1.2.2.

1.2.4. Previous Research and this Study.

As will be discussed fully in chapter two, there is a vast body of research on family structure. Most of the literature is quantitative. The quantitative literature focuses on children's outcomes, health, emotional and behavioural, and/or educational, though there is relatively little research on children's educational outcomes. Most of the British research on children's outcomes is based on old data, which are of dubious applicability for children growing up today. Across the literature, much of the evidence is contradictory.

In comparison to the quantitative literature on outcomes according to family structure, there is little qualitative research on family structure. Of existing qualitative research, few studies have attempted to focus on young people's perceptions of family structure. Adults have, in contrast, tended to speak on behalf of children. In particular, previous British studies which have aimed to access children's views on family structure have only touched on children's views of the extent to which links exist between their family structure and experience of schooling.

1.3. Conclusions.

Demographic changes in family, family ideologies, the juxtaposition of the two and what this may mean for children growing up today, the paucity of research on children's views of family structure and a long-standing personal interest in the family all interweave to shape the backcloth to this thesis. Reflecting on the relationships between demographic trends on family and family ideologies of the type discussed in this chapter made me explore the research literature on children's experience of family structure. Children's voices on their experience of family structure were largely absent from British research

on family structure. This gap is the starting point of this thesis. This thesis aims to understand how 32 young people locate their experience of family structure within their experience of family and schooling.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.

This chapter will first present the research findings on family structure. Where appropriate, where methodological strengths or limitations of existing research relate to specific points in the research evidence, these will be discussed during the presentation of the evidence. However, previous research will be critiqued principally in section 2.5, where methodological strengths and weaknesses of existing research will be discussed. The chapter will conclude by considering the extent to which existing research can be used to draw conclusions about children's responses to family separation and by locating this thesis within the literature on family structure. The ideological literature referred to in chapter one will not be systematically explored in this chapter, because it is not based on systematic analysis of research evidence. However, it will be referred to where appropriate.

Categories of family structure, as used within the academic and ideological literature and by politicians and the media, are riven with problems. Within the academic literature, categories of family structure are often vaguely conceptualized, without the researcher questioning fully the assumptions underpinning them. However, to provide a framework in which to present previous research findings, categories of family structure will be used here as found within the academic literature, even though their use in the academic literature is sometimes arbitrary within an individual study and inconsistent across different research studies. Broadly, an intact nuclear family usually refers to a family headed by two biological parents. A reordered or reconstituted family potentially encompasses both stepfamilies and single-parent families. In general terms, a stepfamily, reconstituted nuclear or reordered nuclear family usually refers to a family headed by two adults, one of whom is usually the natural parent of the resident child/children, whilst the other is a step-parent. The terms single, lone and one-parent family are usually used interchangeably, to denote a family headed by one resident adult, though some research

distinguishes between the terms, as will be discussed in 2.5.1. The term redisrupted family is sometimes used to refer to a family which has experienced several family reorderings. Use of these categories in the presentation of research findings is not to suggest that the categories are unproblematic. Their problematic nature will be considered further in section 2.5.1., in the discussion of methodological issues.

2.1. Overview of Existing Literature.

It is perhaps unsurprising that there exists a vast body of research on family structure, given the demographic changes in family and marriage outlined in chapter one. The literature on family structure has principally been written in the latter quarter of the twentieth century, and is principally quantitative (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). Most of the literature focuses on the psychological and economic (eg Burghes, 1993, 1994) effects of family separation on children. Much less has been written on family structure and children's schooling.

A considerable amount of British research on family structure is survey-based, and uses the large data sets of the 1946 National Survey of Health and Development (NSHD), the 1958 National Child Development Study (NCDS) and the 1970 Child Health and Education Study (CHES). The initial sample in these data sets consisted of children born during the week 3-9 March in 1946, 1958 and 1970. The 1946 NSHD had an initial sample of 13687 children. The 1958 NCDS contained information on 18558 children (Kiernan, 1998:3). The 1970 CHES sample contained 17198 children (Burghes, 1994:14). Researchers using these cohorts include Wadsworth (1988, 1991), Maclean and Wadsworth (1988), Elliott and Richards (1991), Ferri (1993), Kiernan (1997), and Kiernan and Mueller (1998). For instance, Wadsworth (1991:39) used a stratified random sample of 5362 of the children in the NSHD 1946 cohort.

A more recent data set used in research which encompasses family structure is the West of Scotland Twenty-07 Study. Sweeting et al. (1998), for instance, used the 1009

respondents in the third of the three age cohorts; data were first collected on this cohort in 1987, when sample members were aged 15.

Smaller-scale qualitative studies tend to focus on adults' perceptions of family separation (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:15), such as Burgoyne and Clark's (1984) study of 40 stepfamilies in Sheffield and Ribbens et al.'s (1998) study of 23 stepfamily 'clusters'. Some qualitative research has, however, focused on children's perceptions of family separation. Perhaps among the most influential research encompassing children's views on family break-up are two American studies (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989), based on individual interviews with members of 60 Californian families which had recently experienced family separation.

The most frequently cited British studies on family structure which aim to listen to the voice of the child are those by Walczak and Burns (1984), Mitchell (1985) and Cockett and Tripp (1994). Walczak and Burns (1984:8) interviewed 100 volunteers in the London area who had experienced their parents' divorce before they were 18. Half were under 18 at the time of interview (Walczak and Burns, 1984:9). Mitchell (1985) selected her sample through divorce court records. Mitchell (1985) interviewed 71 custodial parents, and 50 young people who, at the time of interview, were between 16 and 18, and who had experienced family separation at least five years prior to interview.

Cockett and Tripp's (1994) study combined both quantitative and qualitative methods. Cockett and Tripp (1994) selected their sample by sending out a questionnaire to almost 1000 families, through 13 schools in the Exeter area. The sample selected through questionnaire consisted of 76 matched pairs of children normally resident in a reordered family and children normally resident in an intact nuclear family. Pairs were matched according to age, sex, mother's educational background, birth order, social class and whether the child was in state or private education. Half of the 152 children were aged 9-10 and half were 13-14 at the time of fieldwork. Individual interviews were conducted with children and parents, and a range of background information was collected on the

children through questionnaires to schools and GPs. Data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Because this thesis is qualitative and also aims to access the child's voice, and because Walczak and Burns (1984), Mitchell (1985) and Cockett and Tripp (1994) are the three main British studies on family structure which attempt to access the child's voice, these three studies will be discussed frequently in this chapter.

There have also been a number of meta-analyses of the literature on family structure, including those by Amato and Keith (1991) and, more recently, Rodgers and Pryor (1998). Utting's (1995) study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on the current state of, and future directions for, the family encompasses both demographic trends and existing research evidence on alterations in family structure.

Some qualitative research on the family considers family structure. For example, Moore et al. (1996) interviewed 20 children from a range of family backgrounds on their views of family life. The sample included a child with a handicapped sibling, an only child, a child with many siblings, a child in a 'traditional' (intact nuclear) family and a child in a 'split' (reordered) family. Morrow (1998) researched children from eight mixed ability classes in four schools, two primary and two secondary, using a questionnaire, a drawing and writing exercise and group interviews, to explore children's views of family. As approximately a quarter of the sample were Pakistani, data were analysed according to ethnic group. Some literature on home and school also encompasses family structure (eg Johnson and Ransom, 1983). David's (1993) more recent study is a wide-ranging, detailed and illuminating analysis of home involvement in children's schooling.

2.2. Children's Experience of Family Reordering.

This section will summarize the perceived stages in children's responses to family reordering, as highlighted by some researchers. More detail on aspects of children's

experience of reordering is included in subsequent sections, both in the discussion of children's outcomes and in the consideration of factors potentially mediating children's responses to family separation.

Research on family structure tends to concur that family separation is, for most children, distressing (Walczak and Burns, 1984; Mitchell, 1985:92; Wadsworth, 1991:115; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). Research suggests that most children potentially experience a range of conflicting emotions over family separation, which can include: confusion, sadness, extreme distress, anger, guilt, bewilderment, rejection, fantasizing about parental reconciliation, idealization of the absent parent, indifference, and, in some instances, relief (Walczak and Burns, 1984:53-4; Cockett and Tripp, 1994). Research evidence agrees that most children would have preferred their parents to have stayed together (Mitchell, 1985:vii; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:4; Walczak and Burns, 1984:52). This is sometimes the case even when there is extreme conflict between the parents. In other cases of extreme acrimony, however, the departure of one parent can be a relief to the child.

It is argued that, in the short term, most children experience a crisis period of about one or two years after family separation (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998: 21). After a crisis period, most researchers claim that the majority of children adapt to the family reordering, although for a small minority, the detrimental effects of family reordering persist into adulthood (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991:90).

Rodgers and Pryor (1998:21) describe the perspective of researchers who highlight a crisis period of about two years as 'balanced'. However, some researchers take a more absolute stance on the detrimental effects of family reordering on children. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), for instance, in their 10 year follow up of Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) sample of 60 Californian families, viewed almost half their sample as emotionally damaged adults. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989:84) also claimed to identify the 'sleeper' effect in young women. Some girls who had apparently adapted well at the time

of family reordering, then manifested distress in adult life and, according to Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), became unable to form stable adult relationships. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) attributed this to the family reordering. Walczak and Burns (1984:41) also claimed that their adult research subjects explicitly revealed that the negative emotional effects of experiencing parental separation as children lasted into adulthood.

For most children, the break-up of their biological parents' relationships is not the final change in their family structure. As will be discussed later, their natural parents are likely to form a new relationship or series of relationships. This potentially entails forming relationships with new step-parents, resident or non-resident, and step-siblings or half-siblings, resident or non-resident.

2.3. Children's Outcomes: Health, Emotional and Behavioural, and Educational.

2.3.1. Overview.

This section will discuss evidence on children's outcomes in three areas: health, emotional and behavioural, and educational. Educational outcomes, because of particular relevance to this thesis, will be discussed in most detail.

The literature on family structure has, on the whole, accumulated evidence that children who experience the break up of their parents' relationships tend to run greater risks of poorer health, emotional and behavioural, and educational outcomes than children in intact nuclear families (Burghes, 1994; Utting, 1995; Kiernan, 1998). In cases of multiple disruption, outcomes, according to some researchers (Capaldi, 1991; Peterson and Zill, 1991; Cockett and Tripp, 1994:35), are often significantly poorer. It should be stressed, however, that the outcome results are averages for the groups under study. These averages conceal the best and worst outcomes within each group. Indeed, the statistical

differences between children living in intact nuclear families and those in other family structures are often small (Utting, 1995; Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998), and disadvantaged outcomes identified by research only apply to a small minority of children (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:5). These outcomes conceal, as will be discussed later, the direction of causality. It should also be emphasized that, according to some research, outcomes differ according to the particular type of reordering experienced by the child. For example, the risks of poorer outcomes are less in a single-parent family through bereavement, than in a single-parent family through parental separation or in a single-parent family which has always been headed by one adult.

2.3.2. Health Outcomes.

There is little evidence available on health outcomes and family structure. Rodgers and Pryor (1998:25) see this paucity of evidence as one of the main flaws in the literature on family structure. Of the existing evidence, Wadsworth (1983), using the 1970 CHES birth cohort data set, found that more children in separated than in intact families were admitted to hospital. An unspecified 'some' of Walczak and Burns' (1984:110) research subjects perceived that their experience of illness was related to their parents' separation. Depression and heavy drinking were also linked by 'some' research subjects to family separation. Cockett and Tripp (1994:23) found that more children in reordered families reported a greater number of health problems and had visited the GP in the six months prior to interview, than children in intact nuclear families.

It is, however, important not to interpret the data at face value. This does not mean that children in reordered families necessarily had more accidents or were ill more often than children in intact nuclear families. The data may, rather, suggest that separated families did not have the resources to deal with accidents at home, and that children in reordered families, or, perhaps, their parents, were more sensitive to health issues than adults in intact nuclear families, and perhaps a little too quick to link perceived illness with

alterations in family structure. Furthermore, other research on health (eg Acheson, 1998) links health outcomes and socioeconomic status.

2.3.3. Emotional and Behavioural Outcomes.

In contrast to the research on health and family structure, there is a considerable amount of literature on children's emotional and behavioural outcomes, according to family structure. A range of associations between family reordering and negative emotional and behavioural outcomes have been found. These include the following, as worded by the researcher/s involved: conduct disorder (Brown and Hepworth, 1993), antisocial behaviour (Rodgers, 1994; Wadsworth et al., 1985), chronic anxiety (Cockett and Tripp, 1994), withdrawn behaviour (Whitehead, 1979), enuresis (bedwetting) (Douglas, 1970, Cockett and Tripp, 1994:22), unhappiness (Cockett and Tripp, 1994), low self-esteem (Cockett and Tripp, 1994), hostility (Whitehead, 1979), disruptive behaviour (Elliot and Richards, 1991), and delinquency (Douglas, 1970; Wadsworth, 1979; Sweeting et al., 1998).

It is the association between delinquency and family break up which has been a particularly heated topic of academic and, as chapter one suggested, political debate, extending into the polemical right wing (eg Murray, 1990, 1994; Green, 1990; Dennis, 1993) and communitarian writing (eg Etzioni, 1993). As suggested in chapter one, this writing has helped label and stereotype children from 'broken homes'. In academic research, associations have consistently been demonstrated between family reordering and increased risk of delinquency and antisocial behaviour, particularly for boys (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:24). Evidence includes the work of Douglas (1970), using the 1946 NSHD cohort; Wadsworth (1979), using the 1946 NSHD cohort, and Wadsworth et al. (1985), using the 1970 CHES birth cohort; Elliott and Richards (1991) using the 1958 NCDS birth cohort; and Sweeting et al. (1998) using the Twenty-07 cohort born in 1972. Outcome measures encompass records and reports of criminal occurrences, behaviour leading to referral and disruptive behaviour at home and/or school. However, whilst these

researchers have demonstrated associations between family reordering and increased risk of delinquency, the causes behind the associations are not well understood. There is academic disagreement about the extent to which factors such as socioeconomic status account for the relationships and how much of the variance can be attributed to family structure (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:25).

Although a wide range of negative emotional and behavioural outcomes was summarized above, and although manifestations of emotional and behavioural distress in the aftermath of family separation may be common, severe psychological disturbance is not (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:21). Most of the emotional and behavioural symptoms tend to be short term, restricted largely to the one to two year crisis period previously described.

Furthermore, there is conflicting evidence across different research studies. This raises questions, first, potentially about the validity of individual studies, and, second, about the generalizability of the findings of individual studies. For instance, whilst Emery (1994), Hetherington et al. (1985) and Kelly (1993) did not find the self-esteem of children in reordered families lower than in children in intact nuclear families, Cockett and Tripp (1994) did. Cockett and Tripp (1994) used the Rosenberg self-image scale to assess children's self-esteem. Whilst half the children in the study apparently showed good self-esteem, children from low conflict intact nuclear families were more likely to show good self-esteem than children in high conflict intact nuclear families, and children in reordered families were significantly more likely to report low self-esteem than their matched pair in the intact nuclear group. Cockett and Tripp (1994:20) argue that, where children's self-esteem is low, it is likely to carry over into other areas of their lives.

Some children in reordered families report not only negative outcomes, but also the positive emotional and behavioural outcomes (Mitchell, 1985). First, some children experience a sense of relief at being removed from a highly conflictive situation. Second, a minority of children in Mitchell's study (1985:111), and over a fifth (21 out of 100) of Walczak and Burns' (1984:108) research subjects described benefits such as increased

maturity through the experience of reordering. A small number of Mitchell's (1985:111) sample described enjoying what was seen as a closer relationship with the resident parent. In Cockett and Tripp's (1994:31) sample, children in reordered families were more likely to discuss personal issues with their resident parent than their peers in the intact nuclear group; this could indicate that children in reordered families had closer relationships with a parent than children in intact nuclear families. Nearly half Walczak and Burns' (1984:108) sample said that an advantage of family reordering had been that they had developed a good understanding of people and of interpersonal relationships.

2.3.4. Educational Outcomes.

2.3.4.1. Academic Attainment .

Researchers using the large data sets of the 1946 NSHD, the 1958 NCDS and the 1970 CHES birth cohorts have consistently found differences in educational attainment between children in intact nuclear and in reordered families.

Wadsworth, for instance, analysed the educational achievement of a stratified random sample of 5362 children in the 1946 birth cohort, in a number of publications (eg Maclean and Wadsworth, 1988; Wadsworth, 1988; Wadsworth, 1991). At age eight, the children completed tests in reading, vocabulary, sentence completion and picture intelligence (Wadsworth, 1991:72). At 11 and 15, children were tested in verbal and non-verbal ability, arithmetic, reading and vocabulary (Wadsworth, 1991:76). Maclean and Wadsworth (1988:161) analysed public examination results at O, A and university level according to family structure. Maclean and Wadsworth make the point that, whatever the social class, children in divorced families tended to have lower educational attainment than children in intact nuclear families. Maclean and Wadsworth found, however, that parental death was more positively associated with educational attainment than parental divorce. Furthermore, a higher percentage of children in manual families in which a

parent had died gained university places than their peers in manual families in the intact nuclear group.

Whilst on the whole there were negative correlations between family reordering and attainment, other factors apart from family structure were associated with educational attainment. For example, children in large families tended to perform lower on test scores than children in small families. Children whose parents were involved in their education tended to perform better than children whose parents were uninvolved (Wadsworth, 1991:98). There were also associations between gender and social class, and educational attainment. For instance, whilst the girls performed better than the boys at eight, boys from non-manual families were catching up by 11, and, by 15, the girls were ahead only in non-verbal tests (Wadsworth, 1991:76,99). However, the most powerful influence on test scores at 11, according to Wadsworth (1991:77), was the school's record in achieving grammar school places.

Other researchers, such as Elliott and Richards (1991) and Kiernan (1992, 1997), have used data from the 1958 birth cohort to analyse educational attainment. At seven, the children in the 1958 birth cohort took an arithmetic test designed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), and the Southgate reading test. At 16, the children took a multiple choice mathematics test and a reading comprehension which entailed choosing the correct word from a list of five to complete a sentence (Elliott and Richards, 1991:262). Elliott and Richards (1991:271) also analysed university level qualifications and qualifications up to and including A level.

Elliott and Richards (1991: 274) concluded that children in divorced families performed more poorly on the outcome measures at both seven and 16 than children in intact nuclear families. There were also correlations between educational attainment, and gender and social class in tests at both seven and 16. At seven, gender and father's social class correlated with reading scores; girls scored better than boys and children with a father in a non-manual occupation performed better than children with a father in a

manual job. By 16, the effects of gender were reduced, but those of social class had increased (Elliott and Richards, 1991:270). In mathematics tests, boys did better than girls at seven and 16, and children with fathers in non-manual occupations tended to perform better than those with fathers in manual occupations (Elliott and Richards, 1991:269). Elliott and Richards (1991:271) found that children from divorced families were much less likely to gain a university level qualification than those from intact families.

Sweeting et al. (1998) analysed the O level results of the third cohort in the West of Scotland Twenty-07 Study: Health in the Community. These data are more recent than those of the other cohort studies discussed; cohort members were 15 in 1987. Students' O level grades were divided into two groups: students with between nought and four O levels, and students with five and above O levels. Sweeting et al. (1998:29) found associations between family structure and educational qualifications. Sample members in intact families were most likely to have qualifications and to enter tertiary education. However, there were some interesting exceptions. Boys in lone-parent families performed as well at school level as boys in intact nuclear families, whilst boys in stepfamilies performed more poorly. Boys in stepfamilies and girls in lone-parent families were least likely to enter tertiary education.

Whilst the researchers cited above systematically found differences in educational outcomes for children in intact nuclear and reordered families, the strengths and weaknesses of this evidence will be considered later, in the section on the relative merits of the data.

Associations have also been found between family reordering and age at leaving school. Researchers such as Illsley and Thompson (1961), Kiernan (1992), Ni Bhrolchain et al. (1994) and Tasker (1992) found that children who had experienced family break-up tended to leave school earlier than children in intact nuclear families. Kiernan (1992) and Ni Bhrolchain et al. (1994) used the 1958 NCDS cohort. Tasker (1992) used teenagers

from the electoral roll in Cambridge, who were born between 1969-71. Illsley and Thompson (1961) used the oldest data set of all: women in Aberdeen who were having their first pregnancy, and who were born between 1910 and 1936. The issue of the age of the data sets will be discussed later this chapter.

Some American, Australian and New Zealand studies (Amato and Booth, 1991; Ferguson et al., 1994; and Finlayson et al., 1987) also report that, lasting into adulthood, children from reordered families tend to have poorer educational attainment than children from intact nuclear families. However, differences reported are small, and it would be unwise to overstate their significance. The limitations of cross-cultural evidence will be considered later in the chapter.

2.3.4.2. The Processes of Schooling.

Perceptions of the processes of schooling are best explored through in-depth, qualitative research. As previously touched on, there has been little qualitative research on family structure and children's experience of different aspects of schooling. Walczak and Burns (1984) and Mitchell (1985) both touch on family structure and aspects of children's education. Cockett and Tripp (1994), through their interviews with children and with parents, explore relationships between family reordering and children's schooling in more detail, though they only devote half a chapter to children's education. This section will focus principally on the work of these researchers.

A problem with Walczak and Burns' (1984) and Mitchell's (1985) studies is that their samples are purely from reordered families; we do not know, therefore, how any young people in intact nuclear families felt about the schooling issues considered by the researchers. Although Cockett and Tripp's (1994) sample consisted of young people in both intact nuclear and reordered families, a disadvantage with their work is that Cockett and Tripp (1994) do not consider whether any family issue, other than those related to family reordering, impacted, whether positively or negatively, on children's schooling.

Research subjects, across all three studies, tended to comment much more on the perceived negative consequences, rather than any positive effects, of their parents' separation upon their schooling. Walczak and Burns (194:108), for instance, grouped their 100 research subjects' comments on divorce into a range of what they labelled, perhaps rather simplistically, 'good' and 'bad' consequences of divorce. Whilst nine research subjects perceived that their parents' separation had affected their schooling positively, 24 perceived that their parents' separation had had a negative effect on their education. Cockett and Tripp (1994:24) found that more children in reordered families than in intact nuclear families reported problems with aspects of school; children in redisrupted families reported more problems than children in step or lone-parent families. Problems highlighted by research subjects, across the three studies, can be grouped into the following areas: schoolwork, relationships at school, changing schools and school attendance.

Some of Walczak and Burns' (1984:33,55) and Mitchell's (1985:75) sample reported finding it difficult to focus on schoolwork, whether at home or school, because of feeling upset over family reordering. In Cockett and Tripp's (1994:24) study, more children in reordered families than in intact nuclear families highlighted problems in concentrating when at school. Cockett and Tripp (1994:23) found that children in reordered families were more likely to report problems with schoolwork than children in intact families. Children in low conflict families were least likely, and children in redisrupted families were most likely, to have received formal or informal additional help with schoolwork (Cockett and Tripp, 1994:24).

Cockett and Tripp (1994:25) reported that more children from reordered than intact nuclear families claimed that teachers and other authority figures could upset them, though the difference was not statistically significant. In Cockett and Tripp's study (1994:25), more children in reordered than in intact nuclear families also reported problems with friendships at school. Cockett and Tripp (1994:25) touched on the point

that more children in reordered families (75%) than in intact nuclear families (59%) were likely to say they had friends whose parents had separated.

Some research claims that children in reordered families can experience more changes of school than their peers in intact nuclear families (eg Elliott et al. 1990; Richards, 1999). This claim was affirmed by Cockett and Tripp (1994:24-5), who found that there were more changes of school among children in reordered families, though first time lone-parents were not significantly more likely to have changed school than children in intact nuclear families. Of Mitchell's (1985:43-4) 50 research subjects, a quarter had changed schools upon family separation, whilst only one in 10 had had their schooling disrupted more than once. Whilst an unspecified number of the research subjects said they did not like changing school, a specified two found it a positive experience (Mitchell, 1985:44).

Both Cockett and Tripp (1994) and Mitchell (1985) consider school attendance. Cockett and Tripp (1994:25) found that parents of children in reordered families (22) were significantly more likely than parents in intact nuclear families (10) to report that their child truanted or was a school refuser. Whilst Cockett and Tripp (1994:25) say that 22 children reported truanting or refusing school, they do not, however, analyse this figure according to family structure. Mitchell (1985:75) reported that some of her 50 research subjects in reordered families had truanted. However, though Mitchell (1985:91) acknowledged that truancy could occur within any family structure, Mitchell (1985) was unable to make any comparison with an intact nuclear group.

In Cockett and Tripp's (1994:25) study, some children (12) and parents (15) in reordered families said that children had found school difficult at the time of the parental separation. 88 children reported not wanting to go to school. These were from both intact (40) nuclear and reordered nuclear (48) families. Cockett and Tripp (1994:25) present the children's stated reasons: problems with a teacher or failure to complete homework. Although these are consistent with reasons presented in the literature on school

attendance (eg O’Keeffe, 1993; Blyth and Milner, 1999), they only represent a minority of reasons cited in the school attendance literature.

Walczak and Burns (1984), Mitchell (1985) and Cockett and Tripp (1994) also refer to aspects of home-school relations. The following areas are touched on: parental involvement in aspects of their child’s schooling according to family structure; whether the child’s school knew about the family separation; in cases where the school knew about family separation, the extent to which it was perceived that the school was helpful to the child; research subjects’ perceptions of whether the school should be informed about family break-up; and the researchers’ perceptions of the roles schools could play in helping children manage family separation.

Cockett and Tripp (1994:25) found that parents in reordered families had less contact with school than parents in intact nuclear families. Lone parents in Cockett and Tripp’s (1994) study had the least contact of all, and said that they found it difficult, for practical reasons associated with childcare, to attend parents’ evenings. Whilst Walczak and Burns (1984), Mitchell (1985) and Cockett and Tripp (1994) did not consider the roles played by parents, resident or non-resident, with homework, Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991:36), in contrast, did, and found that only a tiny minority of children in reordered families were helped with schoolwork by the non-resident parent.

Some research suggests that parents do not usually inform school about family reordering (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Mitchell, 1985). The parents in Mitchell’s (1985:91) study had apparently only usually informed school of the family break-up, when their child was misbehaving. According to Cockett and Tripp (1994:), teachers were aware of students’ more overt behaviour in school, following an alteration in family structure. The reader is not told how, in these cases, the teachers knew about the child’s family structure: whether teachers knew because the child’s behaviour had prompted them to find out, the child’s parents had told the school, or the child’s parents had told the school only because there were problems with the child’s behaviour. If, as in Mitchell’s (1985) study,

representatives of the school finding out about family break-up was linked specifically to behavioural issues with a student, then this could point to potential teacher stereotyping of 'problem' students from 'broken homes'.

Cockett and Tripp (1994:23) claim a third of children in reordered families had talked about their family separation with their class teacher. However, half of Cockett and Tripp's (1994) sample were 9-10 year olds. Primary students are, on the whole, probably more likely to talk to teachers about personal issues than secondary school students. This is partly age-related and partly because primary students spend a lot of time with their class teacher; primary students are therefore probably more likely than secondary school students to develop relationships with a teacher close enough to talk about personal issues.

In Walczak and Burns' (1984:62-3) study, the 100 research subjects had mixed views on the extent to which their school had been helpful over their family break-up; only some research subjects perceived that their teachers had been understanding about their family separation. In Cockett and Tripp's (1994:26) judgement, the schools they worked with wanted to be helpful to children experiencing family reordering. There are, to some extent, mixed opinions within the research literature about whether schools should be told about family reordering. In Mitchell's (1985:178) research, both parents and children were ambivalent about whether school should be informed about family break-up.

Rutter (1989) and Jenkins and Smith (1990), though not writing specifically about family reordering, both argue that schools can provide reinforcement to counteract the vulnerability experienced by children at home. Some researchers, such as Cockett and Tripp (1994) underline how school can play a positive role in helping students manage family reordering and consider, with some attention to practicalities involved, schools' potential roles. Potential roles divide into two main areas: providing support to children experiencing family reordering and curricular provision on the family. Robinson (1991) argues that professionals within school may be the only sources of support for children

experiencing separation. Rodgers and Pryor (1998:7) make the point, however, that like other professionals such as GPs and family lawyers, teachers are often inadequately trained to work with children on sensitive areas of family life. One of the recommendations in Cockett and Tripp's (1994:64) study is courses for teachers to inform teachers of referral services for children experiencing family separation. Cox and Desforges (1987) state that little is written for teachers on family separation; this perhaps implies that there is a need for literature on family break-up for teachers.

Various writers, such as Burghes (1994), recommend that there should be education for parenthood and family life within school. Utting (1995) raises the question of how issues related to parenting and family life could be more effectively taught within school. Cockett and Tripp's (1994:65) view on the relevance of family education in schools is more extreme; they recommend that part of the core curriculum should be educating children about personal relationships and family life. Included within this should be education about the diversity of family structures in modern society. This, in Cockett and Tripp's (1994: 65) view, would help reduce the stigma which they assert children in reordered families still feel; Cockett and Tripp (1994) argue that reducing this sense of stigma would in turn, help raise the educational achievement of children in reordered families.

2.4. Factors Mediating Children's Responses to Family Reordering.

Most research on family structure argues that the relationship between family reordering and children's outcomes, health, emotional and behavioural, and educational, is not straightforward (Burghes, 1994; Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998: 4-5); there is no path down which children will inevitably travel following family reordering. Across the research literature, a wide range of factors is offered as potentially mediating children's outcomes, by potentially acting as protective or exacerbating factors in

children's responses to family reordering. These factors are as follows: the altered family structure itself; socioeconomic factors; family conflict and the extent of the child's involvement in parental conflict; the age of the child at the time of separation; gender; the quality of the explanations given to the child about separation; parental well-being; the child's relationship with the natural parents; the child's stepfamily relationships; the child's support network; and the child's coping strategies.

As will be shown in the following sections, the wide range of factors potentially impacting on children's adaptation to reordering raises questions about the extent to which it is possible to draw conclusions about children's outcomes on the basis of knowledge about their family structure. Furthermore, as will be shown in the following sections, existing research evidence is often contradictory, in two ways. First, within individual factors, there is often conflicting evidence across different research studies. Second, there is disagreement amongst researchers about the relative impact of individual factors on children's adaptation to family reordering. Rodgers and Pryor (1998:19) argue that it is crucial that there is more research which aims to understand these factors, so that children can be helped to adapt to family separation.

2.4.1 The Altered Family Structure.

Cockett and Tripp (1994:83), using the results of their multivariate analysis, claim that the alteration in family structure itself is the most significant factor in explaining children's outcomes, over and above the experience of, for instance, conflict and financial hardship. As already pointed to, some research shows, furthermore, that children's outcomes vary according to the particular type of family reordering. It has been argued that the outcomes of children who have experienced a parental death are better than those who have experienced parental divorce or separation. According to, for instance, Wadsworth (1991:116) and Rodgers and Pryor (1998:6), there is little

difference in the outcomes of children in intact nuclear families and children in a lone-parent family through bereavement.

2.4.2. Socioeconomic Factors.

Whilst the health and well being of children who grow up in poverty are not necessarily predetermined, research, such as the work of Douglas (1968), Ferri (1976) and Murchison (1974), links economic disadvantage to risks that children will fail to thrive (Utting, 1995). It is known that family reordering tends to result in a decline in living standards (Walczak and Burns, 1984:82; Mitchell, 1985:19; Cockett and Tripp, 1994:16). Kiernan (1998:59) argues that even children with advantaged backgrounds are likely to experience a loss of resources through family reordering.

One-parent families are usually worse off economically than two parent families, whether intact nuclear or step (Walczak and Burns, 1984:82; Cockett and Tripp, 1994:16). For example, Utting (1995) reports that, in 1992, 60% of lone-parent families had gross weekly incomes of less than £150 a week, compared with 11% of married and cohabiting couples, whilst 76% of two parent families had an income of over £250 a week. Most lone-parent families are female-headed, and Kiernan (1998: 59) argues that 80% of lone mothers have been on state benefits during the 1990s; in other words, most lone mothers are unable to support themselves.

Studies such as Ferri's (1976), Eekalaar and Maclean's (1986), Burghes' (1994) and Bradshaw's (1991) highlight poverty as the most important influence on children's adaptation to family separation. Guidubaldi et al. (1983), in a study of 115 kindergarten children, highlighted the impact of both the type of family structure and socioeconomic status; they found that single parent and socioeconomic status were the most powerful variables accounting for poorer social and academic competence within their sample. Elliott et al. (1990:309) emphasize a 'strong association' between poverty and family reordering, and children's outcomes. Rodgers and Pryor (1998:25) also argue that

adjustment for socioeconomic factors negates many, though not all, of the relationships between educational attainment and family reordering in British studies.

However, the links between economic hardship and family separation are complex. First, Richards and Elliot (1991) and Rodgers and Pryor (1998:6) argue that financial hardship before as well as after separation can limit children's achievements. Burghes (1994:46) uses this point to argue that the impact on outcomes of financial hardship following divorce may depend on the relative wealth of the family before separation. Burghes (1994:46) hypothesizes that a family receiving state benefits before separation may be affected less by financial hardship after family separation than a family enjoying financial independence before separation. Second, Burghes (1994:46) also makes the point that we do not know whether it is the fall in income or any associated insecurity which may account for links between poverty and children's outcomes according to family structure.

Third, Walczak and Burns (1984:90-91) argue convincingly that it is not only a family's actual economic circumstances which are significant, but also, children's perceptions of family finances. Walczak and Burns (1984:85-86) cite the example of three sisters in their sample who had contrasting perceptions of their family's economic circumstances; this, in turn, illustrates how different people can have dissimilar experiences of the same life event. Walczak and Burns (1984:90-1) also make the plausible claim that it is particularly during adolescence when awareness of lack of money may be most acute. Walczak and Burns (1984:90-1) highlight adolescents' need to feel the same as their peers and for peer acceptance through, for instance, their clothes. If a family's economic circumstances are diminished through family separation, there may not be enough money to buy an adolescent the clothes he/she wants, particularly as, at the end of the 1990s, this is likely to mean brand names. Walczak and Burns (1984:85) highlight the lack of research on children's views on family finances; this pinpoints the need for more research.

Interestingly, Cockett and Tripp's (1994) findings on children's responses to family finance may be slightly contradictory. Cockett and Tripp (1994:16) argue that financial security was more usually associated with the presence of two adults, not one, and that older children were likely to suffer more through lack of money, because of peer pressure, than younger children (1994:56). However, Cockett and Tripp (1994:13) also found no reported differences in the amount or frequency of pocket money across family groups. If financial security was usually associated with the presence of two adults, then it would seem likely that some children in one-parent families would have received less pocket money than their peers in the intact nuclear group.

2.4.3. Parental Conflict.

Research studies agree that exposure to family conflict can affect children detrimentally, both short and long term (Cockett and Tripp, 1994:18). There is considerable evidence that children in high conflict families, whether intact nuclear or reordered, have more problems than children in low conflict families (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998; Cockett and Tripp, 1994:70; Jenkins and Smith, 1991; Dunlop and Burns, 1998; Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that the most distressed children in their sample were those who had been at the centre of their parents' conflict. In general, research concurs that it is better for children in high conflict intact nuclear families if their parents separate, rather than remain together (Cockett and Tripp, 1994).

This does not mean, however, that parental conflict ceases with parental separation. Indeed, conflict related to family reordering is likely not only to precede the separation, but also to continue after the separation itself, and this stresses the extent to which family reordering is a process, not an event (Elliott and Richards, 1991a). Cockett and Tripp (1994:42-3) report how, in 49 of their 76 reordered families, conflict between parents either continued or increased after separation. Only four out of every ten sets of divorced parents reported that they found it easy to speak to one another. Indeed, Cockett and

Tripp (1994:36) argue that divorce can actually instigate new disputes between parents. Whilst, for instance, parents' inability to live together may be at the centre of their arguments before separation, after separation there may be new quarrels over, for example, maintenance payments or access arrangements with children.

Research evidence suggests that it is not only exposure to, but also involvement in, parental conflict, which is potentially detrimental to children's adaptation to reordering (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991:107). Cockett and Tripp (1994) argue that the child is likely to have to take a more direct role in inter-parental disputes after separation, whether in terms of taking messages between parents, or listening to a parent telling tales about the other parent or about a parent's new partner. In contrast, in cases where parents resolve difficulties between themselves, this can serve as a protective factor in children's adaptation to family reordering.

However, it is important to remember that children can have complex responses to family conflict. As has been touched on earlier, for some children, family separation can be a relief, after exposure to family conflict. However, in other cases, even where children have been exposed to extreme acrimony between parents, they would still prefer their parents to remain together, even though this would entail perpetuation of exposure to conflict.

Within much of the literature on family structure, there is an implicit tendency to highlight parental conflict and other family conflict specifically associated with reordering, such as disputes between one parent's ex-spouse and new partner, and to downplay the existence, and potential impact on children, of other areas of family disputes. It is important to remember, in contrast, that children can be exposed to, and potentially affected by, family conflict on issues other than those merely related to family reordering. It may be the case that some children who experience family reordering are as much or more affected by, for instance, quarrels with a sibling or family disputes about whether to have a new pet, as by disputes between their natural parents. In any case,

parental disputes can occur across a range of family structures. Children in intact nuclear families, perhaps even those which are not high conflict families, can also be exposed to and even directly involved in their parents' conflict.

2.4.4. The Child's Age at the Time of Separation.

Some researchers argue that children's adaptation to parental separation is potentially mediated by the child's age at the time of separation. However, there are problems with the evidence.

There is contradictory evidence on the importance of the child's age at separation. For instance, in Leon and Donohue's (1987) study of 106 families, they found that the age of the children, who were between four and sixteen, did not affect their adaptation to separation. In contrast, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) linked the child's developmental stage with his/her ability to understand and accept the parental separation. Kurdek and Siesky (1980) found in their study that older children were less likely to react negatively to their parents' divorce, and more likely to give a two-sided version of the divorce and to view their parents' separation as final, than younger children. Kiernan (1997) found that men whose parents separated before they were six were less likely to be employed at 33 than men whose parents had separated when they were older.

However, research claims about the influences of age on children's adaptation to family tend to confound the child's age at the parental separation with the length of time since separation (Emery, 1988, cited in Cockett and Tripp, 1994:72; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:38). Rodgers and Pryor (1998:38) argue that, if parents separate when the child is young, then the child's age at separation is likely to be confounded with effects of, for instance, living in a lone or stepfamily for a prolonged period of time.

2.4.5 Gender.

There exists a range of often contradictory claims about the extent to which gender is a protective or exacerbating factor in children's adaptation to family reordering.

Some of the research relates the gender of the child to that of the resident parent. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1979) found that boys have greater adjustment problems than girls in lone mother families. This, however, partly conflicts with Walczak and Burn's (1984:100) finding that girls who had experienced family reordering were, with the onset of adolescence, hostile towards any new relationship of the mother's, whilst boys found their mothers' new relationships easier to accept. Other research (Guidubaldi et al., 1987) explores the relationships of gender to the impact of post-divorce parental conflict on children, arguing that exposure to post-divorce parental conflict has less effect on girls than boys.

Rodgers and Pryor (1998) recently put a new and plausible perspective on previous research claims about gender and adaptation to family reordering. Rodgers and Pryor (1998) claim that the degree of distress experienced over family reordering may not vary according to gender, but that boys and girls may manifest distress differently.

2.4.6. Communication over Separation.

Much research highlights the importance of the explanation parents give their children about their separation (Cockett and Tripp, 1994:62). Lack of explanation to children about family break-up has frequently been seen as a factor potentially exacerbating children's problems in adapting to family reordering. In contrast, clear channels of communication about separation between parents and their children have been seen as a potentially valuable protective factor for children experiencing family reordering (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998).

Indeed, Walczak and Burns (1984:58) see the quality of communication between parents and children as the most important factor in children's adaptation to reordering. Walczak and Burns (1985) found that lack of proper communication from parents to children about family separation led to a deterioration in relationships. In contrast, in the cases of those children who had adapted well to family reordering, the key factor, according to Walczak and Burns (1985), was clear parent-child explanations.

Mitchell (1985:65) uses Weiss' (1975) argument that, in order to accept family separation, young people need to develop an account of events leading to separation, to argue that communication about family separation needs to be ongoing. This is because, first, separation is a process not a single event (Mitchell, 1985:56; Elliott and Richards, 1991a). Second, even though a parent may think he/she has provided enough appropriate detail for the child concerned, this may be a false assumption (Mitchell, 1985:55). The child may need a series of conversations about the family separation, in order to understand and accept it. To help children accept the family reordering, Rodgers and Pryor (1998:15) highlight the importance of a two-way process of communication: parents telling children what is happening and, second, being sensitive to, and therefore anticipating, children's needs.

However, data from research studies suggest that, in spite of the importance of explanations between parents and children, parents do not usually explain family separation adequately (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Walczak and Burns, 1984; Mitchell, 1985; Cockett and Tripp, 1994:57). For instance, of Mitchell's (1985:41) sample of 50, most had apparently not been warned beforehand about family break-up. In Walczak and Burns' research (1984:50), a third of the 100 research subjects did not remember receiving any explanation about their parents' separation. In cases where explanations had been given to children, it had usually been the mother who had talked to the child (Walczak and Burns, 1984:51).

Cockett and Tripp (1994:43) found that only five (6%) of the 76 children in reordered families had had their parents' separation explained to them beforehand by both parents. In another six cases, both parents had apparently explained separately about the separation. In a further seven cases, the parents had explained about the break-up together, but after one parent had left the family home. In seven out of ten cases, the mother had told the children of the father's departure; this echoes Walczak and Burns' (1984) findings. In eight cases, children had apparently received no explanation whatsoever, whilst another 16 were merely told in bare outline of the parents' departure.

In some cases, research subjects also emphasized the importance of explanations from parent to child. In Walczak and Burns' (1984:49) study, only a few of their 100 research subjects felt positively about the quality of the explanation their parents had given them about separation. Two research subjects perceived that lack of family discussion about their parents' separation had stunted their own sense of emotional security. When asked in interview what advice they would give separating families, some girls in Mitchell's (1985:174-5) study highlighted explanations from parent to child as most important.

In turn, Cockett and Tripp (1994:51) claim that parents often wanted advice on how to explain family separation to their children. Cockett and Tripp (1994:51) argue that, because of the pain of family separation, parents felt ill prepared to be able to talk about family break-up with their children, members of the extended family and their children's school.

2.4.7. Parental Well-Being.

Research frequently highlights the degree of parental well-being after family separation as a potentially protective or exacerbating factor in children's adaptation to family reordering (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:7).

Much of the literature stresses how parents' ability to parent their child may be diminished by their own distress before, during and after family separation (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:15; Demo and Acock, 1988; Emery, 1994; Hetherington, Cox and Cox, 1982; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989:29), to the extent that parents may, for instance, lean on children for support (Elliot, 1986: 149). Yet the evidence is not clear-cut. Kelly (1987), subsequent to her work with Wallerstein (1980), found that whilst role reversal could occur in reordered families, with the child trying to attend to the needs of the parent, this was not necessarily damaging for the child unless it lasted a long time.

Although some research highlights the concern of some children in reordered families for the welfare of their parents after family break-up (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989:34), it would be wrong to see this as necessarily damaging for the children concerned. It could, rather, be argued that awareness of and empathy for the needs of others are, in moderation, positive indications of maturity.

Mitchell (1985:45-7) presents data on children having extra family responsibilities, to help the resident parent after family reordering. Mitchell (1985:45-7) argues that, whilst only one research subject complained about her role, most, in contrast, apparently welcomed the increased maturity which they perceived had accompanied responsibilities. It may have been the case that some research subjects rationalized their experience, to present something positive to the researcher, and, perhaps, to themselves. We do not know, however, the extent to which Mitchell (1985) either teased out, or checked up on, aspects of research subjects' accounts with them, in order to enhance the validity of her data.

2.4.8. The Child's Relationship with the Natural Parents.

Much research cites the quality of children's relationships with their natural parents after family break-up as a potentially protective or exacerbating factor in children's adaptation to family separation (eg Maclean and Wadsworth, 1988:164; Wallerstein and Blakeslee,

1989:16; Burghes, 1994:11). At one extreme, Hess and Camera (1979) found that the child's relationships with his/her parents after divorce was as important in children's adaptation to reordering as the reordering itself. Walczak and Burns (1984) take a more moderate stance, and highlight a positive relationship between children and their natural parents as one important factor in children's adaptation to family separation.

Many studies (Furstenberg, Morgan and Allison, 1987; Robinson, 1991; Mitchell, 1985) report that children's contact with their non-resident parent, who is usually the father, is often infrequent and lessens over time. Mitchell (1985:141) found that access immediately after separation tends to set a pattern for future access. In Mitchell's (1985) qualitative study, almost one third of the children lost touch with one parent immediately after separation, although in a small number of cases contact was renewed later. Siblings, according to Mitchell (1985), often had very different arrangements for access.

Cockett and Tripp's (1994) findings are similar to those of Mitchell (1985). Fewer than half the children in reordered families had regular contact with the non-resident parent. Half of those who did not have regular contact did not know where the non-resident parent was living. Cockett and Tripp (1994) found that children who had experienced a series of family disruptions were less likely to have contact with the non-resident parent than children who had only experienced one family reordering.

Cockett and Tripp (1994) report that children who had no contact with their non-resident parent nevertheless still had clear feelings about him/her. Mitchell's (1985) and Walczak and Burns' (1984:74) studies report that some children felt rejected if the non-resident parent did not attempt to see them or to keep in contact with them. Walczak and Burns (1984:78) argue that it is important for the child to know that he/she is loved by the absent parent, and has not been pushed aside by, for instance, step-siblings. In Mitchell's (1985:130) study, some research subjects who had access to the non-resident parent were dissatisfied with the access arrangements.

It would seem likely that a potentially important protective factor in children's adaptation to reordering is whether the child has the contact with the non-resident parent that he/she wants. In broad terms, young children are likely to want more frequent contact with the non-resident parent than adolescents, who may prefer to spend spare time with peers rather than with the non-resident parent (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998:16). Another interlinked aspect is that the child has a say in access arrangements (Walczak and Burns, 1994:79).

Only some researchers problematize the concept of contact. In much of the literature, contact tends to be implicitly defined as face to face meetings. Cockett and Tripp (1994:45) go further than this, and interpret contact as also including, for example, telephone calls, presents and cards. Rodgers and Pryor (1998:16), in turn, distinguish between contact with, and knowledge about, the non-resident parent; even where there is no contact with the non-resident parent, Rodgers and Pryor (1998:16) argue that it is important for children's adjustment to have information about an absent parent. Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991:107) distinguish between quantity and quality of contact with the non-resident parent.

Mitchell (1985:20) and Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991:106) argue that mothers tend to take more responsibility for looking after children than fathers in intact nuclear families. Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991:107) make problematic the importance of the child's relationship with the non-resident parent, by their plausible argument that it is not known whether fathers in intact nuclear families are more involved in their children's upbringing than non-resident fathers in reordered families. Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991:107) also make the point that many children in intact nuclear families may not get the attention they want from their fathers. This point is affirmed by one of Walczak and Burn's (1984:34) case studies; one girl described how she had tried, unsuccessfully, to have a close relationship with her father, when he was resident with the family. Within the literature as a whole, however, children's relationships with non-resident fathers do not tend to be compared with children's relationships with resident natural fathers.

2.4.9 Stepfamily Relationships.

There is mixed evidence in the research literature on children's responses to step-parents and step or half siblings. Mitchell's (1985) study found that there was considerable variation in children's feelings towards a resident step-parent. Whilst Mitchell illustrates how some children experienced very positive relationships with resident step-parents, she tends to focus on accounts of negative relationships. For instance, Mitchell highlights the resentment and suspicion, and, in some cases, outright dislike, felt by some children towards step-parents. Robinson (1991) argues that children may feel anger when a natural parent repartners, because it may only be then that they realize their natural parents will not be reconciled.

Burgoyne and Clarke (1984:188), in their influential study of stepfamilies, argue strongly against the reification of step-families, on the grounds that there are many differences between individual stepfamilies. They take the view that, in contrast, it is more useful to compare, for example, the poorest stepfamilies with the poorest intact nuclear families. This raises questions about the extent to which, first, relationships with step-parents should be thought of as distinct from relationships with any other adult, and, second, relationships with step or half siblings should be thought of as distinct from relationships with, for instance, other siblings.

David (1998:4) makes the thought-provoking point that dependent children in stepfamilies may acquire more rather than fewer significant adult figures through family reordering. Edwards et al. (1999:89) claim that step-parents who approach relationships with step-children thoughtfully over time, can sustain a relationship which is potentially more nurturing for the step-children concerned than some biological parents may provide. The work of David and Edwards et al. illustrates how children can benefit from having a step-parent.

Mitchell (1985) distinguishes between children's relationships with resident and non-resident step or half-siblings. Mitchell found that children tended to accept resident step or half-siblings, but were more guarded about non-resident step or half-siblings. Indeed, while children may have to adapt to the presence of step or half-siblings in the family home, this does not mean that, over time, they will not be able to adapt. Furthermore, although a child might feel displaced by the arrival of a step-sibling, similarly, children can also be displaced by the arrival of a new baby who is their natural sibling. In some cases, children may feel jealous of the attention, real or imagined, a step-sibling receives from a parent. However, it would be wrong to assume that rivalry does not occur between natural siblings.

2.4.10. The Child's Support Networks.

Support networks, whether provided through the immediate family, the extended family, peers, and/or professionals such as teachers and doctors, can, it is argued (eg Mitchell, 1985; Cockett and Tripp (1994), be protective or exacerbating factors in children's adaptation to family reordering. The discussion earlier in this chapter about the role of the school described the part a professional organization can play in family reordering. This section will present evidence on the role of informal support networks in potentially mediating children's responses to family reordering.

It has been argued that, because family reordering often results in families moving, children can lose potentially valuable family and support networks (Burghes, 1994; Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Kiernan, 1998:60; Richards, 1999). For example, in Cockett and Tripp's (1994:32) study, three quarters of the sample in reordered families reported less contact with paternal grandparents following family separation. Furthermore, for some children, the quality of contact with grandparents declined following separation; some children reported finding it stressful to visit grandparents with only one parent (Cockett and Tripp, 1994:32).

However, the research literature also illustrates the positive role support networks can play (Walczak and Burns, 1984; Mitchell, 1985). Walczak and Burns (1984:35), for instance, found that adolescents, unlike the younger children in their study, talked about their parents' separation to parents, other adults and friends. In Walczak and Burns' (1984:64) study, siblings were seen as a support in enabling children to feel they were not alone in the situation, though children did not describe talking to siblings about the family break-up. Cockett and Tripp (1994:49) reported that girls were more likely to have talked to siblings about family separation than boys, though the gender of the sibling who was talked to was unspecified. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989:130) illustrate the direct support relatives such as grandparents can provide, and argue that the extended family can be helpful to children, even from a geographical distance.

In Walczak and Burns' (1984:61) study, many of the research subjects perceived that their friends had been their chief source of help outside their family, over the family break-up, even when they had not necessarily talked to friends about the family separation itself. Cockett and Tripp (1994:49) found that one in four children in reordered families had talked to a friend at school about family separation.

2.4.11. Children's Coping Strategies.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1989:112) and Cockett and Tripp's (1994:55) point that siblings can have very different responses to family reordering illustrates how the same event is experienced subjectively and individually, even within the same family. Rodgers and Pryor (1998:13) define parental separation as a life transition which potentially causes stress in children involved and/or increases the maturity of an individual. The extent to which individual children either have coping strategies before the family separation, or develop them through the experience of family reordering, may help explain why some children adapt to family reordering, and why some children in reordered families have poorer outcomes than their peers in intact nuclear families. As

yet, although Rutter (cited in Cockett and Tripp, 1994) has written about psychiatric illness and protective and vulnerability factors, and Brown (1984) has developed a model for women's experience of depression which incorporates protective and vulnerability factors, little is understood about why some children are vulnerable and other children are resilient to divorce and separation (Rodgers and Pryor, 1999).

As argued in section 2.4 above, there is a wide range of factors which potentially mediates or exacerbates the experience of family reordering for children. There is also conflicting evidence across research studies on the relative importance and potential effect of each factor. Different clusters of factors will, furthermore, exist in individual children. It would therefore seem likely that no straightforward conclusions can be drawn about the effects of reordering on children, even though there are correlations between family reordering and disadvantaged outcomes in the existing research evidence.

2.5. The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Data.

This section will set the discussion of what the research evidence says on children's adaptation to family reordering, in the context of the main methodological issues in the data.

2.5.1. Categorization.

As touched on at the beginning of this chapter, researchers on family structure do not tend to question the conceptual basis underlying the categories of family structure they use.

As discussed in section 2.4, existing research illustrates how a wide range of factors potentially mediates children's adaptation to family reordering. This wide range of factors suggests that children's responses to family reordering are likely to be shaped by their individual clusters of protective and exacerbating factors which potentially mediate

experience of reordering. However, use of categories of family structure to group children's experience of family and family reordering can tend to highlight the differences between, rather than the differences within, categories. Use of categories of family structure may conceal, rather than reveal, aspects of children's experience of reordering and of family. Because categories of family structure create boundaries around different types of family, their use can suggest that experience of family life is qualitatively different within each family structure.

There are problems in researchers' definitions of family structures. For example, the literature blurs whether the family structure is the household unit or each individual's experience of the household unit. In the hypothetical case of a family consisting of two adults and two half-siblings, the natural parents of one child might be the resident adults, whilst the natural parents of the other child might be one of the resident adults and a non-resident parent. Both children live in the same family unit, but it is questionable whether both live in a stepfamily. Such conceptual ambiguities do not tend to be articulated within the literature on family structure.

Researchers vary in their use of the intact nuclear and stepfamily categories. There is inconsistency across research studies about whether these categories refer to families headed by two adults who are married, or whether the categories also encompass cohabiting adults. For instance, researchers such as Cockett and Tripp (1994) make no distinction between married and cohabiting couples. In contrast, in Walczak and Burns' (1984) and Mitchell's (1985) studies of the experience of family separation, their samples only included the children of divorced parents. Whilst the conceptual frameworks of Walczak and Burns' (1984) and Mitchell's studies differ from that of Cockett and Tripp (1994), this type of conceptual difference in categorization can be overlooked, even by other researchers on family structure, and findings of studies with differing conceptual frameworks can be compared unproblematically.

In general, the category *redisrupted* lacks conceptual clarity. Some researchers such as Mitchell (1985) do not use the category. In other cases, the term usually refers to two or more family reorderings. In Cockett and Tripp's (1994:8) study, the term *redisrupted* refers to when the resident parent's repartnering has broken down. Cockett and Tripp (1994) state that a child living in a *redisrupted* family could be either in another stepfamily or in a single-parent family. As in the discussion above, it is unclear whether *redisrupted* refers to the household unit, or to an individual's experience of a household unit. Furthermore, Cockett and Tripp (1994) imply that *redisruption* occurs only after living in a stepfamily, rather than potentially after living in either a stepfamily or a single-parent family. When Cockett and Tripp describe their sample of first-time reordered families, they distinguish between single-parent and stepfamilies, but do not seem to consider that sample members in stepfamilies are likely to have experienced a transitional phase in a single-parent family, between living in an intact nuclear family and a stepfamily. Cockett and Tripp (1994) are inconsistent because they also say that a child in a *redisrupted* family may be in either a stepfamily or a single-parent family. Because it can be argued that most children in stepfamilies not headed by both natural parents have experienced at least two disruptions to their family structure, more children have probably lived in *redisrupted* families than Cockett and Tripp's (1994) use of the category suggests.

The problems of categorizing single-parent families have been explored within some sociology of the family:

... Lone-parent households are not a homogeneous or unified group, and it is an oversimplification to treat them as such. (Crow and Hardey, 1999: 253).

Crow and Hardey (1999) offer a model of the routes in and out of lone-parent families to exemplify the above. For instance, routes into a single-parent family could be through the death of one of the adults in the family, through the separation of a couple, married or cohabiting, or through a single woman having a child. As pointed to above, the single-

parent family is often a transitional stage. This means that some children only live short-term, whilst others live long-term, in a single-parent family. Whilst some research on family structure distinguishes between the outcomes of children in a single-parent family through bereavement and the outcomes of children in single-parent families, Burghes emphasizes that relatively little research has focused specifically on single lone mothers; she uses the term single lone mothers to denote mothers living on their own who have never been married, though they may have previously cohabited. By implication, Burghes (1994) also points to how there has been little research on the family experience of children of single lone mothers. Overall, use of the category of single-parent family potentially conceals children's very disparate experiences of living with one parent.

To use categories of family structure, without clarifying what is meant by a specific category and without questioning the assumptions underlying the categories, can reinforce stereotypes of family type. It potentially reinforces both the intact nuclear family as the ideal type, and the stigma attached to children in reordered families, particularly those, as discussed in chapter one, in single-parent families. Even though most researchers acknowledge that there is a diversity of potential responses to family break-up, and so no path down which all children will inevitably travel, researchers' otherwise often unquestioning use of categories of family structure as frameworks in which to group experience of family, helps affirm the perceived validity of these categories.

2.5.2. The Balance between Quantitative and Qualitative Work.

It has already been illustrated that most of the research studies on family structure are quantitative (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). In the case of studies using the 1946 NSHD, the 1958 NCDS and the 1970 CHES data, the representative samples mean that findings can be generalized across the population as a whole, at least for the point in time at which the data were collected. It is not within the scope of quantitative literature to offer detailed explanations of the processes experienced by children, which lead to their outcomes.

Haskey (1998) argues, furthermore, that while interpretive description based on statistical data can give an overall picture, it cannot, on its own, give any impression of the immense variety of family situations and settings.

The NSHD, NCDS and CHES data sets contain information on a wide range of topics, encompassing medical, social, psychological, educational and occupational issues (Maclean and Wadsworth, 1988:160). It is, on the one hand, a strength of the data sets that they contain this breadth of information. On the other hand, the trade off for their breadth is a lack of depth in specific areas. For instance, the NCDS did not ask many detailed questions about family life and family separation (Elliott and Richards, 1991:260). Whilst the data sets have the advantage of being large, there are, therefore, limits to the extent to which they are helpful to researchers working on family structure.

In contrast to the body of quantitative literature on family structure, studies such as those by Walczak and Burns (1984), Mitchell (1985) and Cockett and Tripp (1994) which are qualitative, or which include a qualitative dimension, are the exception, rather than the rule. Consequently, taking the research evidence on family structure as a whole, the imbalance between the quantitative and the qualitative means that evidence on outcomes according to family group is not informed by detailed explanations of the processes leading to those outcomes.

2.5.3. Age of the Data.

Even quantitative studies which have been published recently, such as the research by Maclean and Wadsworth (1988), Wadsworth (1991), Elliott and Richards (1991a) and Kiernan (1997), mainly use old data from the 1946, 1958 and 1970 birth cohorts. Although these data sets offer representative samples, it is likely that findings from these data sets are only generalizable in a very time-specific way. It is questionable whether the experience of children born in 1946, 1958 and 1970 can be compared with that of children growing up at the end of the twentieth century (Burghes, 1994).

For instance, implicit in some of the research literature is the assumption that perception of stigma associated with family reordering can impact on children's adaptation to family reordering (Ferri, 1976; Mitchell, 1985). However, chapter one discussed the changes in demographic trends of family and marriage. Because of these changes, it is likely that there is less stigma potentially attached to growing up in a reordered family at the end of this century than was the case for children born in 1946, 1958 or 1970 (Walczak and Burns, 1984:111; Maclean and Wadsworth, 1988:164; Amato and Keith, 1991; David, 1993:195; Burghes, 1994) Applying the findings of much older data sets to children growing at the end of the twentieth century is therefore problematic.

This is alluded to by some academics, including even those who have written studies based on the NSHD, NCDS and CHES data sets, such as Wadsworth (1991:142,199) and Maclean and Wadsworth (1988). However, the issue of the age of the data tends merely to be touched upon, rather than developed in detail. When the age of the NSHD, NCDS and CHES data is juxtaposed against societal changes in the latter part of the twentieth century, the tendency of academics writing on family structure not to tackle fully the issue of the generalizability over time of NSHD, NCDS and CHES data becomes an omission in their work. Furthermore, the recent dates of many academic publications on family structure mean that it is easy for the age of the data sets the studies draw on to be forgotten, and so, for the findings of the studies to be misunderstood or misrepresented.

Reading, for example, Wadsworth (1991) further emphasizes the extent to which work using these data sets is historically constructed. Important in Wadsworth's analysis of academic attainment is attendance at grammar school. This is discussed in terms of social class and the extent to which the 1944 Education Act created equality of opportunity across social classes. In 1999, this debate seems dated. The fact that Wadsworth gives it detailed consideration highlights the gap between the experience of children growing up today and children born in 1946.

It is interesting that even Sweeting et al. (1998), who do use a more recent data set than researchers such as Wadsworth, Maclean or Kiernan, comment that their data from the West of Scotland Twenty-07 Study, first collected in 1987, are becoming out of date.

2.5.4. Correlation and Causation.

Some researchers overstate associations and confound correlation and causation, in both quantitative and qualitative work. Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1989) study is an example of qualitative research which overstates associations within the data (Elliott and Richards, 1990:310). All the negative outcomes presented by Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1989) research subjects are attributed by the researchers to the consequences of family divorce, rather than to any other distressing experience the research subjects may have experienced. Elliott et al. (1990:309) comment critically, albeit with little regard for caution themselves:

It would seem that Wallerstein has given up the researcher's caution; her discussion and conclusions have gone beyond her own evidence and she ignores much of that of others.

Burghes (1994:17), in assessing the evidence in British large-scale quantitative studies, emphasizes that associations which are statistically significant do not necessarily imply causal relationships. Rodgers and Pryor (1998:53), in turn, without being specific about which studies, claim that many studies use inappropriate statistical tests, and as a result make overstated claims about the impact of different moderating factors. Furthermore, establishing the direction of causation can be problematic. For example, the extent to which parental separation caused a child's emotional and behavioural problems, or the child's behaviour helped contribute to the parents' separation, may be difficult to establish.

2.5.5. Longitudinal Issues.

Within the literature on family structure, there are both qualitative and quantitative studies which claim to be longitudinal.

Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) qualitative study did not set out with a longitudinal research design. However, their sample was followed up at one, five, ten and fifteen years after divorce, to assess the factors influencing positive and negative outcomes and the long term effects of divorce (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989:10). Elliott et al. (1990:310) argue, however, that Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) do not use longitudinal analyses, but, rather, present retrospective accounts of how Wallerstein and the research subjects interpret their experiences of divorce.

A frequently cited strength of the data sets of the 1946 NSHD, 1958 NCDS and 1970 CHES birth cohorts is that they offer longitudinal data. However, it has also been argued that these data sets, to some extent, only permit cross-sectional rather than longitudinal analysis of each cohort (Elliott and Richards, 1991a:260). Elliott and Richards cite the instance of how, for instance, the 1958 NCDS only asks about smoking behaviour at 16 and 33. Elliott and Richards make the point that, although it would be inappropriate to ask about children's smoking habits at age seven, lack of data on smoking habits prior to 16 limits the extent to which the data set can be used to measure development in smoking across time.

Assessment of children's development over time can only be made if the tests to measure outcomes are equally valid at each point in time when outcomes were measured (Burghes, 1994:17). The academic tests used in the 1958 NCDS have been described earlier in this chapter. The Southgate reading test used at age seven had possible scores ranging from 0 to 30. However, nearly one third of the sample scored 29 and 30; the test therefore failed to discriminate between good readers (Elliott and Richards, 1991a:262).

Thus, its validity is questionable and it also makes comparison between reading ability at seven and 16 difficult.

Furthermore, sample attrition also makes it difficult to compare children's outcomes over time (Burghes, 1994:17). For example, with the 1958 NCDS data, information at age 23 was only collected on 70% of the original sample (Elliott and Richards, 1991a:271). Elliott and Richards (p.273) argue that cohort members from divorced families were significantly less likely than those in intact nuclear families to be in the sample at each sweep, and that families experiencing disruption and problems are likely to be those most difficult to trace. If this is the case, then it would seem probable that results on outcomes according to family structure from the 1958 NCDS cohort may underestimate detrimental effects of divorce.

2.5.6. Cross-Cultural Factors.

Much of the existing evidence, such as studies by Camara (eg 1980), Cherlin (eg 1981), Furstenberg (eg 1987), Hetherington (eg 1987), Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), and Zill (eg 1988) is American. Cross-cultural comparisons can be slippery (Elliott et al., 1990; Crossley and Broadfoot, 1992), and the extent to which evidence from research conducted in the United States (US) can be applied to British families is open to question. For example, whilst there have also been largescale changes in family demography in the US, these started to occur earlier than in Britain. Patterns of demographic changes differ in the US and Britain. For instance, the divorce rate is higher in the US than in Britain (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). Furthermore, societal values, which may impact on children's outcomes according to family group, vary cross-culturally. The extent to which the large body of American evidence on the effects of family structure can be applied to children growing up in Britain is, therefore, open to question.

Elliott et al. (1990), in their critique of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), emphasize the problems in making cross cultural comparisons, and criticize Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) for making, as they see it, no attempt to locate the British edition of their book within a British context, but, rather, leaving the reader with the assumption that the values of one country can be applied directly to another.

2.5.7. Researcher Bias.

Family reordering is, as Elliott et al. (1990:310) say, an ‘emotive’ issue, and, as chapter one illustrated, an ideological issue. It is therefore unsurprising that some researchers have shown considerable bias in their approach to family structure. Whilst the previous section discussed the problems of cross-cultural comparisons, this section will exemplify researcher bias through two American qualitative studies (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989). These studies have been selected for consideration here, because they have been very influential within British research on family structure.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) were psychoanalysts. They offered six weeks of free client-centred counselling in return for participation in their research study of 60 Californian families which had recently experienced family separation (Burghes, 1994:13). Although Wallerstein and Kelly (1980:7) claim that the 131 children in their sample were performing at age-appropriate levels at home and school, they themselves acknowledge that the families involved wanted help to resolve problems. This suggests that their sample may have been skewed towards the pathological, rather than adaptive coping. Furthermore, as Wallerstein and Kelly were psychoanalysts, they may, in turn, have been predisposed to detect pathological symptoms in research subjects, rather than adaptive coping. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989), who followed up Wallerstein and Kelly’s (1980) sample, devote much of their book to case studies which exemplify negative effects of divorce, even though, by Wallerstein and Blakeslee’s (p.16) own admission, less than half of their sample of young people had what the researchers present as serious problems.

Indeed, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) have been criticized for their excessively bleak picture of children's outcomes after parental divorce by academics such as Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991), Elliott et al. (1990) and Rodgers and Pryor (1998:21). Even Wallerstein's ex co-researcher, Kelly, was critical of Wallerstein and Blakeslee. Elliott et al.'s (1990) criticism of Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) has been discussed in section 2.5.4. The examples of Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) indicate that the stance of the researchers can skew the collection, analysis and presentation of evidence on family structure.

2.5.8. The Voice of the Child.

Some methodological details about the three main British studies (Walczak and Burns, 1984; Mitchell, 1985; and Cockett and Tripp, 1994) aiming to access the voice of the child on family reordering have been presented earlier in the chapter. This section will assess the relative merits of these three studies' attempts to listen to children.

First, the aim of listening to children makes these studies stand out from most of the research on family structure. Second, Walczak and Burns' (1984) fieldwork was conducted in 1978, Mitchell's (1985) in 1980-1, and Cockett and Tripp's (1994) in 1991-2. The fact that Walczak and Burns' (1984) and Mitchell's (1985) fieldwork was conducted around twenty years ago further highlights how, in contrast to much of the literature on family structure, these researchers were forward-thinking in their aim of accessing the child's voice.

Third, all three studies used one to one in-depth confidential interviews with research subjects. In Walczak and Burns' (1984) and in Cockett and Tripp's (1994) research, the interviews with children/young adults lasted for around an hour; Mitchell (1985) does not tell the reader how long her interviews lasted. The assurance of confidentiality and the opportunity of talking for a reasonable length of time would seem likely to encourage

research subjects to explore their experience of family life with some degree of honesty. These aspects of the research design are likely to help enhance the validity of the data. Indeed, Cockett and Tripp (1994:81) claim that, in particular, the children aged 13-14 in their study were pleased to be asked for their views, and felt that this was an opportunity rarely afforded them.

However, the researchers above only interviewed research subjects once. The validity of data constructed in a study aiming to access the child's voice would seem likely to be enhanced through sustained contact with research subjects over a period of time, in a range of contexts. This sustained contact, rather than a one off interview, offers the researcher opportunities, first, to build up relationships with research subjects, and, second, to triangulate the accounts of individual research subjects over time, in a range of contexts. These, with other methodological considerations in accessing voice, will be discussed fully in the next chapter.

Furthermore, the fact that Mitchell (1985) and Cockett and Tripp (1994) also interviewed parents does raise questions about potential threats to the validity of their data on children. Mitchell (1985) does not inform the reader whether parents were interviewed before children; Cockett and Tripp (1994) explicitly say that they interviewed parents before children. Interviewing parents as well as children may have restricted what children felt comfortable saying about their family life. It is possible that interviewing children before parents may have helped reinforce unequal power relations between adults and children, by suggesting, through the order, that parents were more important than children. This may not have helped further Cockett and Tripp's (1994) stated aim of listening to the child's voice.

Mitchell (1985) and Cockett and Tripp (1994) interviewed in the family home. Walczak and Burns (1984) interviewed in the volunteer's home. For those volunteers who had not left home, that would mean the family home, though Walczak and Burns (1984:12) do say that, in order to ensure privacy, a few adolescent research subjects chose to go to

where Walczak and Burns were based, to be interviewed. Being interviewed in their family context may not have helped research subjects talk freely about family experiences. This also has potential implications for the validity of data.

Whilst Walczak and Burns' (1984), Mitchell's (1985) and Cockett and Tripp's (1994) studies represented important developments in qualitative work on family structure, their methodologies for accessing the child's voice seem, retrospectively, limited.

2.6. Conclusions and Directions for Future Research.

There is a vast body of existing literature, principally quantitative, on family structure. On the whole, this evidence illustrates that in the short term, family separation is distressing for children. In the long-term, research suggests that after a crisis period of around two years, most children adapt to the family reordering. However, a minority of children who have experienced family reordering have poorer outcomes, emotional and behavioural, health, and/or educational, than their peers in intact nuclear families.

There is a range of different factors potentially mediating or exacerbating children's responses to family reordering: the altered family structure; alterations in socioeconomic status; parental conflict before, during and after separation; the child's age at the time of separation; gender; communication over separation; parental well-being; the child's relationship with the natural parents; the child's relationships within the stepfamily; the child's support network; and the child's coping strategies. This range of factors illustrates that children's responses to family reordering are potentially complex. Different clusters of factors are likely to co-exist in individual children. Furthermore, there is conflicting evidence across research studies, about both the relative importance of different factors, and the particular effect of each factor, in mediating children's outcomes. These points make any clear-cut generalizations about the impact of family reordering on children problematic.

As discussed in the chapter, a number of methodological issues raise questions about the quality of some of the data, both quantitative and qualitative, on family structure. Issues considered encompass lack of conceptual clarity underpinning the categories of family structure, the balance between quantitative and qualitative work, the age of the data, confounding of correlation and causation, longitudinal issues, cross-cultural issues, researcher bias and methodological issues in researching the voice of the child. The first and the last are of particular relevance to this study, though all are important issues.

Because of the age of the British quantitative data sets of the 1946 NSHD, 1958 NCDS and 1970 CHES birth cohorts, it would seem important to have a new quantitative study, using a representative sample of children growing up today, to research children's outcomes according to family structure. This would mean that claims about the health, emotional and behavioural, and educational outcomes of children were not based on data which is old and therefore of questionable applicability to children today.

As previously discussed, whilst the quantitative research can give a picture of outcomes, it cannot, unlike qualitative work, inform understandings of the processes leading to the outcomes. Of existing research which is qualitative or which includes a qualitative dimension, few British studies access children's views first-hand. However, the three main British studies aiming to access the voice of the child (Walczak and Burns, 1984; Mitchell, 1985; and Cockett and Tripp, 1994) represent important, but limited, developments in British qualitative research on children's experience of family structure. In building on the existing qualitative research on children's views on family structure, the methodology of Walczak and Burns (1984), Mitchell (1985) and Cockett and Tripp (1994) could be developed to enhance the validity of data constructed on children's perspectives. This will be discussed fully in the next chapter, when the literature on children and childhood will be considered.

Whilst British quantitative research studies do encompass educational outcomes according to family structure, and whilst Walczak and Burns (1984) and Mitchell (1985)

touch on, and Cockett and Tripp (1994) spend half a chapter on, family structure and children's schooling, more research is needed on family structure and schooling. This is in spite of the fact that Rodgers and Pryor (1998) apparently do not perceive this as a gap in existing research.

Some researchers, such as Burgoyne and Clark (1984), Burghes (1994:17-18), Cockett and Tripp (1994), Utting (1995), Kiernan (1998) and Rodgers and Pryor (1998) highlight other areas for future research on family structure. These include: in-depth qualitative work on family processes and relationships; children's short-term distress after reordering; the experience of single mothers; factors which enable parents to cope well after family reordering; relationships between children and their fathers; the extent to which children's outcomes vary within as well as between different family structures; family income and family structure; children in redisrupted families; experience of family separation for different family members; and children's unexpected outcomes according to family structure. The final suggestion for future research reveals a need for studies which do not merely affirm stereotypes of family structure.

This chapter has identified the substantive and methodological strengths of, and gaps in, the existing research on family structure. This thesis will aim to build upon relevant existing strengths and fill in some gaps in the literature. In contrast to the existing body of quantitative research on children's outcomes, it will try to increase understanding of family processes. The thesis will aim, in contrast to much previous research, to access children's voices on their experiences of family and schooling. It will attempt to identify, first, the extent to which children attach importance to their family structure in their accounts of family life, and second, the extent to which research subjects perceive links between their experiences of family and experiences of schooling.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology.

This chapter will first consider the theoretical and methodological frameworks underpinning the thesis. The chapter will then locate the research's central aim of accessing young people's views in the theoretical literature on childhood. After describing the fieldwork, the chapter will discuss the following methodological issues: validity, generalizability and ethics. The chapter will conclude by describing the process of data analysis and writing.

As Ball (1993:46) said:

My preference always is to use 'I' in the writing of qualitative research.

This is because the researcher's self is the main research instrument in ethnography (Woods, 1996:51; Ball, 1993:46; Massey and Walford, 1998); the person of the researcher hones every stage of ethnography, from initial conceptualization of ideas, to data analysis and writing. Throughout this thesis, and particularly in this chapter, the first person will be used, to avoid 'a sanitized scientific style' (Ball, 1993:46).

3.1. Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks.

3.1.1. Symbolic Interactionism.

Symbolic interactionism is not a monolithic tradition. For example, there are individual nuances in the theoretical approaches of four key figures linked to the Chicago School, Blumer (1962), Mead (1934), Goffman (1961, 1969, 1970) and Cooley (1969). In broad terms, symbolic interactionism sees the self as existing in relation to social groups. For Mead, the self consisted of the interaction between the I, the subject which thinks and acts, and the me, the awareness of self as an object existing in the world (Swingewood, 1991). An individual develops consciousness by learning to see him/herself in relation,

not only to significant others, but also to the generalized other, to the values and norms of the social group. Participants both create and are shaped by the social world, through symbolic acts, such as language, gesture or kinesics. Individuals act on the basis of the meanings symbols have for them. Within a social group, meanings are, on the whole, shared; if they were not, then communication would break down.

Symbolic interactionism is concerned with exploring the understandings of participants in the social world (Woods, 1979, 1980, 1996), through understanding the meanings participants attach to symbols. Underpinning symbolic interactionism is the view that interaction is neither static nor clear-cut. Participants' meanings and perspectives shift. Participants' interactions are potentially replete with ambiguities and contradictions, and potentially can shift from the conflictive, through negotiation, to the consensual. In other words, symbolic interactionism provides a theoretical framework to capture the complexity and fluidity of social reality, in contrast to, for example, the greater determinism of structural functionalism.

Symbolic interactionism is the most appropriate framework for my research topic because my principal concern is the meanings young people attach to family and schooling. Whilst family conflict and, indeed, conflict at school are important themes in this thesis, the cohesiveness in the young people's relationships is also pointed to. Symbolic interactionism provides a framework in which both can be given voice to, in contrast to, for example, a conflict perspective. As outlined in chapter one, the subject of this thesis developed through my awareness of demographic trends in family and marriage and my questioning of, first, ideologies of the family, and second, the research literature on children's outcomes according to family structure. Symbolic interactionism provided a framework through which received wisdoms at macro level could be probed at micro level.

3.1.2. Ethnography.

For Woods (1996), ethnography is the methodology most suited to symbolic interactionism. Massey and Walford (1998) argue that, as a minimum, ethnography has seven basic constituents, as paraphrased below in points 1-7. In points 8-10, I have added three further aspects of ethnography which have been of relevance in my collection and analysis of data.

- 1) Ethnography tries to understand what it means to be a member of a particular culture.
- 2) Multiple methods of data collection are used.
- 3) The researcher engages with the members of a culture over time.
- 4) The researcher is the chief research instrument; it is through the researcher that the data are constructed.
- 5) Participants' accounts are given high status.
- 6) Hypotheses and theory are developed, modified and reshaped as a process, not an event.
- 7) Ethnography deepens understanding of a specific case.
- 8) In ethnography, researcher reflexivity is crucial to balance involvement with with analytic distance, to avoid, for example, going native.
- 9) First order constructs interact with second order constructs in the analysis and presentation of data.
- 10) Although ethnography is idiographic, the underlying patterns in a social group that can be identified through ethnography can, arguably, be related to those of a wider social group. This will be considered in 3.3.2 and in chapter eight.

It is not my purpose here to examine the above in detail; rather, implications of the above for the conduct of my ethnography will be teased out, as appropriate, throughout this chapter and the thesis as a whole. However, aspects of the above influenced my initial choice of methodology. At the outset of this research, I was interested in the broad issue

of accessing young people's voices on the importance of family structure in their home and school lives. At the same time, I did not begin with tabula rasa. As Woods (1996:67) says:

... no ethnographer begins absolutely with a blank page.

My chief assumption, at the start of fieldwork, was that young people's perceptions of family were likely to be more complex than, and possibly at odds with, some ideologies of family, as discussed in chapter one, and some of the existing research on family structure, as discussed in chapter two. Ethnography both suited the exploratory nature of the research and offered scope for accessing voices, in particular through some of its foci listed above: the importance of participants' accounts, the researcher-as-instrument in building and sustaining good field relations, time in the field, progressive focusing, and varied methods of data collection.

3.1.3. Personal Reasons Behind the Choice of Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnography.

As indicated, the importance of the researcher's self is highlighted in discussions of ethnography (eg Woods, 1996; Ball, 1993; Massey and Walford, 1998). Personal reasons behind the choice of research topic have already been described in chapter one; personal reasons behind my choice of symbolic interactionism and ethnography will be described here.

Over the years I taught, I became more relaxed and able to be 'myself' with students and more interested in my students as people. A deeply-held belief developed that there were links between seeing the students I taught as people, not just as students learning English in my classroom, and the extent to which the students were enthusiastic about, and successful in, English. Students increasingly talked to me about issues in their personal lives more openly. These developments deepened my awareness of how psychological

access to people is, as Measor and Woods (1991) suggest, usually not automatic. Rather, how one views others and how one is perceived by others will influence what they, in turn, are likely to reveal about themselves over time. My experience as an English teacher made me grapple with the question of how best to access people's understandings, long before I heard the terms 'symbolic interactionism' and 'ethnography'.

As an English teacher, I am used to looking at text in detail, to try to understand the characters involved through, for example, what they think, what they do and say, how others interact with them, and what others say about them. I am used both to looking at individual sections of a text to make observations about characters, and also to setting a section of text in the context of the text as a whole, to assess how far there is continuity in what characters do, say and think. Literature provided a valuable training ground to develop research skills.

The other most relevant autobiographical detail, is that in 1994-5, I studied Sociology of Education, as one of three courses for the Master's in the Governance of Education. As part of this course, I studied symbolic interactionism, and I read a range of ethnographic studies. Much of the theoretical underpinnings of symbolic interactionism and ethnography, such as the focus on understanding research subjects' understandings, relationships and processes (Woods, 1996), resonated with my approach to looking at text to increase understandings of characters and situations.

3.1.4. The Literature on Childhood, Researching Children and the Voice of the Child.

My understandings, developed through experience of teaching, of accessing young people's understandings were further clarified through reading the theoretical literature on childhood. Before, during and after the period of fieldwork, I read as extensively as possible from the literature on children, aspects of childhood and researching children.

Texts read before and during fieldwork helped both develop and give expression to my approach to children in fieldwork. Texts read after fieldwork further helped articulate, through both resonance with and contrast to, my own perspective on children in my doctorate.

Within the literature on childhood, children have been written about from many perspectives, including the historical (Aries, 1962); philosophical (Rousseau, 1979); psychological (Piaget, 1930, 1953; Donaldson, 1978); sociological (Durkheim, 1979); methodological (Pollard, 1985; Stanley and Sieber, 1992; Melton, 1992; Alderson, 1995; James et al., 1998); educational (Hargreaves, 1967, 1975; Lacey, 1970; Willis, 1977; Woods, 1979; Ball, 1981; Pollard, 1987; Mirza, 1992; Grugeon, 1993; Stanley, 1993); the student's voice (Soo Hoo, 1993; Nieto, 1994; Ruddock et al., 1996; Fielding, 1999); political (Lawton, 1994:96); literary (Lawrence, 1949; Kundera, 1982); cross-cultural (Stephens, 1995); children's rights (Archard, 1993; Lansdown, 1994; Alderson, 1994; John, 1995); child employment (Morrow, 1994; James et al., 1998); child protection (Parton, 1991); and legal (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 in Stephens, 1995, appendix).

Whilst I read and reflected on the above, several strands within this literature were particularly important in my research. As Stephens (1995) and James and Prout (1990) discuss, the concept of childhood is inherently problematic in a range of ways: for example, attaching an age to childhood is arbitrary, childhood is culturally and historically specific, and there are variations in constructs of childhood within cultures. Reflecting on the elusiveness of any general conception of childhood helped clarify my aim of listening to the individual voice of each young person. Across the literature, there is a tension between a deficit model (eg Piaget, 1930; Durkheim, 1979) and an asset model (eg Stephens, 1995:25; John, 1995) of childhood. The deficit model sees children as empty vessels waiting to be filled with adult knowledge and values, often at specifically labelled developmental stages along the incremental journey to adulthood. The asset model, in contrast, emphasizes children's active, creative human agency. The

asset model is important in interpretive sociology, in contrast to more traditional positivistic approaches (Stephens, 1995:23). Reflecting on the tensions between the deficit and asset models affirmed my belief in children's potential for active, creative human agency, whilst, at the same time, recognizing that both models to some extent co-exist. The tension also heightened my reflexivity on what it may mean to listen to children, to tap into their potential for human agency.

Consideration of a wide range of literature on childhood revealed discrepancies between claims of listening to the voice of the child and what can happen in practice. This is exemplified by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Largely in contrast to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), it shows a concern for children's powerlessness (John, 1995:105), and establishes a vision of the kind of life each child should be entitled to, incorporating civil, economic, social and cultural rights and asserting the importance of the voice of the child.

There are, however, problems with the Convention. First, it is not easy to listen to the voice of the child within cultures which do not have this tradition. Second, the Convention acknowledges children's power in adult-bestowed terms; no children were involved in the decision-taking or drafting processes with the Convention (John, 1995:105). Furthermore, political rights for children were specifically excluded. Such discrepancies between claims of listening to children and what happens in practice highlighted the crucial importance of being reflexive about what it may mean to listen to children. This reflexivity was particularly important because my research was located in a school; schools do not necessarily have a culture of listening to the voice of the student.

The work of researchers such as Soo Hoo (1993), Nieto (1994), Ruddock et al. (1996) and Fielding (1999) helped further articulate what it may mean to listen to young people, through both similarity to and difference from my research. For example, Ruddock et al.'s opening page underlines how:

... the *conditions of learning* [their italics] that are common across secondary schools do not adequately take account of the social maturity of young people, nor of the tensions and pressures they feel as they struggle to reconcile the demands of their social and personal lives with the development of their identity as learners.

In spite of the second part to the quotation above, common to Soo Hoo, Nieto, Ruddock et al. and Fielding is a concern with the student's identity as constructed within the school and with how students' views on school can contribute to school improvement. Whilst Ruddock et al. interviewed students on their views on school, the work of Fielding, Soo Hoo and Nieto differs in that the students are co-researchers. For example, in Fielding's (personal communication, 19.3.99; Fielding, 1999) current project students are trained as co-researchers to research their peers within school. Fielding's, Soo Hoo's and Nieto's work is potentially emancipatory that it aims to reduce power relations in schools. However, their work does not encompass how issues in students' lives outside school may impact upon their school experience; in this, their view of children is not an holistic one.

Woods (1996: 47) comments on creative teachers' approach to students:

In our research on creative teaching (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996) we have explored how teachers who regard pupils as whole selves rather than as institutionalized clients make 'emotional connections' with pupils in order to maximize their teaching.

By 'whole selves', Woods means an holistic approach to the child, an approach which potentially embraces every aspect of him/her, rather than isolating specific roles, such as the 'institutionalized client'. 'Emotional connections' points to the bond which is created between teacher and student, through this approach. Woods' (1996) view of creative teaching was central to my approach to young people as researcher. Throughout my research, I tried to recognize and show interest in students' 'whole selves': in every aspect of the young people involved. Whilst this was partly to enrich my data, Woods' comments on teachers who approach students as 'whole selves' resonated with, as

discussed previously, my deep-seated beliefs, developed over the course of teaching. If my interest in every aspect of the young people's lives had not been genuine, I doubt I would have constructed the same richness of data; students would have been unlikely to have talked openly to someone whose interest in them they judged contrived.

The literature discussed above helped clarify what it might mean to access young people's voices on family and schooling. At the same time, I recognized the potential tension between aiming to understand young people's experience, and at the same time recognizing that accounts represent perceptions, or perceptions as the research subject chooses to present them to the researcher. I used this tension to heighten my reflexivity.

In general within this thesis, I use 'young people' when discussing experience either of family or of schooling, because the term potentially encompasses the whole self. I tend to use the term 'student' when discussing experience or interaction which in some way is broadly structured by, or which takes place within, the school. 'Child' and 'children' are used when discussing the research literature on family structure; this is how most of the literature refers to young people.

3.2. Fieldwork.

3.2.1. Description of Springfield School.

The fieldwork was conducted at Springfield School, Castletown. Castletown is situated in central England and, at the time of fieldwork (1996-8), had a population of about 38000. Springfield School is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive. At the time of fieldwork (1996-8), there were 1500 students on roll. The 11-16 intake is predominately working class, whilst its sixth form contains more students from middle class families. This is because Springfield is the Area Sixth Form Centre, and about 40% of its sixth form population of about 350 (1996-7) enrol from schools in the wider area. Springfield is multi-cultural; 12% of its students are Punjabi, Chinese or Pakistani. It is a Technology

College, is recognized as an Investor in People, and in 1997 was reawarded the Schools' Curriculum Award.

In 1996-7, there were 85 full time and five part-time members of the teaching staff and 12 Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) at Springfield. Whilst the school's management structure has subsequently been reviewed, in 1996-7, the Senior Management Team (SMT) consisted of the Principal, two Vice Principals (Curriculum and Major School Projects), and five Assistant Principals (Enabling, Publicity, Fundraising, Staff Training and Sixth Form).

'Enabling', defined by the Principal as all the support within the school to help a student achieve his/her full potential, is very important at Springfield. Apart from the Enabling Assistant Principal, other staff whose role entailed specific enabling responsibilities included a full time Counsellor, a full time teacher with responsibility for Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD), a Home-School Liaison Officer, and an Asian Home-School Liaison Officer. At the time of fieldwork, the Counsellor worked long-term with a small number of students, rather than seeing a greater number of students over a shorter period. In 1996-7, each year group up to and including Year 11 had a Head of Year and a Deputy Head of Year. Years 12 and 13 had a Head of Sixth Form and a Deputy Head of Sixth Form.

Teaching is organized in nine faculties: Humanities, English, Mathematics, Science, Health, Home and Community (HHC), Design Technology (DT), Social Studies, Expressive Arts and Learning Resource Group (LRG). Each faculty has a Head of Faculty. Where faculties are made up of different subject areas, each subject has a Head of Department. Students are taught principally in broad-banded classes. A minority of subjects (HHC, music, PE, art and dance) are, up until the end of Year Nine, taught in tutor groups.

The school is housed in a collection of buildings spread over a large campus. The oldest of these dates back to 1923, whilst the most modern of these, the Sixth Form Centre, was built in 1967. Staff are dispersed across the campus in nine separate faculty staffrooms. There is also a large staff room in the Sixth Form Centre, and, at the time of fieldwork, there was another infrequently used staff room in one of the older buildings. In spite of recent events to improve the physical environment, parts of Springfield remain dilapidated.

3.2.2. Reasons for Choosing Springfield School.

Springfield was chosen for a range of reasons. I wished to have potential access to students of different abilities, rather than those who had been selected, in, for example, an independent or grammar school; Springfield is comprehensive. Although, as outlined above, the school has an ethnic minority population, it is only 12% of the school population. I did not want to introduce different ethnic groups' views on family, because I thought that conceptually this would over-complicate my research.

Springfield is in many ways 'leading edge'. This is exemplified by, for instance, its Technology College Status and its awards. It is also 'leading edge' in its approach to social issues; most British schools, in contrast to Springfield, do not employ a full-time Counsellor. The school therefore seemed likely to provide a supportive environment for research on a potentially sensitive issue such as family structure. The Principal supports a variety of research projects in school; I therefore assumed that I would be likely to have fewer restrictions imposed on me than may have been the case in other schools, without a history of supporting research within school. I also assumed that it was more likely that there would be more established channels of communication through which researchers could negotiate issues such as access at Springfield than in some other schools.

Nevertheless, however 'leading edge', many schools would have reservations about having a researcher 'hanging around' (Woods, 1996:52) with students and staff for a

year. There were also pragmatic reasons for choosing Springfield. First, during 1994-5, I had conducted my Master's fieldwork at Springfield. I had, in principle, been invited back to carry out doctoral fieldwork. The school atmosphere had seemed relatively open and this seemed advantageous for conducting further research. The size of the school also seemed potentially advantageous; it would be easier for a researcher to pass relatively unnoticed in a large than in a small school.

The other pragmatic reason for choosing Springfield was because my husband works there. He was a Head of Department and Head of Year in 1996, when fieldwork began. I thought that he might facilitate my access to a wide range of staff, and, through staff, to students. Furthermore, through him, and through my Master's fieldwork, I already knew some staff; I had the advantage of having started to build relationships before fieldwork began.

3.2.3. Early Days in the Field.

My ethnographic study was conducted at Springfield from September, 1996 to July, 1998. In May, 1996, I wrote to the Principal, formally asking her permission to conduct fieldwork at Springfield. At a meeting with her in July (Research Log, 3.7.96.), I was asked to write a paper outlining my research. Later in July (Research Log, 23.7.96.), I received a letter from the Principal giving me permission, with the caveat that I obtain the consent of the Head of Year and parents of any students involved, before conducting individual interviews. This I would in any case have seen as essential.

In September, 1996, I began an initial two month period of general observation within Springfield. This had a range of purposes: to get to know the school better and to build a deeper sense of the school culture; to build relationships with staff, in order to facilitate future access to students; and to identify a sample of students to work closely with.

My husband helped me make some initial contacts with staff. For example, he introduced me to a member of the English Faculty, and, through her, I was introduced to other members of the English Faculty, whose lessons I observed. However, personal characteristics were also important. First, the fact that I had been a teacher helped me gain acceptance with staff, in both general and very specific ways. In broad terms, I had 'street cred': the same shared history. In very specific ways, I could identify with staff; for example, I could sympathize with English teachers about marking overload generated by coursework, or about the limitations of National Curriculum criteria. I could also help students in class, and, furthermore, because I had done a lot of lesson observation when I was teaching, I hope I have developed a sense of how to be at least relatively unobtrusive in a classroom. These points meant that gaining access to a range of lessons was unproblematic.

I think aspects of my personality were important in shaping early research relations. I am determined. For example, I resolved to use every opportunity to build relationships with staff, even if the situation were daunting, and even when the benefits of developing particular relationships were not immediately obvious. I viewed building research relations with staff as having two choices: adopting a passive role, or taking an active role. Whilst the latter was sometimes more challenging than the former, it maximized potential benefits for fieldwork.

For instance, the first time I sat in the main staffroom, I recorded in my research log (25.9.96) feeling that I had two choices: to initiate a conversation or feel an outsider. I began a conversation. I also ensured that I visited as many faculty staffrooms as possible during breaks and lunchtimes, to build field relations. Because I made an sustained effort to do this, over time it became easy, but this did not mean it was not daunting initially. Indeed, when I much later heard staff in the Humanities Faculty say they found the main staffroom 'scary' because it was 'cliquey', inwardly, I empathized.

I can also laugh at myself, and this helped me continue fieldwork with determination when my efforts did not work out as planned. One example of this occurred one break in the main staffroom, just before Christmas, 1996. I had spent a term trying to get to know staff, in ways described above. A young male science teacher to whom I had not spoken before, asked me, 'Have you found a permanent position here yet?' Perhaps he thought I had been 'hanging around' all term on the offchance!

It is likely that my gender played a part in helping me both establish and build research relations with students and teachers. It is probably fair to say that, in most circumstances, female researchers are likely to elicit greater openness from research subjects than male researchers, perhaps most of all when the issues discussed are particularly sensitive and when a non-hierarchical stance (Finch, 1984) is attempted in research relations. At the same time, the influences of gender in field relations are not ascribed and Silverman (1993), for example, warns against universal, taken-for-granted assumptions about gender.

3.2.4. Choosing a Sample: Year Nine.

By November, 1996, after two months' initial observation, I had decided to focus on a sample of students from Year Nine. This was for a range of reasons, both theoretical and pragmatic.

Ball (1988:24) has described adolescents as between the adult supervision of home, school and the immediate neighbourhood, and spheres extraneous to adult control. As Ball (1981) puts it, third year (equivalent to Year Nine: 13-14 year olds) pupils at Beachside were less 'home-centred' than pupils in lower years. Ball (1981) presented the third years as increasingly out of the immediate supervision of their parents and increasingly participating in adolescent culture. This description resonated with my teaching experience, which suggested that 13-14 year olds are probably the age group least willing to talk openly to adults. If, on the whole, the views of 13-14 year olds are

more concealed from adults than those of other age groups, then it could be argued that it is particularly important to access their views. Perhaps paradoxically, I thought Year Nines presented the greatest research challenge, but I was simultaneously confident that I could draw them out about their experiences of family and schooling. This conviction was founded not just on my overall teaching experience, but in particular on that of my last year of teaching (1993-4). During this year, I had been immersed in Year Nines, as I had taught 152 13-14 year olds English.

Selecting a sample of Year Nines was also advantageous in that it would give a range of outcome measures, through the Standardised Assessment Task (SAT) examinations taken in English, maths and science at the end of Key Stage Three (KS3). Furthermore, whilst SATs are national examinations, I worked on the assumption that they are not viewed with quite the same significance as other public examinations, such as GCSEs. I therefore thought that, whilst SATs would offer the advantage of national outcome measures, they would be unlikely to prove an obstacle to research access. Because of GCSEs, students in Years 10 and 11, in contrast, either might be unwilling, or might not be given permission by staff, to miss lessons for interviews.

Choice of year group was also in part related to perceptions of Karl Price, the Head of Year Nine. I judged him easy-going and also genuinely interested in my research; I therefore thought he would be likely to facilitate fieldwork. The first example of Karl's helpfulness was when he invited me to a year team meeting in November, 1996, to present my research to Year Nine tutors.

I decided to take a whole tutor group as my sample. This was for a range of reasons. First, the year group was too large a unit to research (232 students on 9.6.97.), because I wanted to work in depth with individual students. I wanted a sample of students across the range of family structures. The school does not hold systematic records of students' family structures, but it is assumed that each tutor group contains students from a range

of family structures. I wanted a range of abilities in my sample. Tutor groups are organized on a mixed ability basis.

Working with a tutor group would also give me access to students when they were together at less formal times than lessons, such as at tutor time. Health Home and Community (HHC), the school's version of Personal and Social Education (PSE) is taught in tutor groups. HHC is the school subject in which family issues are most explicitly taught. Focusing on a tutor group would therefore give me potential access to a key part of young people's experience of family issues within the school curriculum. I could also, if I wished, select a sub-sample of students from the tutor group to focus on for detailed case study.

I wanted to spend as much time as possible with students. It therefore was important that the tutor would not feel threatened and/or irritated by my presence. Because of this, I wanted a tutor to volunteer for me to research his/her group, rather than forcing my research upon a tutor. This would not detrimentally affect the validity of my research, as I was researching the students, not the tutor.

At the team meeting in November, 1996 that Karl Price invited me to, I therefore gave a presentation of about 20 minutes on my research, took questions from teachers, and gave out a handout (Appendix One) summarizing my research, to help teachers think about whether they were prepared to participate. In the talk and in my handout I was explicit about what the demands of the research were likely to be for students and staff. I hoped that, by allowing staff time to think, this might prompt someone to volunteer immediately. This was the case.

Immediately after the meeting, Lydia Wye, an English teacher, offered her tutor group. Lydia's offer illustrates a point made earlier this chapter: the value of building relationships with as many staff as possible, even when the specific benefits are not immediately apparent. Earlier that term, I had observed one of Lydia's lessons, after

which she had commented that I was non-threatening. We also had some shared characteristics: not only were we both women of about the same age, but also we were both English teachers. These understandings, established between us on a previous occasion, are likely to have influenced Lydia's decision to volunteer her tutor group.

3.2.5. Alongside Adolescents: 9YLC.

The account of fieldwork with 9YLC will be relatively brief; this is because the following sections on validity, generalizability and ethics will focus on more detailed exploration of issues raised in the fieldwork with 9YLC.

Data constructed from November, 1996 to July, 1997 on the 32 students in 9YLC constitute the main part of the substantive findings in this thesis, though the research continued with the then 10YLC from September, 1997 to July, 1998. 15 of the 32 students in 9YLC were boys and 17 were girls. One boy, Muhammed, was Pakistani, and one girl, Laura, was of mixed race; her father was Pakistani and her mother was white.

I spent from November, 1996 to January, 1997 concentrating on building relationships with the students, before interviewing. In the first tutor time with 9YLC, I introduced myself as someone from Oxford University who was writing a book on Year Nine students' views on families and school. This was similar to Measor (informal taped conversation with Ball, cited in Ball, 1988), who also told students she was writing a book. I promised the young people that everything they said to me, in whatever context, would be confidential, in that it would not be repeated to anyone in school, and anonymous, in that in any written account pseudonyms would be used.

From November, 1996 to July, 1997, I was with the students in tutor time and a range of lessons. These lessons included HHC, PE, English, maths, science, modern languages, design technology (DT) and humanities. HHC was the lesson I most frequently observed. I rarely missed either of the two HHC classes per week during the academic year 1996-7.

I conducted two sets of semi-structured tape-recorded interviews, of between 45 and 50 minutes in length. The first set was in January and February, 1997, and the second set was in April and May, 1997. In January, before starting the first set of interviews, a letter was posted to each student's home from the Enabling Assistant Principal, requesting parental consent for me to interview the student. Each letter had a tear-off permission slip at the bottom, for the parents to complete (Appendix Two). To encourage students to return these slips, I told them that all returned slips, whether positive or negative, would be raffled for six McDonald's vouchers. I did not interview any student without a completed permission slip.

All reply slips except for four were returned before the raffle. Of the returned slips, all responses were positive except for two boys'. They then changed their minds after the first raffle and positive reply slips were subsequently returned from their parents. During the week after the raffle, a further two positive reply slips were returned. The third outstanding slip belonged to Brian, who was in a children's home. Although Brian lost two letters about the interviews, his key worker gave consent over the telephone for him to be interviewed. The fourth outstanding slip belonged to Helen. During the academic year 1996-7, Helen featured in media coverage of Springfield. This, according to Helen's mother, increased the already-existing conflict between Helen and the school. Helen's mother was unwavering in her conviction that I was from the BBC. She refused to allow Helen to be interviewed, even though Helen was very keen to participate in the research, and even though I phoned Helen's mother twice, once in February, 1997 and once in June, 1997, to discuss the issue.

I always interviewed in lesson time. If I had interviewed at break and lunchtime, the two main sets of interviews would each have taken weeks to conduct. I thought that the young people's enthusiasm for the interviews might wane if one set of interviews extended over a considerable period of time. Time available for additional interviews would also have been more limited. The students were, furthermore, likely to be willing to miss lessons,

but unwilling to miss their spare time within school. When I consulted Karl Price, the Head of Year, about times for interviews, he suggested they should take place in lessons. This was on the grounds that, in his view, the students would benefit from talking to an adult on a one to one basis, exploring issues in their lives, for a sustained period of time.

For the first set of interviews, I gave Karl Price, on his request, a weekly timetable, so that he could inform relevant teachers which students would be missing from which lessons. After the first set of interviews, Karl Price said that it was not necessary to construct further interview timetables for staff information; the system for interviews was working efficiently, with no students abusing any potential interviews offered for truanting.

For the two sets of interviews in January-February and April-May, the young people could sign up which lesson they wanted to be interviewed in, within a two week period. I conducted a maximum of six interviews on any one day. Most interviews were conducted in a room designated specifically for meetings, in the Sixth Form Centre. The room had easy chairs, which probably helped the students feel more comfortable. It was also relatively private; this, I think, may have helped students feel more relaxed in talking about personal areas of their lives. The fact it was in the Sixth Form Centre, an area Year Nines did not usually go into, would, I thought, help the young people feel special.

My aim in the two sets of interviews was to cover topic areas of students' experiences of family and schooling. I wrote a set of interview questions (Appendix Three) before each set of interviews. However, even before I started interviewing, I knew I would not follow either list. As their detailed and specific nature may suggest, their purpose was to help me feel secure. This is not dissimilar to how a beginning teacher may write lesson plans in much more detail than s/he will follow. In practice, I seldom did more than glance at the written list of questions occasionally, if at all. In reality, I interviewed using a list of topic areas which I carried round in my head. These topics were based on the section headings in the written interview schedules.

Interviews with individual students differed greatly (Appendix Four). This was principally because of contrasts in the personal relationships I had built with individual students and in the depth of my knowledge about each individual’s home life. I viewed it as a strength of the interview if all the topic areas were not covered in one interview slot with a student; it indicated that the student wanted to talk. I conducted extra interviews, where necessary, to cover the topic areas. For instance, in the first set of interviews, 13 young people were interviewed for two fifty minute periods. From February, 1997, I also conducted additional tape-recorded interviews with those young people who requested them, in which we talked about issues they wanted to raise about family and schooling. Most of the young people asked for additional interviews, particularly as fieldwork progressed. As table 3.1 indicates, this means that I have vastly unequal numbers of interviews per student; Sara, for example, had 29, whilst Helen had 0, and Garry and David had two. I regard this discrepancy as a strength of the methodology; as will be discussed later, it illustrates how, except in Helen’s case, students felt able to express their wishes.

In table 3.1, the young people are grouped in alphabetical order according to family structure. This maintains confidentiality, as information on students’ family structure was not collected systematically at Springfield. This order will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

Table 3.1. The Sample: Number of Interviews.

Name of Young Person	Number of Interviews
Andrew	11
Steven	13
Sammy	5
Lynn	4
Clare	9
Garry	2
Malcolm	10
Muhammed	6
Laura	4

Karen	4
Rebecca	7
Julie	7
Matty	6
Carla	5
Emma	6
Tom	3
Johnny	4
Danny	3
Louise	12
Lizbeth	5
Fiona	14
Anna	9
Leanne	6
David	2
Martin	4
Stacey	14
Charley	9
Sara	29
Tim	7
Colin	5
Helen	0
Brian	6

I also attended a number of the students’ out of school activities. These included two school discos, a dance display, a trip to the maternity ward, an ice skating trip to a nearby town, end of term parties in school, and, when the students were in Year 11, their leaving Prom. On numerous occasions, I was invited by the students to the school ditch at break and lunch time, where students collected to smoke. I was also invited to many parties and social events with the young people. I refused these invitations, for reasons discussed in section 3.3.3 on ethics.

I systematically collected a range of written materials: selected pieces of students’ written work, their school reports, information from students’ school records, students’ attendance records and material about the school. Selected members of staff were interviewed in July, 1997. I had originally intended to interview the parents of students in

9YLC, during the summer term, 1997. However, by Easter, 1997, I had decided against this, for reasons again explained in section 3.3.3 on ethics.

Throughout fieldwork, I wrote a research log, on a daily basis (Appendix Five). This was partly to record data that had not been audio recorded, and partly to increase my reflexivity. I wrote in the research log in as much detail as possible, on the grounds that I did not know what would be of importance in the main phase of data analysis. I did not take observational notes in front of the young people, as I did not want to make them suspicious of me. I made jottings as soon as possible after an observation, and subsequently wrote up the jottings in the research log. I used the research log to question my developing insights. During fieldwork, I reread my research log frequently, to see if there were any linkages or disjunctures in my observations.

In this thesis, references to the research log are very specific, citing date, month and year; this is because I want to highlight the precision with which the log was kept. In contrast, references to tape-recorded interviews contain the month and year of the interview referred to. This is because, whilst time is, as will be discussed later, important in qualitative research, I have not, as yet, developed a satisfactory means of incorporating highly specific references to time into any analytic framework. To be very specific in terms of citing interview dates would be to lend this work pseudo-accuracy.

I was at Springfield doing fieldwork for approximately three days a week during the academic year 1996-7, except during the two phases of interviews, when I was in the field five days a week. In July, 1997, I attempted to finish fieldwork; at the end of the summer term, I told the young people I would be spending the next year at home writing my book. I gave students a certificate marking their participation in the research for their National Record of Achievement (NRA) (Appendix Six), and told students they were welcome to call me at home to talk to me. I thought I was completing my fieldwork.

However, I subsequently adjusted my research design. Because of the young people's requests, I returned to the field in September, 1997. During the academic year 1997-8, I spent approximately one day a week with the young people. I conducted informal tape-recorded interviews, on students' requests, and attended tutor time and selected lessons. Some of the young people would also phone me at home, to talk to me about their lives. Data from the year 1997-8 have also been included in the methodological and substantive findings of this thesis.

From April, 1998 to March, 1999, I was employed part-time by the Local Education Authority (LEA) to conduct research on attendance and truancy at Springfield and at its feeder primaries. The then 10YLC was one of the ten classes which completed a questionnaire, administered by myself, on patterns of attendance (Appendix Seven). Although the attendance project was a separate piece of research to my doctoral study, the young people are unlikely to have separated out completing the questionnaire from their relationship with me, built up through the doctoral research. Some relevant findings from the attendance research have therefore been included in chapter six, in the section on students' attendance.

From October, 1998, I was employed part-time as the Research Officer on a literacy project jointly run by Oxford University and Springfield School. This has involved spending approximately two days a week at Springfield. Through this work, I maintained intermittent contact with the young people. I frequently had conversations with them when they were in Year 11, when we happened to meet in school. I also had contact with the young people through attending extra-curricular events, such as at the production of West Side Story.

It was in May, 1999, when the Year 11s left school before their GCSEs, that I consider that I finally completed fieldwork. In May, 1999, I was invited to the Year 11 Prom and to the Year 11 leaving assembly. Whilst I stopped collecting empirical data on family and

schooling in July, 1998, my contact with the students gave me additional methodological insights into my data until May, 1999.

3.3. Methodological Issues.

3.3.1. Validity of Data Accessing Voices.

This section will present how I attempted to carry out the central aim of the research: accessing young people's voices on experiences of family and schooling. The section will also assess the extent to which the different ways I used to access young people's voices enabled me to construct valid data on their experiences of family and schooling.

3.3.1.1. Time in the Field.

The importance of time in the field underpins ethnographic research (Mac an Ghaill, 1991:109). Some of the literature highlights the importance of time in building research relationships. Time is important in enabling the research subject to trust the researcher (Pollard, 1987:106; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1993:222; Walford, 1991:91; Measor and Woods, 1991:65) and hence talk openly to him/her (Woods, 1996:38). In Ball's (1991:179) words:

Not surprisingly, the better I knew my interviewee the more candid the disclosures tended to be, although this was not always the case.

To build research relations which would enable me to access the young people's voices, it was crucial that I was in the field over a long period of time. It was also useful that, within the time framework, I had no discernible school-imposed restrictions on my access to students.

Various markers indicated the progression of research relations with the group as a whole. One marker was the interview. For instance, on the whole, young people talked

more openly in the second set of interviews than in the first. As the research progressed, more students requested additional interviews. Another indicator of the development of field relations was the increasing frankness with which the young people talked to me. First girls, and then, more slowly, boys, started telling me about their sexual activities and their experience of smoking, drinking and drugs. Then, perhaps predictably, came requests for me to buy them alcohol and cigarettes (eg Research Log, 12.3.97., 16.5.97., 22.5.97., 18.9.97.).

Another marker was where students felt comfortable talking to me. After a short time with the tutor group, students started to speak to me outside the classroom (Research Log, 27.11.96.). Then they began to ask if we could walk together from the tutor room to the interview room or to class, or between classes (Research Log, 10.12.96.). By Easter, 1997, young people were talking to me outside the local shop, where they used to congregate to smoke. Soon afterwards, students started calling me over to join their peer group outside the shop. From Easter, 1997, I was invited on many occasions to the school ditch and to students' parties.

These markers indicate positive development of research relations with students. This in turn indicates that the context was created to access valid data on the young people's voices.

3.3.1.2. Reducing Power Relations.

Pollard (1987:107-8) comments that the quality of data from children is related to the amount of control they feel they have over the research process. It would be naive to think that power imbalances could ever be removed completely. However, over the time in the field, I attempted to reduce power relations between researcher and researched. This was both because I believe in minimizing power imbalances, and because I view reducing power relations between researcher and researched as a key part of accessing voices. The most important way in which I attempted to reduce power differences was by

giving the young people choices. This contrasts with some claims (eg Ball, 1988:39-40) that children have little choice within the research process.

The young people had choices in a number of ways. Although, as previously described, I sent a letter to parents asking for consent to interview the students, the students could choose whether to be interviewed. In the first tutor time with 9YLC, I told the young people that they could decide whether or not to be interviewed, and I reiterated this when I sent the letter home to parents. I also made it clear to the young people, from the outset of the research, that they could opt in and out of the research, as they wished. I let students choose when to be interviewed; students decided which lesson they signed up to miss. Students had the choice about how much to say in interview; I told the young people they need not answer any question they did not want to. Furthermore, I talked through with the students collectively, different ways in which they could say 'no' to participating in the research.

Constructing semi-structured interviews around topic areas enabled the students to have considerable control over the development of conversation in interview. Indeed, some of them were impressive in their skill to direct the interview to their own agenda. Students also had the choice of whether to have additional interviews, and, within the constraints of my time, of how many extra interviews they had.

The diversity in the development of field relations, over the time in the field is, I think, the clearest evidence of success in reducing power relations. Students who feel empowered can take their own decisions about their degree of involvement with the researcher, expressing their individual voices, at moments of their choice. The diversity in field relations indicates the extent to which the students made choices about their interactions with me.

This point will be illustrated through the three contrasting examples of Sara, Tim and Sammy. Sara illustrates rapid development in research relations. Tim is an example of

slower development in field relations. Sammy is an example of fluctuation in research relations. What all three have in common is that, to a large extent, the students controlled the development of the relationship with me.

Although Measor and Woods (1991:65) comment that:

Access in the sense of trust only develops slowly in research, as it does in any relationship,

Sara needed little time, either to trust me, or to become a key student gatekeeper in facilitating my access to other students. When I introduced myself to the tutor group in November, 1996, I stressed that I wanted the students to ‘act naturally’. From very early in the research, Sara would remind both staff and students that, in her words, I wanted them to ‘act normal’ and ‘act natural’. When, for instance, the students were told off in maths for their behaviour in a previous lesson in front of ‘the writer’ (me), Sara was sent out of the lesson because she informed the teacher that I wanted students to ‘act natural’ (Research Log, 15.1.97.). For example, when Sara’s friend, Anna, overheard the tail end of Sara telling me that the two of them had almost been caught smoking in the school ditch by the music teacher that lunch time, Anna said, alarm in her voice, ‘You haven’t told her that, have you?’ Sara responded, ‘She wants us to act natural,’ and Anna joined in the conversation (Research Log, 13.1.97.).

Tim is an example of much slower development in field relations. The positive development of our relationship hinged on Tim’s realization, over time, that he could control our relationship. Initially, Tim was uncommunicative. After an HHC lesson, I recorded in my Research Log (20.11.96.):

Started to talk to Tim and immediately got a ‘wall’. I decided to leave him alone and so talked to Charley, who was sitting by Tim. Interesting that, after a while, Tim voiced a comment about Charley, and then joined in the

conversation with a little bit about himself. Finally, Tim dominated the conversation!

Tim, as indicated in section 3.2.5., initially told me he did not want to be interviewed (Research Log, 9.1.97.). It was perhaps fortuitous that, in one humanities class, the teacher sent me to sit at the back with Tim (Research Log, 13.1.97.). Tim buried his head in the curtain at the prospect of sitting by me, and I had to coax him out. At the end of the class, however, Tim asked me:

Are you still accepting offers to be interviewed?

To an affirmative, he responded:

I'll think about it.

On 27.1.97. (Research Log), Tim asked to be interviewed, and subsequently also had extra interviews.

In contrast, Sammy wanted to be interviewed at the start of fieldwork, and, in the first set of interviews, she talked with apparent ease and openness. I felt we had established a good rapport (Research Log, 23.1.97.). Consequently, in April, 1997, I was surprised, first, when Sammy said she did not want an interview, and, second, as she was usually forthright, that she was reluctant to explain why (Research Log, 25.4.97.). When Sammy did explain, she said that she felt she had disclosed too much about her life to me, and that she would rather get on with life, than reflect upon it (Research Log, 28.4.97.).

Rereading my Research Log, I thought it might not be coincidental that, in a previous English lesson (10.3.97.), Sammy had double-checked with me about the anonymity of the research, saying:

My mum would kill me if she knew what I'd said.

From April until July, 1997, Sammy ignored me completely, to the extent that when I was with her in her peer group, she would avoid even eye contact with me. One of my supervisors suggested I should encourage Sammy to be interviewed, as she might provide interesting data. I kept my distance. Although it is usually uncomfortable to be ignored, I felt pleased that Sammy felt able to express and carry out her wishes.

Then, in July, 1997, one morning in tutor time, Sammy suddenly started talking to me again, going from the extreme of a perhaps hostile silence to opening up at great length about being in trouble for defacing the school's new cricket wicket (Research Log, 16.7.97.). I do not know what prompted her to reopen channels of communication at that particular moment. I still did not ask her about being interviewed; if any initiative were taken, I wanted it to come from Sammy. Months later, Sammy asked for an interview, saying:

I've got lots to tell you! (Research Log, 11.11.97.)

The three cases of Sara, Tim and Sammy illustrate how different students expressed their voices at different moments of their choice, over my time in the field. The examples indicate the value of giving the young people space over time in the field. I did not know initially whether I would interview Tim even once. I did not know whether I would ever interview Sammy again. However, both my intuition and my underpinning approach of listening to students' voices told me to hold back from pushing them. Data constructed from interviews they had requested were likely to be of greater validity than from any interview they had been propelled towards.

3.3.1.3. Triangulation.

Triangulating the accounts of research subjects across time and across contexts is one way of validating data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1993:230). However, some students had impressive memories of what they had said in previous interviews. Malcolm, for

example, had a series of extra interviews with me. If I attempted to go back on old ground with him, to triangulate data, he would point it out with:

I've told you that before!

or even:

I told you that in my first interview! (Research Log, 22.4.97.)

Malcolm was not going to go along with my attempts to manage the conversation. The success of such deliberate attempts to triangulate students' accounts over time can hinge on the assumption that either the research subject will not notice that the researcher is talking about the same subject as on a previous occasion, or will be too polite to point it out. Malcolm's example also highlights how such deliberate attempts at triangulation teeter on manipulating the research subject and are potentially incompatible with reducing power imbalances in research relations. This, in turn, is not readily compatible with accessing voices or with treating young people as 'whole selves' (Woods, 1996:47).

Apparent inconsistencies in a research subject's accounts over time are, furthermore, not necessarily indicative of invalid data, as Sara's example suggests. Sara told me in her first interview (January, 1997) that her mother had discovered Sara had lost her virginity, by overhearing some neighbours talking about Sara, in an alley by their house. Sara repeated this in some of her subsequent interviews. Then, in a later interview, Sara said that her once best friend, Shaun, had told Sara's mother about Sara having sex. When questioned further on this by me, Sara said that she had previously always thought her mother had overheard the neighbours talking, but that recently Shaun had 'confessed' to being the guilty party in informing Sara's mother. Surface inconsistencies in a research subject's accounts can point to the research subject's changing perceptions, which he/she has consciously acknowledged; inconsistencies can be compatible with constructing valid data.

However, I think that what I have termed 'synchronic triangulation' is the form of triangulation which, in my research, has best highlighted valid data. I have used 'synchronic triangulation' to describe naturally occurring triangulation within a very short time period. It may not be entirely coincidental that the following example, in which a range of research subjects, unelicited, almost simultaneously gave accounts of the same event, took place after I had spent a year with the students and had, over time, built up field relations.

In November, 1997, when I returned to school after a week's absence, Lydia Wye told me that one of the girls, Stacey, had run away from home after a row with her step-mother and had slept by her grandmother's dustbin. Because of its focus on family structure, this seemed data worth following up. However, I did not have to try to find out more about this. The next person I met was Karl Price, who paraphrased Lydia's account, without any prompting from me.

As soon as I entered the tutor room, Stacey told me she was grounded for running away from home, because of an argument with her step-mother. Stacey went into more detail than Karl Price or Lydia Wye had done. For example, Stacey described the trigger for the argument: a burnt frying pan. Throughout the day, Stacey's friends told me their views on the event, and on what Stacey should do. The range of opinion was interesting. Some thought that Stacey should go to live with her mother in America. Others thought that she should stay with her father and step-mother, in some cases, because they did not want to lose Stacey's friendship (Research Log, 27.11.97.).

Not only was the incident a rich source of data, but the validity of the data was also heightened, because the triangulation was naturally occurring, within a very short period of time.

3.3.1.4. Being Explicit.

Alderson (1995), in writing about the ethics of researching children, emphasizes the researcher's responsibility to clarify the research to the children participating. However, I was also explicit about aspects of the research to the young people to maximize the extent to which I accessed their voices. I assumed that if the young people were confused about aspects of the research process, then they might not feel confident about participating in the research. This, in turn, would be likely to affect their degree of openness with me. To access the young people's voices, I tried to increase their understanding of the research process, to make them feel more comfortable with participating in the research. I did this by being explicit about a range of issues.

For instance, when I first met the students in 9YLC and explained about the research to them, I stressed how I wanted them to act 'naturally' and 'normally'. I explained to the students that I was interested in what they really thought, rather than in what they thought it was polite to say to someone. I reiterated this at various moments early in the research, such as just before the first set of interviews. My attempts to clarify students' understandings of the research by being explicit about behaving naturally were, as has been previously described, helped by a key student gatekeeper, Sara.

In spite of being explicit about interviews, I overestimated students' understandings and/or confidence about being interviewed, before the first set of interviews. From November, 1996 onwards, I referred frequently to aspects of the interviews, and I had what I thought was a detailed discussion about interviews with the students in January, 1997. It was, however, comments from some students which alerted me to the need to repeat explanations about interviews. Just before the first set, one student, Tom, asked me what would happen if he could not answer a question in interview and another student, Brian, asked me if an interview was like a chat show.

These questions prompted me to give students the opportunity in tutor time, together as a class and individually, to ask questions again about interviews. Apart from the questions

cited above, which were also repeated in the class discussion, other questions students raised as a class included: what would happen if there were a silence; whether I would ask another question if the interviewee could not answer a question; what would happen if the interview finished early; and whether I would answer a question if the interviewee could not answer. I was also asked by some of the young people individually if they could swear in interview and if they could eat in interview. In response, I stressed that I wanted them to act normally.

The young people may have needed a number of explanations because they had not understood about interviews, or because their fears were prompting them to repeat questions, seeking some form of reassurance. The point remains, however, that it was necessary for me to repeat explanations.

3.3.1.5. Confidentiality and Anonymity.

As touched on in section 3.2.5, at the beginning of fieldwork with 9YLC, I talked to the students collectively about confidentiality and anonymity. I reiterated the confidentiality of the research to the class at various stages, such as just before the first set of interviews. I also assured students on an individual basis, usually in interview, that the research was confidential, especially when I judged a student to have made a particularly sensitive disclosure.

There were various indications that students believed in the confidentiality and anonymity of the research. Pollard (1985:228) comments on how, in his research at Moorside, the students ‘played up’ confidentiality, to create a sense of secrecy about the research. This is conveyed by the name the children gave their research team: Moorside Investigations Department. My experience was not dissimilar. The young people coined a name for confidentiality, ‘the official secrecy’, and the room I usually interviewed in was known as ‘the confidentiality room’. Indeed, it was interesting that, when we went out of the more usual context of the school to the ice rink in a nearby town, the young people checked whether they were still ‘under the official secrecy’. Belief in confidentiality

persisted over time. For example, when I was conducting the attendance research with the then 10YLC, I started to explain about the confidentiality and anonymity of the attendance questionnaire. Charley interrupted with:

We know all that! We've been through that last year. (Research Log, 5.5.98.)

Some comments suggested that the young people had grappled with the implications of anonymity and confidentiality. For instance, one break time in November, 1998, I saw a group of girls from the sample. Part of the ensuing conversation is cited below:

Sara: Even if you change all the names, my mum'd still recognize me. After all, I've told you the story of my life. If my mum reads it, I'll get done. She'd kill me... Do you think you could make your book too expensive for my mum to buy?

CH: How much is too expensive?

Sara: £6.99.

Belief in the confidentiality of the research is likely to have helped increase the young people's openness about their experiences of family and schooling. In this way, the students' belief in confidentiality has probably helped increase the validity of the data constructed.

3.3.1.6. Presentation of Self.

We are many selves according to context. I aimed to appear a 'whole self' (Woods, 1996:47) to the young people, rather than occupying exclusively the unidimensional role of researcher. I tried to appear a 'whole self' by being, as outlined earlier, with the young people in a range of contexts, from, for example, maths lessons to the school disco, over a period of time. I ensured that the students saw me in a range of roles: someone who chatted to them; someone who was genuinely interested in their views; someone who listened to their problems; someone in front of whom they could talk about drugs,

drinking, smoking and sex, both in general terms and in detail, and who would not be judgemental; someone who would laugh at them and whom they could also tease; someone who helped them in class; someone who learnt alongside them in class; and someone who answered their questions.

It was, I think, particularly important that I never felt artificial assuming any of these roles, and that I never found the young people's company tedious. For instance, whilst Ball (1993:32), Lacey (1993:119) and Woods (1996:51) point to periods of boredom in fieldwork, I cannot claim the same. It is not an understatement to say I found every moment of fieldwork interesting, and that, whilst there were moments at which some field relations needed careful management, like Measor and Woods (1991:66) I found the students' company a privilege. I think that the young people will have detected my genuine interest in and respect for them, and my enjoyment of their company. This is likely to have helped the young people to be open with me and so, increased the validity of the data.

My enjoyment of situations extended sometimes to not being able to control spontaneous responses. For example, when Karl Price started the year's sex education 'with a few ground rules, to check everyone (was) coming from the same place,' I found it impossible to repress a smile, though I controlled myself more than the students. Many of them noticed my response, as there was considerable catching of my eye. I think that my amusement is likely to have underlined to students that I have a sense of humour and that I am a 'whole self' (Woods, 1996:47); I think my spontaneous behaviour probably helped students feel at ease with me. In turn, this is likely to have enhanced the validity of data constructed.

It was important that, when the young people were talking about sensitive issues in their lives, I did not unconsciously become defensive inside. This would, I felt, have been detrimental to accessing their views as, to protect themselves, the young people would be likely to give a more sanitized version of events. To increase my reflexivity about not

being on the defensive with students, I kept various images in mind. The image I most frequently visualized was that of a wall, from Robert Frost's poem 'Mending Wall'. In particular, I often reflected on the lines:

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in and walling out,...
Something there is that doesn't love a wall
That wants it down ...

A range of data indicates that students saw me as a multi-faceted person, not purely in any unidimensional role. Measor (informal taped conversation with Ball, discussed by Ball, 1988:42), thinks students saw her in a counselling role. Students' comments, made over time, indicate that I was seen as a listener and, by some, in a therapeutic role. For example, one tutor time when Sara was persuading another student to have a second interview, she said:

It's really good. It gets it all out of you. (Research Log, 10.4.97.)

Much later, at the Year 11 Prom, Sara introduced me to a friend from another tutor group, saying:

Miss is a really good listener. (Research Log, 12.5.99.)

Other students, such as Louise and Leanne, explicitly commented on various occasions about the benefits of coming to talk to me (eg Research Log, 16.4.97., 21.4.97.). For instance, I heard Leanne remark about being interviewed to her friends:

It makes you think and it really helps! (Research Log, 18.4.97.),

whilst Louise said, during an interview:

I enjoy comin' 'ere to tell like someone. It's good to talk (April, 1997)

Indeed, sometimes young people requested extra interviews when a family problem arose. For example, on one occasion when Leanne asked for an extra interview, she spent the 50 minutes talking about a family row which had taken place at the weekend, over her non-resident father's refusal to increase maintenance payments (April, 1997).

I was also seen as a writer. I was often asked by many of the students, from my first attempt to leave the field in July, 1997 until the students left school, in May, 1999, how my book was going. One student, Steven, saw me as equipped to give literary advice. In 1996-7, Steven wrote a 44,000 word play in his spare time; he gave me the play to read in 1997. By 1999, Steven had turned the play into a novel. Steven gave me the novel to read, and asked for my comments on it and for suggestions about a publisher (Research Log, 7.5.99.). I think it unlikely that Steven asked me for literary advice, because of my background as an English teacher. Steven said he had not told his English teacher about either his play or his novel and his English teacher appeared unaware of his literary inclinations.

Evidence suggests that I was, to some extent, seen as able to help students academically. In class, students would often ask me for assistance with their work. I was sometimes enlisted to give assistance with homework during morning tutor time. Furthermore, when the students were in Year 11, on Anna's request, I gave her several extra one to one sessions on GCSE Spanish and English (Research Log, April-May, 1999).

However, evidence also suggests I was not seen as a teacher by students. For example, I wore a visitor's badge initially, until one tutor time when Charley instructed me to:

Take that off! It makes you look like a teacher, and you're not. (Research Log, 16.5.97.)

Furthermore, my educational insights were seen by students as valuable only up to a point. For example, in one HHC lesson, as often happened, a group of students (in this

case, Fiona, Sara, Anna and Rebecca) had invited me to sit and to work with them (Research Log, 9.1.97.). Another HHC teacher, who came into the room momentarily, looked surprised to see me sitting with the students. I thought that her remark:

Oh well! It'll do them good to have an adult to help!

might prove counterproductive to my efforts to reduce power relations. However, when I made a suggestion about the work, which began, 'Do you think that we should think about...?' I became aware of how readily students could ignore my ideas. With indifferent dismissiveness, Fiona said, 'No!' The group then gave detailed consideration to a suggestion from Anna.

At the first school disco I attended (February, 1997), I was greeted as a friend by Louise. Hanging out of a ground-floor window, Louise extended her hand towards me and exclaimed:

Miss! Miss! You are my friend, aren't you? Say you're my friend!

We shook on it.

Lynn Davies (informal taped discussion with Ball, discussed in Ball, 1988:29) found that the girls she researched called her 'Mrs. Davies' or 'Miss'. I told the young people that they could call me 'Caroline', 'Mrs. Hudson' or 'Miss', whichever they felt most comfortable with. Nevertheless, although I was privy to both girls' and boys' confidences, the young people did not tend to call me by my Christian name; I was 'Miss' or 'Mrs. Hudson'.

With perhaps deliberate self-effacement, Lynn Davies describes herself, in the eyes of her research subjects, as 'a sort of pet gerbil' (informal taped conversation with Ball, discussed in Ball, 1988:29). Data suggest that students saw me as a multi-faceted person.

This may have helped students respond as ‘whole selves’ to me, especially as I did not pretend to be anything other than myself with students. In turn, this is likely to have enhanced the validity of the data constructed.

3.3.1.7. Student Gain.

I also attempted to maximize the extent to which I accessed voices by making sure that students benefited, in a range of ways, from participating in the research. It is likely that there are relationships between students’ perceptions of gain from the research and the extent to which students were willing to be open about their experiences of family and schooling. Student gain will be explored in detail in section 3.3.3 on ethics.

3.3.1.8. My Husband.

Pollard (1985) discusses the problems and possibilities of doing participant observation in the school in which he taught. For Pollard, a key issue was combining teacher and researcher roles with students; he comments that ‘much to (his) surprise’ (p.226) this was less difficult than he had anticipated.

As previously described, my husband works at Springfield. His official role within the school might, in theory, have restricted what students felt comfortable talking to me about and so, affected the validity of data constructed accessing voices. In January, 1998, after the main period of fieldwork, my husband became Enabling Assistant Principal. This role meant that he had much more direct contact with the students (then in 10YLC) than previously, and this contact was usually of a disciplinary nature. There is evidence from students’ comments that they viewed my husband in an official role; students would make comments about my husband such as:

I got done by your husband. (Matty, Research Log, 27.11.97; Anna, Research Log, 20.5.98.)

Indeed, initially I feared that my husband's new role might limit students' openness with me, particularly as in 1997-8 I was at Springfield less frequently than in 1996-7.

However, data relating to my husband are also indicative of the extent to which I was successful in accessing the young people's voices. There were many examples of how there was no discernible reduction in their frankness with me, after my husband became Enabling Assistant Principal. For instance, when Sara phoned me at home during the summer holidays, 1998, my husband answered the phone. Sara must have heard us finish a conversation as he handed over the receiver to me. Nevertheless, despite such reminders that I was associated with someone official at school, Sara, on being asked how she was, immediately launched into a diatribe about a boy she had 'shagged', and then described the prospect of returning to school as 'crap'.

Indeed, some students even asked me to collude with them against my husband. For example, after a performance of West Side Story at Christmas, 1998, Andrew came up to talk to me. The following conversation ensued:

CH: How are things going?

Andrew: Okay. There's just one problem.

CH: What's that?

Andrew: Your husband. He keeps coming up the field when there's only 20 minutes of break and we want to 'ave a fag and 'e just stands there. D'ye think you could have a quiet word? (Research Log, 2.12.98.)

I think that the fact that my husband's role in school did not appear to limit what the students felt comfortable telling me about is, first, evidence that the students believed in the confidentiality of the research; they did not think they would get into trouble with my husband through what they told me. Second, I think that students had a much stronger awareness of the relationships they had developed with me, than of any relationship I had with my husband.

There was evidence of this even early in the fieldwork. For example, during one break, some of the girls realized I was married to a teacher. Initially, they confused ‘Mr. Hudson’ with another teacher at Springfield. Girls crowded round me in a flurry of sympathy. Anna exclaimed:

What, not that tall bloke? Poor you (with great emphasis)! What’s he like at home? (Research Log, 24.1.97.)

Later in fieldwork, when Sara was reading the school Newsletter in December, 1997, she suddenly turned to me and exclaimed:

Miss! Did you know that your husband’s been made Assistant Principal? (Research Log, 12.12.97.)

My husband’s new role did not alter the nature of the students’ interactions with me, and the apparent incongruities of his official position, juxtaposed against the frankness of students’ accounts, serve to place the young people’s openness in sharp relief. These apparent incongruities highlight the extent to which I accessed the young people’s voices.

3.3.2. Generalizability.

There has been considerable debate on the generalizability of qualitative research. Ward Schofield (1990:208) argues that there are three common strands in recent writing on the generalizability of qualitative research: the inappropriateness of universal laws; the view that studies of one context can inform understandings of another context; and the importance of ‘thick’ description. At one extreme, Denzin (1983, cited in Ward Schofield) rejects generalizability. Other approaches to the generalizability of qualitative research, as summarized by Ward Schofield (1990) encompass, for example: the concepts of fittingness (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, 1982), comparability and translatability (Goetz and Lecompte, 1984), naturalistic generalization (Stake, 1978), multisite qualitative studies, the case survey method (Lucas, 1974; Yin and Heald, 1975), the

qualitative comparative method (Ragin, 1987), and meta-ethnography (Noblit and Hare, 1988).

My sample consisted of one class of 32 students who were predominantly working class. It was not a random sample. At the same time, the sample was selected on the basis that there was no reason to believe the class was unrepresentative, in terms of family structure, social class, gender and ability, of any class from Years 7 to 11 at Springfield. This, in my view, enables me to apply aspects of the findings to other classes at Springfield School. For example, findings on the mismatch between students' perceptions of family and the treatment of family in the school curriculum equip me, as will be described later this chapter, after the end of fieldwork, to be part of a working group at Springfield, rewriting the Health, Home and Community (HHC) curriculum on the family.

Research does not have to be generalizable to be relevant. As Wolcott (1995:175) puts it:

Each case is unique, yet not so unique that we cannot learn from it and apply its lessons more generally.

This study has attempted to explore, at micro level, macro level issues on family structure. In origin, it relates to macro level trends in family and outcomes according to family structure. In turn, its findings can potentially illuminate aspects of these. Whilst this study is idiographic, it can help inform understanding of aspects of the experience of other young people, by, at the very least, enabling questions to be raised about the experience of other young people.

Ball (1993:43) underlines how, because of the key importance of the researcher-as-instrument, any ethnography would, to some extent, turn out differently if conducted by another researcher. Whilst this is so, I have attempted to provide 'thick' descriptions of, for example, myself, the sample and the context of Springfield School. These 'thick'

descriptions should help the reader shape judgements about the validity of the data and the extent to which, and ways in which, the findings may be applied to other contexts.

The literature review highlighted how much recent research on children's outcomes according to family structure relies on old data from children born in 1946, 1958 and 1970, in spite of the fact that there have been alterations in family demography and in views on family structure in the second half of the twentieth century. It is therefore important to stress what may otherwise be an obvious point. It is not assumed that this study can be applied to children growing up in, for instance, fifty years time.

3.3.3. Ethical Issues.

According to Lee (1993), any research topic is potentially sensitive. Because I wanted young people to talk as openly as possible about potentially private areas of experience, my research topic was potentially particularly sensitive. It is, therefore, unsurprising that fieldwork raised many ethical issues. However, as Hammersley (1995) puts it:

... we should avoid naive contrasts between the dilemmas and inequalities involved in the research process and some idealised conception of 'authentic related personhood' (Stacey, 1988:23). The rest of real life is full of dilemmas and inequalities, even more than research.

Like Hammersley, I do not think that ethical issues should be considered in a vacuum. I believed it important to acknowledge the ethical issues within my research, but within the context, first, of other considerations within the research, and second, of 'real life' ethical issues. The rest of this section will explain my approach to key ethical issues in my research.

3.3.3.1. Informed Consent.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1993:264), informed consent is a central ethical issue with any research subject. At the outset of the research, I deliberately only talked to the students in broad outline about the research topic, saying I was interested in their

experiences of family and schooling. I wanted the young people to talk as openly as possible about family and schooling, and, from their accounts, to locate their experience of family structure within their overall experience of family. If I had told the students I was particularly interested in family structure, they might have focused on that, and so downplayed or even excluded other aspects of family life. In my view, detailed informed consent might have framed their accounts from the outset, and have reduced the validity of the data constructed.

Furthermore, I wanted to bring the research alive for the young people. I thought that telling the young people, on various occasions, that I was interested in their views on family and schooling provided a flexible, broad framework within which they could talk about their experiences. I did not want to talk in detail to the students about the research, because I judged that they would probably find this tedious. Whilst Alderson (1995), for instance, suggests using written accounts to help children understand the purposes of research, I thought that this, in particular, could potentially deaden the experience of research for the students, making it seem like another school activity.

If students had asked me in any detail about my research subject, either at the outset or during fieldwork, I would have answered their questions. However, beyond asking how the ‘book’ was going, and, in some cases, about which details would be included or left out, whilst the young people were interested in telling me about themselves, they did not ask detailed questions about the purposes or subject of the research.

3.3.3.2. Confidentiality.

As discussed earlier this chapter, I promised the young people total confidentiality. In contrast, some of the literature which considers research ethics (eg Alderson, 1995:19) argues for limits to confidentiality.

It might indeed be argued that my promise of total confidentiality to students was unethical, because of child protection issues. However, at the start of fieldwork, I read

carefully school documentation on child protection. This said that any school employee must report any issue related to child protection to the school's designated person: I was not directly employed by the school. This suggested to me that my guarantee of confidentiality to students did not potentially fall foul of any legal nicety. Furthermore, I was aware, at the outset of and during fieldwork, that if any child protection issue arose, I would find a way of talking around the issue with the student concerned. I would probably have asked the young person concerned whether s/he thought s/he should talk to someone else about the problem. At the same time, I deliberately refrained from having any formulaic blueprint for dealing with child protection issues. I believe that every case would be different, in terms of the interpersonal dynamics between researcher and researched, and also in the situation described by the young person. In my view, each case would need sensitive individual handling.

I had two principal reasons for promising total confidentiality. One was to attempt to access voices. People are unlikely to talk openly about very personal issues, if promises of confidentiality are only partial. Second, I also believe it is unethical for a researcher to disclose what someone has said in confidence, no matter how much the researcher has the research subject's perceived best interests at heart. I did not, on any occasion, discuss the students with anyone in school, though I was discussing data collection on a regular basis with my supervisors.

I was fortunate that maintaining students' confidentiality was unproblematic in that key adult gatekeepers within school, Karl Price and Lydia Wye, respected confidentiality. Lydia frequently referred to her awareness that I could not discuss any of the students with her. When a woman from the Family Planning Clinic came in to talk to the students about contraception, Karl and I had what I consider a significant interchange about confidentiality at the end of the lesson:

Family Planning Representative: (directs remark to Karl) I would imagine there's a lot going on in these students' lives (in a questioning tone).

Karl Price: Ah well, Caroline's the person you should ask about that. Caroline's in the privileged position because she has all the insights into their lives.

CH: And you've never put me into an awkward position about that over confidentiality. (Research Log, 22.5.97.)

It was as though the conversation underlined the confidentiality of the research, both in the past and for the rest of the fieldwork. Indeed, Karl subsequently suggested that, because I respected confidentiality, I might like to work closely with a group of Year 10 girls, some of whom were in the then 10YLC, who were perceived by school as 'difficult' (Research Log, 12.5.98.).

Ultimately, however, once findings are written up, confidentiality is only partial, despite the protection of anonymity; some individuals may be identifiable, if anyone from school chooses to read my account. Whilst one option might have been to alter some of the details about the young people's lives, I was not prepared to do this, because the central aim of the research is to access the young people's voices on their experiences. To alter details would, in my view, be to mute voices.

However, as already described in this chapter, I ensured that I discussed anonymity and confidentiality with the students, and, as discussed in section 3.3.1.5, evidence exists to suggest students understood about confidentiality. Furthermore, students knew that they could tell me to leave things out of the written account. For instance, one boy told me I could include everything about him except for the drug taking (Research Log, 16.6.98.). Homan (1991), in any case, argues that young people are able to protect themselves, and can take their own decisions about what they want to reveal to or conceal from a researcher. For example, it is possible that there may have been sexual abuse within some of the young people's families, but no one talked about any instance of sexual abuse at home to me.

3.3.3.3. Changes in Methodological Decisions.

I made two principal changes to the research design, to protect the young people: I did not, as originally intended, interview parents, and, on the young people's request, I extended my time in the field.

I abandoned my original plan to interview parents during the summer term, 1997. Reasons for this relate both to validity and ethics. At the outset of fieldwork, I had not anticipated the depth in which the young people would choose to describe their experiences of family, school, and peer group activities. I did not have the time or the context to build field relations of similar depth with parents, as with the young people. I therefore would have been unlikely to construct data from parents which would have been comparable with the student data. To attempt to compare the accounts of parents and the young people would therefore have been merely tokenistic triangulation.

However, my principal reason for abandoning my plan of interviewing parents was ethical. I thought that the students would be likely to feel very vulnerable if I interviewed their parents, even if I explicitly told the students that the confidentiality of their accounts extended to my not telling their parents what had been said to me. I also judged that parents might start questioning students about what they had said in interview to me. Even though this might place me in a potentially awkward position, my chief concern was that this would probably worry the students.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1993:121) rightly stress that leaving the field is not always unproblematic. I attempted to leave the field in July, 1997, but I reversed this decision in September, 1997, because of my wish to listen to the students' voices. In September, the students demanded, via Lydia Wye, that fieldwork continue. Not to have respected the students' wishes on this would, in my view, have been to exploit the students for the benefit of the research; this would have been unethical.

As has been touched on, the students' wishes had to be respected within time constraints. Whilst I interviewed students during 1997-8, when they were in Year 10, I could not conduct interviews as often as they wanted, because my time at Springfield was more limited than in 1996-7. In 1998-9, my time was further limited, because of working and writing up. I did not have time to interview, though I had time to attend some tutor times, and to talk at length to the students when I met them in school.

Because my relationships with the young people have largely been enacted within the physical context of Springfield School, as far as I could, I ensured that relationships with students were ongoing, whilst they attended Springfield. Indeed, I was surprised by the extent to which the students' Prom and farewell assembly (May, 1999) marked, for me, not only the students' departure from school, but also the end of my ethical responsibility to maintain active, ongoing relationships with the students. However, if, in the future, any of the young people express a wish to see me, then I will be pleased to respond; they have my phone numbers and address, should they wish to keep in contact.

3.3.3.4. Student Gain.

Alderson (1995) suggests that participating in research can bring benefits for children. Whilst it might be argued that I systematically invaded research subjects' privacy to gain data for my study, there is considerable evidence that gain was not one-sided. As discussed within the section on validity, students benefited from the research in a range of ways, though inevitably individual students will have benefited in different ways at different moments of fieldwork, and some students will have benefited more than others. This section will describe and present evidence about student gain from the research.

Students' gain is perhaps encapsulated by reference to one incident. One lunchtime in May, 1997, four boys were watching me label tapes used that morning. One of the boys, Matty, asked where the other tapes were. I explained that they were at home, locked up in case of burglars. Matty exclaimed:

‘Let’s go and burgle Miss’ house. Then we can do it all again!’(Research Log, 5.6.97.)

Furthermore, many students, over a period of time, made positive comments about participating in the research. Descriptions of the research as ‘really good’ were commonplace, and some students, such as Louise and Anna, said that the research had been the best part of their school career (Research Log, 17.6.98.; Research Log, 23.6.98.).

There is considerable other evidence that the students found the research a positive experience. The fact that the vast majority of them requested extra interviews indicates that students perceived they were benefiting from involvement in the research. Measor (informal taped discussion with Ball, discussed in Ball, 1988:37) comments on how the students were always pleased to see her. If I appeared in the tutor room on a day for which I had not previously arranged appointments, students would rush towards me, often almost knocking each other over and even almost knocking me off my feet, clamouring for an interview. When, on a few occasions during the two years of interviews, I double-booked students by mistake, the student who was not interviewed on that occasion was visibly disappointed. On one occasion, a fierce argument between two students ensued. This was even though I always fixed up replacement appointments.

Another indication that students felt they were benefiting from the research is that they were punctual for interviews. This contrasted with many students’ approach to the rest of school life. For instance, many were often late for lessons and, as will be described in chapter six, most had, at some point, truanted from school. Furthermore, the young people did not find it difficult to talk for 50 minutes, even though many would be reluctant to contribute a brief comment to discussions in class. There were also indications that students remembered what they had talked about in interview to me, even when interviews were separated by several months. In contrast, students often could not remember what had happened in lessons earlier in the same week. This indicates that the interviews had some significance in the students’ lives.

Benefits to students already discussed within this chapter include: being listened to; finding the research cathartic; and being helped educationally. Students also gained educationally from the research in a very specific way. The certificates marking participation in the research which I gave students for their NRAs at the end of the summer term, 1997 became highly valued items in Year 11, when there was more pressure on students to have material in their NRAs. Students who had lost their certificates asked me for replacements in Year 11.

Pollard's (1985) account highlights how his student research team enjoyed doing the research. The young people in my research also found aspects of it fun. For instance, McDonald's vouchers generated great excitement. I held raffles for McDonald's vouchers when parental consent letters were returned and when they had completed the first set of interviews. The students also enjoyed having competitions, with McDonald's vouchers as prizes, for choosing a name for my book, and for choosing pseudonyms for themselves. In the raffles, the students competed with one another about who was going to draw the winning names out of the bag. There was also heated discussion about whether the winners in the first raffle should be excluded from participating in the second. Several students offered me money for McDonald's vouchers; one boy even offered me £15, which he flashed surreptitiously before me in a humanities lesson, when the teacher's back was turned (Research Log, 13.1.97.). I think that all involved enjoyed such drama.

Participating in the research helped make the students feel more positive about themselves. I think that the students enjoyed having extra attention, and that the research made them feel important. Furthermore, I made sure that I praised the students, both individually and as a group, for their participation in the research. For instance, after the first set of interviews, I talked in detail to the students as a group about how well they

had done, and how impressed I had been by their comments in interviews and by their punctuality. I also said that I was going to tell Karl Price and the Principal how impressed I was; Lydia Wye was present as I was talking to the students, so the students knew that she was aware of my views.

Lydia Wye spontaneously commented to me, at the end of the summer term, 1997, that participating in the research had given students more self-confidence, and the tutor group as a whole more of an identity. Indeed, at the farewell assembly in May, 1999, Lydia's speech about the tutor group mainly focused on the benefits she perceived that participation in the research had brought the students.

In all, the research gained a popularity with the young people that I had not anticipated at the outset; it is likely that there was a relationship between the popularity of the research and the young people's perceptions of a wide range of ways in which they were benefiting from participation.

3.3.3.5. Benefit to the School.

There are, within the methodological literature, discussions about reciprocity in field relations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1993:89). My research undoubtedly was helped through the great freedom of access to the students the school allowed me. However, I was also able to repay, at least partially, the school for the freedom I experienced in conducting fieldwork. It was interesting that opportunities to reciprocate with the school came after the main period of fieldwork in 1996-7.

During the autumn term, 1997, the Principal asked me if I would work as an Adviser once a week at Springfield, on a project on marriage, with Year 12 students. This I did during the spring and summer terms, 1998. In the summer term, 1999, I was asked by the Head of the HHC faculty, if, as part of Curriculum 2000, I would be part of a working group rewriting the HHC curriculum on family, to make it relevant to the needs and experiences of young people. The Head of HHC said that I had been suggested by Karl

Price, because, according to Karl, I ‘have (my) finger on the pulse with what goes on in young people’s lives.’ Karl subsequently commented to me that it was important for the school curriculum that the school tapped into my research findings. It is interesting that, as outlined previously, I had never said anything in detail to Karl about students’ experiences.

3.3.3.6. Ethical or Pragmatic Dilemmas?

Pollard (1985:230) highlights how his role as teacher-researcher created some ethical difficulties, as when he was informed about a student ‘nicking’ sweets. Pollard comments on how, in teacher role, he would probably have followed this up: in researcher role, he did nothing. Because I tried to encourage the students to act ‘naturally’ and ‘normally’, it is unsurprising that I placed myself in some situations which required particularly careful handling. These situations primarily concerned peer group activities, such as smoking, drinking, drugs and sex. It is questionable whether my responses to these situations were based on ethics, pragmatics or a blend of the two.

In some instances, I colluded with the students . Such was the case with the ‘spit test’. On the trip to the maternity hospital, a group of the students asked me to find out from Karl Price whether the much dreaded ‘spit test’, used to detect illicit drinking, was to be used that night at the school disco. With apparent casualness, I introduced a conversation with Karl Price about the school disco, asking him what problems were likely to arise. The first he mentioned was that of alcohol. I asked what measures Karl would use to deal with the problem of alcohol. The spit test was not mentioned. I checked that Karl Price had not forgotten to mention it, by asking if there were any other additional measures he would use. The answer was negative. I informed the students of the result.

I colluded with the students for a range of reasons: the strength of my relationship with them; the view that, as a researcher, I was not working directly for the school; the beliefs that rules on drinking are culturally specific and that, whatever, the students would probably find a way to drink; and because I do not respect degrading measures such as

‘spit tests’. These reasons contain a strongly ethical dimension. My final reason was, however, pragmatic. I colluded because, in part, I did not think I was likely to get caught. Whilst to hypothesize is of limited value, had there been a strong risk of being caught, my course of action might well have been different.

I always refused students’ requests for me to buy them alcohol and cigarettes. This was for legal and pragmatic, rather than for ethical reasons. Obviously, I would have been breaking the law if I had colluded with the students in purchasing alcohol or cigarettes. Furthermore, if caught, I would have run the risk of getting into considerable trouble with the school.

However, the first time this situation occurred, I do not think I managed the situation well. One tutor time, a group of boys was bemoaning the fact that they had exhausted all potential supplies of alcohol, stolen from one boy’s parents. They then asked me to buy them some drink, even offering to pay me £1 for every £5 they spent. I attempted to divert the situation, by saying I was sweet and innocent and that the students were trying to corrupt me. The young people were not deceived by this. Charley responded with:

Don’t give us that one! You’re not sweet and innocent. You’ve been through it all before. (Research Log, 16.5.97.)

By joking, I was trying to silence the young people’s requests for me to buy alcohol. In this, I do not think I was treating them as ‘whole selves’. I learnt from this experience to be direct with the students in the future.

Indeed, on subsequent occasions when I was asked to purchase alcohol and cigarettes, I always accompanied my refusal with the explanation that, if caught, I would be thrown out of school. Whilst this did not seem to deter the students from asking me again, at the same time they appeared to respect my decision. For example, when on the next occasion I refused, Malcolm said:

It wouldn't really be fair on you, would it? (Research Log, 22.5.97.)

Malcolm's response suggests that he realized that I was being honest with the students, whereas Charley's response suggests that he had seen through my attempted pose.

As touched on earlier this chapter, I was also frequently invited to students' parties and to the school ditch at break and lunch time. Students were always keen for me to bring my tape recorder. The school ditch is viewed by staff as frequented only by student reprobates and as the home of much that is against school rules: smoking, drinking and sexual activity. The school ditch would probably have yielded a valuable seam of data; I could have triangulated students' oral accounts of ditch activities, with my observations. However, although Pollard (personal communication, 1997) advised me to go, I never took up invitations. Whilst Measor (informal taped discussion with Ball, in Ball, 1988:43) said she did not enter students' private spheres because she felt she had no right to, I felt uncomfortable about such direct collusion with the young people. I also thought the risk involved was too great; I would have had to walk past the staff room window on my way to the ditch. Though the data might have benefited the research, the potential cost to the research, if discovered, was too great. I also did not want to compromise my husband's position in the school.

The examples discussed above indicate the extent to which ethical issues were interlinked with pragmatic considerations in my fieldwork.

3.3.3.7. Ethical Issues in Data Analysis and Writing.

Ethical issues arose in data analysis and writing, as well as during fieldwork. Whilst section 3.4 will describe the process of data analysis and writing, my decision taking over two ethical issues in data analysis and writing will be considered here, as part of the discussion of ethics.

Unlike, for example, Mac an Ghail (1977), Willis (1977) and Whyte (1955) with Doc, I chose not to use respondent validation in analysing and writing. Respondent validation has an ethical dimension; it can help reduce power relations between researcher and researched, by enabling research subjects to have a say in data analysis and in the written account. Respondent validation potentially also heightens the validity of the written account. However, it seemed contrived, in the context of my relationships with the young people. The young people were, like Walford's (1991) students in the City Technology College (CTC), interested in the fact I was writing a book. They also often asked about its progress. However, this interest did not extend, as far as I am aware, to wanting to read it. This suggests that respondent validation would not have met any of the students' needs. If I had used respondent validation, I think I would have been creating an artificial situation with the students, in order to fulfil perceived needs as a researcher.

Furthermore, I would have had to simplify the thesis for it to be intelligible to the students. In order to maintain confidentiality to students, I would also have had to select information only about a specific individual, to feed back to that individual. This process of simplification and selection would probably have reduced respondent validation to a tokenistic activity. Whilst respondent validation may in some cases be compatible with accessing voices, in the case of my research, it would not have been appropriate.

For ethical purposes, pseudonyms have been used for the students, staff, school and the town in which the school is situated, to protect the identity of those who participated in the research. Most of the students wanted their real names to be used; this, however, would have made both the students and their families too identifiable. My first response to this issue was to run a competition in the summer term, 1997 for the students to choose names for themselves. Ideally, I would have liked to respect the young people's voices by using their ideas. However, I did not use their suggestions, because most of them were either too creative or humorous to represent the young people accurately.

Rather than select some students' suggestions for use and not others, I chose pseudonyms for all the students myself.

I chose pseudonyms carefully. All the names I selected were names of students on Springfield's register. I chose names of about the same length as the student's own name. I also selected pseudonyms which sounded similar to the original, but which were not sufficiently similar to reveal identities. Where two students had identical names, I chose different pseudonyms for each, to avoid confusing the reader. Where the students' real names were suggestive of social class, I ensured I chose a pseudonym with similar class associations. For the Muslim boy in the group, I chose a Muslim name. The girl of mixed race had an English name which was short; I therefore gave her the pseudonym 'Laura'.

Although I tried to compromise over the issue of names, by letting students choose their own names, this, as has been described, was unsuccessful. The most I could do in the situation was to be meticulous in choosing appropriate names for the students myself, so that students' identities were altered as little as possible, but students were also protected by anonymity.

3.4. The Processes of Data Analysis and Writing.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:205) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that data analysis is not a distinct stage in ethnographic research; in their view, analysis begins in the pre-fieldwork stage, when research problems are being formulated, and continues to the stage of writing papers and books. Similarly, in my research, data analysis has been ongoing, from reading the literature on family structure before beginning fieldwork, to writing up the doctorate and papers on the research. Over this time, the following strands have interlinked to shape analysis: reading about data, thinking about data, listening to data, talking about data, and writing about data.

3.4.1. Reading about Data.

From October 1995 to September 1996, I read as widely as possible from the literature on family structure and on childhood. Over the summer of 1996, I drafted a literature review. My reflections on the literature interacted with data subsequently constructed during fieldwork, to help shape data analysis. In the second half of Hilary term, 1999, I reread some of the literature. I also ensured that I read key literature published after I had conducted my main literature search in 1995. At Easter 1999, I redrafted my literature review. Redrafting the literature review meant that, in turn, my analysis of the literature interacted more closely and explicitly with my analysis of data from fieldwork in the redrafted substantive chapters of my thesis, than had been the case in the first draft.

3.4.1.2. Thinking about Data.

‘Living’ the data was key to thinking about data. This enabled me to engage in data analysis from fieldwork onwards, despite Hammersley and Atkinson’s (1995:206) point that many ethnographers find conducting ongoing data analysis during data collection hard.

‘Living’ the data meant not only, during fieldwork, having distinct blocks of time most weeks out of the field, to write about fieldwork, but also, keeping the data in my mind at other times from 1996 to 1999. I reflected on the data at times when I was not sitting at a desk working on my thesis, such as when driving the car, and going out walking or running. I heightened my reflexivity by trying to be as questioning as possible about, for example, the methods I used to construct data, the nature of the data I constructed, and the inter-relationships between the two. During fieldwork, on a daily basis, I reflected on either the day as a whole in the field, or on issues or particular events in fieldwork. I reflected on events either which stood out because they were puzzling me, or which seemed dangerously ordinary; I tried not to pass over the commonplace. I did not look for ‘quick fix’ answers to questions about data. Rather, I set my short-term, partial resolutions to questions within a broader, long-term framework: that at some point, as

yet unknown, I would arrive at a solution to the research problems I was attempting to address. This enabled me to tolerate uncertainty. Consequently, I was able to make my thinking about data a process, rather than an event.

Nias (1991:162) comments that:

... not all cerebral activity takes place at a conscious level.

Even when I was not consciously reflecting on the data, at unexpected and sometimes incongruous moments, an idea would suddenly surface about the data. I tried to ensure that I caught hold of the idea, before it slipped from my grasp and became submerged again. Because of such 'flashes', data analysis was far from a conveniently predictable process.

In all, thinking about my data was an interactive blend of logically building one idea upon another by asking questions of the data until a conclusion was reached, and having ideas, as described above, and then going back and asking questions of the ideas to see if the ideas worked for the data.

3.4.1.3 Listening to Data.

In total, I had 237 tapes of student interviews. I listened to all the student tapes, from fieldwork onwards. Most of my transcription of tapes took place during Michaelmas term, 1997, and Hilary term, 1998. I fully transcribed approximately 15 tapes, and partially transcribed the vast majority of tapes. To have transcribed fully the majority of the tapes would have been impossible within my time constraints! Instead, I took notes on those interviews which contained key themes, either for the tutor group as a whole, or for individual students' interviews across time. I also recorded key ways in which an individual student's interview differed from those of other students, or from his/her previous accounts. I noted, furthermore, the extent to which a young person talked about a particular issue during an interview. This analysis of time was, however, rudimentary. I

used three pointers: 'a lot', 'an average amount' and 'not much'. If a young person's account seemed coloured by a particular emotion, such as anger, fear or distress, then I made a record of this.

I checked that the extent to which the notes I had taken on interviews not fully transcribed accurately represented the bulk of the interview, by replaying randomly selected tapes in entirety, after making notes on them. I also listened to some tapes again during the summer of 1998, to assess whether I had in my writing, up to that date, distanced myself too much from the original data.

As with thinking about the data, I tried as far as possible to 'live' listening to the interviews; I played them when I was driving or cooking. If my husband was nearby, I used my walkman, to maintain confidentiality.

I had nine tapes of interviews with teachers and one taped interview with the Principal. Because many of the students became very involved in the research, I had much more student data than I had anticipated at the outset of the research. My focus was accessing the young people's voices and I also was constrained by time. I therefore decided to concentrate on the students' tapes and not to transcribe the teachers' tapes.

3.4.1.4. Talking about Data.

Conversations with other people helped give shape to my analysis of data. Of particular importance were those with my supervisors and my husband. These conversations about data served three purposes: they enabled me to summarize to my listener 'where I was at' with data analysis; questions from the listener then helped me reflect critically on 'where I was at'; and subsequent reflection on conversations helped develop my thinking further.

Conversations with each individual complemented one another in a way which stimulated further thinking. Whilst I discussed issues with my supervisors every couple of weeks, I would 'take stock' with my husband on a daily basis about what themes were

emerging and what I was arguing about each theme. This was a way of monitoring the small-scale, day-to-day developments in data analysis; talking to my supervisors was more a means of acknowledging escalating insights (Lacey, 1993:119). It should perhaps be acknowledged that whilst I was able to be very specific with my supervisors, I was always careful about maintaining confidentiality when talking to my husband.

The process of data analysis was also aided by giving presentations within Oxford University Department of Educational Studies (OUDES). Through preparing for the presentations, my insights into the data crystalized further. Second, the responses of people whose unfamiliarity with my work contrasted with my supervisors' and husband's familiarity provided a helpful springboard for further thought about data analysis and writing up.

3.4.1.5. Writing about Data.

Writing about data is a vital discipline. (Ball, 1991:182)

As already described, throughout fieldwork, I kept a research log in which I wrote on a daily basis. I reread my research log on various occasions during and after fieldwork, to reflect on the data. Insights from the log and interview transcripts interacted a great deal in the process of data analysis.

During 1997, I wrote up case studies of two students' experiences of family and schooling, based on transcripts of some interviews and my research log. I chose Louise and Sara because they came from different types of reordered families: Sara was from a single-parent family and Louise was in a reordered nuclear family in January, 1997. Time constraints prevented me from writing up further case studies. Before altering my decision about when to end fieldwork, I intended to use these case studies in the thesis.

Because I collected more data than I had anticipated, over the extended period of fieldwork, I decided not to include individual case studies.

In Hilary term, 1998, I began the main phase of analysis and writing. I started by reading through all transcripts, notes on interviews, and my research log. It quickly became clear that the data divided into three broad areas: students' experience of family, students' experience of schooling and students' views on the interface between home and school. I started work on students' experience of family. I read and reread all the data until the main themes of students' experience of family emerged: changes in students' family structure, students' responses to family reordering, family conflict, relationships with parents, relationships with siblings and relationships with the extended family. In this, the analysis was inductive, led by the data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). However, as will be seen from the relationships of the findings chapters to the literature review, these strands were also informed by themes within the literature.

I then took each of these areas in turn. When working on each area, I reread all the interview data and my research log. I made notes of all the evidence on a particular area for each student in turn. In selecting evidence, I also checked for disconfirming cases (Silverman, 1993), to ensure that I was using evidence accurately. I wrote up an account of 'findings' for the areas listed above. Although these accounts constituted the 'first draft' of my thesis, they were, in reality, the results of various drafting stages. Whilst these accounts were as analytical as I was able to be at the time of writing, they seemed very descriptive, on rereading them a year later. I then repeated the process of reading, notetaking and writing for the section on schooling, which I completed in draft form during Michaelmas term, 1998, and the section on home and school, which I drafted during Hilary term, 1999.

Whilst the process of reading and rereading the interview data and my research log, and making notes for each student on each theme was time-consuming, it ensured I was steeped in my data. Reading and rereading the data in its entirety also enabled me to

locate a specific issue within the context of students' whole lives; it helped me approach students as 'whole selves' (Woods, 1996:47). Ongoing rereading of the data meant that analytical insights sometimes altered, subsequent to writing a first version of a section. For example, reading all my data before writing about students' experiences of schooling and the home-school interface gave me additional insights on the section I had already drafted, on students' experiences of family. These altered insights later informed my rewriting of the section of my thesis on experience of family.

Furthermore, I wrote conference papers on conflict, gender and time (Hudson, 1998, 1998a, 1998b) because by 1998 I had become aware, through being steeped in my data, that I had not emphasized these themes sufficiently. The process of writing these conference papers in itself further refined data analysis. Having a first draft of the thesis as a whole enabled analysis to be further developed when redrafting during the summer of 1999. In rewriting, I used cumulative insights shaped over the period from 1995 to 1999.

In reworking the thesis, I juxtaposed each theme I was writing about in each chapter, against the first version of the whole thesis, to assess the extent to which I was giving the issue in question appropriate importance, set in the context of the thesis as a whole. I questioned whether my representation of the relationship of each part to the whole accurately reflected the data I had constructed, so that the perspective offered by this thesis as a whole does not distort data constructed during fieldwork.

In all, the process of analysing and writing up data is one in which the researcher-as-instrument is of prime importance. The success of this process in part hinges on the fusion of creativity with system, and of detachment with involvement. Thinking about data interacts with reading about data, listening to data, talking about data and writing about data, over a sustained period of time. The qualities in the researcher which help hone data analysis and craft writing about data are interestingly at odds with what is

arguably Joyce's (1975:215) conception of the artist, as expressed through Steven Dedalus:

The artist, like the God of Creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.

Chapter 4: Family Reordering.

In chapter two, it was argued that much research on family structure tends to use categories of family structure as though they are unproblematic. Chapter two, in contrast, pointed to some problems in the categorization of family structure. One problem pointed to is that distinguishing between categories of family structure potentially highlights differences between categories, rather than differences within each category and similarities across categories.

After describing the family structure of the young people in this sample, this chapter will discuss the arbitrariness of grouping these young people according to categories of family structure. It will then examine the extent to which there is diversity in the experience of family reordering of young people in, first, reordered nuclear families, and second, single-parent families. The extent to which there exist similarities in experience of reordering across these two categories of family structure will be considered. The chapter will conclude by exploring whether the young people in intact nuclear families have experience of family reordering.

In sections 4.3 and 4.4, the aspects of family reordering discussed are those which were highlighted in the accounts of young people in reordered nuclear and single-parent families. As discussed in 2.4, it is also argued within the research literature that these aspects of family reordering potentially mediate young people's responses to family reordering. Relationships with step or half-siblings, whilst potentially part of a young person's experience of family reordering, will be discussed in chapter five; this is because the young people's accounts did not reveal any differences in relationships with step, half or natural siblings.

4.1. The Family Structure of Young People in 9YLC.

Whilst chapter two pointed to problems in the academic literature’s categorization of family structure, categories of family structure will be used in chapters four to seven to explore the young people’s experience of family and schooling. This is, as argued in chapter two, not to suggest the categories are unproblematic; it is to have a framework from which to examine the extent to which these categories inform understanding of the young people’s experience of family and schooling. Four categories of family structure are used in discussing the empirical data in this thesis. Three are as found in the literature: intact nuclear, reordered nuclear and single-parent. The intact nuclear and reordered nuclear categories potentially encompass married or cohabiting couples; the young people, as stated previously, were not asked about their parents’ marital status. The category redisrupted has not been used, because of the problems in its use pointed to in chapter two. The fourth category which has been used here is in care; this describes what was, temporarily, two students’, Brian’s and Martin’s, experience of home. Brian’s and Martin’s experience of care has not been described in detail in this thesis, because its focus is not children in care. Furthermore, because Martin was very distressed and volatile during fieldwork, I did not attempt to cover the topic areas with him in interview. Instead, I was particularly careful to let him talk about what he wanted to.

Table 4.1 presents the family structures of the young people in 9YLC, according to the four categories described above. Family structure has been measured at three points in fieldwork. Time one was in January, 1997, when the young people were asked about their family structure in the first set of interviews. Time two was in July 1997, when, as has been detailed in chapter two, I had intended that fieldwork would finish. Time three was in December, 1997, so that family structure was measured over a calendar year. In the table, **and in all tables in this thesis, unless otherwise stated**, the young people are ordered according to the alphabetical order of their actual surnames, within the categories of family structure as listed above, at time one. This organization protects the

young people’s anonymity, as information about students’ family structure was not collected systematically at Springfield School.

Table 4.1. The Young People’s Family Structures.

Name	Family Structure Time One January 1997	Family Structure Time Two July 1997	Family Structure Time Three December 1997
Andrew	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Steven	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Sammy	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Lynn	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Clare	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Garry	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Malcolm	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Muhammed	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Laura	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Karen	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Rebecca	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Julie	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Matty	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Carla	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Emma	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
Tom	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
* Johnny	intact nuclear	single-parent	single-parent
Danny	intact nuclear	intact nuclear	intact nuclear
* Louise	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear
Lizbeth	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear
Fiona	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear
Anna	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear

Leanne	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear	left school
David	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear
* Martin	reordered nuclear	care	left school
Stacey	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear	reordered nuclear
* Charley	reordered nuclear	single-parent	single-parent
Sara	single-parent	single-parent	single-parent
Tim	single-parent	single-parent	single-parent
Colin	single-parent	single-parent	single-parent
Helen	single-parent	single-parent	single-parent
* Brian	care	reordered nuclear	left school

Bold type and an asterisk have been used to indicate young people who experienced a change in family structure between January, 1997 and December, 1997.

At time one, there were 18 young people in intact nuclear families, nine in reordered nuclear families, four in single-parent families, and one in care.

At time two, there were 17 young people in intact nuclear families, seven in reordered families, six in single-parent families and one in care. One young person in the intact nuclear category at time one, Johnny, had moved into the single-parent category by time two. Within the reordered nuclear category at time one, three young people had experienced a change in family structure by time two. Although Louise was still in a reordered nuclear family at July, 1997, she had experienced two changes in family structure between time one and time two. Between January and July, 1997, Louise's family experienced a brief period as a single-parent unit, after Louise's step-father had moved out. By July, 1997, her mother's partner had moved in. Between January and July, 1997, Martin had been thrown out of home and was living in a foster family. Charley's mother's boyfriend had moved out between times one and two; by time two, in July,

1997, Charley was living in a female-headed single-parent family. In May, 1997, Brian moved from living in a children’s home to a reordered nuclear family, with his mother and his step-father. When this change occurred, during the summer half-term, 1997, Brian also changed schools. Whilst he was not attending Springfield in July, 1997, it is likely that he was still living in a reordered nuclear family; for this reason, his family structure at time two has been included.

By time three, in December, 1997, three young people, Leanne, Martin and Brian, had left Springfield. Consequently, the family structure of 29 of the original sample of 32 was known. At time three, there were 17 young people in intact nuclear families, six in reordered nuclear families, and six in single-parent families. The intact nuclear category contained the same young people as at time one, except that Johnny was, as at time two, in a single-parent family. Of the original reordered nuclear category at time one, the family structure of Leanne and Martin was unknown, because they had left Springfield. As at time one, Sara, Tim, Colin and Helen were in single-parent families. As at time two, Johnny and Charley were also in single-parent families. The family structure of Brian, who was in care at time one and in a reordered nuclear family at time two, was unknown at time three.

Over the calendar year of 1997, the family structure of five young people (Johnny, Louise, Martin, Charley and Brian) altered. That is to say, just under a quarter of the young people in 9YLC at time one changed family structure over a period of 12 months. Louise, as described above, experienced two changes in family structure between January and July, 1997. Only one change in family structure was experienced by a young person in the intact nuclear category at time one, even though the majority of the young people (18 out of 36) were in the intact nuclear category at time one. This suggests that, among the young people in 9YLC, the intact nuclear category was more stable than the other categories of family structure.

Table 4.2 illustrates the number of changes in family structure experienced by the young

people in 9YLC before the start of fieldwork.

Table 4.2 Changes in Family Structure before Fieldwork.

Young people not in intact nuclear families at time one	Number of changes in family structure prior to fieldwork
Louise	2
Lizbeth	0
Fiona	2
Anna	2
Leanne	2
David	2
Martin	2
Stacey	2
Charley	4
Sara	1
Tim	unknown
Colin	1
Helen	1 - at least.
Brian	6?

Of the young people in table 4.2, it is likely that Tim’s and Brian’s accounts may not indicate accurately the changes in family structure they had experienced. Whilst Tim said his mother did not have a live-in partner at the time of fieldwork, and whilst his accounts did not suggest that his mother had ever cohabited during Tim’s life, Tim was unclear about whether his father had ever lived with his family. Brian’s accounts suggested that he had experienced six changes in family structure. Brian had apparently moved from an intact nuclear family to a single-parent family, from a single-parent family to four different sets of foster parents, and from the fourth set of foster parents to a children’s home. However, more than any other young person, Brian took up my suggestions of how to refuse to answer questions; on various occasions, Brian said that issues in his family experience were ‘not safe’ or ‘unsafe’ to talk about (eg Interview, January, 1997). It is, therefore, possible that Brian left out some of the changes he had experienced. For instance, Brian may have gone into a children’s home between sets of foster parents.

As detailed in chapter three, Helen's mother would not allow Helen to be interviewed. Through comments volunteered by Helen in informal conversation, it appeared that she had experienced at least one change in family structure before fieldwork began, moving from a family headed by two adults, to a single-parent family.

As table 4.2 shows, one young person in a reordered nuclear family (Lizbeth) had directly experienced no changes in family structure; the problems of categorizing Lizbeth's family structure will be discussed in section 4.2.2. Two young people (Sara and Colin) had experienced one change in family structure, going from an intact nuclear to a single-parent family. Seven students (Louise, Fiona, Anna, Leanne, David, Martin and Stacey) had experienced two changes in family structure, moving from an intact nuclear to a single-parent family, and then from a single-parent family to a stepfamily.

Charley had experienced four changes in family structure. He had moved from an intact nuclear family to first a single-parent family and then a reordered nuclear family. The third change in family structure, as described by Charley, was when the family became a single-parent female-headed unit. The fourth change was when the family became a reordered nuclear family for the second time.

When the changes in family structure experienced during fieldwork by Louise, Martin, Charley and Brian are added to the changes reported by the young people before fieldwork began, by December 1997, Louise had experienced four changes in family structure, Martin had experienced three changes, Charley had experienced five changes, and Brian had experienced seven changes. Whilst Tim's case is unknown, a sizable minority (13) of the young people had experienced at least one change in family structure. A small minority (four) had experienced more than two changes in family structure. The fact that over one third of 9YLC had lived in more than one family structure illustrates both the diversity in family type and the potential fluidity of categories of family structure. This diversity suggests that, although the majority of the young people in 9YLC were in intact nuclear families, the intact nuclear family was not

the norm, and by implication, other family types were not deviant family forms. The fluidity in family structure further questions the extent to which grouping the young people's experience according to a particular category of family structure accurately represents their overall experience.

4.2. Arbitrariness of Categorizing Family Structure.

4.2.1. Use of Time.

Whilst, as stated previously, the young people's family structure was noted at three points during fieldwork, it is their category of family structure at time one which has been used throughout the thesis, to discuss the extent to which categories of family structure inform understanding of the young people's experience of family and schooling. The fluidity in family structures described above underlines that it is problematic to use the young people's family structure at one point in fieldwork as a basis for discussing experience of family and schooling; it suggests an immutability to categories of family structure which, in the case of some young people, did not reflect their experience. On the one hand, it is recognized that there are problems in using a fixed point in time. On the other hand, whilst time one is an arbitrary choice, it provides a framework from which to discuss the young people's experience of family and schooling according to family structure.

4.2.2. Lizbeth.

Lizbeth has been placed in the reordered nuclear category. However, her experience of family reordering differed from that of other young people in reordered nuclear families. Lizbeth lived with both her natural parents, but it was her father's second marriage. On the one hand, it could be argued that, as she lived with both natural parents, she was in an intact nuclear family. On the other hand, Lizbeth had considerable experience of family reordering. Her father's first wife, though living in Australia, sometimes came over to Britain with Lizbeth's half-siblings, the two daughters of Lizbeth's father's first marriage,

to visit Lizbeth's father. Although Lizbeth enjoyed her relationships with her two half-sisters, to some extent, she felt threatened by her father's ex-wife:

It sounds a bit silly, but I was scared my dad might change his mind about her (ex-wife), know what I mean, start liking her again, but I don't think that would happen. I think he likes my mum too much. Well, I hope that's true. (Interview, December, 1997)

Because Lizbeth had experienced some of the interpersonal dynamics of family reordering, even though the reordering was in the past, Lizbeth has for the purposes of discussion been placed in the reordered nuclear category. However, this was not a clear-cut decision. The fact that placing Lizbeth in a category is problematic underlines the arbitrary nature of these categories.

4.2.3. Single-Parent Families.

At time one, there were, as indicated in table 4.1, four young people in single-parent families. However, according to the young people's accounts, before fieldwork began, nine of 9YLC (Brian, Fiona, Anna, Leanne, David, Stacey, Martin, Charley and Louise) had lived temporarily in single-parent families. Johnny and Charley moved into a single-parent family over the course of fieldwork. As will be discussed in section six of this chapter, two young people in intact nuclear families had experienced a period in single-parent families, when one of their natural parents left temporarily. In total, 15 young people had experience of living in a single-parent family. Of these, Louise and Charley had lived in a single-parent family for more than one period of time.

This further illustrates the point that that grouping experience of family structure at one point in time is problematic. Discussing experience of a single-parent family, on the basis of who was in a single-parent family at time one only reflects the experience of a quarter of those young people with experience of living in a single-parent family. Furthermore, the transitory nature of family structure also makes it problematic to discuss experience of a reordered nuclear family, according to those young people in reordered nuclear

families at time one, when all of these young people except for Lizbeth also had experience of a single-parent family. Whilst some perceptions of being in a single-family as opposed to being in a reordered nuclear family might stand out in the young people's minds, it would seem likely that, in other cases, responses to living in these different family structures had become interwoven in their minds. Whilst a distinction has been made between reordered nuclear and in single-parent families, for the purposes of discussing whether categories of family structure inform understanding of young people's experience of family reordering, it is again underlined that this distinction is inherently problematic.

4.3. Experience of Reordered Nuclear Families.

4.3.1. The Family Break-Up and Reordered Nuclear Families.

In contrast to Lizbeth, the eight other young people in reordered nuclear families at time one (Louise, Fiona, Anna, Leanne, David, Martin, Stacey and Charley) had experienced the same event: the departure of a natural parent from the family home. Chapter two indicated that the age at which the break-up took place and the length of time since family separation are factors often discussed in the literature as potentially mediating children's responses to family break-up. Chapter two indicated that the evidence is, across different research studies, often contradictory (eg Leon and Donohue, 1987; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Kurdek and Siesky, 1980) and that the two variables are sometimes confounded (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998).

The eight young people had, apart from David, experienced the departure of a natural parent before the age of five. Of the seven young people who had experienced family reordering before the age of five, six did not talk in detail about the departure of a parent. Some explicitly indicated that they were too young to remember the family separation; in Leanne's words:

I can't remember anything about my dad leavin' which is quite good really, 'cos I don't know if it was a big row, or anything. But my older sister does remember, but we don't talk about it very much.

As indicated in chapter two, Mitchell (1985) argues that young people need to develop an account of events leading to separation. Like Leanne, Anna did not remember the family reordering itself. However, in contrast to Leanne, Anna indicated explicitly that, through her mother, she had developed an account of the break-up. Anna said that her mother had subsequently explained to her about the marital problems between Anna's father and herself. Anna stressed at various points in fieldwork how her father had changed greatly, and how he now treated his first wife and family by his first marriage well. Like Anna, Fiona developed an account of the family break-up she did not remember, also through her mother. For example, Fiona said that her mother had explained that she had viewed Fiona's natural father more as a friend than a partner (Interview, February, 1997).

Louise's account suggested, in contrast, that she could remember events before her parents split up. In contrast to the other young people whose parents had split up when they were young, Louise focused on the family conflict before the family reordering. Louise's accounts often stressed her natural father's drunkenness and violence towards the family. The conversation below is one example of Louise's descriptions of family conflict:

Louise: 'E (her natural father) used to come 'ome (from the pub) and 'e was so drunk.

CH: Can you remember it?

Louise: Yeh, it was 'orrible. 'E used to, 'cos my brother was one years old, and 'e used to like ... really 'it 'im ... really bad. 'E chucked me down the stairs when I was really little, and 'e, 'e just like, 'e put my mum's 'ead through a window. That was when my mum said, 'He's gotta go.' (Interview, January, 1997)

The family conflict before family reordering may have stood out in Louise's mind, because of her father's extreme violence, and because during fieldwork, Louise experienced her mother's and step-father's disputes. These may have resonated with Louise's earlier experience of family conflict.

In contrast to the seven young people who had experienced a natural parent's departure before the age of five, David's parents had split up only two years before fieldwork started (Interview, January, 1997). It is therefore unsurprising that David's recollections of the family break-up were clearer and more detailed than those of the other seven young people, with the exception of Louise. In particular, like Louise, he focused on family conflict before the break-up. In David's first interview, he gave an emotional and detailed account of his parents' arguments before they split up. The following is taken from David's description of what he perceived as the worst argument between his parents:

David: They mainly argued at night when I was in bed but I could still hear them... There was one time when the neighbour called the police 'cos 'e could 'ear it as well.

CH: Did the police come?

David: Yeh, an' I was really upset then. I just didn't know what to do, so I just ran away. (Interview, January, 1997)

David emphasized his distress and, in his view, his inability to deal with the break-up:

Every night I just thought about it (his father's departure) and couldn't, just started cryin', couldn't handle it. (Interview, January, 1997)

Even though David is speaking about himself in the past tense, these words and others, and the emotional tone in which they were spoken, convey a sense of raw pain. As discussed in chapter two, research frequently highlights a crisis period of one to two

years after family break-up for children involved (eg Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). The fact that, according to David, his father had left home two years before fieldwork began, places David, in contrast to the other young people in reordered nuclear families, just within this crisis period. Whilst this may partly help explain David's distress, it is also likely to be the case that David's father's departure represented a bigger change for David than the departure of a resident parent for the other young people in reordered nuclear families. David had lived with his natural father for much longer than the other young people in reordered families had lived with their non-resident natural parent.

In all these young people's families, the same event, the departure of a natural parent, had occurred. However, the discussion above shows that the young people in reordered nuclear families had different experiences of the same event. Whilst in most cases the departure had taken place when they were young, this was not the case for David. David and Louise had clear memories of the conflict. In contrast, other young people such as Anna and Fiona had developed second-hand accounts of the reordering.

4.3.2. Conflict After Family Reordering.

As discussed in chapter two, conflict, whether before or after family reordering, is often highlighted as one of the key factors potentially mediating children's responses to reordering (eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). Research illustrates how family break-up can instigate new areas of conflict between ex-partners, and that children are more likely to be involved in conflict between their natural parents after they have split up (Cockett and Tripp, 1994). Mitchell (1985) and Rodgers and Pryor (1998), for example, use the potential continuation of conflict after reordering to make the case that family separation is a process, not a single event.

In this data set, there was variation in the extent to which young people's accounts revealed the existence of conflict centring around issues related to family reordering,

after their natural parents' separation. Charley's accounts did not touch on any ongoing conflict between his natural parents after they separated. This does not mean that there was no conflict between his parents. If there was, Charley was either unaware of it or chose not to highlight it in his accounts of family. Whilst the last section illustrated David's distress at his parents' break-up and at their pre-separation conflict, David did not mention any conflict between his parents after they separated. In contrast, David emphasized that his parents got on much better together since they had split up (Interview, January, 1997). When the fact that David talked in detail about the pre-separation conflict is set against how David would have preferred his parents to have stayed together, this suggests that if he had been aware of any ongoing disputes between them, he would have been likely to have discussed these in interview.

In contrast to Charley and David, other young people in reordered nuclear families highlighted the existence of family conflict, after the family reordering. However, across accounts there was variation in the form and frequency of conflict and when it occurred in relation to the break-up itself. Louise and Fiona described how, after their natural fathers left, their fathers harassed their families, by following them. Fiona's account of harassment was much less extreme than Louise's, and the following comment underlines how Fiona felt she was too young to have been affected by her father's behaviour:

My mum was really upset. She felt he couldn't let go. If I'd have been older when he was following us around, I'd probably have been upset and worried. (Interview, April, 1997)

In Louise's case, harassment apparently extended to her natural father putting bricks through her grandmother's windows, with whom Louise, her brother and her mother were living, and, later, putting glue in the locks of her step-father's car (Interview, January, 1997). Louise also related how, on various occasions, Louise's natural father collected Louise and her brother from school, to run away with them (Interview, January, 1997).

Furthermore, Louise's accounts of family life after her step-father left in April, 1997, conveyed how there was a period of intense conflict between her parents. For example, Louise related how her step-father took all her mother's clothes, 'her knickers and everything', because her mother was seeing another man (Interview, May, 1997). Disputes extended to issues such as Louise's step-father's access to his children. Louise stressed, for example, that her step-father tried to compete with Louise's mother for both the affection and custody of Louise's younger half-brother, Chris, and that both parents attempted to involve Chris in their disputes. In the following, Louise's tone was laced with irony:

'E (Louise's step-father) goes to Chris, 'Who do you love best, me or your mum?' 'E goes, 'You, Dad.' 'E goes, 'Well, we'll go to see this man, and you tell 'im that.' And he needs a man to take Chris off my mum! Mum asks Chris why 'e wants to go and see Dad. ''Cos 'e buys me sweets.' 'Well, you just make sure you tell the man that!' (Interview, June, 1997).

Louise's accounts conveyed how other family disputes increased, after her step-father left. For example, Louise said that, without her step-father at home, her natural brother had no one to discipline him, and that her half-brother behaved badly at home, when making the transition from being at Louise's step-father's flat (Interview, May, 1997).

As described in the preceding section, Anna's, Leanne's, Stacey's and Fiona's parents had split up when they were very young. At the time of fieldwork, post-reordering family conflict was not sustained. In contrast to Louise's account of family conflict in the immediate aftermath of the family reordering which occurred in April, 1997, there were occasional flare-ups within their families.

Anna's accounts suggested that her natural parents had a more harmonious relationship than the parents of the other three girls. Anna described how her non-resident natural father always came into her family's house to chat, when he brought Anna home after her weekly visits to him (Interview, January, 1997). Anna's natural father also seemed

helpful to Anna's family. For instance, when Anna's mother wanted to install the internet, Anna's father went round to help with this (Interview, May, 1997). Furthermore, when Anna's family moved house within Castletown, Anna went to stay with her natural father and her non-resident step-mother for several weeks, until her family was able to move into their new house (Interview, June, 1997).

However, even in Anna's case, there were occasional pockets of conflict over issues related to family reordering. Anna described an argument which had taken place after Anna's mother had asked Anna's natural father if Anna and her older natural brother could stay the night with him. Anna's father agreed, but apparently forgot to tell his second wife. Anna's father was working nights, and his second wife had planned to go out. Anna and her brother had to go home, and this prompted a family dispute, with Anna's mother and step-mother slamming the phone down on each other (Interview, February, 1997). This dispute apparently created hostility between Anna's mother and step-mother. Anna did not say exactly when this dispute had occurred, though it was clear, from her accounts, that it was before fieldwork began. The two women were apparently not on speaking terms with one another throughout fieldwork. This indicates how an apparently sudden flare-up could generate long-lasting tensions between family members.

Leanne and Fiona experienced more frequent pockets of disputes related to family reordering than Anna, chiefly over maintenance payments and Leanne's and Fiona's perception that they did not have enough contact with their non-resident natural fathers. This will be described in the next section on the non-resident natural parent.

Stacey's non-resident natural mother lived in the United States. This meant that there was little contact between Stacey's natural parents most of the time. However, during the summer term, 1997, Stacey's mother came over to Britain for three weeks, to see her children from her first marriage. Stacey described how her mother's visit provoked conflict. During Stacey's mother's visit, her father apparently became almost

uncommunicative when her mother phoned up Stacey and her brother, or when Stacey asked if she could go out with her mother. Stacey also repeated explicit statements she said her father had made, attempting to discourage the relationship between Stacey and her mother developing, such as:

He (Stacey's father) said something like, I don't like you gettin' too close, 'cos then you might go to America when you're older, and I don't want that to happen. (Interview, April, 1997)

According to Stacey, her mother's visit had apparently also prompted arguments between Stacey's father and Stacey's resident step-mother (Interview, April, 1997).

The accounts of most of the young people in reordered nuclear families suggest that, as argued in the literature (eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994), there was family conflict over issues related to family reordering, after the break-up itself. Conflict, however, took a range of different forms, from harassment to arguments. Conflict related to family reordering was, according to these young people's accounts, more frequent in some families than in others. These variations suggest that the event of conflict was experienced individually by the young people.

4.3.3. The Non-Resident Parent.

As discussed in chapter two, the quality of children's relationships with their natural parents is frequently highlighted as a potential protective or exacerbating factor in mediating children's response to family separation (eg Richards, 1982, 1987; Maclean and Wadsworth, 1988:164; Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989:16; Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). The literature tends to focus on the negative aspects of children's relationships with their non-resident natural parent, highlighting, for instance, lack of contact (eg Furstenberg, Morgan and Allison, 1987; Robinson, 1991; Cockett and Tripp, 1994).

Within this sample, three young people, Anna, David and Stacey, spoke positively of their relationship with their non-resident natural parent. Of these, Anna appeared most satisfied with her relationship with her non-resident father. Her father lived with his second wife, Gertie, in a village just outside Castletown. According to Anna, she saw her father and Gertie every Sunday, as well as sometimes during the week (Interview, January, 1997).

Like Anna, David had regular contact with his father, who also lived locally. David saw his father three times a week. On the one hand, David appeared content with his relationship with his father. David even said that, since his parents' separation, he had spent more time alone with his father than previously. At the same time, David also explicitly said, as previously stated, that he would have preferred his parents to have stayed together (Interview, January, 1997).

Stacey developed a very positive relationship with her mother during her mother's visit from the United States, in the summer term, 1997. According to Stacey, before this visit, she had only seen her mother once since after her parents' separation. When Stacey was eight, her mother apparently paid a surprise visit to Stacey and her family; Stacey described feeling tongue-tied with surprise at seeing her mother (Interview, January, 1997). In contrast, during her mother's visit from the States in 1997, Stacey described the bond between them:

My dad doesn't understand why we like her... but she is my mum, you know, and I love her (with great expression) and I can't help it. She is my mum... I wasn't gonna let her stay in America and not end up seeing her at all. (Interview, April, 1997)

Stacey described feeling able to communicate with her mother about everything, and enjoying talking to her mother more than to her father and her resident step-mother (Interview, April, 1997). Throughout fieldwork, Stacey continued to speak positively of her relationship with her natural mother, even though, in comparison to David and Anna,

she had little contact with her natural mother. During fieldwork, Stacey only saw her mother for one other period, in the summer holidays, 1998. Stacey's case suggests that positive feelings about a non-resident parent are not merely contingent on regular, face to face contact. Furthermore, whilst previous research (Mitchell, 1985; Furstenberg et al., 1987) highlights how contact with the non-resident parent tends to decrease over time, Stacey's example suggests that this is not necessarily the case; a relationship with a natural non-resident parent can develop positively over time.

Charley's natural non-resident father, like Anna's and David's fathers, lived locally. In contrast to Anna and David, Charley only had occasional, accidental contact with him. This was similar to some young people in Cockett and Tripp's (1994:45) study. The casual nature of this contact is captured by the following account:

Last time I saw 'im (natural father) was ... well, ages ago. My auntie .. needed some petrol one day, so we stopped at this garage and 'e was there ... 'E just asked me 'ow my mum was and I said, 'Alright,' and ... that was all that 'e said really. (Interview, January, 1997)

According to Charley, the amount of contact Charley had with his father had diminished over time. Charley described how, immediately after his father had left, Charley used to see him several times a week (Interview, April, 1997). However, whilst there may have been a discrepancy between what Charley said and what Charley felt, he never indicated any wish for more regular contact with his natural father.

Three young people in reordered nuclear families, Leanne, Fiona, and Louise, described their relationships with their non-resident natural fathers in explicitly negative terms. Louise's accounts conveyed the most negative feelings towards a natural non-resident parent. The following underlines Louise's antagonism towards her natural father:

We used to 'ave to go and see my old dad every Saturday, an' I got in the car with 'im, an' I just wouldn't go with 'im. Something said, 'No, don't go,' so I started kickin' the door in, an' e' let me out. An' he had gave me

this present for my birthday and I 'ated 'im so much I took it 'ome an' put it in the bin... It was a pair of earrings 'an it said like, 'To my daughter,' an' I said, 'No.' (Interview, January, 1997)

The intensity of Louise's feelings is underlined by how she both threw away his birthday present to her and explicitly denied any father-daughter relationship. According to Louise, at the time of fieldwork, she had no contact with her natural father, and explicitly said that she did not want to see him again (Interview, January, 1997). It is likely that Louise's feelings were related to her father's violence towards Louise's family, as described in section 4.3.1.

Leanne and Fiona expressed very different feelings to Louise about their natural fathers. As in Mitchell's (1985) study, both Leanne and Fiona were dissatisfied with the amount of contact they had with their natural fathers, though the frequency of their contact with their natural fathers differed. Leanne's father lived in Castletown, and she saw him once every two weeks, and Fiona's father lived in Wales, and she saw him much more intermittently. Whilst Fiona described how her father had, on various occasions, let her and her older sister down about promised visits (Interview, April, 1997), Leanne described how her father had reduced the amount of contact time with her, from once a week to once every two weeks. When Leanne expressed a wish to see him more frequently, her father apparently underlined his need for space (Interview, April, 1997). Walczak and Burns (1984), in contrast, highlight the importance of the child having a say in access arrangements.

Mitchell (1985) and Walczak and Burns (1984) link children's dissatisfaction with contact arrangements in part to not feeling loved by the non-resident parent. Similarly, Fiona's and Leanne's accounts conveyed that the girls felt they did not get their need for love met by their non-resident fathers. This is suggested by the following extract:

Leanne: (in conversation about her natural father) I feel I need a touch more bit of loving ... just to be able to be with him a bit more, just me and my dad. I think like 'cos I haven't sort of like cuddled him for like a long, long time, and I feel that if we had a bit of a cuddle sometimes, I'd maybe feel a bit happier about our relationship.

CH: When did you last have a cuddle?

Leanne: I honestly can't remember (in a regretful tone). Maybe about a year ago. (Interview, April, 1997).

Both Leanne and Fiona emphasized, on various occasions, how they felt unable to communicate with their non-resident natural fathers. Fiona, for example, described how her 'ears sort of block(ed) up' (Interview, January, 1997) when she spoke to her father, so that she could not hear what he said.

As argued in chapter two, some research (eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Morrow, 1998) highlights children's coping strategies as a potentially protective factor in mediating children's adaptation to family reordering. To a certain extent, both Fiona and Leanne developed coping strategies to help them manage their relationships with their non-resident natural fathers. Fiona had increasingly learnt to adopt a fatalistic approach to her father. For instance, when telling me about a recent experience of being let down, Fiona said:

I knew it would happen, based on experience ... He's always been the same. I've become much more aware that he's unreliable. (Interview, April, 1997)

Leanne's case is interesting in how she very consciously developed coping strategies to manage her non-resident natural father. In contrast to Fiona, Leanne learnt to express her own wishes more assertively to her non-resident natural father. In the dispute over maintenance payments touched on in 3.3.1.6, Leanne resolved to speak her viewpoint to her father:

I think I am going to be a bit more strong about telling him straight out, so he is going to know (said with great feeling), 'cos that's what I'm workin' on at the moment. (Interview, April, 1997)

In an interview two weeks later, Leanne was very proud of herself for speaking her mind to her father:

I couldn't believe I'd actually said it, and at first it was, 'Oh no, I've said it!' but I feel it's much easier to say something now. (Interview, May, 1997)

This is not dissimilar to Walczak and Burns' (1984) findings that some research subjects highlighted increased emotional maturity and understanding of interpersonal relationships, as a result of their experience of family reordering. Leanne also affirms Moore's (1996) point that children are not merely passive recipients of family structure.

The above illustrates that perceptions of a positive relationship with a non-resident natural parent are not necessarily contingent upon regular face to face contact and that relationships can change over time. Stacey's example of a positive development of a relationship is in interesting contrast to what the literature reports as the usual reduction in contact over time. Louise and, probably, Charley, illustrate that not all young people want contact with their non-resident natural parent. Louise's case illustrates the potential link between hostile feelings towards a non-resident parent and the non-resident parent's previous violence. Leanne and Fiona illustrate the importance for young people of being able to express their needs and wishes to the non-resident parent, and of feeling loved by the non-resident parent. Leanne and Fiona also illustrate that some young people can develop coping strategies to manage family problems. The above exemplifies how, although these young people in reordered families all had a non-resident natural parent, there was considerable variation in accounts of relationships, both in terms of contact time and perceived quality of the relationship.

4.3.4. The Resident Step-Parent.

As discussed in chapter two, David (1998) argues that children in reordered families can experience positive relationships with step-parents. Edwards et al. (1999) go further, and suggest that, in some cases, caring relationships between children and step-parents can be more significant for children than unsatisfactory relationships with biological parents.

Whilst all the young people in reordered families, except for Lizbeth, had a resident step-parent, accounts of relationships with the resident step-parent varied. Anna's, Leanne's and David's accounts of their relationships with their resident step-parents affirmed David's (1998) and Edwards et al.'s (1999) findings above. It is likely that there was a link between positive perceptions of relationships and the activities David, Anna and Leanne shared with their step-fathers. This differs from Morrow's (1998) study of children's experience of family, which suggested that only boys emphasized shared activities in their accounts of their relationships with parents.

Anna enjoyed going sailing regularly with her step-father. In describing a sailing holiday the family shared together, Anna emphasized her mother's fear of sailing. Anna was apparently in charge of the boat with her step-father. In Anna's account of this, both her pride at managing the boat with her step-father, and her sense of togetherness with him in doing this stood out (Interview, February, 1997).

In turn, Leanne enjoyed playing squash on a weekly basis with her step-father. Leanne's account of family also revealed that her step-father was demonstrative towards her. When describing the quarrel over Leanne's natural father's maintenance payments, discussed previously, Leanne stressed how her step-father had been caring when she was upset:

So what I did was went into the bathroom and started crying so I didn't make any noise or anything, and then Paul (her step-father) heard me crying. Paul said, 'Come out of the bathroom,' and so I just came out and he just cuddled me (Interview, April, 1997).

In contrast, Leanne said she shared no private time with her natural non-resident father, because Leanne's half-brothers were always there. Second, Leanne did not think her natural father showed her much affection. It is interesting here, that the cuddle demonstrated to Leanne that her step-father cared about her, whereas, as illustrated in section 4.3.3, the absence of a cuddle indicated to Leanne her natural father's emotional distance from her.

David appeared particularly keen on the regular games of snooker he shared with his step-father (Interview, January, 1997). David also emphasized how his step-father was directly involved in his life; for instance:

My step-dad takes me to football trainin' and helps me when I have to get things for teams and stuff. (Interview, April, 1997)

David's positive perception of his relationship with his resident step-father particularly stands out when set against David's distress about his natural parents' break-up and the recent nature of his parents' separation, as discussed earlier this chapter. Because of his distress about his parents' separation, David could have felt antagonistic towards his resident step-father.

Fiona's account revealed no shared activities with her step-father. At the same time, Fiona appeared to accept her step-father's presence, even though Fiona frequently referred to arguments with her step-father over household issues such as hanging up the shower head after use and walking the dog (Interview, April, 1997).

There were shifts in Charley's, Louise's and Stacey's attitudes to resident step-parents. Charley, in the early part of fieldwork, appeared to accept his step-father as a parent. Charley expressed a largely instrumental view of his step-father. Morrow's (1998) research emphasizes how some of the younger children (8-9 years old) viewed parents as providers. This was the case with Charley:

My mum's boyfriend's like a real dad, 'cos he's been here seven or eight years, probably exactly the same, 'cos if your shoes get ruined your real dad'd buy you some. So does he, and he buys us a new coat now and again if you need it. He takes care of the family. (Interview, April, 1997)

However, Charley seemed unperturbed by his step-father's departure, when, according to Charley, his mother threw his step-father out on discovering he was having an affair (Interview, July, 1997).

Louise's views altered about her mother's two resident partners. In January, 1997, Louise said that she viewed her step-father as her father. Like Charley, Louise emphasized his role as provider:

I'd call my real dad 'John', 'cos that's 'is name, and I call my step-dad 'Dad', 'cos I say, Dad is the person looks after you and keeps the roof over your 'ead. (Interview, January, 1997)

However, in the same interview, Louise was explicit about her wish for her step-father to leave home; indeed, Louise had even talked to her step-father about this, though he did not share her views:

I said to 'im, 'Dad, if you move out, you could move somewhere close, and it'd be better.' But 'e doesn't understand it like that.

This shows how feelings can be mixed; contradictory emotions can co-exist. Over the fieldwork, until her step-father's departure in April, 1997, Louise became increasingly hostile towards his presence in the house. Immediately after his departure, Louise was convinced that her mother would not let the man she had been seeing for some time move in. However, he did move in, apparently without Louise being informed beforehand:

It was Saturday. In the mornin' I ... came downstairs and there 'e (her mother's boyfriend) was bringin' these boxes in. I said, 'Oh, are you movin' in?' And 'e said, 'Yeh. Come and 'elp.' So I thought I just might as well help. (Interview, April, 1997)

Because Louise felt she had not been consulted, and because she thought that her mother had broken promises about not having another man living with them, Louise initially felt antagonistic towards her mother's partner. During this time, Louise frequently made comments such as:

My mum's boyfriend's got 'is views and 'is views do my 'ead in.
(Interview, June, 1997)

By Christmas, 1997, Louise referred to her mother's new partner not as her 'boyfriend', but as 'Dad', and to her mother and her resident partner as 'my parents'. This mirrored Louise's account of the development of her relationship with her step-father who lived with the family until April, 1997. In Louise's first interview, in January, 1997, she described how, at first, she did not call this step-father by any name. Then:

I used to call him 'Daddy Stevey' (Steve was her step-father's name) 'cos I was like so wary. And then one day I just come out with it. I just said, 'Right, Dad,' and 'e like ... (imitates a very surprised facial expression).

In both cases, it is likely that the shift in names reflects the growth of Louise's acceptance of her mother's partners, particularly as, in contrast, she would not call her natural father 'Dad'. It has been illustrated in 4.3.3 how Louise apparently denied her father-daughter relationship with her natural father.

In contrast to Louise, Stacey's view of her resident step-mother deteriorated over fieldwork. In Stacey's first interview, in January, 1997, their relationship appeared positive and stable. Stacey's mother's visit from the States coincided with when Stacey started to express negative feelings towards her step-mother. Stacey, however, did not appear to associate her deteriorating relationship with her resident step-mother with

positive developments in her relationship with her natural non-resident mother, as discussed in section 4.3.3. Near the beginning of her natural mother's visit, Stacey said:

I had a little daydream the other day saying, 'I wish my mum hadn't left, but that we'd met Viv (Stacey's step-mother) and that she was our friend and we'd met Aaron and Jim, my step-brothers, and that we hang about with them like we do now, but that our mum was still our mum.'
(Interview, April, 1997)

After her mother's visit, Stacey's accounts expressed increasing hostility towards her resident step-mother. This hostility culminated in the row over the burnt frying pan, described in chapter two, and which will be discussed further in chapter seven. Stacey did not acknowledge any alteration in her feelings about her resident step-mother; she apparently forgot that she had ever described their relationship in positive terms. Louise's and Stacey's accounts indicate that, like the example of Stacey's relationship with her natural mother, feelings can alter over time.

Martin, was unwavering in the venom he expressed towards his resident step-father. Martin frequently made comments such as:

He's not a dad. He's just a piece of shit. (Interview, February, 1997)

Martin's step-father, who had been with the family since Martin was very young, apparently was physically abusive to him. During the spring term, 1997, Martin's step-father threw Martin out of home and sent him to Social Services. They were temporarily reconciled, but, by December, 1997, Martin was in foster care. Like Louise's feelings about her violent natural father, it is likely that there was a relationship between Martin's step-father's violence and the degree of Martin's hostility to his step-father.

All the young people in reordered nuclear families, except for Lizbeth, had a resident step-parent. However, the discussion above highlights both the divergence in these young

people's feelings about resident step-parents, which ranged from positive to hostile, and, in some cases, how their feelings altered over fieldwork. The importance of shared activities in young people's perceptions of positive relationships with resident step-parents stood out.

4.3.5. The Non-Resident Step-Parent.

Some, though not all, of the young people in reordered nuclear families had experienced the repartnering of their non-resident natural parent. As discussed earlier this chapter, Louise did not know where her natural father was. Martin never referred to his natural father. Charley had very little contact with his natural father, and was unclear about his natural father's circumstances. Because Stacey's mother lived in the States, Stacey had not met her mother's partner, at the time of fieldwork. David's father had not, according to David, repartnered since the family break up.

Fiona, Leanne and Anna, in contrast, had non-resident step-mothers with whom they had direct contact. However, their feelings towards their fathers' second wives differed; Fiona was hostile, Leanne was more ambivalent, whilst Anna appeared to have a good relationship with her father's second wife. Fiona linked her antagonism towards her father's second wife, to her perception that her father's wife restricted the contact Fiona's father had with his children from his first marriage (Interview, February, 1997). Furthermore, on what were, in Fiona's view, the limited occasions when she stayed with her father, Fiona claimed his wife made her feel an 'outcast' (Interview, February, 1997).

Leanne's response to her step-mother was more mixed. After Leanne had spoken her opinion to her non-resident father, in the family row over maintenance described in 4.3.3, she reported in interview:

My step-mother wasn't there, thank goodness. I said to my dad, 'I've got nothing against her, but it's none of her business.' (May, 1997)

Leanne was critical of her non-resident step-mother for slamming the phone down on Leanne's resident step-father, during the dispute over maintenance payments. Even though Leanne's accounts conveyed none of the resentment which permeated Fiona's accounts of her non-resident step-mother, Leanne said that she always preferred visiting her father when her step-mother was at work. Nevertheless, apart from the above, Leanne, unlike Fiona, seldom mentioned her non-resident step-mother; because Leanne talked in detail about other aspects of family which distressed her, this suggests that Leanne was probably not unduly preoccupied with her non-resident step-mother.

Anna's relationship with her non-resident step-mother, Gertie, was in sharp contrast to the above. As described in 4.3.3, Anna had weekly contact with her natural father and his second wife. Anna had also been on holiday with them (Interview, February, 1997). In her accounts of family, Anna expressed no hint of resentment towards her non-resident step-mother. Indeed, in the argument referred to earlier this chapter, about Anna and her brother staying the night at Anna's father's, Anna acknowledged Gertie's viewpoint:

My mum thinks Gertie's really selfish, but she's (Gertie) never had kids, ... and it was really difficult for her to come here 'cos they (Anna's father and Gertie) like met in a foreign country and they weren't married or anything an' I was five and my brother was eight. (Interview, February, 1997)

Some of the literature highlights how, in the process of family reordering, children can be drawn directly into family conflict (eg Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Cockett and Tripp, 1994). In contrast, Anna refused to be drawn by her mother into taking her mother's side against Gertie. This, however, resulted in what for Anna was a slightly uneasy compromise. She was not directly involved in, yet not completely disengaged from, the conflict:

I don't wanna say I don't like Gertie, because I do. I get along with her, and I don't wanna go against my mum, so I just get caught in the middle. (Interview, January, 1997)

Section 4.3 has considered the experience of reordering of young people in reordered nuclear families, in terms of the break-up itself, the conflict after family reordering, and relationships with the non-resident natural parent, the resident step-parent and the non-resident step-parent. It has been illustrated that there existed considerable diversity in experience of the each of the above. Given that such diversity in reported experience existed among the young people in reordered nuclear families, this raises questions about the extent to which categorizing experience of family reordering according to family structure accurately reflects the individual nature of the young people's experience.

4.4. Experience of Single -Parent Families

4.4.1. Young People in Single-Parent Families.

In section 4.2.3, it was discussed how, whilst 15 young people in total had some experience of living in a single-parent family, four young people (Sara, Tim, Colin and Helen) were in a single-parent family at time one. During fieldwork, two young people, Johnny and Charley, moved into a single-parent family, whilst Louise experienced a brief period in a single-parent family. This underlines the transitional nature of the single-parent family and raises questions about whether, if the category of single-parent family is used to group children's experience, it needs breaking down into, for example, short or long-term experience of a single-parent family. It may be that the experience of children living temporarily in a single-parent family cannot be grouped with children living long term in a single-parent family.

Section 4.4 will principally use the accounts of Sara, Tim and Colin. Helen will not be discussed, because her mother did not allow her to be interviewed. Sara, Tim and Colin had, coincidentally, not experienced the transition from single-parent to reordered

nuclear family. Charley's, Louise's and Johnny's experience of a single-parent family will also be drawn upon. Section 4.4.6, on living with a single-parent, will use the insights of young people in reordered nuclear families about their experience of a single-parent family, as well as those of young people in single-parent families at the time of fieldwork.

The young people in single-parent families highlighted similar issues in their accounts of family reordering to the young people in reordered nuclear families: the break-up itself, conflict after family reordering and relationships with the non-resident parent and the non-resident step-parent. Because these areas have been related to the academic literature in section 4.3, references to the literature will not be repeated in section 4.4.

4.4.2 The Family Break-Up and Single-Parent Families.

As with the young people in reordered nuclear families, the length of time since the natural parents' break-up varied. Tim could not remember if his father had ever lived with him. Sara had been in a single-parent family for two years, at the start of fieldwork. Colin's father had left the year before fieldwork began. As already indicated, Johnny's father and Charley's and Louise's step-fathers left during fieldwork.

As discussed in chapter two, some research highlights the importance of communication within the family, of both parents talking through the family reordering with their children, before the break-up itself (eg Rodgers and Pryor, 1998; Walczak and Burns, 1984). The literature also emphasizes how children's accounts suggest this often does not occur (Walczak and Burns, 1984; Mitchell, 1985; Cockett and Tripp, 1994). Colin's and Johnny's accounts stress that they had had little preparation for the family break-up. Furthermore, even though Colin's parents had apparently been arguing for a long time, Colin said that he was shocked when his father left (Interview, January, 1997). Johnny also said that he was unprepared for his father's departure. Birthdays are usually special occasions. However, according to Johnny, his father left without warning on Johnny's

fourteenth birthday. Unsurprisingly, Johnny said that this was a birthday he would not forget (Interview, December, 1997).

It was Sara who was particularly shocked by the suddenness of the family reordering. Sara differed from the other young people in single-parent families, in that her family was single-parent through bereavement. Sara's father died suddenly of a heart attack when, according to Sara, the family had just moved to South Africa. Sara's father's death was particularly shocking for Sara because she saw it:

My dad was racin' speedway... We was watchin' 'im race and 'e just fell off 'is bike, in the middle. I knew, I knew 'e was dead straight away... Then I found two rand. That's the money over there an' it's supposed to be lucky. I just went mental. I threw it over this wall. I didn't think anything could be lucky no more. (Interview, January, 1997)

Sara's action of throwing the 'lucky' money away and the extreme negativity of the last sentence emphasize her sudden distress.

The accounts of young people in single-parent families, like those of young people in reordered nuclear families, differed in the extent to which they highlighted the existence of family conflict before the reordering. Tim's accounts suggested he was unclear about whether his parents had ever lived together, and he did not pinpoint any conflict between his natural parents. Colin, in contrast, highlighted how unpleasant he had found his parents' arguments:

It (his parents splitting up) was better them being friends 'cos when they was together all they ever done was fight (long pause). The arguments wasn't exciting or anything. They was horrible (with great expression). (Interview, January, 1997)

Elliott and Richards (1991) stress that in families which are single-parent through bereavement, the child can idealize the dead parent. It is perhaps unsurprising that Sara's accounts of family both did not reveal any conflict between her parents and also

demonstrated her idealization of her father and of family life when he was alive. Sara stressed, for instance, how close the family was, how well her parents got on, how close Sara was to her father, and the activities that the family shared and that, in particular, Sara shared with her father (Interview, February, 1997).

As with young people in reordered nuclear families, there was variation in the experience of family break-up of young people in single-parent families, in the length of time since separation, the cause of living in a single-parent family, and the degree of family conflict experienced before the break-up. Interestingly, what stood out in these accounts was their shock at the change in family structure.

4.4.3. Conflict after Family Reordering.

Like the young people in reordered nuclear families, the young people in single-parent families varied in their reports of conflict after family reordering. Sara's account emphasized how her father's death triggered a period of difficult relations between Sara and her mother. On a number of occasions, Sara emphasized how she could not manage her mother's grief, as when she said:

Like now, you know, she (Sara's mother) gets upset about my dad and starts cryin'. I go upstairs. I just can't handle it. You know, 'cos I just don't want to be part of it. An' if I'm thinkin about my dad, I won't say anythin', keep it to myself. (Interview, April, 1997)

Whilst the literature (eg Mitchell, 1985) stresses that parents can make emotional demands on children after family reordering, Sara had resisted this. However, there was not merely a distance between Sara and her mother, as presented above. Sara's accounts revealed intense disputes between them, in which, according to Sara, she was taking out on her mother the death of her father.

I was sayin' anythin' to piss her off. An' I was doin' stuff to piss her off.
(Interview, June, 1997)

In Sara's view, the conflict between them was especially intense, because Sara was upset by her mother's affair with Sara's uncle, who was her father's brother. According to Sara's accounts, she discovered the affair when she found her mother and uncle in bed together, in her home. When describing this in interview, Sara shivered and exclaimed, 'Ugh!'; this underlined the distressing impact of the discovery on Sara. The comment below suggests how Sara linked her mother's affair with her father and, implicitly, her father's death:

I used to be really, really horrible to my mum about it, and say, 'You said that you loved my dad, but you can't have done. You must have fancied my uncle all the time.' (Interview, April, 1997)

Furthermore, according to Sara, part of her retaliation for her mother's affair was to become sexually active herself:

... I lost my virginity to get back at my mum for having sex with my uncle.
(Interview, April, 1997)

Sara may have too starkly dichotomized family life before and after her father's death. However, her case underlines how an intricate web of different strands of conflict can interweave after a change in family structure.

Colin, in contrast, said that family conflict had been reduced after the family reordering (Interview, January, 1997). In Tim's case, the only quarrels he described which were related to family reordering apparently occurred when Tim misbehaved. On these occasions, according to Tim, his mother would threaten him with being sent to live with his natural father:

Tim: I'm grounded. My mum's threatened that I'll live with my dad.

CH: Does your mum mean it?

Tim: I ain't got a clue ... This time I think she means it. (Interview, January, 1997)

The contrasts in Tim's, Sara's and Colin's accounts of post-reordering family conflict underline further the diversity of experience of family among young people in single-parent families. Sara's case underlines a potentially complex web of conflict related to family reordering.

4.4.4. Relationships with the Non-Resident Parent.

Whilst Sara did not have a non-resident parent, Colin visited his natural non-resident father three times a week (Interview, January, 1997), though his enthusiasm for doing so decreased over the course of fieldwork (Interview, December, 1997). Johnny said that he saw his non-resident father every day (Interview, December, 1997). Tim, in contrast, said in his first interview that he could only remember seeing his natural father on a few occasions, over the course of his life (January, 1997). There were similarities between the first time Tim remembered meeting his natural father, and Stacey's account, referred to in section 4.3.3, of meeting her non-resident natural mother when she was eight. Tim, like Stacey, stressed his surprise and also his difficulty in talking to his father:

I couldn't believe he was my dad at first. I thought 'e was one of my mum's friends. I couldn't really talk to him (Interview, January, 1997).

In a later interview (April, 1997), Tim revealed that there were issues related to his father that he wanted to resolve. Tim's father had, apparently, visited Tim's home two weekends before this interview:

I asked 'im (Tim's father), 'Why weren't you there?' My mum hadn't said why 'e walked out. 'E doesn't know why 'e walked out. Said 'e 'ad too many kids anyway... Tough if my dad minded me asking - it was a fair question. I'd have liked to ask 'im why 'e came back.

Even though, during fieldwork, Tim expressed no wish to have direct contact with his father, the above emphasizes how Tim needed to develop an explanation of the family reordering.

The young people in single-parent families differed, not only in the amount of contact they had with the non-resident natural parent, but also in the extent to which they indicated they had unanswered questions about the break-up. Furthermore, whilst the example of two young people in reordered nuclear families, Anna and Fiona, discussed earlier this chapter, indicated their need to develop an account of events leading to reordering, Tim further highlights this point. Tim voiced unanswered questions years after the reordering.

4.4.5. Relationships with the Non-Resident Step-Parent.

Not all young people in single-parent families had a non-resident step-parent. Tim and Johnny said that their fathers were not living with anyone. In contrast, Colin said that his natural father was living with a woman (Jane) for whom he had left Colin's family. Though Colin stressed his surprise when told about his father's involvement with Jane, particularly as he had considered her a friend, Colin frequently expressed positive feelings about Jane. In the early part of fieldwork, Colin stressed how much he enjoyed outings with his father, his younger brother, Jane and Jane's son, and linked his enjoyment to the fact that Jane always bought them treats (Interview, April, 1997).

Charley's step-father, like Colin's father, left home because he was having an affair. However, Colin's and Charley's family situations differed. In contrast to Colin's father, Charley's step-father went to live with his mother, not his lover, though he apparently continued seeing his lover. Charley, in contrast to Colin, did not mention any interaction between himself and his step-father's lover. As with the young people in reordered

nuclear families, there was variation in experience of a non-resident step-parent amongst students in single-parent families.

4.4.6. Living with One Adult.

Though all the young people who were in single-parent families during fieldwork, or who lived in a single-parent family before moving into a reordered nuclear family, had lived with only one adult, accounts of life with one adult varied. This section will use the accounts of four young people, David, Sara, Leanne and Louise, to illustrate the diversity in responses to living in a single-parent family.

David did not talk in detail of the period when he lived with his mother, before his step-father moved in. David's account did suggest, however, that, as far as possible, he dealt with the situation by avoidance:

It (living with just his mother) was alright 'cos a lot of the time I weren't there, 'cos it was like round the summer holidays, so I was out with Garry and Tom. (Interview, January, 1997)

In contrast, Sara talked frequently and in detail of her feelings about being in single-parent family. Sara's responses to her family structure were mixed, though her prevailing emotion was dislike for her family structure. As discussed in chapter two, considerable research evidence underlines the financial disadvantages associated with family reordering, above all, in single-parent families (eg Walczak and Burns, 1984; Elliott and Richards, 1991; Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Sweeting et al., 1999). Some research highlights altered socioeconomic status as potentially the most important factor mediating young people's response to family break-up. Walczak and Burns (1984) underline how young people's perceptions of family finances may differ, within the same family, and that adolescents are particularly likely to feel affected by lack of money. Whilst the other young people in the sample did not usually focus on the topic of money,

Sara frequently mentioned the financial problems she associated with having one parent. When talking about money, Sara often repeated the phrase, ‘ ‘Cos it’s like a one-parent family.’ In an early HHC lesson, Sara told me her mother could not afford to take a job with longer hours than her part-time cleaning job, because:

... she’d lose her benefits, ‘cos it’s like a one-parent family. (Research Log, 25.11.96.)

Sara repeated the same phrase, when describing how her mother could not afford to buy Sara cigarettes (Interview, January, 1997). Sara came to a later interview distressed, because some of her peers had apparently been mocking her trainers. Sara emphasized how her mother could not afford to buy her brand names, again repeating, ‘ ‘Cos it’s like a one-parent family.’ (Interview, April, 1997)

Sara viewed a single-parent family as only partially complete, saying, for instance, that her family was not a ‘full’ family or a ‘normal’ family (Interview, April, 1997). Throughout fieldwork, Sara stressed how close she had been to her father, in comparison to her mother. Sara’s shock at her father’s death and her subsequent conflict with her mother have been described earlier in this chapter. At the same time, Sara’s accounts of family suggested that, to some extent, she had come to terms with living with just one parent. The following exemplifies how feelings can alter over time:

I’m still really upset by it (her father’s death), but not like as much as I was. Before I used to be, you know, ‘Oh it’s my thirteenth birthday and my dad’s not here (mimics a distressed, helpless tone).’ You know. But now it’s more, ‘Oh I wish he was still here, you know, but there’s nothing much I can do about it.’ (Interview, April, 1997)

There were also contradictions in Sara’s feelings about her mother. In spite of frequently affirming how close her relationship with her father had been, in comparison to her relationship with her mother, Sara acted considerately to her mother. For instance, some weeks before Mother’s Day, Sara described in detail and with great pride how she was

going to give her mother a cafetiere, which apparently her mother had wanted for a long time. Sara had planned carefully details such as how she was going to give her mother the present, to maximize her mother's pleasure (Interview, February, 1997).

Although Sara talked frequently and at length about missing her father, she also perceived that there were advantages in terms of the freedom she was allowed, in living in a single-parent family:

It's (being in a single-parent family) like different, 'cos I can do more stuff, and not get a bollocking (Interview, April, 1997).

Whilst Sara's feelings about living in a single-parent family and her relationship with her mother were mixed, they were, on the whole, negative.

In contrast to Sara's and David's accounts, Leanne's account of her earlier experience of life in a single-parent family, before her mother married her step-father, emphasized the closeness of and the love within the family unit consisting of Leanne, her mother and her older sister:

Being close in a family is really important, 'cos I can speak very easily to my mum. She's really the only person I can really talk to and my older sister, because when I was younger it was just the three of us and it was just the three of us for quite a few years so I can speak very openly to my mum. (Interview, January, 1998)

Leanne described her fear that, in moving from a single-parent into a reordered nuclear family, she would receive less love:

At the beginning I didn't really like him (her step-father), because I thought that I wasn't going to get as much love, but then a few months after the wedding I realized that ... I was actually getting more because there was Paul (her step-father). (Interview, April, 1997)

In spite of the fact that Leanne's fears apparently proved unfounded, Leanne's account stresses how young people can perceive advantages in living in a single-parent family.

A range of tensions in Louise's family related to family reordering have been described earlier in this chapter. Chapter seven will discuss Louise's perception of how, in her opinion, she externalized her experience of family tensions at school. However, Louise's accounts of the brief period during the summer term, 1997, after her step-father moved out and before her mother's next partner moved in, suggest that she preferred living in a female-headed single-parent family to a two parent family. Louise relished how, in her perception, she was treated as an equal by her mother. As discussed in chapter two, some parents in reordered families in Cockett and Tripp's (1994:30) study felt that, through family break-up, their children had been pushed into roles demanding premature maturity. However, Louise's accounts of family reveal that, like some of Mitchell's (1985) respondents, she valued the adult relationship she perceived that she shared with her mother during this transitional single-parent phase. Louise apparently enjoyed aspects of her responsibilities at home, such as looking after the house and family with her mother, and making arrangements for child-care. According to Louise, they shared 'adult' conversations, as in the following extract from Louise's account of a long conversation in which they comment derogatorily on men:

I know more about men than most people, 'cos my mum talks to me about men. She says, 'What are men?' I say, I'm allowed to say this word about men, 'W-a-n-k-e-r-s' (spells it out). And she asks me, 'What do you want 'em for?' And I go, 'Their money.' An' she goes, 'Yep.' And she tells me like how to treat men. You're meant to treat men like they're gonna treat you ... (Interview, April, 1997).

Whilst Louise perceived that her mother treated her as an adult during this period, the above reveals an adult-child dimension to their relationship. Louise needs permission to use the word 'wanker' and is childlike in the way she spells it out. Furthermore, Louise's

mother leads the conversation, instructing her daughter in how to deal with men. This suggests that that their relationship was not as egalitarian as Louise perceived it to be.

Although the single-parent family structure is obviously distinctive in that there is only one resident adult, young people's responses to living with one adult ranged from positive to negative. Furthermore, certain points stand out in particular in the discussion above. Sara's case highlights, first, the potentially complex range of feelings a young person may have about a single parent and, second, how greater acceptance of loss can develop over time. Louise and Leanne underline how young people can have very positive perceptions of life in a single-parent family. The evidence from this data set emphasizes that derogatory stereotyping of single-parent family life belies the experience of some young people of single-parent family life.

4.5. Similarities in Experience of Reordering Across Reordered Nuclear and Single-Parent Families.

Whilst there was a diversity of experience of reordering within the categories of reordered nuclear and single-parent families, there were also similarities in experience of reordering, across the two categories. First, as the section headings in 4.3 and 4.4 indicate, the same broad areas arose in the accounts of young people in both categories. Second, all the young people in reordered nuclear families except for Lizbeth had experienced living in a single-parent family. The extent to which their experience of family reordering can be viewed as distinct from that of young people in single-parent families is, as discussed in section 4.2.3, questionable.

Third, within each of the areas of family reordering explored, similar strands were developed by young people in both categories of family structure. For example, young people in both reordered nuclear and single-parent families revealed that responses to family conflict were varied, that conflict took a variety of forms, and that conflict was instigated by a range of issues. For instance, young people in both categories of family

structure revealed that their amount of contact with and their feelings about the non-resident parent varied. These points suggest that experience of family reordering is comparable across the two family structures, and so, raise questions about the usefulness of distinct categories as a way of grouping young people's experience of reordering.

4. 6. The Experience of Family Reordering of Young People in Intact Nuclear Families.

The academic literature on family structure tends not to consider the extent to which young people in intact nuclear families have some experience of family reordering (eg Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Mitchell, 1985). In contrast, this section will argue that, while no young person in the intact nuclear category in January, 1997 had experienced the permanent separation of his/her parents, all young people in intact nuclear families had some experience, whether vicarious or direct, of family reordering.

Julie and Rebecca had experienced the temporary separation of their parents. Rebecca's mother had left the family for a period on two previous occasions. Julie's father had left home for about a year, when she was 11. As discussed in chapter two, academics such as Walczak and Burns (1984), Mitchell (1985) and Rodgers and Pryor (1998) emphasize the importance for children's adaptation of clear explanation about the separation, at the time of separation. In her account of her father's departure from home, however, Julie focused both on the suddenness of the departure and on the abruptness of the explanation she received:

I was surprised when they split up, because I didn't even know they were havin' a bad time... I was ... polishin' the telly and my mum said, 'Don't worry. You don't have to do the polishin' today. Your dad's left.'
(Interview, April, 1997)

Julie's shock at her father's departure is not dissimilar to the surprise described by some students in reordered families when a parent left.

Like some young people in reordered families, Julie also had direct experience of the temporary repartnering of her parents during the year her father was not living at home. Her mother's boyfriend frequently visited the family home, whilst her father apparently was seeing someone who lived opposite the family home. Julie experienced a mixture of emotions towards her mother's boyfriend:

'E was really nice to us. Bought us everything... But I remember writing in my diary that 'e was just like so full of himself ... I read that just a while ago. (Interview, April, 1997)

Whilst Julie did not describe why her father returned to live with the family, Julie described how her father had threatened to move out again more recently, during an argument between her parents which apparently occurred just before fieldwork began. Julie explicitly stated how, even though she did not think her father would leave, she nevertheless feared he might do so (Interview, April, 1997). Julie's experience of family reordering not only belonged to the past, but, also, to the recent present. Julie's account of her diary entry, furthermore, stresses how reminders of the past permeated the present.

Rebecca's account, like Julie's, conveyed the suddenness of a parent's departure, the first time her mother left home:

Before when we were really young, she (her mother) went off with someone else for about three months, but then she did come back ... They were arguin' and she just walked out. I thought she was angry with me. I don't know what about, but I just thought she was angry because she'd gone. (Interview, January, 1997)

The above also illustrates the point made by, for example, Rodgers and Pryor (1998), that young children may blame themselves for a parent's departure. For Rebecca, family reordering was not merely an event of the past. On many occasions throughout fieldwork, in informal conversations and in interviews, Rebecca's accounts of family emphasized the extremity of conflict between her parents, whose relationship appeared to teeter on the brink of complete breakdown. The following comment by Rebecca highlights the conflict:

My parents argue about anythin'. I don't think my dad's ever going to talk to her (Rebecca's mother) properly again. They've argued too many times.
(Interview, April, 1997)

Walzak and Burns (1984:53-4) touch on how, in some cases where parental conflict is extreme, the parents' separation can be a relief for children involved. Indeed, because of the degree of family conflict, family reordering was an event Rebecca actively wished to recur. In contrast to Julie, and to her own previous experience of reordering, Rebecca emphasized her wish for her natural father to leave permanently; Rebecca wanted to be in a single-parent family (Interview, April, 1997).

Clare's accounts of family revealed how her mother had walked out temporarily, after arguments with Clare's father, on several occasions. One such occasion was on Clare's sister's birthday (Interview, April, 1997). It has been indicated in discussing Johnny's case that birthdays are usually special family events. This underlines the distress that her mother's temporary departure is likely to have caused Clare. Although Clare's accounts of family did not suggest that conflict between her parents was ongoing or extreme, Clare, like Julie, feared that one of her parents might leave during an argument (Interview, April, 1997). Clare's glimpses of family reordering should therefore not be viewed as completely dissimilar to that of students in reordered families.

For the first part of fieldwork, Danny thought that his parents were his natural parents. However, during the summer term, 1997, Danny's parents told him that he was adopted.

This knowledge altered the perspective of Danny, his friends, and the school on the precise nature of Danny's family structure. Whilst Danny was still in an intact nuclear family in that it was the first marriage of both his parents, it was an unusual intact nuclear family in that his parents were not his natural parents. Danny's responses to his adoption are not known in detail, because it was not possible to interview Danny after he discovered he was adopted.

Malcolm, Lynn and Emma had some associations of family reordering with their own family, either through a parent's childhood, or through members of the extended family. The young people were not explicitly asked about their parents' family structure, when their parents were children. In his first interview, however, Malcolm volunteered the information that his father had grown up in a children's home (Interview, January, 1997). Malcolm, in subsequent interviews, often returned to the subject of his father's childhood, saying that he thought it had been unhappy, even though his father apparently did not talk about it, and even though Malcolm did not know details of his father's life in the children's home.

Lynn's experience of family reordering in the extended family was through her grandparents' divorce, which, according to Lynn, took place in 1995 (Interview, April, 1997). Her experience of family reordering is striking in that it came through two individuals who, it might be assumed, would be more likely to represent traditional family values than the dissolution of marital bonds, because of their roles as grandparents.

Emma, although in an intact nuclear family, had experience of reordering in her extended family; she had an aunt and uncle who had divorced. Emma was critical of the way in which she perceived that her aunt played with her ex-husband's emotions, by, according to Emma, not wanting to be with him, but not letting him establish a life independent of her (Interview, December, 1997). Emma therefore had experience, not only of the structural changes associated with family reordering, but also of the complexities of

interpersonal dynamics which can be associated with reordering, through her extended family.

It is possible that some young people may not have discussed their experience of family reordering. Of the 18 young people in intact nuclear families at time one, at least seven had direct experience of family reordering, either through their immediate or through their extended family. Furthermore, all the young people in intact nuclear families had vicarious experience of family reordering, through their friendship groups which, as will be discussed in chapter six, included students across a range of family structures. Data in this thesis suggest that living in an intact nuclear family is not necessarily synonymous with experiencing an unchanging family structure. Furthermore, although, as discussed in section 4.1, the intact nuclear category was a more stable category than the reordered nuclear and single-parent categories, the evidence in section 4.6 suggests that, experientially, the intact nuclear category was more unstable than the structural evidence of section 4.1 suggests. These points highlight the extent to which the academic literature on family reordering has glossed over the instability of intact nuclear families.

4.7. Conclusions.

This chapter has examined the experience of family reordering of young people in reordered nuclear, single-parent and intact nuclear families. It has argued that, whilst examining young people's experience according to family structure at a particular point in time is, to some extent, arbitrary, it provides a framework from which to examine young people's experience. At the same time, examination of the arbitrariness of categorizing according to family structure underlines that analyses of young people's outcomes and experience of family and schooling according to family structure within the research literature are problematic.

It has been shown that there was a diversity of family structures within 9YLC . This indicates that, amongst the students in 9YLC, the intact nuclear family was not the norm

and, in contrast, that reordered nuclear and single-parent families were not deviant family forms. Examination of changes in the young people's family structures before and during fieldwork emphasizes the fluidity of categories of family structure. The fact that 15 (including Julie and Rebecca) out of the 32 young people in the sample had experienced living in a single-parent family emphasizes the extent to which, within this sample, experience of a single-parent family was, first, normal and, second, often a transitory phase.

Examination of the experience of family reordering of the young people in reordered nuclear and single-parent families revealed that, within each category, there was a diversity in their experience of each aspect of reordering examined. Furthermore, when the experience of reordering of young people in reordered nuclear families was compared with that of young people in single-parent families, it was seen that there were similarities across the two categories of family structures. Both the diversity within each category and the similarities across the two categories raise questions about the extent to which it informs understanding of the young people's experience of reordering to distinguish between the two categories, particularly when, as argued, the categories are in themselves somewhat arbitrary. By distinguishing between the two categories, one is likely to be privileged above the other. The discussion in chapter one of the stereotyping of single-parent families suggests that, in any distinction between categories of family structure, the single-parent category is likely to be stigmatized. In contrast, the chapter has presented evidence that some young people had positive feelings about living in a single-parent family.

The chapter has illustrated that almost half of the young people (7 out of 18) in intact nuclear families had experience of family reordering within their families. The evidence that all young people in intact nuclear families had some experience, whether direct or vicarious, of family reordering underlines how there are overlaps in the experience of family structure of young people in intact nuclear and in reordered families, whether

reordered nuclear or single-parent. This further underlines the point that clear boundaries do not exist between categories of family structure.

Across the family structures, there were insights into issues related to family reordering. It was seen that conflict related to family reordering took a wide variety of forms, particularly after the parents' break-up. Most, though not all, young people found exposure to conflict distressing. In all cases in which an adult in the family was violent, the young person felt hostile towards the adult. There was considerable evidence within the data that young people's feelings towards an adult could change over time; this suggests young people's potential to adapt to changed circumstances. Some young people had been very surprised by their parents' separation. Some had needed to ask unanswered questions, even years after the reordering had taken place. Some young people had felt unable to express their feelings to a parent, and some felt unloved by the non-resident parent. Whilst some of the young people did not have as much contact with the non-resident parent as they would have liked, others did not want to see their non-resident parent. This emphasizes the importance of letting young people express their wishes about contact.

Chapter 5: Family Dynamics.

This chapter will examine the young people's relationships with the following family members: fathers, mothers, siblings and the extended family. The chapter will consider the extent to which young people's accounts revealed associations between family structure and family relationships. Gender will be discussed, where highlighted in the young people's accounts of family relationships. The chapter will conclude by providing a model, Networks of Conflict: Networks of Support, for the young people's experience of family.

The literature on family structure does not tend to consider gender in detail, despite the co-existence of a large body of academic literature on gender. As indicated in chapter two, existing evidence on the gender of the child and family structure is contradictory and inconclusive (Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). Rodgers and Pryor (1998) also make the point that boys and girls may manifest distress differently, but this has not been explored in any detail in British qualitative work on family structure. Furthermore, British literature on family structure has not explored how boys and girls perceive relationships with different family members.

5.1. Family Relationships.

5.1.1. Relationships with Mothers.

Within this sample, all the young people lived with their natural mother, with the exceptions of Stacey, and, for part of fieldwork, Brian and Martin. There was therefore a parallel in the living arrangements of all the young people, whatever their family structure, except for the three above.

Some research on gender considers the extent to which women focus on interpersonal relationships, on connection with others, rather than separation. An interconnected strand within the literature is the extent to which women, more than men, possess qualities such as empathy and caring for others (eg Gilligan, 1982; Rich, 1990; Deaux and Major, 1990; Tannen, 1998; Maltz and Borker, 1999). Within this sample, young people's accounts, across the range of family structures, suggested that they valued communication in their relationships with their mothers.

For example, as Rich (1990) found in her research with girls at Emma Willard School, Clare (intact nuclear) described how she confided in her mother; she told her mother 'secrets' about herself (Interview, December, 1997). Clare, Anna (reordered nuclear) and Fiona (reordered nuclear) explicitly stated that they could talk to their mothers, but not to their fathers, whether natural or step, about relationships with boys. In various interviews, Rebecca (intact nuclear) emphasized how she and her siblings were close to their mother, in contrast to their father whom they perceived as dogmatic and difficult, as the following comment suggests:

We're all close to my mum. I'd like it if my dad left, 'cos we can do stuff better when he's not around. (Interview, May, 1997)

Across all family structures, whilst boys valued communication in their relationships with their mothers, their relationships appeared, on the whole, less close than girls' relationships with their mothers. Some boys highlighted the importance of conversation in their relationships with mothers. Matty (intact nuclear) said he talked more to his mother than to his father (Interview, May, 1997), whilst Malcolm (intact nuclear) described how:

When my mum gets home, we normally have a fag together, and talk over the day. (Interview, April, 1997)

Two boys explicitly talked about how an important aspect of their relationships with their mothers was that their mothers were understanding. Steven (intact nuclear) said that his mother was more understanding than his father and that she was becoming increasingly so (Interview, April, 1997). Charley (reordered nuclear) focused explicitly on his mother's awareness of his feelings:

My mum knows when I'm emotional and how to comfort me. (Interview, April, 1997)

On the whole, girls more than boys tended to show they were aware of their mothers' emotions and needs (Rich, 1990). Within this sample, however, some young people in reordered families (Leanne, David, Charley, Tim, Anna, Fiona, Martin, Louise, Sara) showed particular awareness of their resident mothers' needs and feelings. Leanne, for instance, emphasized her perception of her mother's need for closeness, and related this to her mother's sense of security:

My mum likes that I speak to her, because then she feels a part of me. Like if I didn't speak to her, I don't think she would feel that happy, because she wouldn't feel secure enough. (Interview, April, 1997)

Tim emphasized that he did not want to become like his older brother, because his older brother had apparently upset his mother and exacerbated her thyroid problem, by delinquent behaviour. Whilst this did not mean that Tim might not in his turn upset his mother, it suggests that he was aware of her feelings (Interview, March, 1997). Charley described how, at Christmas, 1996, his family waited to open their presents until his mother had come home from hospital, after giving birth to his baby half-sister on Christmas Eve, because:

... she likes to see us openin' them. She likes to look at our faces, and then she knows that we're happy. (Interview, February, 1997)

Whilst David, as discussed in chapter four, would have preferred his parents to have stayed together, he also described how both his parents were ‘happier’ since they had split up, and how, in turn, that had made him ‘happy’ (Interview, January, 1997).

This empathy may be similar to findings, as discussed in chapter two, that through the experience of family reordering, some research subjects claimed to have developed a better understanding of people and of human relationships (Walczak and Burns, 1984), and that some research subjects claimed to enjoy a closer relationship with the resident parent than before the reordering (Mitchell, 1985).

Being aware of their mothers as people with needs and feelings did not mean, however, that these students would necessarily attempt to meet their mothers’ needs. For example, in chapter four, it was shown how Sara distanced herself from her mother’s grief over Sara’s dead father. Chapter four also illustrated how Anna refused to take her mother’s side against her non-resident step-mother.

The importance of communication in relationships with mothers did not preclude the co-existence of conflict with mothers over, for instance, adolescent boundaries. Conflict with parents over issues such as adolescent boundaries will be considered in 5.2.1.

5.1.2. Relationships with Fathers.

5.1.2.1. Resident Natural Fathers.

Chapter four examined the relationships of young people in reordered families with their natural fathers who, in all cases except Stacey’s and Lizbeth’s, were non-resident. Chapter four showed that some young people in reordered families highlighted problems in their relationships with their natural non-resident father. Burghes (1994) points to the needs for research on how children’s relationships with their fathers change before and after separation. However, it is only a minority of researchers on family structure (eg

Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991) who point out that many children in intact nuclear families may not get the attention they want from their fathers, and that it is not known if fathers in intact nuclear families are more involved in their children's upbringing than non-resident fathers of children in reordered families. The literature underplays potential similarities in fathers' relationships with their children across family structures and, instead, tends to start from the unarticulated assumption that there is a qualitative difference between the relationships of young people in intact nuclear and in reordered families with natural fathers. This section will, in contrast, examine whether, across the family structures, there were similarities in accounts of relationships with fathers.

The girls in intact nuclear families and the two girls, Stacey and Lizbeth, who were in reordered nuclear families with resident natural fathers, presented their relationships with their resident natural fathers as, on the whole, more distant than their relationships with their natural mothers. Clare did not talk about her father a great deal in her interviews, though her accounts suggested they had an amicable relationship:

The best thing about holidays is having a laugh with my dad. (Interview, July, 1997)

However, Clare also explicitly commented that there was a lot about her life that she did not tell her father (Interview, April, 1997).

As discussed in chapter four, Julie had experienced family reordering temporarily, when her natural father left home for a year. Her account of her father suggested that she did not consider that their relationship was close:

I don't really get along with my dad now, but it's got nothing to do with him leaving. It's just that he usually just gives me lifts places, and that's about it. (Interview, April, 1997)

Stacey, Carla's, Clare's and Karen's accounts of their fathers emphasized that their fathers spent a lot of time out at work. According to these girls, when their fathers were at home, they could be grumpy. For example, Karen and Clare highlighted their perception that their fathers were 'stressy' when they were working nights. Stacey presented her resident natural father as uncommunicative, though he may not have been as uncommunicative as she suggests in the following:

My dad's not very easy to talk to. He's usually watching the football or something. (Interview, April, 1997)

Though some girls explicitly highlighted their perception of a lack of communication with their resident natural fathers, this did not appear to upset them. On the whole, boys, like girls, presented their relationships with fathers as less close than their relationships with mothers. However, boys tended to explore the degree of closeness in their relationships with resident natural fathers in less detail than girls. Steven, for example, said of his father, who was training to be a vicar:

My dad's usually just working, or at his religion. (Interview, April, 1997)

Steven appeared unperturbed by his father's absorption in work and did not develop the subject further.

The boys in intact nuclear families who had good relationships with their fathers, like the boys in Morrow's (1998) sample, tended to share activities with them. Andrew, for instance, spoke of how he did the weekly shop with his father and of how, particularly on holiday, he enjoyed going to the pub with his father. Andrew apparently also gave his father moral support in his father's attempts to give up smoking (Interview, January, 1997). Several boys, such as Andrew, Muhammed and Matty, spoke enthusiastically about visiting their fathers at work and sometimes helping them with their jobs. Tom, in

turn, was in a county football team, and was enthusiastic about how his father took him to football training and watched his football matches (Interview, January, 1997).

5.1.2.2. Resident Natural, Non-Resident Natural and Step-Fathers.

There are similarities in the accounts of relationships with natural resident fathers, discussed in 5.1.2.1, and the accounts of relationships with natural non-resident fathers and step-fathers, discussed in chapter four.

As discussed in 4.3.3, whilst there was considerable variation in the young people's perceptions of their relationships with natural non-resident fathers, Anna's and David's relationships appeared most positive. These relationships appeared similar to positive relationships with natural resident fathers, discussed in 5.1.2.1, in that the two young people shared activities with their natural non-resident parents. Chapter four illustrated that positive relationships with step-fathers, such as Leanne's, Anna's and David's, also tended to be based on shared activities. Furthermore, whilst Brian was in care until the summer term, 1997, he visited his natural mother and his step-father every weekend, and his accounts suggested that he valued his relationship with his step-father. Though Brian, unlike Leanne, Anna and David, did not suggest that he spent time alone with his step-father, his accounts revealed enjoyment of regular family activities, such as trips to the ice-rink and watching videos as a family.

The above suggests that the quality of the relationship was more important than the family structure in these young people's perceptions of relationships. On the whole, these young people valued a sense of connection with their fathers, whether natural resident, natural non-resident or step. This tended to be in the form of shared activities rather than in the form of talk and emotional connection, as was more the case with the young people's relationships with mothers.

Across the range of family structures, some young people suggested that their relationships with their fathers, whether natural resident, natural non-resident or step,

lacked a sense of connection. As discussed, this did not appear to bother boys or girls in intact nuclear families, although girls appeared more aware of this disengagement than boys. In contrast, the accounts of some girls in reordered families, as discussed in 4.3.3, highlighted that they were distressed by their natural non-resident father's apparent disengagement. Fiona and Leanne revealed how they were upset by not having the contact they would have liked with their non-resident fathers, and how they felt unloved. Comparison of Leanne's and Fiona's relationships with their natural non-resident fathers and those of some young people with their natural resident fathers or resident step-fathers suggests that the perceived disengagement could occur across the family structures, but that it was likely to be exacerbated by problems in contact arrangements with non-resident fathers.

It is possible that physical abuse within the family may have been under-reported. Three young people, Rebecca (intact nuclear), Louise (reordered nuclear) and Brian (care), said that their natural fathers had been physically abusive towards a member of the family, and Martin (reordered nuclear) highlighted how his resident step-father was physically abusive. Of the young people in the sample, their accounts conveyed most hostility towards a natural father, whether resident or non-resident. Chapter four described the violence of Louise's and Rebecca's natural fathers and Martin's step-father. Brian, in turn, declared vehemently of his non-resident natural father:

I hate my dad. He abused me physically... I don't know where he is and I hope he isn't alive. (Interview, February, 1997)

It would appear that these young people's hostility was linked to their fathers' violence, rather than to their family structure, as they spanned a range of family structures. As discussed in chapter four, although Rebecca's mother had previously left home temporarily and although Rebecca's intact nuclear family was teetering on the point of breakdown throughout fieldwork, Julie (intact nuclear) had also experienced her parents' temporary separation. In contrast to Rebecca, Julie's account of her father did not suggest

that her father had been violent to a family member and did not convey hostility to him. This contrast further suggests that, in these cases, it was probably not the experience of family reordering but the experience of violence which was linked to the young people’s hostility.

5.1.3. Relationships with Siblings.

Table 5.1 illustrates the young people’s sibling networks. The table presents the number of siblings in the immediate family, and each young person’s position in the family. The term ‘resident’ has been used for natural, step or half-siblings who were attached to the student’s immediate family. The term ‘resident’ includes those siblings who were, for instance, away from home at university or college. Non-resident step or half-siblings were attached to the non-resident parent’s immediate family.

Table 5.1. Siblings.

Young Person	Family Structure Time One January 1997	Position in Family	Resident Natural Siblings	Resident Step/Half Siblings	Non-Resident Step/Half Siblings
Andrew	intact nuclear	2 of 2	1 brother		
Steven	intact nuclear	1 of 3	1 brother 1 sister		
Sammy	intact nuclear	3 of 3	2 brothers		
Lynn	intact nuclear	1 of 2	1 brother		
Clare	intact nuclear	2 of 2	1 sister		
Garry	intact nuclear	3 of 3	2 brothers		
Malcolm	intact nuclear	3 of 4	1 brother 2 sisters		
Muhammed	intact nuclear	4 of 6	4 brothers 1 sister		
Laura	intact nuclear	1 of 4	3 sisters		
Karen	intact nuclear	2 of 3	2 sisters		
Rebecca	intact nuclear	3 of 5	2 brothers 2 sisters		
Julie	intact nuclear	1 of 2	1 brother		
Matty	intact nuclear	1 of 1			

Carla	intact nuclear	2 of 2	1 brother		
Emma	intact nuclear	1 of 3	2 sisters		
Tom	intact nuclear	2 of 2	1 sister		
Johnny	intact nuclear	3 of 3	1 brother 1 sister		
Danny	intact nuclear	1 of 1			
Louise	reordered nuclear	1 of 3	1 brother	1 half- brother	not known
Lizbeth	reordered nuclear	1 of 2	1 brother	none	2 half-sisters
Fiona	reordered nuclear	2 of 3	1 sister	1 half-sister	2 step-sisters
Anna	reordered nuclear	2 of 3	1 brother	1 half-sister	none
Leanne	reordered nuclear	4 of 5	1 sister	1 step-sister 1 step-brother 1 half sister	1 step-brother 1 half-brother
David	reordered nuclear	1 of 1			1 step-sister 2 step-brothers
Martin	reordered nuclear	1 of 2		1 half-brother	Not known
Stacey	reordered nuclear	2 of 4	1 brother	2 step-brothers	1 half-sister 2 half-brothers
Charley	reordered nuclear	3 of 6	2 brothers	1 half-brother 2 half-sisters	Not known
Sara	single-parent	1 of 2	1 sister		2 half brothers 1 half-sister
Tim	single-parent	3 of 3	1 sister 1 brother		4 half-sisters 1 half-brother
Colin	single-parent	1 of 2	1 brother		1 step-brother
Helen	single-parent	1 of			Not known
Brian	care	3 of 3	1 brother 1 sister		not known

It has been argued (eg Moore, 1996) that research may have focused on the parent-child relationship, at the expense of recognizing the potential significance of sibling relationships to children. Young people in reordered nuclear families differed from young people in intact nuclear families, in that they potentially had resident step or half-siblings. In contrast to young people in intact nuclear families, young people in reordered

nuclear and single-parent families potentially had non-resident step or half-siblings. Some research (eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994) tends to dwell on the problems children may face in having step-siblings. However, in Morrow's (1998) recent work, a minority of children described positive relationships with step-siblings. As discussed in chapter two, Burgoyne and Clark (1984) argue against the reification of the step-family. This section will assess the extent to which these young people's accounts suggested that relationships with step or half-siblings differed from relationships with natural siblings.

In this sample, the young people tended to express resentment of step or half-siblings when they perceived that a parent was favouring the step or half-sibling. Louise, for instance, frequently expressed jealousy of her younger resident half-brother, Chris. According to Louise, Chris was very spoilt, in comparison to Louise and her natural brother, because he had cystic fibrosis. This perceived favouritism frequently made Louise very angry, as illustrated by the following, which was uttered in a tone of barely suppressed fury, as the climax of a long diatribe against her mother's attitude to Chris:

If Chris said, 'Jump!' my mum would ask, 'How high?' (Interview, April, 1997)

This is similar to Kagan and Lewis' (1996) finding that children with a handicapped sibling can feel that parental attention is focused on the handicapped child.

Martin was extremely resentful of his younger resident half-brother. Martin perceived that his half-brother was privileged by his mother and step-father, whilst Martin apparently was grounded indefinitely during fieldwork and expected to do a lot of housework (Interview, April, 1997).

However, jealousy also existed between natural siblings. Sara (single-parent), for example, described how her mother apparently favoured her younger natural sister. During fieldwork, on various occasions, Sara expressed anger about how her mother favoured her younger sister, by giving her money and buying her treats (eg Interview,

April, 1997). Sammy (intact nuclear), in turn, related early in fieldwork how one of her older natural brothers resented how Sammy was her parents' favourite:

I know he (her brother) thinks I can wrap my mum and dad round my little finger ... I think he feels resentment towards me as well, because my mum and dad pay me much more attention than him. (Interview, January, 1997)

Sixsmith and Knowles (1996) stress that a child may have contrasting relationships with different siblings. It was not the case that students in reordered families necessarily had problematic relationships with step or half-siblings, in comparison to relationships with their natural siblings. Anna, for instance, said that she got on well with her younger half-sister, though they had argued in the past when they had shared a bedroom. Anna's view of her older natural brother is, in contrast, perhaps best summed up by her unequivocal:

My brother does my 'ead in. (Interview, January, 1997)

Anna's dislike of her natural brother extended to wishing, on occasions, that he did not belong to her family:

No families are perfect, but I reckon we'd be quite a good family if it was just the four of us: me, my mum, my step-dad, my (half) sister. (Interview, February, 1997)

Anna included her half-sister in her family schema, without specifically mentioning that she was a half-sister, in contrast to her reference to her 'step-dad'; perhaps this suggests that family structure was unimportant in Anna's perception of her half-sister.

Leanne, when asked what the most important event in her life had been, said the birth of her younger half-sister. For Leanne, this fulfilled one of her wishes. In the following, Leanne places more importance on position in the family than on family structure:

It's a big change for the whole family, 'cos there's a new person to be cared for. I know a lot more about how to care for a little kid, and I always wanted to be a big sister. (Interview, May, 1997)

Moore and Beezley (1996) make the point that siblings can support each other. Leanne also had an older resident step-sister, from her step-father's first marriage, as well as an older natural sister. Leanne's natural sister was away at university, whilst her step-sister lived in Castletown. Comments made over the course of fieldwork indicated that Leanne clearly valued greatly her relationship with her older natural sister. Leanne said that she viewed her sister as:

... somewhere between a parent and a friend ... she kind of disciplines me, but in a different sort of way to my parents .. If I've done something wrong, she helps me understand what they (Leanne's parents) were going on about. (Interview, April, 1997)

After the family argument over maintenance payments, described in chapter four, Leanne explicitly highlighted her need for her sister:

I just really wanted my sister there. (Interview, April, 1997)

However, over the course of fieldwork, before Leanne left Springfield in July, 1997, Leanne described her relationship with her older step-sister as becoming increasingly close. Leanne perceived that this relationship was increasingly similar to her relationship with her older natural sister (Interview, April, 1997). This illustrates a point made in chapter four, that relationships can alter over time.

Morrow's (1998) work on children's perceptions of family emphasized how the Pakistani children in her sample emphasized the responsibilities of older siblings to care for younger siblings. As argued in the literature, some research (eg Mitchell, 1985) argues that family reordering can entail children having extra responsibilities. In this sample, some young people were in caring roles, or had a sibling in a caring role. However, these cases spanned the range of family structures. For instance, Malcolm (intact nuclear)

described how his older sister looked after the family on a daily basis, because his mother apparently had a job she found draining:

My older sister's like the mum. She gets us ready (for school) ... She cooks us dinner and she's just there when we need her when something goes wrong. (Interview, April, 1997)

Louise (reordered nuclear) also said she had to 'act like the mum' (Interview, January, 1997). Louise's role as carer appeared to be unrelated to her family structure. Louise gave two reasons why she was in a caring role at home: her mother's job and her younger half-brother's handicap. Louise's mother was working nights until the summer term, 1997, and her younger half-brother's cystic fibrosis meant that he needed a lot of looking after. Louise's tasks ranged from Hoovering, shopping, cooking, giving her half-brother his medicine and caring for him when he was ill. As previously described, Louise resented how Chris was spoilt. The demands on Louise created some tensions within her which will be described in chapter seven. However, Louise did not appear to resent looking after Chris. Examples such as the following implicitly suggest her pride in being able to manage difficult situations, in this instance, in contrast with her mother:

I've 'ad to bring 'im (her half-brother) back to life again, three times. 'E 'as convulsions ... the first time, 'e was layin' on the floor. 'E got so 'ot 'e went into a convulsion, just shakin' and turnin' blue... So I just put 'im into the position. My mum just went into a fit. Well, not exactly a fit, but she was just freakin' out. (Interview, January, 1997)

Sara (single-parent) sometimes had to look after her younger sister, whilst her mother was at work. According to Sara, this only extended to babysitting (Interview, April, 1997). Whilst it might seem likely that children in single-parent families might have to look after one another, because of only having one adult at home, Sara was in less of a caring role for a sibling than Malcolm's sister or than Louise.

Some young people linked their feelings about family not to family structure, but to their position in the family. For example, Karen (intact nuclear) had an older and a younger sister. Throughout fieldwork, Karen declared her dislike of being the middle child. Karen even expressed her resolve not to have an uneven number of children herself, so that none of her children would feel left out (Interview, January, 1997). Clare (intact nuclear) preferred her position of younger daughter, as she said she was allowed more responsibility than her older sister had been (Interview, November, 1997). Emma (intact nuclear), in contrast, remained unshaken throughout fieldwork in her dislike of being the eldest of three girls. Emma felt that she was allowed no freedom, and she took careful note of the contrasting freedom she perceived that the sister nearest to her in age was allowed (Interview, January, 1997). Matty (intact nuclear) and Danny (intact nuclear) both claimed to like being only children, because they said they were spoilt.

In this sample, there were links between gender and accounts of siblings. Boys readily told me facts about their siblings, such as how many siblings they had, and about activities they shared with siblings, such as playing football. On the whole, however, most boys seemed relatively unaware of their siblings; it was as if Steven's words below summed up many boys' approach to siblings:

... my sister, she's just there. (Interview, January, 1997)

There were some exceptions. Boys in larger families, such as Muhammed (intact nuclear), Malcolm (intact nuclear) and Charley (reordered nuclear), went into much more detail than other boys about their relationships with siblings. This was particularly the case with Charley, who frequently updated me about his five siblings. Martin (reordered nuclear), as discussed above, also talked, over several interviews, about his antipathy towards his half-brother, whilst Tim (single-parent) voiced his hatred of his violent older brother in various interviews. However, girls' presentation of their relationships with siblings differed from boys' accounts, in that they pinpointed much more specifically than boys different aspects of their relationships with siblings. More girls talked about

conflictive relationships with siblings. As the conflicts they described were usually with brothers, it is reasonable to assume that some of the boys in the sample, who appeared nonchalant about siblings, were in reality involved in conflict with them.

It has already been described how Anna preferred her younger half-sister to her older natural brother. Over the fieldwork, Anna related many of her arguments with her brother, which usually centred around housework or, in Anna's view, her brother's selfishness (eg Interview, April, 1997). Other girls, across the family structures, also perceived that a brother lacked thought for others. For example, Louise and four girls from intact nuclear families, Rebecca, Lynn, Julie and Carla, complained about their brothers' selfishness. The following is typical of girls' complaints about brothers:

I was glad when he went away to university. He's always selfish, and never lets you touch his stuff. I'm really glad he's not there (with feeling). A proper brother would speak to you all the time. No one gets on with him. (Rebecca, Interview, January, 1997)

Within this sample, the young people's sibling relationships were unrelated to their family structure. It has been argued that sibling rivalry existed across the range of family structures, and extended to natural, step and half-siblings. It has, furthermore, been illustrated that some young people had positive relationships with step or half-siblings. In some cases these relationships were more positive than relationships with natural siblings. Being in the role of carer for a sibling was unrelated to family structure. In some cases, position in the family helped shape responses to siblings. Across the range of family structures, gender influenced perceptions of sibling relationships.

5.1.4. The Extended Family.

5.1.4.1. Contact with the Extended Family.

As discussed in chapter two, some research argues that the extended family can provide valuable support for children experiencing family reordering (Mitchell, 1985; Cockett

and Tripp, 1994). Another strand in some literature is that children can lose contact with members of the extended family through family reordering (Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Richards, 1999). An unarticulated assumption within the literature is that relationships with the extended family are inherently positive experiences for the young people concerned.

Within this sample, only Louise, referred to losing contact with the extended family through family reordering. Louise described how so much time had passed since she had seen her parental grandparents, that she did not know whether she would recognize them. The following implicitly suggests that Louise was unlikely to take any initiative to see her grandparents, apparently through respect for her mother's feelings:

I'd like to see them again, but ... my mum says it's up to me, but then if I did do it, I dunno whether she'd like (pause). She said it's up to me if I wanted to, but then, like my mum, she would say that. (Interview, January, 1997)

In contrast, this data set reveals the importance of the extended family in the young people's lives. The majority of the sample had regular contact with members of the extended family. 23 young people, across the range of family structures, saw members of the extended family once a week or more. Some young people, across the range of family structures, had a large number of relatives living locally. For instance, Carla (intact nuclear) had six sets of aunts and uncles in Castletown (Interview, January, 1997). Charley's (reordered nuclear) grandmother had 13 children, all of whom lived in Castletown or in two towns about twenty miles distant from Castletown. David's (reordered nuclear) mother apparently had eight sisters and a brother, all of whom lived in Castletown.

It was Charley and David who particularly stressed the importance of large family gatherings in the lives of their families. The following examples suggest that both boys

found such gatherings overwhelming. During fieldwork, Charley's older sister had a baby. Charley narrated how, whilst she was in labour in hospital:

We was all up till 12.30, waitin' ... They was all round our 'ouse, my auntie Karen, my auntie from round the corner, my auntie from ... (a town about twenty miles away). You couldn't 'ear yourself think, but it was alright. I went out over the field. (Interview, April, 1997)

David described how his aunts gathered together three times a week:

They (his aunts) take it in turns whose house they go round to. They all talk for ages. I go out with my cousins. (Interview, April, 1997)

Brian (care) talked about having relatives in a town twenty five miles from Castletown, but made no reference to any living further away than this. Whilst Charley talked extensively about relatives living within the radius of Castletown, he did not mention any contact with any relatives living at a distance. Martin (reordered nuclear) did not talk about the extended family. However, 28 young people, who spanned the range of family structures, referred to active relationships with members of their extended family who lived at a distance from Castletown.

Some young people's accounts suggested that they viewed active relationships with the extended family as not merely contingent upon face-to-face contact. Links also encompassed phone calls and sending and receiving letters and cards. Andrew (intact nuclear), for instance, highlighted how relationships with the extended family can be maintained in a range of ways:

Even if they (relatives) live far away, you can keep in contact by phone, like we phone my gran in Scotland every week. (Interview, January, 1997)

Seven of the sample talked about members of their extended family living abroad. This was unrelated to family reordering. Five of these young people were from intact nuclear families. It was to some extent related to ethnicity. Muhammed had relatives in Pakistan and Laura had relatives in India. The fact that relatives lived abroad did not mean that they were not valued by the young people, as Karen's description of her uncle's and aunt's visit from Canada suggests:

CH: How was it meeting lots of your family ...

Karen: (Interrupts) It was really good. We got really close to them and everything. It was horrible when they left. Everyone was cryin'.
(Interview, January, 1997)

5.1.4.2. Negative Experiences of the Extended Family.

However, experience of the extended family was not always positive. Four young people, Sammy, Clare, Rebecca and Laura, described feuds between the members of their immediate and extended families. Sammy, for instance, talked in detail of a long-standing dispute between her mother and her aunt, over her grandmother's will:

... neither of them would make the first move ... And then she (Sammy's mother) got a letter from her sister. And I think it's just learnin' to accept that you might have been wrong, and that no one's always right. My mum's still comin' round. She 'ad to 'ave counselling about it, 'cos she's got a lot of anger inside her. (Interview, January, 1997)

According to Sammy, one consequence of her mother's and her aunt's feud was that she felt left out, in comparison to her friends, at birthdays and Christmas:

CH: Do you consider your auntie as part of your family?

Sammy: I do. For a long time I didn't. I just acted as if I didn't have one. But then, 'cos we don't get birthday cards or anything, on my birthday I thought, 'Oh, my friends have got their relations round,' and I thought, 'I want mine!' (Interview, January, 1997)

This underlines the point that it was by no means only young people experiencing family reordering who were likely to be affected by family conflict; these four girls were all in intact nuclear families.

Some young people found the death or illness of members of the extended family distressing. For example, both Sammy and Clare said in interview that they were still upset by the death of a grandparent, though it was seven years since Sammy's grandmother had died, and six years since Clare's grandfather had died. Furthermore, one of Clare's aunts died of cancer during fieldwork (Interview, November, 1997). Up until her death, Clare had talked in interview about how she valued this aunt, how she loved visiting her, and how worried she was about her aunt, because she had cancer (May, 1997). After the aunt's death, Clare not only revealed in interview how distressed she was, but she was also crying in the tutor room during one tutor time.

A minority of the sample, David (reordered nuclear), Sara (single-parent), Rebecca (intact nuclear), Emma (intact nuclear) and Louise (reordered nuclear), disapproved of members of their extended family. Louise, for instance, was critical of an aunt. Apparently, her aunt had lived with five different men, and had children by three of them; according to Louise:

She's got her morals muddled up. (Interview, May, 1997)

Louise described one occasion when her aunt was at their home, supposedly looking after Louise and her siblings. Her aunt was in bed, drunk, surrounded by her own children, Louise, her brother and her half-brother, instructing her audience in how to use a condom. Louise expressed her disapproval:

She (Louise's aunt) went on and on about this. There's like five year olds there. I couldn't believe it. I go, 'You shouldn't be talkin' like this with kids on the bed.' And she goes, 'Oh well, they don't know what one is, do they?' (Interview, May, 1997)

It could be argued that Louise's aunt was not only an example of sexual promiscuity, but also that she was fostering it in those she was supposedly looking after.

This data set therefore questions the often implicit assumption that contact with the extended family is always a positive experience for young people. The examples cited underline how conflict between the immediate and the extended family can impinge upon young people's experience of family, how illness or death in the extended family can cause young people distress and how, as the example of Louise's aunt suggests, the extended family does not necessarily provide examples of positive behaviour for young people.

5.2. Networks of Conflict: Networks of Support.

Chapter four argued that the differences within and similarities across categories of family structure in these young people's experience of family reordering make it problematic to group their experience of family reordering according to categories of family structure. In this chapter, it has been argued that, whilst there were several associations between family structure and the young people's family relationships, on the whole, there were similarities across categories of family structures in young people's relationships with mothers, fathers, siblings and members of the extended family. It would seem therefore that, overall, categories of family structure do little to inform understanding of young people's experience of family.

The rest of this chapter will present a model for young people's experience of family - Networks of Conflict: Networks of Support. Whilst this has some similarities to, for instance, the vulnerability factors and protective factors used by Brown (1984) within his explanatory model of women's susceptibility or resilience to depression, it is emphasized that Networks of Conflict: Networks of Support was developed inductively, from the data collected. It should also be underlined that it is a tentative model.

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 indicate that factors generating conflict and support can be grouped broadly, as under the headings at the top of each table. However, each young person's experience of family is made up of an individual network of interlinked factors, negative and positive. The networks model both permits broad grouping, potentially to encompass all the young people's experience of family, and also enables the individual nature of each young person's networks of conflict and support to emerge. The networks model permits a holistic approach to each young person, approaching each young person as a 'whole self' (Woods, 1996:47), rather than grouping family experience according to categories of family structure.

This holistic approach to the young people is limited here to experience of family. The potential impact of peer group experience is not summarized here, and school experience is included only insofar as young people described the impact of aspects of school on family life. Furthermore, although tables 5.2 and 5.3 summarize the main issues which, according to accounts, created networks of conflict and of support within individual young people, there was not systematic evidence within the data set on, for instance, the relative degree of intensity with which each issue impacted upon the lives of individual students.

Some examples used in discussing Networks of Conflict: Networks of Support are found elsewhere in this thesis. This is because the model offers an alternative framework for the young people's experience, as discussed elsewhere in terms of categories of family structure.

5. 2.1. Networks of Conflict.

As argued in chapter two, the literature on family structure tends to group family conflict into pre-reordering and post-reordering conflict, whilst at the same time labelling some intact nuclear families which appear on the verge of breakdown as high-conflict families

(eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994). This, in effect, identifies family conflict too closely with family reordering, and helps pathologize reordered families as sites of conflict, in contrast to most intact nuclear families. It does not illustrate that conflict is normal in all families, as in, Frazer (1999) and Jagger and Wright (1999) argue, all social groups.

In the networks model, conflict is used to encompass both young people's reports of family disputes and the inner distress revealed by some young people which they perceived as having been triggered by home problems. Within this sample, accounts emphasized that family conflict could be triggered by a wide variety of tensions, not merely by issues related to family reordering. Most of the sample indicated that they found conflict, whether associated with family reordering or other aspects of family life, distressing. Young people did not necessarily find conflict within their families which was related to family reordering more distressing than other sources of family tensions. Furthermore, the networks model questions whether it is possible to separate out conflict related to family reordering from other sources of conflict in a young person's family life.

Table 5.2 illustrates the networks of conflict in family life which individual students said affected them. The fifth column, 'adolescent boundaries', denotes those activities such as smoking, drinking, drugs and sex, upon which parents potentially attempted to place restrictions. The final column records when school-related issues created conflict at home; school-related issues have been categorized in terms of the student's academic performance, the student's behaviour at school, and discovered truancy. School-related issues will be discussed in chapters six and seven.

Bold type and an asterisk have been used to indicate students whose family structure changed during the main period of fieldwork, from January to July, 1997.

Table 5.2. Networks of Conflict.

Young Person	Family Structure Time One	Issues Related to Family Reordering	Other Family Issues	Adolescent Boundaries	School
Andrew	intact nuclear		moving	. smoking . drinking . drugs . friends . times	. academic . behaviour
Steven	intact nuclear		. moving	smoking drinking . times	. academic . behaviour
Sammy	intact nuclear		moving family communication . feud with extended family . death of relatives father . brothers	smoking . drinking . sex times	. academic . behaviour
Lynn	intact nuclear		father brother . cousin's illness	. smoking . drinking . sex . times	. academic . behaviour
Clare	intact nuclear	. parents' arguments	sister . aunt's illness death in extended family father's feud with mother's relations	times	
Garry	intact nuclear		brothers . money	. times	academic . behaviour
Malcolm	intact nuclear	. father's childhood	. brother death in extended family	times	academic . behaviour . truancy
Muhammed	intact nuclear		death of sibling . brother	times	
Laura	intact nuclear		siblings	times	
Karen	intact nuclear		. position	times	
Rebecca	intact nuclear	half-sister parents' separation parental conflict	. father's personality . father's violence to brother . father's debts . repossession of house brother . death of sibling	times	
Julie	intact nuclear	parents' separation parents' arguments	. brother father	smoking drinking . times	academic . behaviour truancy
Matty	intact nuclear			. smoking	. academic

				. drinking . times	. behaviour
Carla	intact nuclear		brother . father	. times	
Emma	intact nuclear		. position	. times	
Tom	intact nuclear			times	. academic . behaviour
* Johnny	intact nuclear	parental separation	. brother's violence towards Johnny.	. drinking . times	. academic . behaviour
Danny	intact nuclear	. adoption		drinking smoking . drugs	. academic . behaviour . truancy
* Louise	reordered nuclear	. break up of natural parents' marriage . conflict of mother and step-father, before and after separation mother's partner moving in	. alcoholic violent father natural brother . half-brother's handicap aunt	. smoking . drinking sex	. academic . behaviour
Lizbeth	reordered nuclear	. some fear of father's ex-wife	brother . father	times	
Fiona	reordered nuclear	previous harassment by father contact with natural father non-resident step-mother jealousy of non-resident step and half- siblings father slitting wrists	. household issues . increase in conflict with step-father house moves	smoking drinking . sex . times	. academic . behaviour
Anna	reordered nuclear	mother's and step-mother's relationship	brother . household issues	smoking drinking . times	academic
Leanne	reordered nuclear	contact with father . maintenance step-mother . jealousy of non-resident step and half- siblings		. times	.

David	reordered nuclear	parents' arguments pre-separation parents' break up single parent family		times	
* Martin	reordered nuclear	step-father half-brother foster care	household tasks	smoking times	academic behaviour
Stacey	reordered nuclear	step-mother step-brothers	household tasks father	smoking drinking sex times	academic behaviour
* Charley	reordered nuclear		brothers sister's dog	times	academic behaviour
Sara	single-parent	father's death mother's affair finance	sister household tasks	smoking drinking sex drugs times	truancy
Tim	single-parent	lack of knowledge about parents' break-up	brother's criminal record brother's violence towards Tim brother worrying mother	times	academic behaviour
Colin	single-parent	parents' break up	brother	times	academic behaviour
Helen	single-parent	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown
* Brian	Care	natural father's violence living with foster families living in children's home	household tasks (in children's home)	smoking times (above in children's home)	academic behaviour truancy

As discussed in chapter three, Ball (1981) presented the third years at Beachside as increasingly out of the immediate supervision of their parents and as participating in adolescent culture. Indeed, it is unsurprising that the young people in this sample were keenly aware of conflict with parents over adolescent boundaries. All the young people's accounts, across the range of family structures, highlighted conflict with parents over adolescent boundaries and one issue arising in all accounts was the times young people were allowed out until. Many also had periods of conflict with parents over smoking and

drinking. In a few cases, there were problems with parents over the adolescents' experimentation with drugs. Girls also experienced trouble with their parents, if their parents discovered they were sexually active. This happened more when they were in Year 10 than in Year Nine.

The example of three young people, Louise, Sara and Steven, will be used to tease out the concept of networks of conflict. They have been selected because each was from a different family structure. As illustrated in table 4.1, Louise was in a reordered nuclear family, Sara was in a single-parent family and Steven was in an intact nuclear family. This range of family structures emphasizes how conflict existed in all families, not just in reordered families.

Over the course of fieldwork, Louise frequently talked at great length about the conflict in her family related to family reordering: how her natural father's alcoholism and violence led to the break-up of her natural parents' marriage; her natural father's subsequent harassment of the family; issues related to the break-up of her mother's and step-father's marriage; and, initially, about her mother's partner moving in with the family in the summer term, 1997. However, Louise described other family-related tensions. Louise talked about frequent disputes with her natural brother. Louise explored in detail the tensions within her and the family problems created by her younger half-brother Chris' handicap. Louise's disapproval of her aunt, as discussed in section 5.1.4.2, also created tensions within Louise. Louise often got into trouble at home for staying out later than supposed to, for smoking and drinking and, in Year 10, for being sexually active. Her academic performance and behaviour at school sparked family conflict, as will be discussed in chapter seven.

The number of sources of conflict described above point to complex interpersonal dynamics within Louise's family. For instance, although on the one hand, Chris' handicap is a problem distinct from the conflict over family reordering, on the other hand, the extent to which Louise's half-brother's handicap impacted on the conflict

between Louise's mother and step-father is open to question. Similarly, it is unlikely that Louise separated out the potential impact on her of each of the sources of conflict described above. It is more probable that the different sources of tension interacted within Louise. The networks model suggests potential linkages, without being over-prescriptive.

Sara's example also underlines how a range of home-related issues form a network of conflict, in which issues related to family reordering become inextricably interlinked with other sources of family tension. Sara frequently talked about her distress over her father's death. In Sara's perception, her father's death was linked to her subsequent rebelliousness:

I used to be real, real good when I was 11. I never did anything bad before my dad died. I'd tried smokin', but I didn't smoke. I started smokin' 'cos when my dad died I was like really upset. I'd never drunk before in my life. I never went near a boy, more than gettin' off with one. And it was like after my dad died I did everything. (Interview, January, 1997)

First, Sara associated her rebelliousness with only having one adult at home. Second, on various occasions, Sara explained that her sexual activity, smoking, drinking and drug-taking had occurred in reaction to her father's death. Furthermore, in chapter four it was illustrated that Sara linked her sexual activity with her wish to get revenge on her mother for the latter's affair with Sara's uncle. In Sara's view, her mother would not have been having an affair if Sara's father had been alive. However, it is possible that Sara's father's death may not have caused Sara's rebelliousness quite as unequivocally as she perceived.

In turn, Sara's rebelliousness created conflict between Sara and her mother. Sara was in frequent trouble with her mother over the time she stayed out until, smoking and drinking, and in intermittent trouble over drugs and sex. For instance, Sara talked in detail about getting in extreme trouble when her mother discovered she was sexually active at 11. What follows is a short extract from the conversation:

She (Sara's mother) went mental, completely ballistic. God, I was grounded for ages. I weren't allowed out. I weren't allowed to speak to boys. I weren't allowed boyfriends. (Interview, January, 1997)

Sara's uncle generated further conflict within Sara through his perceived favouritism of Sara's sister. Sara was particularly aware of this because, according to Sara, her uncle had spent a lot of time with her family since her father's death. Sara also resented her mother's favouritism of her sister, as discussed in section 5.1.3. Sara also perceived that her father's death had created financial hardship in her family. As discussed in chapter four, lack of money sometimes upset Sara, as when she could not afford the same clothes as her peers. Sara reported no family conflict over her academic performance and behaviour at school, except for one instance of truancy, to be discussed in chapter seven. The above illustrates that Sara experienced many sources of conflict within her family life. These are interlinked and issues related to reordering are inseparable from other areas of family conflict.

Steven's case, above all, underlines that even when a student reported no home problems related to family reordering, he/she could still experience conflict at home and that, on occasions, family conflict could be intense. In particular, Steven experienced family conflict over adolescent boundaries. One instance was when Steven was grounded, following an altercation with his mother over her infringement of his space:

My mum moved my furniture in my bedroom around. I was pissed off, so I moved around the furniture in my mum's bedroom. My mum threatened to throw me out on the streets forever. (Interview, November, 1997)

Although Steven was light-hearted with me about being 'throw(n) out on the streets forever', he was not jocular about being grounded! Furthermore, Steven talked on many occasions about getting into trouble with his parents over drinking and smoking. One example was when his parents discovered he had, over time, removed alcohol from their dining room for parties with his peers:

I got caught and grounded for the £160 drink. 'Do you know anything about the missing bottles? I said not, but then they started getting clever. I'm not trusted now, and I'll really get into trouble if they catch me taking drink again. (Interview, June, 1997)

Steven also related how his increasing rebelliousness had created conflict between his parents. In the incident above, his mother had apparently sided with Steven against his father. This in turn, according to Steven, created a series of arguments between his parents (Interview, June, 1997). The fact that Steven's behaviour apparently affected aspects of his parents' relationship emphasizes the network of conflict. Another major family-related source of tension for Steven was when his father changed jobs and Steven's family moved from Germany to Britain. This coincided with transfer to secondary school for Steven. Steven talked in detail about how he had found it difficult to adapt to Castletown and Springfield and to learn counter-culture norms which, in Steven's view, were essential to gain acceptance from his peers.

5.2.2. Networks of Support.

Experience of family was not purely conflict-driven. These young people's accounts also indicated positive areas in family life, though these seemed fewer and less marked than the areas of conflict. This may reflect these young people's lives. However, the impact on a young person of his/her network of support is not merely contingent on quantity, on the number of positive areas experienced, but also on the quality of each positive aspect, as experienced by the young person. Furthermore, the young people may have under-reported the positive aspects of family life. Problems probably stand out more and are easier to talk about than positive experiences. Consequently, in contrast to the networks of conflict, I have not only classified within networks of support positive aspects of family explicitly commented on by the young people, but also those aspects of family it could be inferred from the young people's accounts that they found positive. Table 5.3 sets out the young people's networks of support.

Table 5.3. Networks of Support.

Young Person	Family Structure	Parents	Siblings	Extended Family	Coping Strategies	Other Factors
Andrew	intact nuclear	mother . father		.grandparents aunts, uncles . cousins	.avoidance	. holidays
Steven	intact nuclear	. mother		. grandparents aunts, uncles . cousins	.avoidance	holidays
Sammy	intact nuclear		.older brother		.aggression	
Lynn	intact nuclear			.grandparents . cousin	.avoidance	
Clare	intact nuclear	. mother . father		.grandparents .aunts, uncles		dog
Garry	intact nuclear		.brothers			dog
Malcolm	intact nuclear	. mother father	.sisters		.avoidance	chess .country dancing sea scouts
Muhammed	intact nuclear	.mother .father	.brothers .sisters	.grandparents .aunts, uncles . cousins		
Laura	intact nuclear	.mother		.grandparents .aunts, uncles .cousins		holiday
Karen	intact nuclear	.mother		.grandparents .aunts, uncles		
Rebecca	intact nuclear	.mother	.sisters			
Julie	intact nuclear	.mother		.grandparents .aunts, uncles .cousins		
Matty	intact nuclear	.mother .father		.grandmother	.avoidance	
Carla	intact nuclear	.mother		.grandparents .aunts, uncles . cousins		
Emma	intact nuclear	.mother	.youngest sister	uncle		
Tom	intact nuclear	. mother . father	sister			
* Johnny	intact nuclear	. mother		.grandmother		

Danny	intact nuclear	mother . father				
* Louise	reordered nuclear	mother			.taking responsibility	.single- parent family
Lizabeth	reordered nuclear	mother	older half-sister	.grandparents		
Fiona	reordered nuclear	.mother	. sisters	.grandmother	realism	
Anna	reordered nuclear	mother resident step-father .non-resident father .non-resident step-mother	half-sister	grandparents	refusal to be drawn into family arguments	
Leanne	reordered nuclear	. mother .resident step-father	.older natural sister older step-sister younger half-sister	.grandparents .aunts, uncles	.learning to express needs	
David	reordered nuclear	.mother .resident step-father .non-resident father	.nonresident step-siblings			
* Martin	reordered nuclear	.mother				
Stacey	reordered nuclear	.non-resident mother resident step-mother initially	.older natural brother	.grandmother .aunts, uncles		dog
* Charley	reordered nuclear	.mother resident step-father initially	.natural siblings half-siblings	being an uncle .grandmother .aunts, uncles .cousins		older half- sister's dog and puppies
Sara	single-parent	.memory of relationship with father			.resilience	
Tim	single-parent	.mother	.older sister	.being an uncle	.avoidance	
Colin	single-parent	.mother .non-resident father .non-resident step-mother		. aunt, uncle		
Helen	single-parent	. unknown	unknown	. unknown	. unknown	

* Brian	Care	mother step-father	sister and brother	grandparents		
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Coping strategies have been included under networks of support. This is because having coping strategies enabled these young people to manage problematic areas in family life, as illustrated in chapter four through the examples of Leanne and Fiona.

The final column of table 5.3 provides an umbrella for eclectic aspects of family life which did not fit into any of the other areas. The fact that four young people, Clare, Gary, Stacey and Charley, said that having a pet was a very positive aspect of family life underlines the importance of listening to young people’s voices on their family experience. In contrast, some adults might be likely to underestimate the importance some young people attach to having a pet.

Louise, Sara and Steven will be used to discuss the concept of networks of support, in order to present evidence on the same young people for both parts of the model. Louise’s enjoyment of the adult relationship she shared with her mother was highlighted in chapter four. As discussed, Louise was particularly aware of this during the family’s transitional phase as a single-parent family, in the summer term, 1997. Whilst Louise’s family responsibilities generated some tensions within her, as will be discussed in chapter seven, on the whole Louise appeared to be proud of her responsibilities at home. This pleasure was particularly marked when there was no adult male in the family. In this way, it could be argued that the single-parent family structure was, temporarily, part of Louise’s network of support. In spite of experiencing some tensions over her responsibilities, Louise appeared on the whole to embrace them most of the time. This, it could be argued, was also a coping strategy which enabled Louise to manage a challenging situation.

In Sara’s case, whilst she had experienced the death of her father, and whilst her accounts explicitly illustrated that she had not completely come to terms with her loss, at the same time, her accounts underlined how positively she felt about their relationship. In

particular, Sara appreciated their closeness, which in part for her was evident in their shared activities. The following is one example from many conversations with Sara about their relationship:

Sara: I used to be real, real close (with great feeling) to my dad. You know, if ever I wanted anything it was Dad, you know, I just used to do lots of things with him, you know.

C.H.: So what did you used to do with him?

Sara: Well, we used to go crab huntin' if we went on holiday ... Me and my dad always used to take things to bits, see how they worked... 'E just used to come in, like I 'ad all these toys, like usin' toys an' stuff, an' he'd say, 'Come on, let's take it to bits, see how it works.' (Interview, February, 1997)

As Sara's network of conflict suggests, she perceived that she had many family problems. It could be argued that Sara's positive memories of her father and what, as previously discussed, was her idealization of family life when he was alive, helped support Sara in managing these difficulties. Furthermore, whilst Sara sometimes appeared upset by family problems, she did not appear submerged in them. Indeed, Sara appeared resilient. It could be argued that Sara's resilience was in effect a coping strategy which enabled her to withstand family difficulties.

Steven's accounts suggested that he found various aspects of family life positive. Section 5.1.1 indicated how Steven appreciated the fact that his mother, over the period of fieldwork, became increasingly understanding. It will be described in chapter seven how Steve's mother helped foster his intellectual development. Steven also said he enjoyed visiting his relatives in the town on the south coast where they lived, and going on holiday with relatives. It was the case, however, that these positive aspects of family were sometimes qualified; sometimes visits to relatives were described as 'boring' and some of their presents to Steven, such as socks at Christmas, were dismissed with a degree of contempt.

Avoidance was Steven's most frequently adopted coping strategy to manage family conflict. One example of this was when, as described in section 5.2.1, his parents discovered £160 worth of alcohol had disappeared. Steven had been taking this over a period of months. Although Steven's peers had shared the alcohol, I heard them in tutor time over an extended period of time, repeatedly telling Steven that his parents were likely to find him out. On the surface at least, this appeared not to register with Steven. When Steven's parents discovered the alcohol had disappeared, his father said he wanted an explanation within 24 hours from Steven or his sister. Steven updated me on developments during tutor times. Apparently he postponed having to face his father by going out that evening, leaving for school before his father was up the next morning, going home the next evening after his father had left for his Bible class, and then having a very early night. Such avoidance was only temporarily successful. Finally, Steven had to face his father's wrath.

Whilst the networks of support appeared smaller in scale, and, on the whole, experienced less intensely by individual students, they may have acted as a partial buffer to the networks of conflict described in section 5.2.1. Furthermore, it may be the case that the data constructed in this study underreports networks of support, whilst a study specifically on networks of support might construct more data on perceptions of positive aspects of family.

5.3. Conclusions.

This chapter has argued that these young people's relationships with mothers, fathers, siblings and members of the extended family were largely unrelated to categories of family structure. It has been illustrated that gender influenced these young people's relationships with parents. Both girls and boys highlighted closeness and communication in their relationships with mothers, though this was emphasized by girls more than boys. Some of the young people in reordered families appeared particularly aware of their

mothers as people with needs and feelings, though this did not mean that they would necessarily attempt to meet their mothers' needs.

There were similarities in perceptions of relationships with fathers, whether natural resident, natural non-resident or step. Positive relationships with both fathers and mothers were characterized by a sense of connection, though the form of the connection differed. Whilst positive relationships with mothers were characterized by communication, positive relationships with fathers were characterized by links created through shared activities. In relationships in which the father did not appear to spend time with or show affection towards the young person, the relationship tended to be characterized by disengagement. Young people in intact nuclear families were apparently unaffected by this. However, in some cases in which a natural non-resident father appeared disengaged, the young person involved wanted more connection with the father. Anxieties were generated within the young people concerned, over, for example, unsatisfactory contact arrangements and feeling unloved. There were associations between these young people's hostility to a father, whether natural resident, natural non-resident or step, and the father's physical abuse of a member of the family. Overall, girls tended to perceive more problems than boys in relationships with fathers, whether natural resident, natural non-resident or step.

In terms of the young people's relationships with parents, there were, therefore, two associations with family structure. The first was that some girls and boys in reordered families appeared to have a particularly heightened awareness of their mothers' needs and feelings. The second was that, for some girls in reordered nuclear families, having a non-resident natural father appeared to exacerbate issues also present in some other young people's relationships with fathers.

Accounts suggested that these young people's relationships with siblings were unrelated to family structure. Anna showed that young people can feel more positive about a half-sibling than a natural sibling. Leanne's case indicated that the birth of a half-sibling was

a key moment in her life. The young people felt negative about a sibling, whether natural, step or half, where they perceived that a parent favoured the sibling. Perceptions of sibling relationships were also linked to gender. Girls, in contrast to boys, tended to highlight conflict in sibling relationships, particularly with brothers. Girls were often critical of, in their view, brothers' lack of thought for others. Boys, unlike girls, apparently did not value consideration for others in their sibling relationships. Various young people associated their feelings about a sibling with their position in the family, although no clear patterns emerged across those students who highlighted position in the family in their accounts.

In contrast to claims in some of the literature (eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994), only one young person appeared to have lost contact with members of the extended family through family reordering. The majority of the sample, across the range of family structures, had active relationships with members of the extended family, including even those who lived at a distance from Castletown. Accounts suggested that, in this sample, an active relationship with the extended family was not dependent on face-to-face contact. This chapter has also challenged the often implicit assumption that contact with the extended family is an inherently beneficial experience. Some young people were distressed by death and illness in the extended family and by family feuds between the immediate and the extended family. The fact that the young people who mentioned family feuds were all in intact nuclear families highlights the normality of family conflict, across the family structures. Furthermore, some of the young people disapproved of members of the extended family.

A tentative model, *Networks of Conflict: Networks of Support*, has been developed for conceptualizing these young people's overall experience of family. The model takes an holistic approach to the young people's experience of family, negative and positive, rather than approaching the young people's experience of family through categories of family structure. The model's holistic approach to family experience could help diminish stereotypes of categories of family structure, because it is not premised on the

assumption that experience of family can be categorized according to family type, and so does not privilege the intact nuclear family in comparison to other family types.

Chapter 6: Schooling.

As discussed in chapter two, some previous research, using representative samples from the 1946 National Survey of Health and Development (NSHD), the 1958 National Child Development Study (NCDS), the 1970 Child Health and Education Study (CHES) and the West of Scotland Twenty-07 Study found negative relationships between family reordering and children's educational attainment (eg Wadsworth and Maclean, 1986; Wadsworth, 1988,1991; Elliott and Richards, 1991; Sweeting et al., 1998). A range of problems with these studies was detailed in chapter two. As also described in chapter two, the three principal British qualitative studies on children's views of family reordering (Walczak and Burns, 1984; Mitchell, 1985; Cockett and Tripp, 1994) only touch on family structure and the processes of schooling.

Because schooling is considered in chapters six and seven, the term 'student' will be used much more than in earlier chapters to refer to the sample. This chapter will consider the following which emerged, through the data constructed, as central to the school experience of the young people in 9YLC: friendship groups, behaviour within school, views on school, educational attainment and attendance. The chapter will assess the extent to which the young people's schooling, in terms both of outcomes and experience, was related to family structure or to variables such as gender and friendship group which, as the data revealed, impacted upon school experience. The chapter will, therefore, begin by presenting the main friendship groups in 9YLC.

6.1. Friendship Groups.

Where students can choose with whom they sit in class, one way of considering friendship groups is to observe students' seating patterns in class. The young people in 9YLC could choose where they sat in tutor time and in most lessons. For much of the fieldwork, students tended to sit in the same groups in tutor time. The individual identity

of each group was emphasized by how, on the whole, members of each group tended to focus their attention inwards into the group more than they directed their attention outwards towards other members of the class. In other lessons which 9YLC had as a class, students would tend to sit with members of their friendship group. Often, however, particularly in the case of the larger friendship groups, the whole of a friendship group would not sit together. This was because, in subject lessons, seats tended to be on a ‘first come, first served’ basis; how many of his/her friends a young person could sit with depended on how early he/she arrived at the lesson. Friendship groups were also identifiable by whom I observed young people ‘hanging around’ with outside lessons during school time, in the corridors or in the immediate proximity of the school buildings, between lessons, at break, or at lunchtime. Friendship groups were delineated by students’ accounts of their activities with friends, both in school when I was not present, and out of school.

During the early part of fieldwork with 9YLC, there were five chief friendship groups within the class, as summarized by table 6.1. **In table 6.1, the students are ordered according to friendship groups.**

Table 6.1: Friendship Groups.

Friendship Group	Name	Family Structure
One	Clare	Intact nuclear
One	Carla	Intact nuclear
One	Sammy	Intact nuclear
One	Emma	Intact nuclear
One	Lizbeth	Reordered nuclear
One	Leanne	Reordered nuclear
Two	Rebecca	Intact nuclear
Two	Stacey	Reordered nuclear
Two	Anna	Reordered nuclear
Two	Fiona	Reordered nuclear
Two	Sara	Single-parent
Three	Andrew	Intact nuclear
Three	Steven	Intact nuclear
Three	Matty	Intact nuclear

Three	Johnny	Intact nuclear
Three	Muhammed	Intact nuclear
Three	Charley	Reordered nuclear
Three	Tim	Single-parent
Four	Garry	Intact nuclear
Four	Tom	Intact nuclear
Four	David	Reordered nuclear
Four	Colin	Single-parent
Five	Lynn	Intact nuclear
Five	Karen	Intact nuclear
Five	Julie	Intact nuclear
Five	Helen	Single-parent
Five	Louise	Reordered nuclear

There were three students who did not integrate fully with any group, but who consistently attached themselves to a particular group during tutor time and who would be tolerated by the group.

Table 6.2. Students Attached to Friendship Groups.

Attached to Group	Name	Family Structure
Three	Malcolm	Intact nuclear
Three	Danny	Intact nuclear
Four	Martin	Reordered nuclear

For the purposes of discussion in this chapter, these three young people will be referred to as part of the friendship groups listed above.

Two students, Brian (care) and Laura (intact), were outsiders to any group. Whilst at Springfield, loners were known as ‘saddos’, in this thesis, Brian and Laura will be referred to as isolates (Hargreaves, 1967). It was only in 9YLC, however, that Laura did not have any friends. In the spring term, 1997, Laura changed tutor group, to be with two girls with whom she was friendly.

Friendship group one was known as the 'boffin girls' by members of the tutor group, across friendship groups. For instance, when Tom drew out Clare's and Emma's names in a raffle for McDonald's vouchers, he exclaimed:

Oh! It's the boffin girls! (Research Log, 2.2.97.)

The label was derogatory. Group one was also self-named, in that individuals in group one acknowledged that they were known as the 'boffin girls'.

There were some alterations in friendship groups, over time. As Year Nine progressed, the girls in group two increasingly sat with and talked to the boys in group three, as well as increasingly interacting with some of them socially out of tutor time within school, and, according to students' accounts, out of school. This pattern was, though to a much lesser extent, replicated by some of the girls in group five, with the boys in group four. Hence by the end of Year Nine, because groups two and three had joined, there were four main friendship groups. However, because the main period of fieldwork took place when the students were in Year Nine, five friendship groups will be used here.

Within each of the five friendship groups, there were also smaller friendship groups. Within friendship group one, for instance, there were three pairs of friends: Leanne and Clare, Emma and Lizbeth, and Sammy and Carla. Furthermore, the bonds between the first four girls seemed closer than those between the group as a whole. There were also, over the course of the fieldwork, quarrels between individuals within friendship groups. For example, whilst Sara described Fiona as 'a real good friend' (Interview, February, 1997), for a period of time later in the fieldwork, Sara and Fiona were not speaking to each other (Research Log, 4.12.97.). Friendships between individuals spanned friendship groups. Anna (group two) was, for instance, very friendly with Leanne (group one).

Cockett and Tripp (1994) found that children in intact nuclear families were less likely

than children in reordered families to have friends whose parents had separated. In contrast, table 6.1 illustrates that each group contained students from a range of family structures. The table also illustrates the gendered nature of friendship groups, though the increasing integration of the girls in group two and the boys in group three has been described. Thus, whilst there existed no relationship between family structure and friendship group, there was a relationship between gender and friendship group.

6.2. Behaviour.

6.2.1. Typologies.

This section will examine the behaviour of individuals in 9YLC. It will explore the extent to which the young people's behaviour in school, in and out of class, was related to family structure, gender, friendship group or to the effect of teachers on students' behaviour. The section will not encompass truancy; it focuses on the behaviour of the young people when they were present at school. Truancy will be considered in section 6.5 on school attendance.

There has been a considerable research on pupil sub-cultures and researchers have developed typologies which potentially encompass pupils' behaviour and attainment. Hargreaves (1967), for instance, distinguished between upper and lower stream sub-cultures in his study of Lumley secondary modern. Lacey (1970) distinguished between pro and anti-school cultures in his study of Hightown Grammar. Willis (1977) categorized the boys in his study into the 'lads' and the 'ear'oles'. Meyenn (1980) developed four categories for the girls he researched: the PE girls, the nice girls, the quiet girls and the science lab girls. Chaplain (1996) grouped pupils as 'engaged' and 'disengaged'. In these studies, the terminology and groupings have been developed individually. In this ethnography, the following typology categorizing the behaviour of students in 9YLC has also been developed inductively. In broad terms, the following four categories describe students' behaviour: boffin, naughty, disaffected and unmanageable.

As Lacey (cited in Woods, 1990) argues, students' behaviour does not necessarily fit a specific category within a typology all the time. Rather, table 6.3 presents students' behaviour as it was most of the time within school, as observed by me, as presented by students in conversations with peers, and as described by students in informal conversations and interviews with me.

Table 6.3: Students' Behaviour.

Name	Family Structure	Friendship Group	Behaviour
Andrew	Intact nuclear	Three	Disaffected
Steven	Intact nuclear	Three	Disaffected
Sammy	Intact nuclear	One	Disaffected
Lynn	Intact nuclear	Five	Disaffected
Clare	Intact nuclear	One	Boffin
Garry	Intact nuclear	Four	Naughty
Muhammed	Intact nuclear	Three	Disaffected
Malcolm	Intact nuclear	Three	Disaffected
Laura	Intact nuclear	Isolate	
Karen	Intact nuclear	Five	Boffin
Rebecca	Intact nuclear	Two	Disaffected
Julie	Intact nuclear	Five	Disaffected
Matty	Intact nuclear	Three	Disaffected
Carla	Intact nuclear	One	Boffin
Emma	Intact nuclear	One	Boffin
Tom	Intact nuclear	Four	Naughty
Johnny	Intact nuclear	Three	Unmanageable
Danny	Intact nuclear	Three	Unmanageable
Louise	Reordered nuclear	Five	Unmanageable
Lizbeth	Reordered nuclear	One	Boffin
Fiona	Reordered nuclear	Two	Disaffected
Anna	Reordered nuclear	Two	Disaffected
Leanne	Reordered nuclear	One	Boffin
David	Reordered nuclear	Four	
Martin	Reordered nuclear	Four	Unmanageable
Stacey	Reordered nuclear	Two	Disaffected
Charley	Reordered nuclear	Three	Disaffected
Helen	Single-parent	Five	Unmanageable
Sara	Single-parent	Two	Disaffected
Tim	Single-parent	Three	Unmanageable
Colin	Single-parent	Four	Naughty

Brian	Care	Isolate	Unmanageable
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The boffins were five out of the six girls in friendship group one, and Karen from friendship group five. The boffins were usually well behaved and attentive in class. They sometimes chose to work even when they did not have to. For instance, in a tutor time when the students could choose activities on computers, four of the boffins in friendship group one started off by writing letters in Spanish; Louise (disaffected) and Julie (disaffected) were, in contrast, playing a computer game next to them (Research Log, 5.12.96.). I also noted that the boffins were usually well organized in bringing the relevant equipment to class (eg Research Log, 27.11.96.). The boffins were often helpful, to individual teachers or to the school as a whole. For instance, the boffin girls in friendship group one organized the sale of tickets for the Valentine's disco and were responsible for selling refreshments during the disco. In contrast many of the other students appeared to enjoy the disco, but were not involved in helping with it (Research Log, 13.2.97.). It did not come to my attention that the boffins engaged in activities which did not conform to the official school norms, such as smoking or drinking in school.

Three boys were labelled 'the naughty boys' by some of the tutor group, such as Louise, Anna and Julie, although these boys were less frequently referred to as naughty than the boffin girls were called boffins. The naughty boys misbehaved in class by activities such as talking and by being silly. For example, when the students were putting up Christmas decorations, Colin and Tom spent most of the time jumping from table to table in the tutor room, just managing to avoid colliding with one another (Research Log, 12.12.96.). Their laughter in class often verged on giggling. The naughty boys were, however, immature rather than disaffected. Their immaturity was both behavioural and physical; they were all very small. They were described as 'immature', 'childish' and 'stupid' by, for instance, the disaffected girls in friendship group two (Research Log, 12.3.97.).

The disaffected students were those who misbehaved in class by more significant challenges to the teacher, such as by 'backchatting' (the students' phrase for 'being cheeky to') the teacher, and sometimes even swearing at the teacher. For instance, a group of the disaffected students spent a Religious Education (RE) lesson throwing an unwrapped tampon to each other and eventually at the teacher (Research Log, 7.11.97.). Charley, for example, said of himself:

I'm no angel (Interview, January, 1997),

and described how he would often talk in class when the teacher was talking, and shout out deliberately. I observed Sara in a maths lesson challenge both the teacher and, implicitly, much of school learning. When the teacher was explaining standard form, Sara asked loudly:

What's the point?

and then muttered to me:

I don't see the point in doin' something if you don't know why you're doin' it. (Research Log, 13.3.97.)

The disaffected students also engaged in activities in school outside class which ran counter to official school norms, such as drinking and smoking, on the school field and in the school ditch. Before school discos (Research Log, 13.2.97., 5.6.97.) and on the tutor group trip to the ice rink (Research Log, 24.4.97), disaffected students were also drinking illicitly.

The unmanageable students were those students whose disaffected behaviour was more extreme and negative than those students in the disaffected group. The unmanageable students, on the whole, could not control their own behaviour sufficiently to conform to institutional norms. Brian, for example, left a letter telling Karl Price Brian hated him, on Karl Price's desk at the beginning of an Health, Home and Community (HHC) lesson

(Research Log, 10.4.97.). During interviews, Brian was prone to stabbing his fingers with pins (from a noticeboard in the room I usually interviewed in). Johnny and Paul were, by the end of Year 10, attending the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), which was for students whose behaviour could not be contained by school. When Helen was asked by Lydia Wye, the tutor, to take off her puffa jacket in tutor time, she first shouted and then swore at the tutor (Research Log, 8.1.97.). Louise frequently spoke of how she could not control her talkativeness, silliness and disruptiveness in class (eg Interview, 29.4.97.). Teachers often had problems controlling the unmanageable students.

Two students, Laura and David, did not conform to any behaviour type. Their behaviour did not run counter to institutional norms. They tended not to stand out in class or tutor time in any way. Unlike the boffins, they did not tend to be helpful to teachers and they were not identified as boffins by any other members of the tutor group.

6.2.2. Family Structure and Behaviour.

The overall summary of behaviour in table 6.2 illustrates that the intact and reordered nuclear categories both contained young people with a range of behaviours, from unmanageable to boffin. Within these two categories, therefore, it is not the case that students' overall behaviour in school related to family structure. The single-parent and care categories, in contrast, contained only disaffected, naughty and unmanageable students. However, the single-parent and the care categories are small in comparison to the intact nuclear and reordered nuclear categories. There is, therefore, less scope for spanning the range of behaviours within these categories. Three out of the five students in these categories were boys; the relationships between gender and behaviour will be discussed in the next section.

6.2.3. Gender and Behaviour.

Behaviour was, to some extent, gender-related. The six young people who were boffins were all girls. Five of the seven unmanageable students were, in contrast, boys. On the

whole, the relationships between gender and behaviour contrasted, at both extremes of the typology. The three naughty students were all boys. The group of 14 disaffected students consisted of almost equal numbers of girls and boys: six boys and eight girls. Whilst the gender balance in the disaffected group was almost equal, the girls' behaviour was increasingly disaffected over the course of fieldwork.

6.2.4. Friendship Groups and Behaviour.

There were links not only between gender and behaviour, but also between friendship groups and behaviour. The previous section discussed how the friendship groups in 9YLC were largely, with the exception of group two (girls) merging with group three (boys), organized around gender. Friendship group one consisted of five boffins and one disaffected student (Sammy). Friendship group two consisted of five disaffected girls. Friendship group three consisted of five disaffected boys and two unmanageable boys. Attached to friendship group three were one disaffected boy (Malcolm) and one unmanageable boy (Danny). Friendship group four consisted predominately of naughty boys (three), with one boy (David) who did not fit into any behaviour type. Attached to group four was an unmanageable boy (Martin). Friendship group five spanned the range of behaviours, with two unmanageable students (Louise and Helen), two disaffected students (Lynn and Julie) and one boffin (Karen). The behaviour of the two isolates, Brian and Laura, was dissimilar. Brian was unmanageable and Laura did not fit any behaviour type.

It may be the case that there were unmanageable students either in or attached to three of the five friendship groups, because it would seem unlikely that any friendship group consisting largely of unmanageable students would survive the interpersonal conflict between its members over a period of time. In contrast, with unmanageable students spread over three friendship groups, the dynamics of each friendship group were likely to be more harmonious.

6.2.5 The Influence of Teachers on Students' Behaviour.

Woods' (1979, 1990) point that teachers can influence students' behaviour was confirmed by evidence from this study. First, some teachers had a positive influence on students' behaviour, even those students who were, in general, disaffected and unmanageable. Second, at the other extreme, some teachers with problematic classroom management had a negative impact on students' behaviour, even including those who were generally boffins. Some students explicitly commented on how teachers affected their behaviour. Andrew, for instance, said:

It (how he behaved) depends on the teacher (Interview, March, 1997),

whilst Danny, who was generally a disaffected student, muttered, when I commented on his model behaviour in a humanities lesson:

It's the teacher. (Research Log, 16.1.97.)

This section will consider how some teachers altered the behaviour of the tutor group as a whole. The section will also highlight how specific individuals' behaviour appeared particularly affected by individual teachers.

Teachers' positive impact on students' behaviour will be illustrated first, with reference to humanities, for which the students were in broad ability bands. The humanities teacher to whom Danny referred above, Miss Black, taught both a top band and a bottom band. Wallace (1996) highlights how good teachers set clear expectations for pupil behaviour. Similarly, Miss Black set clear boundaries for, and had high expectations of, students. She praised students both for effort and for good work. Miss Black had a positive impact on students' behaviour in both the higher and lower ability groups. Likewise, Mr. Thompson, who taught the parallel lower ability band for humanities, had a positive impact on students' behaviour, through his rapport with them, his non-confrontational teaching style, and the clear structure to his lessons. In both Miss Black's and Mr.

Thompson's classes, students on the whole worked hard and there were few instances of students challenging the teacher.

In contrast, in some other lessons, such as music and design technology, all the students misbehaved, in varying degrees, because the teachers concerned could not control the students. In the first set of interviews, many students referred to the apparent chaos of the weekly music lesson with Mr. Wilson. In the following, Sammy was explaining why most of the tutor group had been handed out detention slips in tutor time that morning, after the previous day's music lesson:

Sammy: We was all messin' about.

CH: What were you doing?

Sammy: Talkin'.

CH: Talking.

Sammy: Shoutin'.

CH: Was that normal ...

Sammy (interrupts) It was normal for a music lesson.

CH: So had he just had enough yesterday?

Sammy: 'E 'as enough every lesson.

CH: I don't know him.

Sammy: You don't want to. (Casual conversation before interview, January, 1997)

Her comments clearly and tersely indicate that misconduct was ubiquitous in music.

When asked what the worst things about school were, Karen who was a boffin, said classes like music in which no one could learn. However, despite implying that she wanted to learn, the interview continued as follows:

CH: Why are you laughing?

Karen: Because it's so terrible.

CH: What happens then?

Karen: Well everyone's like they don't do their work. I don't really do any work. People they just like mess about on the keyboards. Sir tries to stop them but he can't. (January, 1997)

In spite of being a boffin, and in spite of implying that she would prefer to learn in music, Karen, according to her account, misbehaved in music because of the teacher's problematic classroom management. Triangulation of these students' comments with my observation of the morning tutor time in which the detention slips were handed out and the students, in response to receiving the slips, were talking about the previous day's music lesson, heightened the validity of the data constructed.

The tenor of Andrew's statement below was typical of students' comments on technology:

Mr. Silva's excellent. You can do whatever you want. You can even swear at him. (Interview, January, 1997)

I observed Mr. Silva's lower band technology lesson after seeing coverage of apparently intransigent pupils at The Ridings School on television. The general level of student misbehaviour in Mr. Silva's lesson was so extreme that I recorded in my research log:

The Ridings has nothing on this! (15.1.97.)

Students' behaviour verged on the anarchic throughout. For instance, as soon as Mr. Silva told the class to stop talking at the beginning of the lesson, a large group of boys, consisting principally of the members of friendship group three, picked up the large table they were sitting at and started banging it up and down very loudly and chanting, throughout Mr. Silva's explanation of the two-dimensional drawings the class was supposed to do that lesson. Next to these boys was a group of girls which included Louise, Lynn, Emma, Sammy and Leanne. At intervals, individuals within this group loudly commented that the lesson was 'boring' and 'crap', always when Mr. Silva was within earshot. Mr. Silva ignored these comments. At one point, Johnny yelled, 'Fuck off!' at Lynn, for no apparent reason. Lynn said, with what it could be suspected was feigned outrage, designed to provoke a response:

Sir! Sir! Did you 'ear what 'e said to me?

Mr. Silva did not respond, yet was clearly aware of the chaos. At intervals throughout the lesson, Mr. Silva commented to me that I was still 'surviving', a comment which could suggest he was transferring his state of mind onto his perception of how I was reacting to the situation. Throughout, the students' misbehaviour was more extreme than was usual in most other subjects.

Whilst the above illustrates how individual teachers could affect the behaviour of the class as a whole, it was two young people, Tim and Sara, who behaved in starkly contrasting ways with different teachers. Tim's behaviour was generally extremely unruly in technology, but the following incident stood out in particular. At one point during Mr. Silva's lesson discussed above, Tim was standing in the middle of the room, in conversation with me. On being told by Mr. Silva to sit down, Tim looked at him with unveiled contempt, and declared with extreme irritation:

'Ang on! I'm talking to Miss!

The contrast with Mr. Thompson's humanities class was marked. For example, in one lesson, Mr. Thompson sent me to sit next to Tim at the back. I therefore could observe Tim closely. I was struck by how Tim, despite his usually unmanageable behaviour, got on with work when the students were required to work alone, put up his hand to answer questions in class discussion and looked at Mr. Thompson with what I described in my research log (13.1.97.) as a 'soft adoring look'. Because of the last point, I do not think Tim's almost 'boffin' behaviour was because I was sitting by him, especially as Tim was, over time, unruly in a range of other contexts I was an observer in.

Sara was in Miss Black's top band class for humanities. She contributed frequently to class discussions and wanted to do well. For example, in one lesson when Miss Black gave Sara her written work back, Sara yelled with open pleasure across the classroom to me, 'Got a merit!' (Research Log, 16.1.97.). Sara was in Mr. Flyte's lower band

technology class. She felt picked on by Mr. Flyte, and was frequently at loggerheads with him:

‘E blames me for everything! ... And that’s why I give ‘im so much mouth, because I’m being told that everything that ‘appens is my fault. (Interview, July, 1997)

In this interview, Sara recounted how, the previous day, she had called Mr. Flyte a ‘fucking twat’ when told by him to be quiet. Sara apparently was then sent into the technology lesson of another teacher, Mr. Brown. According to Sara, Mr. Brown advised her to leave Mr. Flyte’s room, if she felt herself in a confrontational situation with Mr. Flyte. After receiving this advice, Sara decided to return to Mr. Flyte’s lesson. Sara’s return immediately precipitated a highly provocative farewell from her to Mr. Flyte. With some expertise, Sara combined following Mr. Brown’s advice with expressing her utter contempt for Mr. Flyte. The volume of Sara’s voice increased as she recounted the following to me in an extremely rebellious tone. She almost shouted the last three words:

So I walked back in and ‘e started goin’, ‘What do you think you’re doin’?’ I go, ‘I’m not allowed to ‘ave a confrontation with you. See yer later!’ (Interview, July, 1997)

There is no reason to disbelieve Sara’s reporting of the situation. While extreme, it was not dissimilar to behaviour I observed in some other lessons, and Sara’s friends gave similar accounts of the interaction between Sara and Mr. Flyte .

The contrasts between humanities, and music and technology illustrate how individual teachers could alter, both positively and negatively, the usual behaviour of students in 9YLC. Whilst it could be argued that in the examples above the students showed little responsibility for their own learning, the teachers who had a detrimental effect on students’ behaviour often attempted to shift responsibility from themselves onto the students, by, for instance, putting students on behaviour report or into detention. I observed this occurring over the course of fieldwork, even though some other teachers

were at least partially aware of what was happening. Lydia Wye, for example, often commented on the discrepancy between the number of detention slips the students received after music and technology lessons, in comparison to other lessons (eg Research Log, 23.1.97.).

Tim and Sara were both from single-parent families. Cockett and Tripp (1994:71) suggest that teachers may stereotype family structure. Less tentatively, Power (1998) uses the examples of teacher perceptions of single mothers and 'promiscuous' mothers to make the same point. When I met Mr. Silva by chance, the day after the lesson described earlier, he again referred to the fact I was still 'surviving'. He euphemistically described the students as a group as 'lively' and then commented on some individuals, including Tim:

The trouble with Tim is that he has no strong male figure in his life. He was rejected at birth by his father and now he lives with his mother and his brother, who rules the roost. He gets on much better with women than men. What he needs is strong discipline like the army. (Research Log, 16.1.97.)

It is striking that rather than discuss his own conduct of the lesson, Mr. Silva reinforces family stereotypes, by using Tim's lack of a father as an explanation for Tim's behaviour. Mr. Silva did not know I was researching family structure. He is, therefore, unlikely to have made the comment above because he thought it was what I wanted to hear. This further highlights Mr. Silva's use of family stereotypes to conceal his own professional difficulties.

Doing ethnography enabled Sara's and Tim's unruly behaviour to be contrasted with their more positive behaviour. Furthermore, insight was gained into understanding at least part of the processes behind the two young people's contrasting behaviours: the approach of the teachers concerned. Doing ethnography therefore enabled data to be constructed which challenges negative stereotyping of children from single-parent families.

6.3. Views of School.

There is a growing body of research on students' views on school and the role of students' views in school improvement (eg Soo Hoo, 1993; Nieto, 1994; Ruddock et al., 1996; Fielding, 1998; Fielding, 1999). This section will not attempt to cover comprehensively the views students in 9YLC expressed about their schooling. This is not only because of the growing amount of research on views of school, but also because, within the data, there were few relationships between views on school and family structure, gender, friendship groups and/or behaviour. This section will, rather, touch on the main areas developed in young people's accounts. Where there were links between views on school and family structure, gender, friendship groups and behaviour, these will be discussed in more detail.

6.3.1. The Perceived Importance of Education.

All the students apart from Danny highlighted a perceived utilitarian purpose in schooling; 'getting an education' was seen as central to getting a job subsequently. It would be unwise, however, to take such statements at face value; it is likely that they were learned responses which were easy to assert. It was striking that the majority of the students used the phrase 'getting an education' almost as though education were a consumer product. In contrast, many of the students did not put this espoused value into practice in their work habits, as when they did not take responsibility for their own learning in the lessons discussed in 6.2.5.

There was one relationship between family reordering and students' views on the importance of education. Two girls from reordered nuclear families, Leanne and Louise, highlighted education as equipping them to deal with future family difficulties. Leanne stressed the importance of education in enabling women to be independent. Leanne linked education, independence and potential marriage break up:

I just wanna get an education and experience life and all the difficulties
(with great expression) on my own, because if something does happen in a

marriage, which you've really got to consider, then if you were married and you hadn't experienced what life is actually like on your own then you won't get anywhere if you're left on your own. (Interview, January, 1997)

Leanne introduced the comments above into a conversation which had been specifically about school, rather than family. This further emphasizes the importance she attached to education as a potentially protective factor in helping an individual deal with setbacks in life.

It is likely that Leanne's experience of family reordering had heightened her sense of the role education can play in fostering independence and being a protective factor in managing the loss of a partner. Furthermore, Leanne's mother was, at the time of fieldwork, doing an English degree at a university in a nearby town, with the aim of changing career from hairdresser to teacher. Apparently Leanne's mother had returned to education after she had married for the second time. Leanne therefore had a personal example within her family about how education can change people's lives, and it is possible that Leanne associated her mother's career change with family reordering.

Louise viewed education as a way not to become like her parents. According to Louise's accounts, her parents were, at the time of her comments below, embroiled in interpersonal conflict which led to their break-up three months later:

I think it's (her parents' disputes) made me like look that I'm not ever gonna be like that when I get older. I'm gonna get an education and then I might think about settling down. I'd like to be summat like a PE teacher. My mum says it's gonna be hard, but I'm willing to do it... I don't wanna depend on a man. I wanna depend on myself. (Interview, January, 1997)

Through negative example, Louise's parents had helped shape some long-term educational goals for her. The above conversation took place before the students received any input from school on option choices. Louise, however, had already looked up what

qualifications she would need to be a PE teacher. I also heard her talk about being a PE teacher on separate occasions to both Lydia Wye and Karl Price, when the students were choosing options later in the spring term, 1997. This suggests that, in aim at least, Louise was serious about wanting to be a PE teacher. In her comments above, whilst it is unclear whether by 'I don't wanna depend on a man,' Louise means economic dependence, emotional dependence or both, it suggests that Louise saw education as a way of gaining independence from a man, and that her goals had emerged at least in part in reaction to parental conflict.

The examples of Louise and Leanne suggest that the experience of family reordering can develop young people's awareness of the potential importance of education. However, this did not mean that both girls were equally likely to put their views into action. Whilst Leanne was an assiduous student, Louise was unable to concentrate, and seldom did much written work, either in or out of school.

6.3.2. Enjoyment of School.

Whilst all students except one, Danny, asserted the importance of school, this did not mean that all students except Danny enjoyed school. Unsurprisingly, no one said he/she enjoyed school all the time. Only three young people, Johnny, Danny and Brian, expressed uncompromising dislike of school. As the following example suggests, they did not mince words:

I hate Springfield School. (Johnny, attendance questionnaire, summer, 1998)

Students' enjoyment of school, on the whole, decreased over the course of fieldwork. Students increasingly described school in terms such as 'boring', 'crap' and 'a load of bollocks'. This was particularly so with the disaffected girls. Stacey, for instance, said at the beginning of fieldwork:

My overall opinion of school is good. (Interview, January, 1997)

Almost a year and a half later, however, Stacey wrote in the attendance questionnaire:

By Year 10, we know the whole school so completely that we know how boring and crap it really is on certain days. (Summer term, 1998)

Although these students increasingly described school as boring, most highlighted individual subjects that they enjoyed. As Cockett and Tripp (1994) found amongst their sample, these tended to be subjects the students could be active in, such as dance, drama, art and, though to a lesser extent amongst the girls, PE. Technology, however, was not included.

Whilst most boys said they did not like English, Steven's expressed dislike of English at school contrasted with his literary activities out of school. According to Steven's accounts, his parents actively encouraged his literary skills. In his first interview (January, 1997), Steven told me how he read and wrote avidly out of school. His mother was, apparently, the principal person to foster Steven's eclectic literary tastes, which encompassed both Tolkien and Steven King. Steven's father, however, was not without influence. Steven's father was training to be a vicar and Steven told me that, on his father's advice, he had read Revelations twice, and was using ideas from Revelations in his own writing (Interview, January, 1997). As referred to in chapter three, after his first interview Steven showed me what I judged an excellent play he had written: 44,980 words of almost impeccable English, based on Tolkien, but set in the context of Castletown. Steven's example suggests that dislike of a subject within school can co-exist with love for the same subject out of school.

With the boffin girls in friendship group one, there were some links between friendship group, behaviour and dislike of school because of the pressure of work. Leanne, for instance, revealed that her own tensions over schoolwork were even transferred onto her

parents:

I think they (parents) sometimes get concerned about me 'cos I do get uptight about exams and tests and things. (Interview, April, 1997)

In January, 1997, Emma highlighted how she was 'wound up' in maths, because the teacher kept on emphasizing the Standardised Assessment Tasks (SATs), not to be taken until May. According to Emma, the tension she experienced made her unable to concentrate properly in maths. English, in contrast, was 'alright', because Emma did not feel 'pressured' (Interview, January, 1997). Over the course of Year 10, the boffin girls increasingly articulated feeling overburdened by school, and the reason they gave for this was GCSE coursework.. Towards the end of the first term in Year 10, Emma, for instance, voiced a more explicitly negative view of school than she had done previously. She linked her negativity to feeling stressed:

I could do without school. It's all tests and pressure. (Interview, November, 1997)

6.3.3. The Social Dimension of Schooling.

Whilst 31 of the 32 students in 9YLC said they thought that education was important, and whilst most students highlighted some subjects that they enjoyed, their accounts and my observations of their lived school experience suggested that in some cases learning was a relatively incidental part of students' overall school experience.

The social dimension of schooling was very important to nearly all the young people. Sara, for instance, explicitly focused on the human aspect of school, in contrast to learning:

The good things about school are the people and that's about it...The learnin' stuff is boring. (Interview, January, 1997)

Although the boffin girls were more work-oriented than the rest of 9YLC, friends were, according to their accounts and my observations, a central part of their school lives. For instance, when asked what the best things about school were, Clare's answer was 'meeting people' and 'seeing your friends' (Interview, January, 1997). Furthermore, many of the young people, especially the boys, commented that breaks and lunchtimes were what was best about school, and some commented explicitly on the perceived brevity of respite from lessons.

Some studies have tended to heighten gender differences in pupil culture outside lessons. Though conducted with much younger children, Grugeon's (1993) research on girls' playground games almost dichotomizes girls' and boys' playground activities. Stutz's (1992, cited in Grugeon, 1993) research into the play of 7-14 year olds found that boys' play lacked the sociability of girls' play. However, in this study, break and lunch provided opportunities for social interaction for both girls and, albeit less so, for boys.

Steven, interestingly, linked football and friends:

Your friends and football are more important than lessons. (January, 1997)

However, Steven, like some of the other boys, was by no means involved merely in football with his friends. I observed him out of lesson time standing around in groups, both single-sex and mixed, engaged in conversation. Three of the girls, Stacey, Sara and Fiona, emphasized how they valued talking to Steven and to some of the other boys in friendship group three. These girls described how, for instance, in tutor time, they would tell Steven they wanted to talk. Steven apparently would ask the girls what they wanted to talk about, and a conversation would ensue (Research Log, 23.1.97.). Andrew was also seen by these girls as a 'real good friend' (Sara, Interview, February, 1997). According to Sara, she could talk to Andrew about anything, and he would be able to give advice, particularly about boyfriends (Interview, February, 1997).

Brian (isolate) and Laura (isolate), were the only young people who did not mention valuing the social interaction school provided a forum for. As they were unpopular with the rest of the tutor group, this was an area I felt would have been insensitive to raise with them. Apart from Brian and Laura, students' accounts and my observations of their actions revealed that both boys and girls, across family structures and friendship groups, greatly valued the social dimension of school.

6.3.4. Challenging the Norms.

As described in the section on behaviour typologies earlier this chapter, an important part of school life for the disaffected and unmanageable students was challenging institutional norms. This both made school more exciting and affirmed and strengthened social bonds. It was not only the illicit activities in themselves, but also the build up and aftermath to forbidden activities, which were important to the disaffected and unmanageable students, such as those in friendship groups two and three.

For example, in a maths lesson just before break, Sara told me that she was longing for break, to smoke with friends on the school field. Sara detailed who would be 'up the field' and what some of the interpersonal relations between students were. Sara was much more engaged with this than with the maths lesson (Research Log, 13.1.97.). Indeed the zest and the eager anticipation students conveyed to me when talking about their illicit activities underlined the extent to which these activities were to the forefront of their minds, in contrast to the academic side of school.

Over the course of fieldwork, there were various examples of disaffected and unmanageable students enjoying the aftermath of forbidden activities. On the occasions when the disaffected students in friendship groups two and three drank at lunchtime, afternoon lessons were more exciting for them, because of the risk that they might give the drinking away through their behaviour. Whilst I did not witness the following lesson, I have no reason to disbelieve students' accounts of it. Not only did a number of students

tell me the same account, but I was also present when students were talking about the situation amongst themselves. In any case, the scene described was not dissimilar to other scenes I was present at whilst at Springfield.

In one afternoon science class, after a session of lunchtime drinking, Steven apparently put on a pair of safety goggles and ran round chanting, 'Safety first!', oblivious to the teacher. It was not a practical lesson; there was no reason to wear goggles. 'Safety first' was the science teacher's catch-phrase when goggles were handed out before experiments. At one point in the lesson, Steven fell backwards off his stool and was splayed on the floor, unable to get up. According to students' accounts, the teacher shouted, 'Steven!', stood over him and asked him several times what cartilage was. Steven, according to the students, went 'completely white' and was unable to articulate himself properly. He managed replies like:

It's the thingy, the thingy, the stuff between the thingies, um that fluid stuff ...

Apparently, Sara was hissing:

Steven! Steven! Act normal! (Research Log.13.3.97.)

Such occasions formed part of the stock of stories that the disaffected students in friendship groups two and three delighted in regaling each other with. Such illicit events, therefore, added to the disaffected students' enjoyment of school, not only as they occurred, but also subsequently, when they entered the students' oral folklore, to be told and retold to one another. In this way, the forbidden activities, and the build up to them and their aftermath, also strengthened students' social bonds. By implicit contrast, the academic side of schooling was further downplayed by these students.

6.4. Attainment.

6.4.1. SATs and CATs.

The introduction to this chapter referred to previous research which, using representative samples, found negative relationships between children's educational attainment and family reordering (Wadsworth and Maclean, 1986; Wadsworth, 1988, 1991; Elliott and Richards, 1991; Sweeting et al., 1998). Within this sample, students' educational attainment will be considered according to family structure, gender and friendship groups, using outcomes in national examinations/tests: Key Stage Three (KS3) Standardised Assessment Task (SAT) scores in English, maths and science, and cognitive ability test (CAT) scores. The students took KS3 SAT examinations in English, maths and science in the summer term, 1997, when they were in Year Nine. The students took three CAT tests: v (verbal ability), q (quantitative ability) and n (non-verbal ability), when they were in Year Ten, in 1998.

The school had a standardised assessment system: 1-5 for attainment, with 1 as the highest and 5 as the lowest, and A-E for effort. School-based assessments have, however, not been used here because there was no systematic moderation of marking within the school. It is likely that there was considerable variation in marking, both between and within faculties. In contrast, grades from national examinations and tests have, in theory, been marked and moderated, to set criteria.

Whilst the CAT tests were taken in Year 10, they have been analysed according to students' family structure at time one, in January, 1997. This is, as argued in chapter four, for consistency across the thesis as a whole. However, it is recognized that this is to some extent problematic, because some students had experienced changes in family structure over the fieldwork. This is a further indication of the potential arbitrariness of the categorization of family structure within the research literature, as discussed in

The discussion in this section makes no attempt to generalize the scores to a wider population. Tables have been used to summarize the data, and the section aims to describe briefly the attainment data for this sample, according to family structure, gender and friendship groups, to explore the extent to which, within this small sample, there are variations and patterns in the students’ SAT and CAT scores.

Table 6.4 summarizes students’ KS3 SAT results in English, maths and science, and students’ average SAT grade over the three subjects. The table then summarizes students’ three CAT scores, and the average for the three. In SATs, most 14 year olds score between level four and level seven; according to the school documentation (Springfield, 1998) from which scores are taken, the average pupil should be at level 5.5 at KS3. The highest score possible in a CAT test is nine; if a student scores nine, then he/she is in the top ninth of the population.

Table 6. 4. SATs and CATs.

Name	Structure	SAT Engl	SAT M.	SAT Sc.	Aver	CAT v	CAT q	CAT n	Aver
Andrew	Intact	5	6	5	5.3	5	6	5	5.3
Steven	Intact	7	6	6	6.3	7	7	7	7
Sammy	Intact	7	6	5	6	6	7	4	5.7
Lynn	Intact	6	4	4	4.7	4	4	5	4.3
Clare	Intact	5	4	4	4.3	3	5	4	4
Garry	Intact	5	6	5	5.3	6	8	9	7.7
Muhammed	Intact	5	4	3	4	2	2	3	2.3
Malcolm	Intact	4	5	5	4.7	3	6	6	5
Laura	Intact	3	3	4	3.3	1	3	5	3
Karen	Intact	6	6	5	5.6	6	6	8	6.7
Rebecca	Intact	7	6	5	6	5	5	4	4.7
Julie	Intact	4	5	4	4.3	3	4	5	4
Matty	Intact	4	5	4	4.3	3	6	5	4.7
Carla	Intact	6	5	5	5.3	4	6	6	5.3
Emma	Intact	6	5	5	5.3	5	5	6	5.3
Tom	Intact	5	4	4	4.3	5	4	4	4.3
Johnny	Intact								
Danny	Intact	5	5	6	5.3				
Louise	Reordered	4	4	4	4	4	4	7	5
Lizbeth	Reordered	6	5	5	5.3	4	5	4	4.3

Fiona	Reordered	6	6	5	5.6	4	7	7	6
Anna	Reordered	6	5	5	5.3	4	4	5	4.3
Leanne	Reordered								
David	Reordered	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Martin	Reordered								
Stacey	Reordered	6	5	6	5.6	4	4	6	4.6
Charley	Reordered	3	3	4	3.3	3	4	2	3
Helen	Single	5	3	4	4	2	2	3	2.3
Sara	Single	5	5	6	5.3	6	4	6	5.3
Tim	Single	4	3	4	3.6	2	3	4	3
Colin	Single	5	4	4	4.3	3	3	5	3.7
Brian	Care								

Key:
 SAT Engl. = SAT English.
 SAT M. = SAT maths.
 SAT sc. = SAT science.
 CAT v = verbal ability.
 CAT q = quantitative ability.
 CAT n = non-verbal ability.
 Aver = average.

Springfield’s booklet (Springfield, 1998) did not include scores for students who had left Springfield before September, 1997. The table above therefore does not contain scores for all students in 9YLC. In Danny’s case, his SAT scores were available, but not his CAT scores.

6.4.2. Attainment and Family Structure.

Table 6.5: Scores Available by Family Structure.

Family Structure	N SATs	N CATs
Intact nuclear	17	16
Reordered nuclear	7	7
Single-parent	4	4
Total N	28	27

Table 6.5 illustrates the number of SAT and CAT scores available for students in 9YLC, according to categories of family structure.

Table 6.6. Family Structure and Ranges of Average SAT and CAT Scores.

Family Structure	Range: SATs (Average)	Range: CATs (Average)
Intact nuclear	6.3 - 3.3	7.7 - 2.3
Reordered nuclear	5.6 - 3.3	6 - 3
Single-parent	5.3 - 3.6	5.3 - 2.3

Table 6.6 shows that, within this sample, there was a range of scores for both SATs and CATs, within each category of family structure. Table 6.6 shows that the range was greatest, for both SATs and CATs, within the intact nuclear category. However, as the intact nuclear category was the largest category, it had potentially more scope for spanning a wider range of scores than the other categories. The highest score for SATs and CATs was in the intact nuclear category. The lowest score in the intact nuclear group was, in the case of SATs, as low as in the reordered nuclear category, and, in the case of CATs, as low as in the single-parent category. For SATs, the lowest score in the single-parent category was higher than the lowest scores in the intact and reordered nuclear categories.

Table 6.7. Family Structure and Frequencies of Average SAT Scores.

Structure	3- 3.4	3.5-3.9	4-4.4	4.5-4.9	5-5.4	5.5-5.9	6-6.4
Intact	1		5	2	5	1	3
Reordered	1		2		2	2	
Single		1	2		1		
N = 28	2	1	9	2	8	3	3

Table 6.8. Family Structure and Frequencies of Average CAT Scores.

Structure	2- 2.4	2.5- 2.9	3- 3.4	3.5- 3.9	4- 4.4	4.5- 4.9	5- 5.4	5.5- 5.9	6- 6.4	6.5- 6.9	7- 7.4	7.5- 7.9
Intact	1		1		4	2	4	1		1	1	1
Reordered			1		3	1	1		1			
Single	1		1	1			1					
N = 27	2	0	3	1	7	3	6	1	1	1	1	1

Tables 6.7 and 6.8 illustrate the frequencies of average SAT and CAT scores, within ranges, according to family structure. Tables 6.7 and 6.8 show that there were clusterings in the average scores for SATs and CATs. For average SAT scores, there were 19

students clustered between levels 4 and 5.4. This illustrates that the sample as a whole is skewed downwards from level 5.5 which, according to the Springfield documentation (Springfield, 1998) referred to earlier, represents the level for the average student. The CAT scores for 16 students were clustered between 4 and 5.4. The skewing downwards was most marked in the reordered nuclear and single-parent categories, particularly for the CAT scores of students in single-parent families.

6.4.3. Attainment and Gender.

Table 6.9: Scores Available by Gender.

Gender	SATs	CATs
Boys	12	11
Girls	16	16
N	28	27

Table 6.10: Gender and Range of Average SAT and CAT Scores.

Gender	SATs Average	CATs Average
Boys	6.3 - 3.3	7.7 - 3
Girls	6 - 3.3	6.7 - 2.3

Table 6.11: Gender and Frequency of Average SAT Scores.

Gender	3 - 3.4	3.5 - 3.9	4 - 4.4	4.5 - 4.9	5 - 5.4	5.5 - 5.9	6 - 6.4
Boys	1	1	5	1	3	0	1
Girls	1	0	4	1	5	3	2
N = 28	2	1	9	2	8	3	3

Table 6.12: Gender and Frequency of Average CAT Scores.

Gender	2- 2.4	2.5- 2.9	3- 3.4	3.5- 3.9	4- 4.4	4.5- 4.9	5- 5.4	5.5- 5.9	6- 6.4	6.5- 6.9	7- 7.4	7.5- 7.9
Boys	1	0	2	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	1	1
Girls	1	0	1	0	5	2	4	1	1	1	0	0
N = 27	2	0	3	1	7	3	6	1	1	1	1	1

Tables 6.9 - 6.12 illustrate that, within this sample, there was a range in the average SAT and CAT scores according to gender. Whilst the highest average SAT and CAT scores

were in the boys’ group, tables 6.11 and 6.12 show that, on the whole, the girls tended to do better than the boys.

6.4.4. Attainment and Friendship Groups.

Table 6.13: Sample by Friendship Groups.

Friendship Group	N = SATs	N = CATs
One	5	5
Two	5	5
Three	8	7
Four	4	4
Five	5	5
N	27	26

Table 6.13 illustrates the SAT and CAT scores available for the sample, according to friendship group. Laura’s SAT and CAT scores have not been included, because, as discussed in 6.1, she was an isolate.

Table 6.14: Friendship Groups and Range of Average SAT and CAT Scores.

Friendship Group	SATs	CATs
One	6 - 4.3	5.7 - 4
Two	6 - 5.3	6 - 4.3
Three	6.3 - 3.3	7 - 3
Four	5.3 - 4	7.7 - 3.7
Five	5.6 - 4	6.7 - 2.3

Table 6.15: Friendship Groups and Frequency of Average SAT Scores.

Friend-ship Group	3 - 3.4	3.5-3.9	4 - 4.4	4.5-4.9	5 - 5.4	5.5-5.9	6-6-6.4
1	0	0	1	0	3	0	1
2	0	0	0	0	2	2	1
3	1	1	2	1	2	0	1
4	0	1	2	0	1	0	0
5	0	0	3	1	0	1	0
N = 27	1	2	8	2	8	3	3

Table 6.16: Friendship Groups and Frequency of Average CAT Scores.

Friend- ship Group	2- 2.4	2.5- 2.9	3- 3.4	3.5- 3.9	4- 4.4	4.5- 4.9	5- 5.4	5.5- 5.9	6- 6.4	6.5- 6.9	7- 7.4	7.5- 7.9
One	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Two	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
Three	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	0
Four	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Five	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
N = 26	2	0	2	1	7	3	6	1	1	1	1	1

Table 6.14 illustrates that there was a range in average CAT and SAT scores according to friendship group. Across SAT and CAT scores, the range was greatest in friendship group three, the large group of disaffected boys. However, because this was the largest friendship group, there was potentially more scope for spanning a wider range of scores than in the other friendship groups. Whilst in friendship group four, there was a larger range in the average CAT scores than the average SAT scores, table 6.16 illustrates that this was because of an outlier, and that the other CAT scores were clustered together. In friendship groups one and two, in contrast to the other friendship groups, the average SAT and CAT scores are on the whole clustered in what were the higher grades within this sample. These two groups consisted of girls. Their average SAT scores were on the whole higher than those of the girls in friendship group five.

6. 5. Attendance at School.

Within the literature on school attendance, early research (eg Kline, 1898 and Healy, 1915, cited in O’Keeffe, 1993) tended to attribute the causes of truancy to perceived inadequacies in children and/or their homes. More recent research (eg Carroll et al.1977; O’Keeffe, 1993) has challenged this view, arguing that schools also play a part in fostering good school attendance. Within the research on family structure, Cockett and Tripp (1994) found that more parents in reordered families than parents in intact nuclear families said that their children had truanted. Mitchell (1985), using a sample of children in reordered families, found that some had truanted, though she was unable to make any comparison with the intact nuclear category.

This section will explore school attendance in more detail than Mitchell (1985) and Cocket and Tripp (1994). It will assess the extent to which these students' attendance was related to family structure, gender and friendship groups. This section will first focus principally on the school register, as a quantitative record of students' attendance. Analysis of the attendance register did not form part of the attendance research I conducted. The section will then use other data sources to discuss the processes of truancy.

6.5.1. The School Attendance Register.

Until July, 1997, the school used an Optical Mark Reader (OMR). This recorded attendance on the Systems Information Manager (SIMs) system. Some research (Blyth and Milner, 1999) has highlighted potential inaccuracies in school attendance records. Indeed, although OMR was the school's official system, OMR data on student attendance should be used with some caution. In September, 1997, OMR was replaced by Bromcom. Bromcom is a system of networked computerized registers, carried by individual teachers, who take the register at the beginning of every lesson. Bromcom is perceived by the school to be a more thorough and accurate system than OMR. The change from OMR to Bromcom therefore raises some questions about the reliability of OMR data.

In spite of their problems, OMR data have been used here. It was considered more appropriate to use the 1996-7 OMR data, rather than the 1997-8 Bromcom data. 1996-7 was the principal period of fieldwork, and the data on students' truancy discussed later in this section were constructed principally during the main period of fieldwork.

The official register recorded reasons for each absence as follows: medical, holiday, exclusion, unauthorized and absence for other authorized reasons. It was decided not to include types of absence for each student systematically in the analysis below, because the SIMs manager considered that the OMR record of specific reasons for individual

students’ absence was more inaccurate than its record of attendance totals for individual students (Research Log, 9.12.97.). The officially recorded type of absence for some individuals will be referred to in the discussion, where I was able to verify, through conversation with the individuals concerned, the type of absence recorded on the register.

According to SIMS, there were potentially 190 attendances am and 190 attendances pm, for the academic year 1996-7.

Table 6.17. Students’ Average Total Attendance.

Name	Family Structure	Average am, pm Attendance (out of 190)
Andrew	Intact nuclear	163
Steven	Intact nuclear	170.5
Sammy	Intact nuclear	176
Lynn	Intact nuclear	181.5
Clare	Intact nuclear	186
Garry	Intact nuclear	182
Muhammed	Intact nuclear	180
Malcolm	Intact nuclear	167
* Laura	Intact nuclear	
Karen	Intact nuclear	187
Rebecca	Intact nuclear	181
Julie	Intact nuclear	181.5
Matty	Intact nuclear	172.5
Carla	Intact nuclear	185.5
Emma	Intact nuclear	179.5
Tom	Intact nuclear	182.5
Johnny	Intact nuclear	180.5
Danny	Intact nuclear	166
Louise	Reordered nuclear	164.5
Lizbeth	Reordered nuclear	180.5
Fiona	Reordered nuclear	171.5
Anna	Reordered nuclear	182.5
* Leanne	Reordered nuclear	175.5
David	Reordered nuclear	180
Martin	Reordered nuclear	140
Stacey	Reordered nuclear	180.5
Charley	Reordered nuclear	155

Helen	Single-parent	147.5
Sara	Single-parent	182
Tim	Single-parent	127.5
Colin	Single-parent	175
* Brian	Care	118.5

- * In the spring term 1997, Laura changed tutor groups. To analyse Laura’s attendance, I would have had to ask the SIMs manager, who photocopied 9YLC’s attendance record for me, to photocopy the attendance record of another tutor group. I did not want to risk straining research relationships.
- * Leanne took time off towards the end of the summer term, 1997 to help sort out her family’s removal arrangements. This lowered her attendance record.
- * As Brian left Springfield in May, 1997, his attendance will not be included in the analysis of attendance for the whole school year.

The range in total attendances at school for the academic year 1997-8 was from 127.5 (Tim, single-parent) to 187 (Karen, intact nuclear), a range of 59.5. This illustrates that there was considerable variation in students’ total school attendance within 9YLC.

For a more detailed consideration of total attendance per student, total attendances have been grouped as follows: 180-190 days, 170-179.5 days, 160-169.5 days, 152-159.5 days, and below 152 days. The figure of 152 has been chosen because the Education Social Worker (ESW) Service intervenes when students’ attendance falls below 80%: 152 or fewer days out of 190 for the school year 1996-7. The 150s range has therefore been taken from above the ESW intervention figure of 152, from 152.5 to 159.5 days.

Almost half the class (15 students) had a total school attendance between 180 and 190 days. These students were: Karen, Clare, Carla, Tom, Garry, Lynn, Rebecca, Johnny, Muhammed, Anna, Julie, Lizbeth, David, Stacey and Sara. Students within this range spanned family structures. 10 of these students were from intact nuclear families (six

girls, four boys); four from reordered nuclear families (three girls, one boy); and there was one girl from a single-parent family. There was an association within this group between gender and attendance; two thirds of these 15 students were girls. In the case of the three students who were clearly the best attenders, there were associations between attendance and gender, family structure and behaviour type. They were all girls from intact nuclear families and their behaviour was boffin. Young people with an average attendance of between 180 and 190 days spanned the friendship groups. There were three girls from friendship group one, four girls from friendship group two, two boys from group three, three boys from group four and three girls from group five.

There were seven students whose total school attendance was between 170 and 179.5. Students within this range of school attendances spanned the range of family structures. Four of these were from intact nuclear families (two girls, two boys), two were from reordered nuclear families (girls), and one was from a single-parent family (boy). The gender balance was almost equal in this group (four girls, three boys). This group included students from all friendship groups except for group five. Just under half (three) of the students in this range were from friendship group one. One girl was from group two, two boys were from group three, and one boy was from group four.

There were four students whose total attendance was between 160 and 169.5. Three of these were boys from intact nuclear families. The fourth, Louise, was from a reordered nuclear family. Whilst Louise was from friendship group five, the three boys (Malcolm, Danny and Andrew) were from friendship group three.

There was one student, Charley, in the category 152-159.5. Charley was from a reordered nuclear family, and from friendship group three.

Without including Brian, there were three students who attended school for 152 or fewer days. These were Martin (reordered nuclear), Helen (single-parent) and Tim (single-parent). There were no young people from intact nuclear families in this category. These

students spanned three friendship groups: Martin was from group four, Tim from group three, and Helen was from group five. There was a link between students with the lowest attendance in 9YLC and behaviour type; all three students were unmanageable.

However, according to the official register, the three young people who attended for 152 or fewer days had contrasting reasons for their high number of absences. Martin, who had 140 out of 190 school attendances, spent 19.5 school days on holiday, on a trip with his family to the Far East. Helen, who attended 127.5 days, was excluded from school for 25 days. Tim, who attended school for 127.5 days, was, apparently, ill for 35 days, and had 25.5 days' unauthorised absences. Though these three students were all from reordered families, the disparate reasons given for their absences make the cases difficult to compare.

Whilst analysis of the school register illustrates that total level of school attendance was largely unassociated with family structure, qualitative data revealed that the attendance of three students (Louise, Brian and Danny) was temporarily affected by issues related to family structure. According to the official register, between 21 April, 1997 and the end of the school year, Louise had 35 unauthorised absences. Louise told me, both in interview and in tutor time, that she had to take time off school, to help her mother sort out family issues, after her step-father had left.

Brian (care) had 31 absences for 'other authorised circumstances', between 17 March, 1997, and 9 May, 1997, when he left school. The absences occurred between Brian finding out he was going to live with his mother in a nearby town, rather than live in care, until his move took place. In Danny's case, from June, 1997, he started to have unauthorised absences and in the course of Year 10 became a school refuser. Danny's refusal to attend school began immediately subsequent discovering that he had been adopted.

Common to all these cases is that the students' absences coincided with a transitional

phase in family structure. Whilst Danny was not moving into a family, like Brian, or having a new adult living with the family, like Louise, he had learnt new information about his family. Evidence from this sample suggests that attendance can be affected by other changes in family circumstances, unrelated to family structure. Leanne, as previously described, had time off before her family moved house to a nearby town.

6.5.2. Truancy.

The official attendance record will not be used to discuss truancy. This is not only because of its inaccuracies, discussed earlier, in recording types of absence. OMR, in contrast to Bromcom, could not pick up post registration truancy (PRT) (O’Keeffe, 1993). Furthermore, whatever the system, blanket truancy (BT) is likely to be underreported (Stoll and O’Keeffe, 1989; O’Keeffe, 1993). To conceal whole-day truancy, some students forge sickness notes, whilst some parents condone children’s truancy, by writing sickness notes. For instance, on January 20, 1997, Sara was marked on the register as absent for medical reasons. When I interviewed Sara later in the week, she told me she had been truanting, and that the boy she had truanting with had forged her sickness note as, apparently, Sara could not imitate her mother’s signature. The rest of this section will, therefore, use data constructed from student interviews, informal conversations with students and observation of students, and the data from the attendance questionnaire to discuss truancy in 9YLC. One of these data sources, the attendance questionnaire, was used in the attendance research I conducted. The section will explore the processes of truancy and will consider whether there were associations between truancy and family structure, gender and/or friendship group.

These sources of data revealed that all students in 9YLC, apart from Clare, Louise and Karen, had truanting, though some did not attach the labels ‘truancy’ or ‘skiving’ to, for instance, pretending to be ill.

Four girls (Emma, Lizbeth, Stacey and Fiona) apparently took occasional days off if they

felt under pressure from school. Although Lizbeth and Emma did not talk about this to me, both girls wrote about it in the attendance questionnaire in the summer term, 1998; Emma, for example, wrote:

I pretend that im ill because i might have had an argument or the whole thing might be getting on top of me but not very often though.

The girls described in the questionnaire how they would occasionally take a day off, if they felt stressed by school, if they had too much homework, or, in Year 10, if there were coursework demands. This latter point concurs with Stoll and O’Keeffe’s (1989) finding that truancy increased in GCSE years because of coursework demands. In contrast, no boy said that he had truanted because of pressure of school.

Emma and Lizbeth were also among those girls who, across the range of girls’ friendship groups (one, two and five), described, chiefly in interview, how they had taken time off school when they were being bullied. The other girls were Lynn, Leanne, Carla and Stacey. Lynn, for instance, said:

I didn’t wanna live anymore (because of bullying)... I pretended I was ill sometimes and my mum she knew I was just pretending, but she thought it would be better for just a few days, like for me to stay off. (Interview, January, 1997)

Four out of the six girls were in friendship group one. The girls in group one described, on various occasions over the course of fieldwork, together and also separately in interview, how, for intermittent periods, the interpersonal dynamics within their friendship group had previously been highly charged and difficult to resolve, and how members of the group had been highly antagonistic to one another. No boys, in contrast, took time off, or chose to talk about taking time off, because of being bullied. Truancy because of being bullied was related to gender and, to some extent, friendship group.

In Stoll and O’Keeffe’s (1989) research, boredom was the reason most frequently cited

by students for truancy. The majority of the young people in 9YLC (23) took time off school because of boredom with school, and, in contrast, the allure of out-of-school activities. Section 6.3.2. indicated that Stacey's boredom with school increased over time. In answer to the question, 'What do you do when you skive?' Stacey wrote:

Smoke drink mess about have fun in other words. (attendance questionnaire, summer term, 1998)

The 23 students who truanted because of boredom with school were: Andrew, Steven, Sammy, Lynn, Garry, Muhammed, Malcolm, Rebecca, Julie, Matty, Tom, Johnny, Danny, Fiona, Anna, David, Martin, Stacey, Charley, Sara, Tim, Colin and Brian. These students were from the range of family structures, included both boys and girls, and spanned all the friendship groups. There was a relationship between behaviour type and not truanting because of boredom with school. No girl who was a boffin truanted because of boredom with school. Sammy, whose behaviour was disaffected, was the only girl in friendship group one to truant through boredom with school.

Whilst Stoll and O'Keeffe (1989) argue that many school attendance records conceal, rather than reveal, blanket truancy, doing ethnography meant that I had access to some occasions when students were planning to truant. These occasions revealed peer influence, both when truancy was considerably pre-planned and when it was spontaneous. For instance, during the summer term, 1997, Andrew and Steven spent one tutor time planning to miss school for two days the next week, to go fishing together, and put their plan into practice. On another occasion, I was due to interview Andrew. Matty, Malcolm and Steven arrived at the same time, and asked if they could all be interviewed together. When I suggested that Matty, Malcolm and Steven should go to their next lesson. Malcolm, in contrast, suggested to Matty and Steven that they should truant together. The two agreed and all three truanted, but were caught by Karl Price.

According to the young people's accounts, the decision not to truant was sometimes

related to family, though not to family structure. Although it has been described how Louise took time off school after her step-father left, Louise also said she did not truant. Louise associated this with her mother, who apparently would 'kill' her if she were caught for truanting. This, according to Louise, might prompt her mother to inquire about the rest of Louise's school life. Tom said that truanting was difficult because of his mother who would 'do' him, if caught. Whilst Tom focused on parental authority, Fiona and Julie gave a contrasting reason: Fiona and Julie said that their mothers would be upset and that they would feel guilty about this. It may be the case that Fiona and Julie also thought that they might get into trouble with their mothers; perhaps selfless and selfish reasons co-existed.

6.6. Conclusions.

This chapter has illustrated that, in this sample, there were some associations between the students' school experience and a range of different factors, of which family structure was only one.

Within this sample, friendship groups all spanned a range of family structures. Friendship groups were organized according to gender. Except in the case of group five, each friendship group principally contained students of a similar behaviour type.

There was an association between family structure and behaviour; the students in the single-parent and care categories were all either naughty, disaffected or unmanageable. There was also associations between gender and behaviour, at both extremes of the typology. All the boffins were girls, and five out of the seven unmanageable students were boys. The data suggested that teachers can influence students' behaviour, both negatively and positively. The example of Mr. Silva, with Cockett and Tripp's (1994) and Power's (1998) evidence, suggested that some teachers can stereotype family structure.

There were few patterns in students' views on school. The example of two students suggested that experience of family reordering can increase the value some students place on education. Students, whatever their family structure, gender, or friendship group increasingly expressed dislike of school. There was a link between gender and behaviour type, and reason for disliking school. The boffin girls increasingly disliked school, because of pressure. There was another link between gender and reason given for disliking school. Some girls described how being bullied had made them negative about school. Nearly all students, both boys and girls, whatever their behaviour type, placed great importance on the social dimension of schooling. With the disaffected and unmanageable students, a key part to enjoyment of school was challenging its norms by participating in illicit activities and subsequently revelling in the oral folklore generated.

Within this sample, there was variation in the level of educational attainment within each category of family structure and some similarities across the categories of family structure. Tables 6.7 and 6.8 showed that where SAT and CAT scores clustered (4-5.4 for SATs; 4-5.4 for CATs), students obtaining these scores spanned the range of family structures. There were some associations between gender and attainment; the girls on the whole did better than the boys, though boys gained the two highest average CAT scores.

Almost half the class attended school for 180 days or more out of 190. Whilst these students spanned the range of family structures, there were links with gender. Two thirds were girls. In the case of the best attenders, there were associations with family structure, gender and behaviour type. The best attenders were all girls from intact nuclear families, who were boffins. There was an association with family reordering and students with the poorest attendance. The three students who attended school for 152 or fewer days, the Educational Social Worker (ESW) figure for intervention, were all from reordered families. However, they had different reasons for having low attendance; this makes them difficult to compare. The qualitative data showed that three other students had time off when they were experiencing a transition in their family structure, or, in Danny's case, a transition in his understanding of his family structure. Whilst Cockett and Tripp

(1994:23) argue that schools can help students when they experience conflict over family reordering, their point may have implications, not only for family reordering, but also for schools' approach to major life changes experienced by students.

The data revealed that nearly all students had truanted. There appeared no relationship between the fact of having truanted and family structure, gender or friendship group. Data were not collected on the amount individuals had truanted, but there was a variety of insights into the processes of truancy within this sample. As with Stoll and O'Keeffe's (1989) research, the most common reason for truancy was boredom with school. Whilst the majority of students (23) said they had truanted because of boredom, the boffin girls were not amongst these students. There were some associations between gender and reasons for truanting; some girls had truanted because of feeling under pressure, and some girls had truanted because of being bullied. Interestingly, in the case of four young people, there were associations between deciding not to truant and family. Access to some occasions when students were planning to truant revealed the importance of peer influence in this process. The insights into the impact of family on some students' attendance may point to the school's role in being understanding during periods of family difficulty or family change, though it is questionable how the school could collect this type of information effectively.

Within this sample, within each area considered, there were some associations with family structure, gender and friendship groups. In this data set, there appeared to be more associations between gender and schooling than between family structure and schooling. The range of associations, the small size of the sample, the lack of consistent patterning according to family structure, and the insights doing ethnography offered into the processes of schooling, indicate that, within this sample, categorizing students' experience of schooling according to family structure conceals the complexities of the processes involved in these students' experience of schooling.

Chapter 7: Home and School.

The Plowden Report's (1967) metaphor of a triangle to conceptualize the relationship of children, parents and teachers is well known. Home-school relations are also frequently described in terms of a partnership (Bastiani, 1992, 1996). Whilst Bastiani (1996) does consider the problems of partnership, the two metaphors in themselves may suggest that a neat simplicity characterizes issues involving home and school. The metaphors perhaps conceal, rather than reveal, the gaps between home and school and the complexities in the interactions across the gaps. Soo Hoo (1993), Nieto (1994) and Ruddock et al. (1996) argue that students' views are, on the whole, not used by schools to improve students' experience of education. This chapter will explore the interactions between home and school, principally from the viewpoint of key participants: the students themselves. This chapter will try to understand the young people's perceptions of three aspects of the interface between home and school: home involvement in students' schooling, school involvement in issues related to students' home lives, and the treatment of the family in the school curriculum. Where relevant, family structure will be located within the discussion.

7.1. Home Involvement in Students' Schooling.

Though legislation to promote parental involvement in their children's schooling is by no means a phenomenon of the 1980s and afterwards, as the Spens Report (1938), the Education Act (1944) and the Plowden Report (1967) alone testify to, there is no doubt that under the New Right government in the 1980s the drive to promote parental involvement in children's schooling increased greatly. Yet the concept of parental involvement is far from straightforward, and is not necessarily beneficial for the education of all children. First, it has been argued that government pays lip service to

parental power, and subsequently marginalizes parents (Baker, 1994). Second, not all parents are equally equipped to support their children's schooling. Encouraging parental involvement in children's education could therefore reinforce structured inequalities such as those of social class and ethnicity. Third, the extent to which parental involvement in their children's schooling through, for example, attendance at parents' evenings or helping with homework, is beneficial for children's learning is questionable.

Within the research on family structure, little has been written on parental involvement in children's schooling according to family structure. However, some evidence suggests that teachers perceive parents in intact nuclear families as more involved in their children's schooling, than parents of children in reordered families, with lone parents less involved than parents in reordered nuclear families (Cockett and Tripp, 1994). In Cockett and Tripp's study, for example, lone parents said that practical issues meant it was problematic to attend parents' evenings.

7.1.1. Parental Participation in Schooling.

This section will discuss the young people's perceptions of parental involvement in their schooling. Examination of school records at Springfield indicated that some parents intervened in students' schooling by, for instance, writing to school or meeting with teachers, over school-based behavioural and educational issues. However, students tended not to explore this with me. In contrast, students talked more about parental involvement in schooling, in terms of homework and parents' evenings.

These young people's accounts suggested that most of their parents, across the range of family structures, wanted to help with homework. Macbeath and Turner (1990:49) found that, whilst parents felt less equipped to help with homework, as children progressed through secondary school, parents frequently felt able to help in one specific area. In this study, students' accounts suggested that parents' ability to help with homework hinged not only on the level of their education as a whole, but also on specific areas of expertise.

Karen, for instance, described how her mother helped with art, and her father sometimes helped with maths. Andrew said his father sometimes helped with maths. Emma also said her father helped with maths, whilst her mother helped with humanities. Stacey described how her resident step-mother helped with science homework, as she worked as a science technician.

Sara, in contrast, described how her mother could not help her with schoolwork, because her mother had apparently left school when she was 14. However, whilst Sara was in a single-parent family through bereavement, her family structure was unrelated to her mother's ability to help with schoolwork.

Gender influenced parental participation in homework. David (1993:180) described mothers as the 'mainstay' of children's home-based education, and in contrast to Sara's case, mothers across the range of family structures appeared to be more involved than fathers in the young people's education. For example, Muhammed described how his mother often talked to him about homework, underlining the importance of personal organization. Matty highlighted how his mother encouraged him, albeit unsuccessfully, to work hard, whilst his father, in Matty's words 'ke(pt) out' (Interview, January, 1997). Rebecca frequently related how her father distracted her and her sister by having the television on too loudly when they were doing homework. In contrast, her mother bought them reference books to help with homework, and would help look things up.

It was the mothers of three girls in reordered families who appeared to place particular value on education. Fiona stressed, not altogether approvingly, how:

My mum's very keen on school. (Interview, January, 1997)

Fiona then described how her mother talked to her about the importance of education in facilitating success in future life. Anna's and Leanne's mothers were studying for first degrees at university. Anna said of her mother:

She sort of dropped out of school and didn't get very good grades for her GCSEs so she wouldn't be able to get a very good job. Now she's gone to college. She wants to be a teacher and is doing a degree in English. (Interview, April, 1997)

There may be a link between the mothers' decisions to gain further qualifications and the processes of family reordering; perhaps changing family structure is one way of prompting assessment of and taking action upon areas of an individual's life apart from the personal, such as educational qualifications.

Conversations with Leanne and Anna revealed how both mothers were keen for their daughters to succeed academically. For instance, both mothers had bought computers to be used for homework, and had installed Encarta, so the girls had ready sources of information for schoolwork at home. Leanne's mother also sent Leanne for after-school coaching before the Standardized Assessment Task (SAT) tests even though Leanne was viewed by teachers and students as a high-achiever. Leanne was the only member of 9YLC to have extra coaching before the SATs. Anna and, as the following comment suggests, Anna's mother, thought that Leanne's mother put too much pressure on Leanne:

Leanne's not allowed to go out weekdays. She has to finish her homework and if she's finished she has to read or revise ... My mum doesn't agree 'cos if she (Leanne's mother) keeps her (Leanne) in all the time doing homework, then she's not gonna have a life. (Anna, Interview, April, 1997)

In spite of Anna's mother's concern for Leanne, Anna's mother apparently told Anna that the key reason the family was moving house when Anna was in Year 10, was so Anna would be away from 'bad influences' which would prevent her from doing her homework. Whether Anna's mother's stated reason was in fact the family's real reason for moving is open to question. However, Anna's mother's words suggest that she emphasized the importance of homework to her daughter, and Anna seemed to accept her mother's reason at face value.

David was unusual in claiming that his father was actively involved in his schoolwork on a regular basis, whilst his mother was unable to help. This was even though David's natural father was non-resident, whilst David lived with his mother. David apparently had regular contact with his father three times a week. David said that, if he was having problems with schoolwork, he would take his work to his father's, even on evenings when he was not due to see his father. In David's case, family reordering had not removed active parental support of schoolwork. The fact that the non-resident parent lived locally, not at a distance, was important in enabling David's natural non-resident father to be regularly and directly involved with schoolwork. In David's view, a key factor in his father's ability to help was not family structure, but his father's profession. Profession was related to perceptions of expertise. David said his father knew how to do his homework, because he was a teacher. It was interesting that, in David's case, his father's status as a teacher did not mean help was restricted to specific subjects, but apparently encompassed all areas.

However, David's accounts also suggested that contact arrangements with his father sometimes prevented David from doing his homework. Some literature underlines the importance of schools being understanding about the potential problems contact arrangements with the non-resident parent can create for aspects of children's schooling (Bastiani, 1989; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). David's case suggests that teachers were unaware of the complexities in his family arrangements:

The teachers are annoyin' sometimes, because (long pause) when you haven't done your homework, and if you've got a really good reason, like you never had time, 'cos you were at your dad's, and you say that, they just say, 'Well, you should have done it there.' Just things like that. They don't understand, 'cos their dads were probably together when they were at school. (Interview, January, 1997)

Bastiani (1989) and Utting (1995) underline the importance for children's well-being of schools recognizing diversity in family type. David suggests above that teachers had a

model of the two parent family, which did not enable them to appreciate the impact of his family structure on aspects of his schooling.

Anna's non-resident step-mother, Gertie, participated in her schooling. Anna, like David, did not think about Gertie's participation in her homework in terms of family structure, but in terms of perceived parental intelligence:

My dad's not very brainy but Gertie's really clever. She helps me on the computer with my homework and it looks really good. (Interview, September, 1997)

Chapter two described how some research literature argues that changes such as moving house can have a dislocating effect on children and that children in reordered families are likely to experience more of such perceived dislocations than children in intact nuclear families (Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Richards, 1999). Data from this study illustrate that the effects of moving are not as straightforward as the above suggests. Anna described how a transitional period, when her family had moved out of their previous house, but was unable to move into their new house, benefited her schoolwork. This was because Anna stayed with her natural father during this transition. Gertie therefore had extra input into Anna's schoolwork during this period:

I went to my dad's house and I did my homework really well. Gertie helped me and I got A's. (Interview, September, 1997)

At Springfield 'A' was the highest grade for effort while '1' was the highest grade for attainment.

Whilst David's case illustrates that the non-resident parent's participation in the young person's education does not inevitably end with family break-up, Anna's illustrates that family reordering can actually increase the support available for young people's schoolwork: family reordering can, in some cases, benefit rather than hinder school performance.

Research (eg Macbeath and Turner, 1990) underlines that homework can involve other people, whether family or friends. Data from this study illustrate that, across the range of family structures, parents are not the only sources of help for homework. Some students' accounts revealed the role members of the extended family played in homework. Lizbeth, for instance, described how her father could not help with homework, because he was a 'bit thick' (Interview, January, 1997). Her grandmother, however, was able to play an important part in homework, because of the child-care arrangements in Lizbeth's family. Lizbeth's grandmother looked after Lizbeth and her brother after school on a daily basis, until their parents returned from work. According to Lizbeth, her grandmother had 'big books', which her grandmother would refer to if unable to supply the help immediately herself.

Many students, across a range of family structures also received help with homework from older siblings. Some students described how they, in turn, sometimes helped younger siblings with schoolwork. Johnny described how his older sister helped him 'a lot' with homework (Interview, January, 1997). Leanne said her older sister had frequently helped with homework, before leaving home for university, when Leanne started Year Nine. Sammy also described how her oldest brother, who lived with his girlfriend in Castletown, helped with schoolwork when he visited her family.

Some literature (Wolfendale, 1983, 1989; Bastiani, 1989; Atkin et al., 1988) considers the issues involved in increasing parental attendance at parents' evenings. The Campaign for State Education (CASE) (November/December, 1994) commented on 'the difficulties of reaching real parents' because of practicalities such as work commitments. Cockett and Tripp's (1994) finding that this was particularly the case with lone parents has been referred to earlier in this chapter.

For some cases within this sample, parents' attendance at parents' evenings hinged on practicalities. However, this occurred across the range of family structures. Andrew

voiced awareness of potential problems for parents in attending parents' evenings, though his mother attended parents' evenings regularly:

Sometimes it's like puttin' parents out to get them there if they work or if they want to go out. Teachers say you need to come to parents' evenings, but parents have to cancel what they're doin', to come up to the school.
(Interview, January, 1997)

Other students referred specifically to themselves. For instance, Claire, Karen, Muhammed and Stacey said that their parents did not come to parents' evenings, because their fathers were at work in the evenings. In Stacey's case, for instance, her father worked nights and her step-mother, according to Stacey, had to take care of Stacey's two younger step-brothers. Likewise, Muhammed's father did two jobs. This apparently meant that, although Muhammed's father was very supportive of his son's schooling, he was unable to attend parents' evenings, whilst Muhammed's mother stayed at home to look after younger siblings.

David's account showed how family reordering could increase parental attendance at parents' evenings. David said that because his mother had remarried, his step-father would probably attend parents' evenings, in addition to his non-resident natural father (Interview, January, 1997). Sara, in turn, was disappointed that her mother's lover (Sara's uncle and her father's brother) had refused to go to Sara's parents' evenings with her mother. Her mother's lover apparently argued that he had no obligation to attend, as he was not Sara's father. His response appears understandable; he still lived with his own wife, who, according to Sara, was unaware of the extra-marital relationship. Nevertheless, Sara was disappointed by his refusal. Sara's and David's accounts both suggest that they did not think of parental attendance at parents' evenings purely in terms of biological parents.

7.1.2. Students' Views on Home Involvement in Schooling.

Students, across the range of family structures, supported the principle of parental involvement in young people's schooling. The comments below are typical of students' views:

School reports are a good idea, 'cos they tell your parents how you're getting on and they can help and encourage you. (Steven, Interview, January, 1997)

and:

School reports are good 'cos your parents like to know how you're doing and how the teachers think you're doing. (Fiona, Interview, January, 1997)

There was one exception. Tim did not talk about the principle of parental involvement in schooling. Instead, he immediately related general questions about his perception of the importance, first of parents' evenings, and second of homework diaries, to his individual case. Tim commented of parents' evenings:

They're a bad idea 'cos then my mum finds out how bad I really am (Interview, January, 1997),

and of homework diaries:

Only thing homework diaries is good for is drawin' on. The only thing I write is, 'None set!' (Interview, January, 1997)

Whilst all students except Tim supported the idea of parental involvement in their schooling through parents' evenings, homework diaries and school reports, nearly all students reacted against the idea of parents being involved in school by, for instance, giving talks in school or helping on a school trip. Only a small minority of students thought that parents should give talks in school about their jobs. No student wanted

parents to accompany a school trip. Indeed, most reacted with horror to the idea! Many said they would find it 'embarrassing' to have their parents on a school outing. Stacey's and Tim's reactions were perhaps the most extreme to the prospect of parents on a trip. At the suggestion, Stacey stared at me, gesticulated largely and exclaimed emphatically:

You gotta have some freedom! (Interview, January, 1997)

Tim, in turn, declared:

I couldn't handle my mum on a trip! And if she gave a talk in school I'd feel about that big (draws minuscule shape in the air). I'd die. (Interview, 27.1.97.)

Antipathy to the prospect of parents participating directly in some aspects of students' school lives is unconnected with these young people's family structure; it was expressed by all the young people, and would appear to relate to adolescent embarrassment over parents.

Principle and practice differed about parental participation in students' education. In practice, students, across the range of family structures, appreciated parents' involvement in their own education, when students perceived they were doing well at school. In some cases, parental approval of students' school performance was reinforced by rewards. In the morning tutor time after the Year Nine parents' evening Muhammed said he would have liked his parents to have been able to go, as he had 'a good reputation' (Research Log, 5.3.97.); by implication, his parents would have responded positively to teachers' reports on him. A number of other students, particularly girls, were very keen to tell me about positive comments teachers had made about them to their parents the evening before (Research Log, 5.3.97). Leanne, for instance, beamed as she said her mother was 'really proud' of her, whilst Lizbeth and Emma said their parents were pleased their schoolwork had been improving.

Sara's pleasure particularly stood out; she was delighted by her mother's response to teachers' comments at parents' evening. Sara told me:

I'm real pleased ... My mum didn't know about it. My mum was real pleased. She took me out and bought me a load of chocolate yogourts (laughs). She said, 'We'll go to Sainsbury's on the way home.' I go, 'Why?' 'Well,' she goes, 'you gettin' a good report. We'll get you something from Sainsbury's.'... So I 'ad three cans of coke and that yogourt thing. (Interview, March, 1997)

This runs counter to Cockett and Tripp's (1994) findings on perceptions of the reduced participation of lone parents, in comparison to parents in intact or reordered nuclear families, in children's schooling. Sara's mother is actively involved. Sara responds with delight to her mother's pleasure, and is rewarded for teachers' comments about her. Perhaps Sara's pleasure at the reward of some yogourts and coke suggests more about the economic status of her single-parent family than about this lone parent's involvement in her daughter's education.

Similarly, Louise expressed pleasure at her mother's positive response to Mr. Winter, the science teacher's, telephone call to Louise's mother to praise Louise's improvement in science, after Mr. Winter had previously telephoned Louise's home on several occasions to complain about Louise's behaviour in science. Unsurprisingly, both Louise and her mother were pleased at the contrastingly positive telephone call. Like Sara, Louise was rewarded by her mother:

Mr. Winter 'phoned again and 'e said, 'Louise has been makin' an improvement. Like she has been buckin' her ideas up.' I was pleased. My mum said, 'You're doin' good in school. 'Ave a bit more pocket money.' (Interview, April, 1997)

Anna spontaneously volunteered her view that school should acknowledge positive aspects of students' school performance to parents. Anna explicitly linked this to her wish for her mother's affirmation of her schoolwork:

If you've done something good (at school), it would be good if a letter went home to your mum, 'cos then my mum would be really proud of me. If I got something like that, she'd be really happy. (Interview, January, 1997)

It is unsurprising that the young people responded positively to teachers' positive feedback to parents on their children's school performance, not least of all when such praise in turn generated a further reward.

In contrast to the above, Sara commented about school in general:

The things you do wrong seem to matter more than the things you do right.
(Interview, January, 1997)

Students, across the range of family structures, responded negatively to parental involvement in their schooling, when they perceived their parents would respond adversely to knowledge about their school performance. Whilst parental response to positive reports of a student's schooling tended to result in a reward for the student, in contrast, negative reports of students' schooling resulted in parental displeasure manifested through, for instance, tellings off, and, usually, punishment for the young person concerned. This could consist of withholding pocket money, but grounding was the most common punishment. Grounding appeared the most unpopular punishment with the students. It varied in form. Students could be confined to their bedroom or to the house as a whole. Grounding could last a day, but sometimes extended for weeks at a time. Sometimes parents allowed the grounded adolescent to attend after school extra-curricular activities. In other cases, students had to return home immediately after school.

Whatever the precise form of punishment, however, it is hardly surprising that the majority of students (19), across the range of family structures, spoke of attempting to block channels of communication from school to home, when they feared bad news from school which would be likely to result in punishment. Students blocked communication

from school in a variety of forms, and showed some ingenuity in their attempts to prevent information from reaching their parents. Some students' accounts suggested that they invested considerable mental energy, both in fearing and in trying to avoid parental detection of negative reports on aspects of their schooling.

Some students disposed of letters for home given out at school, on the way home. Fiona justified doing this with reasons which were, arguably, selfless as well as selfish. Like Sara's mother, Fiona's mother apparently was upset when Fiona was in trouble at school. Fiona described how she did not want to distress her mother, and also how she did not want to feel guilty about causing any unhappiness. At the same time, Fiona was concerned to protect herself from her mother's displeasure (Interview, December, 1997). Julie described how she ripped up any letters she was supposed to take home from school, but how her mother became directly involved in Julie's school life when the science teacher, Mr. Winter, phoned her mother to complain about Julie's behaviour. Julie, unlike Fiona and Sara, did not comment on her mother's reactions, but merely bemoaned being grounded.

Matty described how, on one occasion, he unwisely delayed intervening in the school's communication with his home. He, unusually, did not throw away a detention slip before arriving home. His mother apparently went through his pockets. The detention was for swearing, and Matty's mother, according to Matty, had strong views on swearing; Matty was grounded. Matty's neglect to take appropriate precautions was in spite of the fact that he had told me he was watching the post at home, to intercept any potential letter from school about the swearing incident (Research Log, 6.3.97.).

Indeed, a number of students described how, if in serious trouble at school, they watched out for the post at home. If a letter had the school stamp on, it was thrown away. Sammy not only told of how she did this, but also how she tried to alleviate her guilt about doing this, by making her parents cups of tea. On one occasion when Lynn was caught by school for truanting, she managed to intercept a letter home about truanting, although her

attempts were then thwarted, because Karl Price, as Head of Year, telephoned her parents (Interview, April, 1997).

Danny said he disposed of his school reports, because his behaviour was poor in some lessons (Interview, January, 1997). Charley had what was perhaps a more subtle method of managing parental responses to school reports. Charley's verdict on school reports was:

I don't like 'em 'cos I suppose your parents need to know how you're gettin' on, but they worry about the stuff what you're not gettin' on with. (Interview, January, 1997)

When asked if his mother encouraged him to act upon negative comments in school reports, Charley responded:

Yeh an' I just agree. It's easier. (Interview, January, 1997)

If students were on behaviour report, then an adult at home had to sign their report book, in which teachers commented on the student's behaviour in every class, on a daily basis. Matty said he only told his parents about what he been doing at school when he was on report, because his potential to withhold information was reduced. On other occasions, Matty circumvented parents' potentially negative responses to aspects of his school performance, by avoiding referring to activities at school. Students such as Andrew claimed they signed their own detention slips, so that their parents did not have to find out that they were in detention (Interview, April, 1997.).

Some students manipulated the appointments system at parents' evenings by booking appointments only with teachers whom they thought would give them a good report. At the Year 10 parents' evening, Sammy made appointments for her parents to see all teachers except the history teacher, because Sammy had had a bad physical fight with

another girl during history. Julie described, with some pride, how, after the Year 10 parents' evening:

... my mum s(aid), 'Oh well done! You're doin' good in school!'
(Interview, November, 1997.),

when Julie had merely taken her mother to see the science, English, PE and Expressive Arts teachers. These were teachers of subjects Julie thought she was doing well in.

Whilst Andrew did book appointments with all his teachers, he dealt with their criticisms by feigned agreement with teachers and his mother, similar to Charley's management of school reports described above. Mr. Bryman, Andrew's history teacher, told me how, when he informed Andrew's mother that Andrew had not done any homework for some months, she responded:

You are going to see a significant improvement in Andrew in the next months. Is that right, Andrew?' (Research Log, 5.3.97.)

Andrew had, apparently, nodded meekly. However, Andrew, in describing the same incident to me, declared that he had no intention of doing history homework (Research Log, 6.3.97.). Tim, in contrast, had a blanket strategy to deal with parents' evenings. Tim told his mother that the school had stopped having them, and then 'lost' the slips for them on the way home (Interview, January, 1997.).

However, Louise was the most determined to prevent her parents from finding out about her school performance. In her first interview (January, 1997), she stated:

I don't like my parents to know what I'm like at school really.'

This understates Louise's consistent and sustained attempts to withhold information on her school performance from her parents. When Louise, on various occasions, subsequently touched on why she did not want her parents to find out about her school

life, her explanations suggested that this was because of wanting to avoid parental surveillance and fury:

If she (her mother) knows about my school life, she'll go mad ... and then she'll know what I'm like every day, like every single minute of every day (with great feeling). (Interview, April, 1997)

Parental fury and parental punishment of Louise were closely interconnected. When Louise's parents found out about any trouble Louise was in at school, Louise was usually grounded.

As a consequence, Louise threw away communications from school to home; as she said:

If there's a letter home, it's in my bag, then it's in the bin. (Interview, April, 1997)

This needed careful timing as, apparently, when Louise's step-father lived with the family during the early part of fieldwork, he was in the habit of checking through Louise's schoolbag for any detention slips or report books (Research Log, 13.1.97.). In Louise's first interview, she related how she was grounded because her step-father had found some detention slips when searching through Louise's bag (January, 1997).

Louise said that she never asked her parents for help with any schoolwork, because she did not want them to see her work (Interview, January, 1997). Louise attempted, if possible, to be put on internal rather than external suspension, as then no letter would be sent home (Interview, January, 1997). Louise, in turn, said she managed being on behaviour report by signing her report book herself (Interview, April, 1997.). Lydia Wye, as form tutor, told Louise she wanted to see her parents, after Louise got the most serious type of detention, a Principal's Detention, after ripping up the slips for other detentions. Louise was in some trepidation about this prospect:

Miss Wye said she wanted to see my parents. If she sees my parents (laughs) God, trouble! (Interview, November, 1997.)

Perhaps fortunately for Louise, Lydia Wye did not choose to contact her parents on this occasion.

However, Louise, unlike Tim, viewed it as inevitable that her parents saw her school reports:

I hate 'em (reports) when they come through, 'cos they (her parents) 'ave to see 'em and then they like notice how I've been, and then they go, 'Tut! Talkin' again!' 'Cos ever since I've been little it's been talkin' on my report. 'Louise is too much constantly talkin'. She needs to shut her mouth up a bit.' (Interview, January, 1997)

Louise's account indicates that her parents had a long-standing awareness of how Louise's talkativeness was seen by school to impede her educational progress. However, over the course of fieldwork, Louise never described her parents attempting to help her deal with the perceived problem, other than to reprimand her. By implication, therefore, Louise viewed school communication with the home as not benefiting her in any way; not only did it potentially result in Louise being told off or grounded, but it also did not help Louise to alter her behaviour.

Whilst students, in principle, supported home involvement in their schooling, and whilst home involvement was welcomed in practice when students were doing well, students had a variety of strategies for blocking a wide range of negative communications about their schooling, from school to the home. Furthermore, students invested considerable resources, in terms of time and energy, into blocking channels of communication from school to home.

7.2. The Impact of Home Issues on Students' Schooling.

This section will explore the extent to which students perceived that issues related to home impacted on their experience of schooling.

7.2.1. Issues Related to Family Reordering.

Seven students, five girls and two boys (Anna, Fiona, Stacey, Louise, Leanne, David and Martin), from reordered nuclear families and two students (Colin and Sara) from single-parent families, said that family reordering had affected aspects of their school lives.

7.2.1.1. Father Absence and Authority.

One student from a single-parent family, Sara, linked loss of her father with a reduction in parental authority. In Sara's opinion, lack of an authority figure partly explained her attitude to aspects of schooling. Sara claimed that, if her father were alive:

I'd probably be more like into my schoolwork, not be not bothered, and I doubt I'd have skived. 'Cos if my dad found out, I'd get grilled ... I would have been tryin' to get better test marks an' that. (Interview, April, 1997)

Sara explained that she had learnt to take responsibility for the decisions she took, in her personal life and in her schooling, because she only had one parent, not two, to tell her what to do. Sara's account suggested that her conception of what she took responsibility for encompassed behaviour which was against official school norms:

I'm gonna skive. I'm willin' to take the responsibility. Only thing is, I don't want my mum to find out, 'cos she gets upset and it's me who's done something wrong. (Interview, April, 1997)

In the above, positive and negative are interwoven; a positive quality, self-responsibility, is channelled into behaviour which is against institutional norms.

7.2.1.2. Conflict in Reordered Families.

As discussed in chapter two, research on family reordering emphasizes the potentially detrimental effects on children of exposure to conflict (Ferri, 1984; Cockett and Tripp, 1994). As discussed in chapter four, some students within this sample revealed that they were distressed by family conflict generated by issues related to reordering. Of the nine students in reordered families who said home life impacted upon school experience, the accounts of seven emphasized the impact on school experience of conflict related to aspects of reordering.

Louise's account emphasized how her parents' arguments, before they split up in May, 1997, affected her behaviour at school. When asked if what happened at home affected what happened at school, Louise's response was unequivocal, although she also felt it necessary almost to apologize for her reaction to her home situation. In her reply, Louise rapidly moved from the general to herself:

I think that what happens at home influences what happens at school all the time really. I know it sounds stupid, but if my parents have had a bad argument, I just wanna have a bad argument at school. I know it sounds stupid, but now my parents are arguin' all the time, even in subjects I used to be good in before, like English, I've started backchattin' the teacher and not doin' my work. (Interview, April, 1997)

As described in chapter four, Louise claimed that her family situation had benefited her, by developing her responsibility. However, Louise referred many times over the fieldwork to her need for an outlet for the inner tensions created, in her view, by her experience of family. As Louise said:

I 'ave to let something out somewhere. (Interview, January, 1997)

Louise described how, at school, she reacted to her parents' arguments:

Louise: Say your parents have had a bad night, you just come to school thinkin', 'No, I just wanna have a bit of fun today.' If my parents are arguin' an' stuff like that, I just come in the next day and just talk. Just go mad.

CH: What do you mean by, 'Just go mad?'

Louise: I just annoy all the teachers an' be silly an' that. (Interview, April, 1997)

Although Louise was lucid about her perception of how she externalized emotions at school, this lucidity in itself was in itself not enough to alter her behaviour at school; Louise was often in trouble at school for disruptive behaviour, talkativeness, and argumentativeness.

As discussed in chapter two, the literature on family structure frequently highlights a short-term crisis period for children after parental break-up (Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998). David described how his parents' break-up two years previously had affected his experience of schooling, in the short-term. David described how his distress at his parents' break-up had affected his concentration both at school and when he was doing his homework:

I just couldn't handle it. It was like in certain lessons when I hadn't done my homework 'cos I didn't understand it, I just thought about him, and thought, 'Oh, if he was still here...' (Interview, January, 1997)

Three months later, in his next interview in April, David revisited the subject of the impact of family reordering upon homework. The fact that David then returned to the subject of homework and family conflict suggests its potential importance to him:

CH: Did this (your parents splitting up) affect you?

David: (Long pause) Yeh. (Long pause) I was still thinkin' about it. I couldn't forget it. I couldn't do my homework very well, because of what was happening. Sometimes they was arguin' whilst I was doin' my homework.

In David's accounts above, his feelings of distress and of being unable to manage his emotions are interwoven with the practical difficulties of doing homework when arguments were taking place. David's openness in his two interviews here, when contrasted with his usual shy reserve with me, underlines the extent to which David perceived family reordering had impinged upon his school experience. However, David also said that, whilst he would still prefer natural parents to be together, he no longer felt so distressed by his family situation that it affected other aspects of his life such as school. David claimed, in effect, that the impact of family reordering on his school performance had been short term.

In contrast to David, as described in chapter four, Stacey's, Leanne's and Fiona's natural parents had split up when they were too young to remember the break-up. The three cases illustrate the potentially long term impact of conflict linked to family reordering on aspects of students' school experience.

Over the fieldwork, Stacey described how her resident step-mother's conflictive relationship with herself and her older natural brother, James, distressed her both at home and school. Stacey frequently stressed how she and James were 'always treated second best' (Interview, April, 1997) by their step-mother. However, there was, as described in chapters three and four, a period of particularly intense tension, triggered by her step-mother's anger when Stacey burnt a frying pan.

According to Stacey and some of the other girls, Stacey had been too scared to tell her step-mother about the frying pan. Instead, Stacey wrote her step-mother a letter of explanation, and went out to avoid her. When Stacey returned, she apparently found her step-mother had 'trashed' her bedroom and had destroyed her art GCSE coursework. Stacey then ran away from home, slept outside her grandmother's house by a dustbin, and truanted from school (Research Log, 27.11.97.).

This event impacted on Stacey's school life, in a range of ways. First, it affected her attendance. Second, Stacey lost some of her coursework. Third, the incident appeared to affect her well-being at school temporarily. For several weeks after this incident, Stacey looked under strain at school and appeared listless and withdrawn, in the views of Lydia Wye, Stacey's female friends and myself (Research Log, 4.12.97.). Fourth, a private family issue became a more public, school issue.

As discussed in chapter four, there was intermittent conflict within Leanne's family over issues related to family reordering. During the period of fieldwork, there was a major dispute in Leanne's family over Leanne's father's maintenance payments for Leanne and her sister, discussed in chapter four. Initially, the dispute was between Leanne's natural parents. However, it then rapidly spiralled to involve a solicitor, Leanne's older natural sister, Leanne's older step-sister, Leanne's resident step-father, Leanne's non-resident step-mother and Leanne herself.

Leanne claimed, as will be discussed later, that she usually managed to block off home conflict from her school life. However, the week after conflict erupted, Leanne requested an additional interview. In this interview she focused on the family dispute. When asked how much she thought about this type of conflict, Leanne responded:

Well I think about it every day all the time really since it happened (laughs). Since Saturday, it's the only time I've spoken about it, 'cos I haven't spoken to any of my friends about it 'cos it's sort of (pause) I dunno, I just didn't wanna speak about it. (Interview, April, 1997)

If Leanne was unable to think of anything else apart from the family conflict, then it impacted, albeit in the short-term, on her school experience. Whilst the dispute distressed Leanne, there was no-one within the school apart from myself with whom she apparently felt able to talk about it to.

Fiona's dissatisfaction created by the discrepancy between the relationship her non-resident father offered and the relationship she would have liked with him, have been discussed in chapter four. Fiona's accounts revealed that this discrepancy between the real and the ideal sometimes impacted on her school life, as when she was upset because her father cancelled their weekend together at the last minute (Interview, April, 1997).

In December, 1997, Fiona's non-resident step-mother left Fiona's non-resident father, apparently for a man she had been having an affair with. Fiona's natural father slit his wrists in response to his altered family structure. Because of her father's attempted suicide, Fiona described herself as 'upset' for several weeks afterwards (Interview, December, 1997).

This incident also illustrates how an issue, which was in this instance originally related to family structure (Fiona's father and his second wife), can ripple outwards, generating a momentum of its own and involving other people. The events in Fiona's family developed into a major peer group conflict, fought out, to some extent, in the forum of the school. When Fiona heard before school one morning about her father's suicide attempt, she apparently telephoned Stacey, in tears. Consequently, Fiona did not meet Sara, as usual, to walk to school. Sara was upset, according to some of the girls: Sara felt let down and relegated as Fiona's friend to second place after Stacey. In turn, Stacey and Fiona did not agree with Sara's perspective; as Stacey said:

I can't stand it Sara being such a bitch about it. I don't see how she could not understand what Fiona was going through. (Interview, December, 1997)

The rift culminated in the following symbolic event, which took place at school, and is narrated here by Stacey:

Fiona, Sara and me had a photo done together. Mine was in my wallet and I ripped her (Sara) off and drew on her. I got Rebecca to give it to Sara. Sara cried. She's not gonna make up with me. (Interview, December, 1997)

During this period, I frequently observed Sara being glared at by Stacey and Fiona. Particularly after the photograph incident, it is unlikely that Sara, or perhaps any of the individuals involved, were able to concentrate fully on schoolwork. It seems probable, therefore, that aspects of the school experience of various girls were affected by what in this instance was originally an incident related to family structure, in the family of one of the girls.

The above illustrates that, according to some young people's accounts, issues related to family reordering impacted on aspects of their school experience. Fiona's example shows how a major conflict involving a range of individuals can escalate from one issue. Whilst in this instance, the issue was related to family reordering, in other cases, the trigger for a major conflict could be unrelated to family structure. The example of Fiona's father and the peer group feud demonstrate how, through the process of conflict, the participants' focus changed, from Fiona's father to perceptions of each others' behaviour.

7.2.1.4. The Impact on School Life of Parental Conflict in Intact Nuclear Families.

Five young people in intact nuclear families (Lynn, Clare, Rebecca, Julie and Carla) also said that, to some extent, parental conflict impinged upon their school experience. There are therefore, similarities between their experience and that of young people in reordered families. Of these five students' accounts, Rebecca's and Julie's suggested that their parents' disputes impacted upon their school experience more than in the other three cases. Chapter four discussed the extent of conflict in their homes: how both young people had experienced the temporary separation of their parents, and how Rebecca's family was teetering on the verge of break-up during the fieldwork.

As will be discussed later, like Leanne, Rebecca claimed she was usually able to separate out home and school, when she was at school. However, during fieldwork, there was a

period of particularly intense conflict between Rebecca's parents, principally over money. During this period, Rebecca was worried because her father had to go to court, and she feared that their house would be repossessed. Rebecca claimed that, on an ongoing basis, her homework was disturbed by vitriolic arguments between her parents. She said that, as a consequence, she was unable to concentrate properly at school (Research Log, May, 1997). During the summer term, 1997, the network of conflict within Rebecca's family impinged upon her school experience.

Julie described how she initially felt very upset when her father left home, but that after a while she became used to the situation (Interview, April, 1997). However, Julie's accounts of family life suggested that, even though Julie's parents were together again, there were recurrent, if relatively infrequent, flare-ups between them, which distressed Julie and her brother. It was discussed in chapter four how, even though Julie told herself that her father would not leave, in Julie's mind there was still room for doubt. Julie said that such incidents distressed her at school as well as home.

Whilst Carla said that she frequently argued with her brother, Carla did not say that these arguments affected her sense of well-being, either at home or at school. Carla also explicitly said that arguing with her father did not distress her (Interview, April, 1997). However when asked what made her sad about her family, Carla said that both when her parents argued and when she argued with her mother, she felt upset, at home and at school (Interview, April, 1997). In Carla's case, it was not the existence of home conflict which affected her at school, but conflict between particular members of her family.

7.2.2. The Impact on School Life of Other Family Tensions.

This section will explore other home issues which, according to the young people, impacted upon experience of schooling: moving house and school, illness and tensions over issues significant to the adolescents.

7.2.2.1.Moving House and School.

It was discussed in chapter two that some research argues that children in reordered families are likely to experience more house moves than children in intact nuclear families and that the experience of moving house and, in some instances, school is potentially dislocating for the young people concerned (Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Richards, 1999).

In this sample, young people across the range of family structures spoke of moving house and, in some cases, of changing schools as a consequence of a house move. Students, across the range of family structures, tended to perceive moving as having a negative effect on school experience. Students did not tend to comment on the educational dimension of school. Instead they focused much more on the impact of moving on friendships.

For instance, Sammy's father had changed profession when she was eight and, since then the family had moved area every two years because of his job. Sammy described how this had affected her experience of school:

I don't like movin' around. It's not the place. It's the schools I 'ave to keep changin' to... It's just the process of making friends again and gettin' used to it and finding your way around. (Interview, January, 1997)

Andrew, who had only moved once, to Castletown from Scotland when he was nine, commented on moving:

I don't really like moving. It's the hassle, changing school and changing friends. (Interview, April, 1997)

Fiona said that their family had moved nine times. As a consequence, Fiona had changed school four times, apart from the transition from primary to secondary. Fiona thought that moving house had created tensions for her at school, because she found changing schools

and having to meet new people stressful; in her words, this process was ‘awful’ (Interview, February, 1997). The moves had occurred principally after the initial family reordering and after Fiona’s mother had remarried. According to Fiona, the moves were, except for one, unconnected with the family reordering. The family apparently moved because Fiona’s step-father had changed jobs frequently. This example underlines the importance of understanding the processes of reordering. Although Fiona was in a reordered family and although she had moved a great deal, the reason behind the majority of the moves was, according to Fiona, not linked to the family reordering.

Students who had never moved also viewed moving as negative because of the potential effect on friendships. Clare and Garry, for instance, were adamant that they would not want to move, because of having to make new friends.

7.2.2.2. Illness.

Two girls, Carla and Louise, said that illness within their families had affected aspects of their school lives.

When asked if she had ever felt affected at school by anything at home, Carla described how she had felt upset at school, when she was in Year Seven, when her mother was in hospital with gall stones:

‘Cos they didn’t know what it was at first, when she got taken into hospital, and I was upset about that. School didn’t know, but I was upset at school, and teachers kept on asking me what was wrong. (Interview, April, 1997)

Despite teachers asking what was distressing Carla, she apparently did not inform them of the situation at home. Students’ constructs of teachers will be discussed later this chapter.

Whilst Carla's mother's illness upset Carla for a limited period of time, the impact of illness in Louise's family on Louise was, in contrast, ongoing. Louise's perception of the impact of her parents' conflict on her schooling has already been discussed. When asked if anything at home affected her at school, Louise also commented on her younger half-brother's cystic fibrosis:

Yeh because just say if somebody says something, 'cos my brother's terminally ill, every time someone says ... like one of those sort of jokes, I just give 'em a weird a dirty look, and they know and stop. (Interview, April, 1997)

Louise then described in detail a maths class in which students had had to say whether they agreed with animal testing. Louise, unlike all the other students, had ticked that she agreed, because, as she subsequently explained to me, her brother took medicine daily which had been tested on animals. Louise, in describing her response to her peers during this class, repeatedly used the word 'upset'. The following extract reflects her distress, as her home situation impinged on school:

... they (her peers) were all like 'avin a go at me, and I really felt upset (with great emotion), because my brother like all 'is medicine 'e 'as to take every single day is animal, and got really upset about it, and Tom was laughin', and I said, 'Oh shut up!' I was gettin' really upset 'cos 'e was sayin' all stuff about it. (Interview, April, 1997)

Louise broadened out from the specific maths class, to state that 'something always popped up' to do with her brother's illness at school. Louise perceived that her brother's illness permeated her school life at unexpected moments on a long-term basis. Louise's discussions of both her parents' arguments and her half-brother's illness suggest that the network of conflict at home impinged upon aspects of Louise's schooling.

7.2.3. Tensions over Issues Significant to Adolescents.

The accounts of some girls, across a range of family structures, revealed that issues which adults might dismiss as insignificant were significant enough to upset the young

people at home and school. This emphasizes the importance of accessing and listening to young people's voices, in order to understand the issues that adolescents perceive affect them, rather than making assumptions from an adult perspective about which issues are significant in adolescents' lives.

Fiona's perception of the impact on her school life of aspects of family reordering has been previously discussed. Fiona also described how other aspects of family life upset her. She did not imply, furthermore, that the other issues had any less impact on her than home tensions centred around family restructuring. Fiona related how, for instance, she came to school in a bad mood if she had argued with her younger half-sister or with either of her parents (Interview, April, 1997). In the following example, Fiona highlighted shared shoes as a source of tension between her sister and herself:

CH: Has anything that's happened in your family affected how you've got on at school?

Fiona: Yeh, 'cos like on Friday when I had an argument with my little sister over a pair of shoes we both share, I came to school really angry and couldn't concentrate. (Interview, April, 1997)

Fiona also described how she came to school in 'a bad mood' after incidents such as when her parents shouted at her for not hanging the shower up properly on its hook (Interview, April, 1997). Fiona claimed this was a frequent occurrence. On one occasion, when I asked Fiona how she was during the first morning lesson, she told me she was in 'a very bad mood' because she had just had a major argument about, in her words, 'nothing' with her step-father. This apparently culminated in Fiona storming out of the house, and subsequently simmering over the issue in the Spanish lesson. Whilst Fiona explicitly commented on how her family argued over little things (Interview, May, 1997), Fiona's case suggests that albeit 'little things' could provoke major responses which spilt over into the world of school.

7.2.4. Managing Reactions to Family Issues.

In chapter four, it was discussed how a small minority of the young people had developed coping strategies to manage family problems. Whilst some students, across the range of family structures, perceived that aspects of their school lives were affected by home issues, a small minority of their accounts suggested that they had developed coping strategies to help manage their responses to family problems. Students' accounts suggested that, on some occasions, these coping strategies helped reduce the impact of family issues on their school lives.

It has been discussed earlier in this chapter how Rebecca and Leanne said they were sometimes upset at school by family conflict. However, Rebecca and Leanne also both described how they tried to draw as much of a line as possible between events in school and their experience of family conflict. In Rebecca's case, she claimed that she attempted to keep family problems and school completely separate from one another (Interview, May, 1997). However, the extent to which this was a very fine balance is illustrated by how Rebecca's family problems began as soon as school ended, potentially outside Springfield School:

I think actually in school is separate, 'cos I try to not think about it (home issues) when I'm at school, ... but my dad picks us up every day, and he'll say (Rebecca adopts a critical tone of voice), 'Your mum's been doing this. Your mum's been arguin''. (Interview, May, 1997)

Given that Rebecca's father was bringing home issues to the door of the school, Rebecca's capacity to keep the two separate might be more open to question than her first comment above suggests.

Leanne described with more sophistication than Rebecca how she usually tried to separate out home problems and her school life:

Leanne: I block it (home argument) out and then think about it at home and then just think about schoolwork in school so ... I just like kind of protect myself from it.

CH: How do you block out what happens at home?

Leanne: I just sort of like 'cos they'd had some fights before and I just left my schoolwork in school and my homework at home as well, like I've made it not interfere with my schoolwork. (Interview, April, 1997)

Leanne's account reveals how, in her view, both past experience and effort on Leanne's part were important in apparently enabling her to block off home at school, for self-protection and, more specifically, to protect her schoolwork. According to the two girls, their coping strategies helped mitigate the effects of home conflict on school experience, to some extent. However, the examples of their responses to some family conflict, as discussed earlier this chapter and in chapter four, suggest that their strategy of separating out home and school was far from infallible.

7.2.5. School's Role in Home Issues.

Cockett and Tripp (1994) and Rodgers and Pryor (1998) argue that schools can provide support to help students manage home problems. This section will focus on students' perceptions of the school's role in helping students deal with home-related issues.

7.2.5.1. Students' Perceptions of School Involvement in Home.

The majority of students, across the range of family structures, thought that as a general rule school should know if there were problems within a student's family, including those related to family break-up, if these affected the student's performance at school. Andrew's response was typical of most students:

CH: Should the school know if there are problems in a student's family?

Andrew: Yeh 'cos if you're like havin' a bit of trouble in a lesson, they would wanna know like why, like if you'd had an argument in your

family. They would wanna know why you're actin' differently. Gettin' in a stress. Not doin' your work. (Interview, April, 1997)

Lynn specifically related school knowledge of students' home lives in general, to the issue of family structure. She said school should be informed if a student's parents split up, but only if the student was upset in school. (Interview, January, 1997)

Students differed, to some extent, about whether the student concerned should have a choice in whether school was informed of any family problems. Some, like Andrew, thought that school should be informed of family difficulties, whatever the student's wishes were:

They should find out by the parents 'phoning school, writin' a letter, or by the child tellin' the teacher. Even if the child didn't want school to know, the parents should 'phone up anyway. (Interview, May, 1997)

Others, such as Carla and Charley, thought that the student's wishes over school knowledge of a student's home situation should be respected. Garry and Tim were, in contrast, in a small minority in their uncompromising views that home and school should be kept entirely separate; in Tim's forthright words:

... 'cos it's (home) none of their (school's) business. (Interview, January, 1997)

However, when the issue of school knowledge of students' family problems was related directly to themselves, no young person indicated s/he would want school to know if there were problems within his/her family. David was apparently not bothered by the fact his mother had written a letter informing school of her marital break up. At the same time, when asked if he had told anyone at school about his parents' marital break-up, David interpreted the question in terms of telling a friend at school. David replied that, after his parents had split up, he had 'mentioned' this to his friend, Tom, at school (Interview, January, 1997).

Like David, other students also interpreted talking to someone at school about home issues in terms of talking to a friend. Often, as the following comment by Louise suggests, a student placed one friend in the role of confidante:

CH: Does anyone at school know what's happening at home?

Louise: Yeh, Julie, 'cos she's a really good friend and you can tell 'er almost anything, and most of my old friends, if you tell 'em anything, next day it'll be all way round the school. (Interview, April, 1997)

In some cases, young people confided in a small number of friends. Increasingly, as fieldwork progressed, students placed me, within the forum of the school, in the role of confidante over home issues. When, for instance, Anna, who was one of Sara's close friends, asked if she could come to join in the conversation between Sara and myself, Sara responded:

I don't want you to hear what I've got to say about my family problems.
(Research Log, 16.1.97.).

Most students did not appear to connect the idea of talking to someone at school to the possibility of talking to a teacher. Rather, most students, implicitly or explicitly, affirmed Andrew's view that he would not talk to a teacher about a personal issue, because:

They're official. (Interview, May, 1997)

When I asked Andrew if he would think of telling a teacher about any trouble at home, he reacted with horror:

If I had trouble at home, a row at home, I'd probably tell a friend like Matty. I would never tell a teacher (laughs) 'cos they're teachers and you just can't talk to them... It's just something about them I can't explain.
(Interview, May, 1997)

However, Andrew, in contrast to many students, explained his refusal to involve school in home life with some sophistication. In the following quotation, he pinpoints the unequal power relations between teacher and student, and the fear that communication would go full circle and that school would inform home of the student's comments on home:

If I did talk to a teacher, they'd probably tell your mum. They're higher up than your friends and they've got more power to do things. (Interview, April, 1997)

When asked if any teacher knew anything about their home lives, a few of the young people, such as Leanne, Clare and Fiona, said their form tutor, Lydia Wye, did. However, this was not through Lydia Wye's official role as teacher, but because the tutor used to live in the same neighbourhood as some students. Fiona was very friendly with Lydia Wye's daughter. Fiona was at pains to point out to me, when we were alone together, the personal relationship between Lydia Wye and herself out of school: how they called one another by first names out of school, how Lydia had taken Fiona on holiday, and how Lydia knew about aspects of Fiona's family situation. However, amongst her peers, Fiona was at pains to conceal any personal relationship between them, going to the extent of even avoiding eye contact with Lydia.

On the whole, students' interpersonal relationships with teachers did not appear to facilitate raising personal issues with teachers. Fiona's case highlights the extent to which within school a student might actively deny an out- of-school personal relationship with a teacher. Furthermore, there was, on the whole, a mismatch between students' views of relationships with teachers and some teachers' aims in their interpersonal relationships with students. For instance, Lydia Wye aimed to be easy-going and open as a tutor. From my observations through attending tutor time, she was. It may be the case that, on the whole, students' construction of teachers as 'official' was too deeply embedded for students to discuss a range of home issues with teachers.

Sara's case illustrates that she did not want to be marked out as different, because of her family situation. In 1994, when Sara entered Year Seven, Sara's mother apparently informed Springfield that Sara's father had recently died. Sara, however, said she would not have wanted school to do anything after her father's death, because she would not have wanted to have been singled out among her peers:

I wouldn't wanna be treated differently (by school), because something happened in my family. I just wanna be treated exactly the same.
(Interview, April, 1997)

The following extract highlights how Sara almost placates the school, as represented here by Karl Price, in a Health, Home and Community (HHC) lesson, to avoid entering into any detailed discussion about her family. Sara preferred not to acknowledge her father, than suggest, through her work, that her family was any different to those of her peers:

CH: Has school ever said anything about your dad's death?

Sara: I think Mr. Price said once, 'cos we had to do this thing, 'Explain your family, what your dad does, what your mum does, what your sister does.' And 'e come up to me and said, 'Sara, are you alright to do this?' 'Yeh,' I said, 'That's fine. I'll just leave my dad out.' (Interview, April, 1997)

Sara's desire for her family to appear like those of her peers may be related to adolescence and peer group pressures. If adolescents dislike appearing different from their peers, then this raises questions for schools about addressing home issues.

7.2.2. School Intervention in Family Issues.

However, Sara stood out from her peers in actively seeking school help over a family issue. As discussed in chapter four, Sara described, over the course of fieldwork, how she took out her father's death on her mother, by being extremely difficult and argumentative

with her. Sara related how, when she was in Year Eight, she went to see the School Counsellor about her behaviour towards her mother, on the advice of her older friend, Shaun:

Cos Shaun said noone else was acting like that to their mum... Shaun took me to see the Counsellor. The Counsellor said, 'I'll send you to see the school nurse. There might be a medical explanation for the behaviour.' (Interview, April, 1997)

Sara's response to the school nurse suggests she thought little of the school's handling of her home problem:

The school nurse is quite, 'Oh, what's your problem then (imitates a well-spoken, brisk voice)?' And I go, 'I've been gettin' in a stress with my mum.' And she goes, 'Oh, you're going to start your period soon.' And I'm like, 'Brilliant. Absolutely fucking brilliant!' (Interview, June, 1997)

Sara's use of phrasing, such the contrast between her own colloquial 'gettin' in a stress' with the Counsellor's impersonal 'the behaviour', underlines the potential accuracy of Sara's reporting. If Sara's reporting is accurate, then it could be argued that she was treated dismissively; the nurse apparently provided an explanation without listening to Sara's views. The fact that Sara took a friend with her to see the Counsellor may suggest that she felt uncomfortable about the meeting with the Counsellor. If this is the case, then this, coupled with the nurse's response, make it unsurprising that Sara subsequently made no mention of confiding in school about a home issue.

Whilst Sara was unusual in seeking school help over a home issue, there were a few examples, over the course of fieldwork, of parents asking for school help over a home issue. Danny, until the summer of 1997, was unaware he had been adopted. Danny's father, as a school governor, had frequent contact with school. He informed school that Danny was adopted, before Danny had been told. This brought a family issue into the domain of the school. Danny's father's order of disclosure apparently showed no respect for any wish Danny might have for privacy about his family background. Prior to this,

Danny had consistently been in trouble at school. However, after Danny's parents told him he was adopted, there was a sharp deterioration in his behaviour both at home and school. When Danny resorted to locking himself in his bedroom and using his bedroom furniture to barricade the door to avoid attending school, his parents in desperation asked Karl Price for help in getting Danny out of his bedroom. According to Karl Price, he refrained from giving direct advice, because he judged the issue to be beyond the school's role in home-school issues.

Louise's perception of the impact of her family problems on her school experience has been discussed earlier in this chapter. Louise's sustained attempts to prevent her home from finding out about her schooling have also been explored. Louise, however, not only invested effort in preventing home from finding out about school, but also in preventing school finding out about home. Louise's decision not to give school access to information about her family was based on a historical reason, referred to by Louise over a number of interviews. When Louise was attending another secondary school in Castletown, she apparently talked to a teacher about her home:

... and this teacher told this other teacher, and they phoned up my mum and said, 'Oh I think Louise is 'avin a bit of a bad patch at school because I've heard that ... you've split up with your husband.' So I got done for that. My mum goes, 'I don't want anyone knowin' our business.' She goes, 'It's my business, not everyone else's.' (Interview, April, 1997)

After this, Louise attempted to keep out of trouble with her mother by remaining silent to school about home. According to Louise, she would only speak about home if pushed to do so by school. Louise's accounts highlighted how she only gave relatively innocuous details about her family, designed to silence rather than inform school enquiry. When, for example, Lydia Wye raised with Louise the number of after-school detentions Louise was, first, getting and second, missing, and Louise's failure to return slips to school signed by parents, Louise said:

I told Miss Wye a bit (about home), but I wouldn't tell Miss Wye much, because if I told anyone, the teacher would get in contact with my parents, and ... then my parents would bellow at me for telling the teachers my personal life, and so ... I only tell 'er what she needs to know. (Interview, April, 1997)

In this case, what Louise judged Lydia Wye 'need(ed) to know' about her home was that her mother could not sign anything from school because she was at work from 5pm onwards, and that Louise had missed the detentions because she did not want to walk home alone. These details glossed over the range of problems in Louise's family.

However, Louise's family's approach to school knowledge of some aspects of their family lives altered abruptly during the summer term, 1997, when her step-father left and her mother's boyfriend moved in. According to Louise, her mother had always said Louise could talk to her openly about any issue. In Year 10, when Louise thought she was pregnant, she told her mother. Louise's mother's boyfriend informed school. In a meeting with Karl Price and Lydia Wye, her mother's boyfriend demanded that school should punish Louise for her unconfirmed pregnancy, by putting her on report. In this way, her mother's boyfriend humiliated Louise by placing her private life in the public forum of the school and demanding that the school should punish Louise for an out-of-school personal issue.

School, as represented by Karl Price and Lydia Wye, thought that Louise's, as well as Danny's, parents had acted inappropriately in asking for school guidance and school intervention over what both teachers considered to be parenting issues. However, it would be difficult to envisage how Karl Price and Lydia Wye could have conveyed this to the students and still have maintained their professionalism to the parents concerned. Consequently, the young people were unaware of Karl Price's and Lydia Wye's views. Instead, they thought that Danny and Louise were in trouble with both school and home.

Sara's, Danny's and Louise's examples suggest that, in these instances of school involvement of school in home issues, the young people's voices were not listened to and the young people's powerlessness was reinforced. In Danny's and Louise's cases, neither student had any say in whether school was informed about a home issue. Furthermore, Louise had no choice over what school knew about her home, either when Louise's mother forbade Louise from giving school any insights into their family situation, or when Louise's mother's resident boyfriend thrust the knowledge of Louise's potential pregnancy into the public forum of the school.

Students' accounts of how they viewed teachers, of not wanting to be different from peers, and of examples when school was involved in home issues raise the question of the extent to which the school support for students over home difficulties, envisaged by Cockett and Tripp (1994) and by Utting (1995), is feasible within existing school culture.

7.3. The Family and the School Curriculum.

Rodgers and Pryor (1998) and Cockett and Tripp (1994) underline the importance of teaching about family life and the diversity in family type within the school curriculum. The diversity in the young people's experiences of family and the sophistication of their understandings of family life and of interactions within the family have been illustrated in chapters four and five. Nieto (1994: 399), albeit writing in the States, views the school curriculum, both official and unofficial, as 'at odds with the experiences, backgrounds, hopes and wishes' of many students. This section will explore the extent to which aspects of the curriculum on family at Springfield tapped into the young people's understandings and experience of family.

Nearly all the students in 9YLC said they thought that the family should be part of the school curriculum. For instance, Louise's school record contained a piece of work from her previous secondary school on her opinion of aspects of school. Louise had written:

I should like to do more on the family.

When asked about what they had done in different subjects on the family, most students' recollections were hazy. Carla, for instance, had an interview with me immediately after an HHC lesson on family conflict (January, 1997). Although Carla was a boffin and therefore usually attentive in school, and although the lesson had preceded the interview, Carla told me that they had not done anything on the family in HHC. When I mentioned the subject of that day's HHC lesson, Carla then agreed that it had been about family, but was unable to talk about it in any detail. The fact that students were, on the whole, unable to remember much about lessons which had encompassed the subject of the family suggests, perhaps, that its treatment within the curriculum had not been meaningful to them.

Data were not collected systematically on teaching on the family in subjects across the whole school curriculum. However, I attended almost every HHC lesson with 9YLC from November, 1996 to July, 1997. During this time, as recorded in my research log, the family was considered within HHC in a range of ways. Some lessons were directly concerned with family. Students drew their family trees and designed a family crest. As mentioned above, one lesson was on managing family conflict. Another lesson was based on prose passages comparing families today and families in the past; this did not consider family structure, but was concerned with rules for young people within families. The family was brought into other HHC lessons, whilst not forming the core of the lesson. For instance, students had to do their lifelines; aspects of family came into all of the lifelines. When students had to write a letter to a problem page, a problem with a parent was the subject of a number of students' letters. In other words, the family received considerable attention within the Year Nine HHC curriculum,.

Most of the activities above were introduced by a brief class discussion, or by Karl Price giving instructions for the task to 9YLC. The students spent most of the time in class working in their exercise books on the tasks set on family and the final written product was the main goal of each of the different tasks on family. This may have made the work

on family indistinguishable from much other work within school. For example, the students drew their lifelines early in fieldwork (Research Log, 25.11.96.). At the beginning of the class, Karl Price gave instructions for the task, telling the students, for instance, to consider both their experience from birth until 1996, and also to speculate about their future. The young people spent the rest of the lesson doing their lifelines: presenting information on themselves and their families in their exercise books. I used the lesson as an opportunity to find out about the young people and their families, by talking to them either individually or in small groups. On an individual or small group basis, many of the young people engaged in conversation at some length with me. The following extract from my research log is an account of one conversation:

The other day I'd talked to Laura in tutor time. Today she opened up much more. The other day she'd touched on a conflict in her family, but had indicated she didn't want to talk about it. In the lesson, however, she started saying her dad had had a big row with her grandmother and that they weren't allowed to speak to her grandmother. She said that her grandmother used to live in the same street as them. She and her sisters had been to see her grandmother and her dad had found out and shouted at them. I asked her if she had talked about it to anyone at school and she said, 'No, I wouldn't talk to a teacher about that.' (Research Log, 25.11.96.)

On the one hand, the final sentence points to Laura's perception of the gap between family life and the school. On the other hand, Laura's account suggests that her experience of family conflict was potentially a valuable resource for learning. For example, it would appear from the above that Laura probably had insights into how conflict between individuals can create dilemmas for other individuals' interpersonal relationships. My various conversations with individuals or groups during that one lesson underlined how, across the class as a whole, there were both a range of varied accounts of family and a diversity of views on family-related issues. However, these were not taken up or explored within the lesson. At the end of the lesson, the books were taken in to be marked.

After the end of the lesson, Karl Price flicked through the exercise books and commented to me that he was surprised at some of the things the students had included (Research Log, 25.11.96.). He used Louise as an example, saying he thought it was inappropriate that Louise had included her father breaking her mother's nose in her lifeline. Karl said that he would 'have a word' with Louise in the next lesson about what was 'appropriate' to include in her work.

I was relieved by Louise's perhaps fortuitous absence from the next lesson (Research Log, 28.11.96.). Had she been there, and had Karl Price remembered to speak to her, it is likely that the messages given to Louise would have been not only that her personal experience was considered inappropriate by a representative of the school, but also that Louise was not capable of making judgements about what to include about her life in a task that centred around herself. In other words, Karl would not have validated Louise's personal experience. Early the next term, I heard Louise talking about her father breaking her mother's nose to a group of friends in a design technology lesson (Research Log, 15.1.97.) and Louise subsequently talked about her family life in detail to me over a period of time. The fact that Louise talked about this incident on a number of occasions in a range of different contexts underlines its significance to her.

In the next HHC lesson, in commenting on the students' lifelines, Karl Price remarked to the class as a whole that only three students (Clare, Anna and Sammy) had included marital break-up when they speculated about their futures (Research Log, 28.11.96.). Karl Price asked these three girls why they had included the break-up of their marriage. The girls' responses were perfunctory, merely touching on the fact that this might happen. For example, Clare answered:

.... because some marriages do break up.

Although the above brought issues related to family structure into the school curriculum, the issues were not explored in any depth. After the interchange with the three girls, Karl Price underlined in some detail his view that the students should have included academic

qualifications in their lifelines. The fact that none of the students had included academic qualifications may question the extent to which the students viewed them as of immediate relevance to their lives.

Within a school subject potentially of great personal relevance to their lives, and within a task potentially focused on the students as people, on how they saw their lives, the young people's insights into family were not tapped into in detail, whilst the importance of the academic was, instead, underlined. Although Karl Price was one individual working within the school, it is likely that the students saw him as representing official school norms. It is likely that the message given to the students about the lifelines was that, in the school's view of what counted as learning, personal experience was relatively incidental and the academic was important.

At the beginning of an HHC lesson soon afterwards, individuals were asked to do a presentation on the family crest they had spent the previous lesson designing (Research Log, 16.12.96.). Stacey was first, followed by Garry, and both were virtually monosyllabic. Because of their near-silence, the students were given time within the lesson to develop their work on family crests. Collectively, the subjects of the family crests were varied. For example, Sammy's crest centred around the values of loving and caring, whilst Stacey had made herself the only subject of her family crest. Clare had a dog on hers, because her pet was important to her. Lizbeth's had a chicken on, because her family regularly spent weekends showing their chickens at chicken shows. Potentially, there might have been an interesting discussion around some of the subjects selected for the family crests. However, when Andrew was asked to present his crest at the end of the lesson, he was not much more expansive on it than Garry and Stacey had been about theirs earlier that lesson, and the topic was drawn to a close..

This reluctance to contribute to the HHC curriculum on family was not untypical of the students. Indeed, I often found it hard to believe that the young people in the HHC class were the same young people who explored family-related issues thoughtfully and at

length with me. It was as if a dynamic of distance were maintained by students and teacher together. On the one hand, the students gave little evidence that they had any real insight into family issues that could be drawn upon in lessons. The students, on the whole, did not seem to recognize any responsibility on their part to contribute to a joint enterprise of learning between teacher and student. On the other hand, the HHC curriculum did not tap into their expertise on family and, as pointed to above, the message transmitted by a representative of the school was that certain types of information about the self and the family were more valued within school than other types.

I, however, had privileged insights into students' understandings of family. I had invested time and energy into building relationships with the young people. It was discussed in chapter four how I was not seen as a member of staff by students. In contrast, it has been discussed earlier in this chapter how students tended to see teachers in official roles; perhaps this view of teachers did not readily enable students to use their pre-existing understandings of family, based on personal experience, to inform more general consideration of family issues. Perhaps their silence, or near-silence, was in part also resistance to institutional norms. Furthermore, I talked to the young people on an individual basis and in HHC lessons they were together as a group with, on average, between 25 and 30 students present in each lesson; the size of the class may have restricted what individuals felt comfortable saying.

The discussion above illustrates that, whilst a gap exists between these young people's understandings of family and the HHC curriculum on family, the dynamics generating and maintaining the distance between these young people's experience of family and the HHC curriculum on family raise at present unanswered questions about whether this gap can be bridged, and, if it can, to what extent and how. When the dynamic of distance presented in this section is set against Cockett and Tripp's (1994) statement, referred to at the beginning of this section, that schools should teach about family life, Cockett and Tripp's statement could appear almost glibly assertive.

7.4 Conclusions.

This chapter began by referring to the metaphors of Plowden's (1967) triangle and partnership, often used to describe the relationships of home and school. This chapter has explored three areas of the young people's school experience in which home and school overlap: parental involvement in students' schooling, school involvement in issues related to students' homes, and the subject of the family within the HHC curriculum. Exploration of these three areas has revealed the complexities embedded in issues concerned with home and school, which run counter to the apparent simplicity of metaphors such as 'triangle' and 'partnership'.

It has been illustrated that support for students' schooling should not only be viewed in terms of parental support. Data from this study illustrated that siblings and members of the extended family were, in some cases, important contributors to students' homework. Parents' ability to be involved in homework depended in part on their general educational level and also on specific areas of expertise. Mothers tended to be more involved than fathers in, for example, their children's homework. Parental attendance at parents' evening depended in part on practicalities and these were, in contrast to some claims in the research literature (eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994), unrelated to family structure. Indeed, there were few links between parents' involvement in students' schooling and family structure.

The links that there were gave interesting insights into family reordering and parental support of students' schooling. From students' accounts, the mothers of three girls (Fiona, Leanne and Anna) in reordered nuclear families appeared particularly supportive of their daughters' schooling. Sara's lone mother not only attended parents' evening, but was also delighted by teachers' reports on her daughter. David's non-resident father was actively involved in his homework. Through family reordering, the number of parents who were involved in David's and Anna's schooling increased, rather than, as some literature claims, decreased.

David's account highlighted how sometimes he had experienced difficulties in doing his homework, because of his parents' arguments before the family break up and because of the practicalities of contact arrangements after the family reordering. His account also suggested that in his view teachers had a traditional model of the intact nuclear family, which, by implication, meant they did not understand fully his situation. David's case exemplifies the point made by some of the literature (Bastiani, 1989; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998) that schools should recognize the diversity in family type and be understanding about difficulties potentially experienced by children during the process of reordering.

The chapter discussed how, in principle, the young people thought that parents should be involved in students' schooling. Moreover, the young people welcomed parental involvement in, for example, parents' evenings, when the outcomes were positive for students. This underlines the importance for schools and parents of focusing and building on the positive in students' schooling. This could potentially benefit students' education and promote a closer partnership between home and school.

However, the chapter has illustrated the range of ways in which the majority of the young people attempted to block channels of communication between home and school, when they thought that communication from school to home would disadvantage them. In other words, in situations in which students perceived that their powerlessness would be reinforced, they used their creative agency to attempt to block channels of communication. In this way, what was intended to promote students' learning, by school liaison between home and school, in actuality, did not achieve this. The students' actions in stalling communications from school to home neither facilitated a closer relationship between home and school, nor helped benefit their education.

The chapter has also argued that, according to the young people, a range of home issues impinged on their school experience. These encompassed father absence and perceived lack of parental authority, conflict related to family reordering, parental conflict, moving house and school, family illness and tensions over issues which were significant to

adolescents. Family reordering was, therefore, among a number of home issues affecting school experience. Experience of family conflict, across the range of family structures, appeared to be the most common factor affecting experience of schooling. A small minority of the young people had developed strategies to reduce the impact of family conflict and schooling.

Most students thought, in principle, that school should know about problems in a student's family. However, in spite of this, the evidence suggested that, in practice, students did not tend to approach school for support over home-related issues. The data suggested that in part this was because students constructed teachers as 'official'; the students were in a subordinate power position to teachers, and perhaps this did not facilitate discussion of personal issues with teachers. Where school was involved in issues related to students' families, this tended to reinforce students' powerlessness.

This tensions between students' descriptions of the impact of home issues on their schooling, students' support of school involvement in home issues as a general principle, and students' reluctance to involve school in their own home lives raise questions about how Cockett and Tripp's (1994) and Rodgers and Pryor's (1998) argument that schools should provide support for children experiencing difficulties with home might best be put into practice, if at all.

Through focusing on observation of a year's HHC lessons, the chapter has revealed that there was a discrepancy between these young people's understandings of family and the scope of the HHC curriculum on family. This is not to suggest that the HHC curriculum on family either could or should make as its basis personal revelations by students about their own family situations. Rather, it is to argue that perhaps the HHC curriculum on family could take as its starting point the sophistication of students' understandings of families, based largely on their personal experience, and develop these further, by filtering them into a more general consideration of family issues.

As touched on in chapter three, I have been asked by Karl Price and by the Head of the HHC faculty to join a working group during the academic year 1999-2000, to rewrite the HHC curriculum on family. The group's stated aim is to build on students' existing knowledge, to deepen their understandings of family. This was initiated in part because, in 1999, Karl Price apparently voiced concern that the HHC curriculum on family was inappropriate. Whilst I never discussed my conversations with students with staff at Springfield, Karl Price's awareness of my research topic may have acted as a catalyst, prompting him to reflect upon the subject of the family within the HHC curriculum.

At the time of writing, it seems likely that aspects of this study will form part of the group's starting point. Thus, the group will begin from a basis of some research, though it will not engage in the systematic collection of research evidence. In contrast, its work will largely be deciding what will be taught in the classroom and implementing what is decided on. Questions about bridging the gap are therefore likely to be answered largely within a practical context, rather than from within a context based on collection of further research evidence.

The chapter has illustrated mismatches in three areas. There are discrepancies between what the young people think in general principle and what they think with specific reference to themselves about first, parental involvement in students' schooling and second, school involvement in home issues. The third gap is between the young people's understandings of family and the HHC curriculum on family. Through identifying and understanding these gaps and the conflict and tensions surrounding them from the perspective of key participants, the young people, there is potential for development. Future work with the HHC working group may help answer questions about whether, in the context of Springfield, the gap between the young people's understandings of family and the HHC curriculum on family can be bridged.

Chapter 8: Conclusions.

This thesis has explored 32 young people's experience of family and schooling. The thesis has examined the extent to which commonly used categories of family structure (intact nuclear, reordered nuclear and single-parent) inform understanding of these young people's family and school experience.

8.1. Conclusions on Previous Research.

Chapter two argued that, although there is a vast amount of research on family structure, most of it is quantitative. Whilst the quantitative literature gives overall evidence of children's outcomes according to family structure, it shows little about the processes leading to children's outcomes. Across the quantitative literature, the evidence indicates that a minority of children who are in reordered families have poorer outcomes, health, emotional and behavioural, and/or educational, than their peers in intact nuclear families.

However, chapter two argued that there is a range of problems with this data. The British evidence on children's outcomes according to family structure is chiefly based on old data, from the National Survey of Health and Development (NSHD), the National Child Development Study (NCDS) and the Child Health and Education Study (CHES). It is questionable whether the experience of children growing up today can be compared with that of children born in 1946, 1958 or 1970. Other problems with using existing research evidence include the difficulties of making cross-cultural comparisons from, for example, American research, the confounding of correlation and causation, ascertaining the direction of causation, and researcher bias.

Whilst the quantitative literature tends to conclude that a variety of factors can mediate children's outcomes according to family structure, and that individual children may

respond very differently to family reordering, the literature does not go further, to question the validity of grouping children's experience of family according to categories of family structure. Researchers have not tended to question the assumptions underpinning their use of categories of family structure.

Chapter two also showed that, whilst there was a large body of quantitative literature on family structure, there exists little qualitative British research on family structure. Of the existing literature, most is concerned with adults' experience of family reordering or adults' perspectives on children's responses to family structure. Few British studies aim to access the voice of the child. Of the main three (Walczak and Burns, 1984; Mitchell, 1985; Cockett and Tripp, 1994) aiming to access the voice of the child, only Cockett and Tripp (1994) consider education in any detail; they devote half a chapter to education. Furthermore, in these studies the research subjects were only interviewed once and interviews were usually in the research subjects' homes. This questions the extent to which these researchers fulfil their stated aim of accessing voices.

The thesis therefore aimed to fill various gaps in the research literature. It aimed to access young people's experience, by focusing on young people's voices over a sustained period of time. It aimed to challenge unquestioned assumptions underlying much research on family structure, by questioning the extent to which categories of family structure informs understanding of young people's experience of family and schooling. It also aimed to focus more on the processes of schooling than previous British qualitative work on children's family structure had done.

8.2. Methodological Conclusions: Accessing Voices.

Three aspects of the fieldwork were central to my aim of accessing the young people's voices: being in the field over a sustained period of time, giving the young people choices, and meeting some of their needs. The data constructed were enriched by giving the young people choices over, for example, whether they participated in the research at

all, when they were interviewed, how often they were interviewed, what they chose to talk to me about, and when fieldwork ended. Handing over power in these ways encouraged the young people to participate in the research over a sustained period of time and characterized field relations with a life and vitality which the young people brought to their relationships with me. Indeed, I cannot explain in rational terms the interpersonal dynamics of some students' relationships with me. As my decision about changing when fieldwork ended may suggest, it was as if trying to hand over power to the young people resulted, in some instances, in the young people almost running aspects of the fieldwork. The extent to which the young people did not appear concerned about my husband's role within the school emphasizes the extent to which their relationships with me had a life and strength which existed independently of the school or anyone official within it.

The data benefited by the fact that fieldwork met both my needs as researcher and also needs within the young people. As researcher, I constructed a breadth and depth of data which I simply had not envisaged at the start of fieldwork. Participating in the research met a range of needs within the young people. Not least of all, the young people appreciated talking, over a period of time, on a one-to-one basis with someone who was interested in them as people and who wanted to hear everything they had to say about themselves. Tapping on the young people's personal experience over time and making it clear to them that their experience was important may, in some cases, have helped validate the young people's experience, and this may have increased self-esteem. The individual attention the young people received over time through involvement in the research probably contrasted with their usual experience within school of being part of a large class, and may have helped make them feel valued. Some found participating in the research therapeutic. Not least, aspects of the research were fun. The young people probably wanted to participate in the research over the two years of fieldwork because the research potentially met a range of needs within them.

It is likely that there is a relationship between the extent to which I accessed the young people's voices on their experience of family and schooling, and empowering the young people through giving them choices and meeting some of their needs. The context in which the research was set may have played a part in this. Young people do not tend to have many choices in their school lives, and do not tend to explore their personal experience at length over time within the school environment. The choices the young people had in the research and the focus of the research on the young people as individuals may have stood out in contrast to their usual experience of schooling and, through this, enriched the data constructed.

8.3. Empirical Conclusions.

8.3.1. Generalizability.

This study is small-scale and exploratory. It was of 32 young people, in one tutor group in one school. Its findings are not generalizable. However, its detailed focus on processes has provided insights into these young people's experience of family and schooling which may enable questions to be raised about other young people's experience of family and schooling. The findings of this study may therefore illuminate understanding of aspects of other young people's experience of family and schooling.

8.3.2. Overall Empirical Conclusion.

The overall conclusion to this thesis is that to group these young people's experience of family and schooling according to categories of family structure does little to inform understanding of these young people's experience of family and schooling. It, furthermore, potentially stereotypes those young people who are not in intact nuclear families. On the whole, the data revealed more associations between gender and experience of family and schooling, than between family structure and experience of

family and schooling. The conclusions will be discussed within the three areas of experience explored in this thesis: family, schooling and the interface between home and school.

8.3.3. Experience of Family.

Chapter one highlighted changes in family demography and the plurality of family types. Chapter four showed that the young people in this study reflected this plurality in the diversity of structures they experienced as family. Chapter four also illustrated how in some cases, a specific family structure was temporary. The thesis illustrated that, although there were only four students in the single-parent category at time one, 15 of the students had lived in a single-parent family either before or during the fieldwork. The thesis has argued that grouping the young people's experience of family and schooling according to a specific category of family structure does not reflect the diversity of and changes in family structure experienced by these young people. Furthermore, it conceals the extent to which experience of a single-parent family was almost a majority experience amongst the young people in 9YLC.

The thesis has explored the young people's experience of family reordering. The thesis has compared the experience of the young people in reordered nuclear and in single-parent families of the following aspects of reordering: the break-up itself, family conflict after reordering, the relationship with the non-resident natural parent, and the relationship with the non-resident step-parent. In the case of reordered nuclear families, the young people's relationships with the resident step-parent were explored. In the case of single-parent families, the young people's views on living with one adult were examined. The thesis has argued that, whilst there were structural differences between reordered nuclear and single-parent families, there was considerable diversity in the experience of reordering within each category, and there also existed similarities in the experience of reordering across the categories of reordered nuclear and single-parent families. Furthermore, several of the young people in this sample were positive about

living in a single-parent family. These points question the extent to which it is appropriate to sub-divide reordered families into the categories of reordered nuclear and single-parent. This is particularly the case if to do so potentially stigmatizes those in single-parent families, as in the ideological debate over the family, discussed in chapter one.

In considering young people's experience of family reordering it has, furthermore, been argued that the boundaries between the intact nuclear and the reordered categories were not clear-cut. The evidence suggested that the young people in the reordered nuclear and single-parent categories had greater experience of family reordering than young people in the intact nuclear category. However, some young people in intact nuclear families had experienced the temporary separation of their parents. Furthermore, according to the young people's accounts, a minority of families in the intact nuclear group teetered on the brink of breakdown, and some young people in intact nuclear families commented on the level of parental conflict in their families. All the young people in intact nuclear families had vicarious experience of family reordering, through their friendship groups, which spanned the range of family structures.

The thesis has examined the young people's experience of family life, in terms of their relationships with mothers, fathers, siblings and members of the extended family. The thesis has argued that there existed similarities in experience of the above areas, across the range of family structures. These further underlined the permeability of the boundaries between categories of family structure.

There were similarities in the young people's relationships with resident natural fathers, non-resident natural fathers and step-fathers. The quality of the relationship was important to the young people, rather than the family structure in itself. Good relationships tended to be characterized by shared activities and by the father, whether natural or step, demonstrating that he cared for the young person. In contrast, negative relationships were characterized by distance. In extreme cases in this sample, where

young people expressed most hostility to a father, whether natural or step, there tended to have been physical abuse.

In some cases in this sample, there were more tensions in relationships where fathers were non-resident. However, these tensions did not appear to be inherent in the family structure itself. The evidence in this study illustrated that problems tended to arise when the young person felt unable to express his/her needs and wishes about the relationship. For example, the evidence suggested that it was not necessarily important to these young people to have a lot of contact with the non-resident parent. What mattered was that the young people had the amount of contact they wanted. In other words, evidence from this study indicated that the young people needed to have a degree of autonomy in their relationships with their non-resident natural fathers..

The thesis has shown that some of the young people were positive about relationships with step or half-siblings, in some cases more than with natural siblings. Leanne's case, for example, highlighted how she viewed the birth of her half-sister as one of the key events in her life. Resentment of a sibling, whether natural, step or half, was often linked to perceptions of parental favouritism of the sibling.

In this sample, young people across the range of family structures valued relationships with the extended family. The majority of this sample had regular contact with members of the extended family who lived locally. Some accounts highlighted that positive relationships with the extended family were not necessarily contingent upon face to face contact. The thesis has also argued that not all relationships with the extended family were positive. In some cases, there were family feuds. Some of the young people disapproved of members of their extended family and some were upset by illness in the extended family. This is important because claims within the research literature (eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994) that young people in reordered families can lose contact with relatives tend to be founded on the assumption that contact with the extended family is inherently beneficial for the young people concerned.

The thesis has argued the importance of gender in these young people's family relationships. In general, the young people in this sample tended to have closer relationships with mothers than with fathers, and girls tended to have closer relationships than boys with their mothers. Girls in this sample tended to highlight more conflict in sibling relationships than boys did. As the sibling conflict highlighted by girls tended to be with brothers in particular, it seems reasonable to suggest that, in actuality, some of the boys were also engaged in conflict with siblings.

Indeed, it has been argued that conflict was a normal part of family life, whatever the young person's family structure. As Frazer (1999) argues, conflict is a normal part of any social group. It was the case that nearly all the young people in reordered families explicitly talked about experiencing conflict over a range of issues related to family reordering, and that, in some cases, there was conflict years after the family break-up. Even Anna, whose accounts suggested she experienced positive family relationships, except with her natural brother, experienced a difficult period of conflict between her mother and her non-resident step-mother.

However, parental conflict was not merely contingent on family reordering. Some young people in intact nuclear families were affected by their parents' quarrels. Across all family structures, there was a range of issues which generated family conflict. The young people in this sample appeared to react particularly strongly to conflict over adolescent boundaries, such as drinking, smoking and the times they were allowed out until at night. Indeed, the evidence in this thesis suggested that in families where a range of issues provoked conflict, and where one or indeed some of these were related to family reordering, it was not necessarily the issues related to family reordering which, according to these young people's accounts, they were most affected by.

This thesis has therefore argued that, whilst nearly all accounts of family reordering highlighted the existence of conflict, it is important not to pathologize the process of

family reordering and reordered families, as sites of conflict, and, in contrast, to sanitize interpersonal dynamics in intact nuclear families. At the same time, to underline the normality of conflict is not to deny its potentially distressing effect on young people. Indeed, these young people's accounts suggested that, on the whole, that they were affected by family conflict and that, in some cases, home conflict impinged upon experience of schooling. In a minority of cases, these young people's accounts revealed that they had developed coping strategies to help manage family conflict, though these were not infallible.

Because these data underlined the normality of conflict in these young people's experience of family across the range of family structures, the model of Networks of Conflict: Networks of Support has been developed for these young people's experience of family. It was suggested that each young person experienced a network of interlinked factors creating conflict within the young person. Young people's accounts also suggested that, conversely, there were also more positive factors, which potentially acted as buffers to the sources of conflict. The Networks of Support aspect of the model was more tentatively developed than the Networks of Conflict, because there were fewer indications of supportive factors within the data. It was argued that the model of Networks of Conflict: Networks of Support potentially informs understanding of the whole child.

8.3.4. Experience of School.

Students' accounts suggested that a range of factors interwove to shape experience of schooling. Students' accounts revealed some associations between experience of aspects of schooling (friendship groups, behaviour, views on school, attainment and attendance) and family structure, gender and school-related factors.

The thesis has illustrated that there were several associations between family structure and students' school experience. There was an association between family structure and

students' views on school. Two girls from reordered families placed great importance on education as a means of enhancing independence and as a protective factor in dealing with potential marital break up. There was a link between family structure and behaviour. No student in the single-parent and care groups was a boffin. The data on attainment revealed that there was a range of SAT and CAT scores within each category of family structure, though the highest scores were in the intact nuclear category. There was a link between family structure and attendance. The three best attenders during 1996-7 were all girls in intact nuclear families. None of the three students with below 80% attendance was from an intact nuclear family, though the disparate reasons for their absences make the cases difficult to compare. Some students' accounts suggested that school attendance was affected during a transition in family structure. In contrast to Cockett and Tripp's (1994) claim that children in intact nuclear families were less likely than their peers in reordered families to have friends whose parents had separated, this data set showed that the students' friendship groups spanned the range of family structures.

The data revealed links between gender and experience of schooling. Friendship groups were organized around gender and, to some extent, behaviour type. There were associations between behaviour, and gender and friendship group. The boffins were all girls, and all except one were in friendship group one. Most of the unmanageable students were boys. All the 'naughty' students were boys. There was some links between gender and views on school. The three students who said they hated Springfield were all boys. There was an association between gender and behaviour type and views on school; some of the girls who were boffins were increasingly negative about school, because of feeling under pressure. Within this sample, there were some links between gender and attainment. Though two boys gained the highest CAT scores, on the whole, the girls' scores were higher than the boys. There were links between gender and students with the highest attendance for the academic year 1996-7. Two thirds of students who attended for 180 days or more were girls, and the three best attenders were girls. There were also associations between gender and reasons for truanting. Four girls (not all of whom were

boffins) said they had truanted because of feeling under pressure at school. Some girls said that they had truanted because of being bullied at school.

This thesis has also illustrated that there were associations between these young people's experience of school and school-related factors. It has been argued that, to some extent, teachers influenced students' behaviour, both positively and negatively. The data also pointed to potentially complex inter-relationships between school-related factors, disaffection and adolescence. It was shown that nearly all students placed particular value on the social dimension of schooling, in contrast to the academic dimension. The disaffected and unmanageable students spent considerable time and energy in challenging institutional norms; this strengthened their social bonds and, by implication, further downplayed the academic side of schooling. Students felt increasingly negative about school as they progressed upwards in the school. The majority of the young people had truanted because of boredom with school.

8.3.5. Experience of Home and School.

8.3.5.1. Parental Involvement in the Young People's Schooling.

This thesis has illustrated that there were some associations between family reordering and parental participation in the young people's schooling. In contrast to some claims in the literature (eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994), parents of young people in reordered families did not appear to be less involved in their children's schooling than parents of young people in intact nuclear families. The mothers of three girls in reordered families appeared to place particular value on the importance of education in maximizing success in life. There were some examples of family reordering resulting in increased parental participation in schooling. Whilst David's non-resident father remained actively involved in his schooling, it was likely that his resident step-father would also become involved in his schooling by, for instance, attending parents' evenings. Anna valued the help she received with homework from her non-resident step-mother. Sara's mother was actively

involved in her daughter's schooling, through attendance at parents' evenings. In contrast to Cockett and Tripp's (1994) findings on the reduced participation of lone parents in their children's schooling, this study found that practical constraints could prevent parents across the range of family structures from attending parents' evenings.

As in other research (eg Macbeath and Turner, 1990), this study illustrated that parental involvement in homework was related to specific areas of parental expertise, and that homework involved not only parents, but potentially also siblings, the extended family and peers.

In this study, there were no associations between family structure and the young people's views on parental involvement in their schooling. All students except one thought their parents should be involved in their schooling. However, this study found that, to some extent, principle and practice diverged. Students welcomed their parents' involvement in their schooling, when they perceived they were doing well at school. In contrast, when students were doing badly or were in trouble, many of them attempted to block the channels of communication from school to home, to prevent their parents from finding out about aspects of their schooling. Whilst good school performance was often rewarded materially by parents, bad news from school usually resulted in punishment at home for the young person concerned. It is unsurprising that so many of the students invested considerable energy trying to block channels of communication from school to home, when there was such a contrast in parental response to good and bad news from school.

8.3.5.2. The Impact of Home Issues on Students' Schooling.

Young people's accounts of family and schooling underlined that, whilst home and school were physically distinct, boundaries between the two were not impermeable psychologically. The thesis has argued that the young people perceived that a range of home issues potentially impacted upon their schooling.

The thesis has shown that issues related to reordering impacted upon the school experience of some students in reordered families, both short term, at the time of and in the immediate aftermath of reordering, and long-term. For example, Sara related father absence to lack of an authority figure to patrol aspects of her approach to school. However, she also linked the lack of an authority figure to the development of a potentially positive quality in herself: self-responsibility. David highlighted practical problems in completing homework on some evenings when he was visiting his non-resident father. There was, however, a contradiction in David's account, as he also revealed that his non-resident father was actively involved in his schooling, through helping with homework and attending parents' evenings.

As with the young people's experience of family, experience of conflict associated with family was the key factor which, according to the young people's accounts, potentially affected experience of schooling. In some cases, across all categories of family structure, the conflict was linked to issues of family reordering. In other cases, the conflict was linked to other family issues, as discussed in the section on experience of family. Young people's accounts suggested that distress triggered by other aspects of family life, such as moving house and school or illness in the family, also potentially affected schooling. Just as some students described coping strategies to manage home issues, a small minority of students explicitly revealed that they used coping strategies, with varying degrees of success, to prevent home conflict from impacting upon school experience.

This study found a mismatch within the young people's principles on school intervention in home problems. Most students thought, in general, that school should be informed if there were difficulties in a student's family. However, when this principle was applied to themselves, the young people's views altered: students did not want school to know about issues in their own families.

It has been illustrated that a range of reasons potentially accounts for this. First, evidence suggested that the young people tended to construct teachers as 'official'. Whilst the

young people would talk to a friend at school about family problems, most did not appear to connect the idea of talking to someone at school about difficulties related to home, with the possibility of talking to a teacher. Indeed, most students reacted with horror when this was explicitly suggested. Second, the example of Sara's response to school knowledge of her father's death suggested that the young people might not want to appear dissimilar to their peers. Third, the existing examples of school intervention in home issues reinforced, for the students, unequal power relations. This was perhaps particularly the case because students were unaware of the school's critical stance on issues the parents had sought school assistance on.

8.3.5.3. Family and the School Curriculum.

This thesis has illustrated that there was a mismatch between the young people's understandings of family and the HHC curriculum on family. It has argued that the HHC curriculum did not tap into the young people's often sophisticated understandings of family, and filter these understandings into developing further students' insights into family-related issues. In turn, it was argued that the young people did not, on the whole, appear to view learning as a shared enterprise between teacher and student. On the whole, the students did not appear to take responsibility for contributing their understandings of family to the HHC curriculum. In all, a dynamic of distance was maintained between the young people and the school over the treatment of family within the HHC curriculum, as experienced by 9YLC.

8.4. Implications of the Thesis.

8.4.1. Implications for Schools.

This thesis has illustrated that young people can make thoughtful and articulate judgements about their experience. As underlined by researchers such as Fielding (1999, 1999a), Soo Hoo (1993) and Nieto (1994), it is important for schools to listen to the

views of key stakeholders - the students themselves - about a wide range of school issues, spanning, for example, links between home and school, curriculum, pastoral care, extra-curricular, and school ethos. Fielding (1999, 1999a), Soo Hoo (1993) and Nieto (1994) argue that listening to the student voice is an integral part of school improvement. To acknowledge students' views is not the same as to adopt them uncritically. However, listening to students' views, and making it clear to students that their views are being taken into account, could also help reduce unequal power relations within schools.

Cockett and Tripp (1994) and Rodgers and Pryor (1998) recommend that schools should teach about the plurality of family types within the curriculum. The evidence from this study also affirms the importance of this, both within the school curriculum and within wider school processes. The discussion of demographic trends in chapter one illustrated diversity in family type. This diversity was reflected in the structures experienced as family by members of 9YLC. The evidence of this study that categories of family structure do little to inform understanding of family further underlines Cockett and Tripp's (1994) and Rodgers and Pryor's (1998) recommendation as above. It would therefore seem important that schools do not privilege the intact nuclear family as an ideal type, both in their official and their unofficial processes, when this could potentially disadvantage young people who do not conform to the perceived intact nuclear ideal, and could reaffirm the stereotypes of family type portrayed by some ideologies of family, as discussed in chapter one.

Cockett and Tripp (1994) recommend that there should be provision for teaching about relationships and family life within the curriculum. The evidence of this thesis illustrated that what potentially impacts negatively on the young people is not the altered family structure, but the experience of conflict. This suggests that schools could teach interpersonal skills and how to negotiate and manage conflict in interpersonal relations within the curriculum. Furthermore, a minority of the young people revealed that they had developed coping strategies to manage conflict. Perhaps schools could teach students a range of coping strategies, by tapping on students' existing expertise. If schools do not

teach relationship and conflict-management skills, then, where young people experience a high degree of conflict at home, they are unlikely to develop these skills elsewhere.

Teaching about diversity in family type, without privileging the intact nuclear family, and teaching interpersonal relationship and conflict management skills are both challenging aims. To achieve these, it is crucial for a school curriculum to be designed and implemented very thoughtfully. Furthermore, the teachers working with such a curriculum need a particularly well developed understanding of its aims; it is not a curriculum which lends itself to easy delivery. As discussed in chapter seven, at Springfield, a working party is going to assess the extent to which the HHC curriculum on family is appropriate for the knowledge, understanding and needs of Springfield students. It is planned that, on the basis of this group's work, the HHC curriculum on family will be redesigned.

Researchers such as Kincheloe and Steinberg (1999) argue not only that learning is a collaborative engagement between teacher and student, but also that students can engage in 'critical literacy'; with teachers' guidance, students can engage critically with their experience. However, students cannot engage critically with their experience, if the curriculum does not draw upon their experience. To create an HHC curriculum which would be meaningful for the young people engaged in learning through it, students could be involved in designing the curriculum. The evidence presented in chapter seven of how the young people withheld their understandings of family in the HHC lessons on family may suggest that, if the young people were involved in designing the curriculum on the family, the process of actively engaging them in this task might be complex.

As previously referred to, research (eg Mitchell, 1985; Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998) underlines how schools can provide support for students during family reordering. However, the feasibility of such recommendations is problematic. The fact that, in this study, the young people highlighted how a range of home issues potentially impacted upon schooling, but how they would not, on the whole, approach a teacher for

support, raises questions about school culture and the functions of schooling. It seems unlikely that, for example, Springfield School could provide support for students on home issues, on anything more than an ad hoc basis, without alterations in how these students view teachers, to enable students to approach teachers over problematic issues in their lives. Teachers would also need training in how to deal with problems students raised. Furthermore, because of current resourcing in education, in terms both of school funding and competing demands on teachers' time, it is questionable whether teachers would have the time to be supportive, as envisaged by Cockett and Tripp (1994), on anything more than an occasional basis.

The fact that I was working within the school, yet was not of the school, raises the issue of whether there is space within the context of the school for someone who is not seen as a teacher, to work with students on problematic issues. Many of the young people welcomed the opportunity to talk within school, though not to an official representative of the school. As outlined in chapter three, whilst the school has a Counsellor, at the time of fieldwork, she worked principally with a few of the school's more problematic students, on a long-term basis. The Counsellor would not have been available for the young people to talk to.

When the often sophisticated and mature judgements of the young people are set against the importance of peer influence in young people's lives, as illustrated in this thesis, this suggests that a workable solution to the issue of school provision of support over home problems might be a programme of peer counselling. Peer counselling could be developed so that students could talk to older students, in Year 12, for example. Training could be provided for the Peer Counsellors, initially and on an ongoing basis. The training could encompass not only how to relate to younger students, but also issues such as confidentiality and child protection.

There was some evidence from this study that issues related to family reordering could pose some problems with students' schoolwork, such as, for example, practicalities of

juggling homework with visiting the non-resident parent, or of doing homework during parental arguments. Cockett and Tripp (1994) highlight the importance of schools being understanding to students experiencing family break-up. This raises the issue of whether schools should collect detailed information on students' families, and if so, what information should be collected, and how it could be collected and updated. At present (September, 1999), Springfield only holds very basic information on students' families, such as addresses and contact telephone numbers. Even this information rapidly becomes outdated. However, if schools do not hold more detailed information on students' families, they can only offer support on a much more ad hoc basis, based on, for example, either students or friends of students talking to teachers about problematic home issues, or parents informing school of difficulties at home.

The findings of this thesis, set against previous recommendations (Cockett and Tripp, 1994) that schools should provide support for young people, raises questions about boundaries between home and school, and where the limits to the school's responsibility for students may lie. The thesis raises the question of whether it is the school's responsibility to intervene in family issues which impact upon young people's experience of schooling.

The thesis raises other issues for schools. It has been illustrated how teachers influenced the behaviour of students in 9YLC. Perhaps staff awareness of this could be heightened, either through training, or through strategies such as observing individual students with a range of teachers, to assess how far the students' behaviour is consistent across different teachers, or how far it is shaped by individual teachers.

The thesis illustrated how several girls in reordered families believed strongly in the power of education to change life opportunities. This raises the question of how schools might convey this message more effectively to its students, so that education was not merely, for some students, largely a consumer product to be 'got', but was seen as potentially increasing opportunities for each individual.

Furthermore, in this study, students gave a wide range of reasons for truanting, encompassing boredom with school, being bullied and feeling under too much pressure at school. These were similar to the findings of previous research (eg O’Keeffe, 1994). This range of reasons suggests that it is important for schools to understand the reason(s) behind truancy, in order to reduce the amount of truancy. This may also suggest that school policy on attendance should be flexible enough to address the divergence in reasons for truanting.

The young people’s patrolling of the communication channels from school to home has been illustrated. It may be important for schools to examine the extent to which there is a balance between positive and negative communications from school to home, and to ensure that positive messages about students’ schooling are conveyed to parents. Perhaps there is also room for school examination of its mechanisms to convey negative information about students to parents, so that, first, students’ learning is benefited, and, second, that official channels of communication are not subverted. It could be argued that Springfield’s communication from school to home was not, in the case of students in 9YLC, as effective as it perhaps could have been.

8.4.2. Implications for Policy Makers.

This study underlines recommendations (Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Utting, 1995; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998) that policy makers should recognize that diversity in family structure is the reality for the experience of children growing up today. The evidence from this study that categories of family structure do little to inform young people’s experience of family and schooling suggests that policy makers could problematize their use of categories of family structure, to ensure that they can see beyond the stereotypes of family type portrayed by some ideologies of family, as discussed in chapter one.

Because of the degree of central control in the school curriculum, it would seem important for policy makers to question whether the images of the family within the school curriculum accurately reflect the reality of students' experience of diversity in family type. Policy makers could recognize any ambiguities, such as those pointed to in the discussion of the Labour Party Manifesto in chapter one, in their approach to family. Policy makers could examine critically the extent to which it is appropriate to suggest through the curriculum that the intact nuclear family is the preferred family form. Furthermore, policy makers could question whether the curriculum can teach that there exists a diversity in family structures and, at the same time, that the intact nuclear family is the preferred type. It would seem likely that in practice these two aims are mutually irreconcilable.

The findings of this thesis also affirm the importance of questioning, at policy level, where the limits to the purposes of schooling are. If schools are to provide support for students experiencing difficulties, then this carries resourcing implications for policy makers. If such support were provided effectively within schools, this could not be merely as an additional role for teachers.

8.4.3. Implications for Parents.

This thesis has implications for parents, across all family structures. Whilst this study has underlined the normality of family conflict, whatever the family structure, it has also highlighted the distress such conflict potentially creates in young people. This study, like some previous research (eg Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998), illustrates that it potentially benefits children if their parents, as far as possible, resolve their conflicts between themselves, and do not involve their children in conflict, either as witnesses or as participants, called upon to take sides. Whilst the thesis has suggested that young people could be taught about conflict-management within the forum of the school, parents could, where possible, encourage the development of such skills in their children.

This study has raised questions about fatherhood, whether natural or step. It has pointed to the importance of fathers, whether natural or step, showing children that they care about them, and being sensitive to the type of relationship their children would like. It might be easy for fathers to underestimate, for example, the value placed by some of the young people in this study upon shared activities.

This thesis has raised issues about family reordering. Like previous research (Cockett and Tripp, 1994; Rodgers and Pryor, 1998), it illustrates that it potentially benefits children if parents acknowledge their children's needs and wishes over family reordering. The findings of this study, like Walczak and Burns' (1984) work, highlight how young people vary in the amount of contact they want with the non-resident parent, and how they may want less contact during adolescence, because of peer group involvement. This points to the importance of parents listening to their children's wishes over, for instance, access arrangements, and showing children that they have acknowledged their children's wishes, even if they are then unable to comply with the wishes.

Evidence from this study confirmed previous research (eg Mitchell, 1985; Cockett and Tripp, 1994) that young people need to develop an account of events leading to separation. Tim, for example, showed how he wished to raise with his father unanswered questions about why his father had left, years after the event itself. This study showed that some family break-ups had occurred when children were too young to remember them. Whilst, for example, Fiona and Anna had developed their own account of events leading to their parents' separation, it was their mothers' version of events. This suggests that parents could not only recognize that they need to talk about the family break-up with their children, but also that they are likely to influence greatly the accounts their children develop of the break-up. Whilst it might be tempting to bias the account against the ex-partner, it is not necessarily helpful for the child and the child's relationship with the non-resident parent to do so.

Evidence from this study suggested that perceptions of parental preference of a natural step or half-sibling potentially had a negative impact on the young person's relationship with the sibling; a clear message of this thesis is the importance of treating children equally.

This study also carries implications for parents about schooling. The evidence of the extent to which the young people manipulated school communication to home, to avoid displeasure and punishment, may suggest that such systems of rewards and punishments could be reconsidered by parents. If the negative communications from school that students block are the messages school really wants to communicate to parents about, then parents could think about the extent to which their negative responses to aspects of their children's schooling are helping their children, where necessary, alter aspects of their behaviour in school. Furthermore, it might be easy for parents to underestimate a positive message of this thesis: when the young people were doing well, they welcomed parental intervention in their schooling.

8.5. Future Research.

The study has raised a range of issues which could be followed up in future research.

The study has suggested that young people in single-parent families can have positive feelings about their family structure and that family reordering can help young people to value education. Future research could explore the extent to which young people in reordered families have positive perceptions of family and of their family structure, to find out how common these are.

In this study, the young people's accounts suggested that their response to family conflict potentially influenced their experience of family and schooling. More research is needed on children's responses to family conflict, and the extent to which children develop coping strategies to deal with conflict. Whilst the model Networks of Conflict: Networks

of Support was developed inductively from these data, it was stressed in chapter four that there was less evidence in this data set on the supportive factors in these young people's family experience, than on the factors generating conflict. Future research could develop this model more, and explore systematically the extent to which there exists in other young people's family experience a balance between supportive factors and factors creating conflict.

This study has shown that there existed similarities in young people's responses to their fathers, whether natural or step. As touched upon by Burghes (1994) and Utting (1995), more research is needed into fatherhood, and young people's relationships with fathers,

Chapter two highlighted how much British research on children's outcomes, whether health, emotional and/or educational, is based on the old data sets of the National Child Development Study. It argued that it is problematic to compare the evidence on children born in 1946, 1958 and 1970, with the experience of children growing up today. At best, this evidence can only tell us about the adults who are the parents of children growing up today. It was within the scope of this thesis to analyse the sample's SAT and CAT results. A large scale study, using a representative sample, of children's outcomes according to family structure is greatly overdue. Such a study would provide evidence on a range of outcomes according to family type, for young people who are growing up today, not for people who are middle-aged today.

Research is also needed into images of the family in the school curriculum, both at primary and secondary level, to assess the extent to which the curriculum potentially stereotypes family structures. Research could also be conducted into teacher perceptions of family structure, to assess the extent to which the school's unofficial curriculum potentially stigmatizes children from reordered families. Further research could examine parental participation in education, to examine if there are differences according to family structure.

In conclusion, overall, this thesis highlights the permeability of boundaries around categories of family structure. Whilst this thesis has illustrated that categories of family structure do little to inform understanding of these young people's experience of family and schooling, the data, in contrast to the ideologies of family discussed in chapter one and in contrast to much of the research literature, revealed some positive aspects of family reordering. Some young people had positive feelings about being in a single-parent family. In two cases, there was a link between family reordering and valuing education as a potential means of ensuring success in life. These data illustrated how a lone parent was actively involved in her daughter's schooling and, furthermore, how family reordering could result in increased parental participation in young people's schooling. The above are illuminating examples, rather than patterns across the data set. However, they have a potential corrective function to previous research findings on children's outcomes and family structure, and to family ideologies, if followed up by more research into the processes and outcomes of young people's experience of family structure.

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APPENDIX ONE.

HANDOUT FOR YEAR NINE TUTOR TEAM: 1996.

RESEARCH TOPIC: FAMILY STRUCTURE AND STUDENTS' EDUCATION.

‘... the natural state should be the two-adult family caring for their children.’ (John Redwood, 2.7.93.)

‘The ‘abnormal’ family has now become the norm.’ (Sunday Times, 7.9.93.)

1) Broad Aim: to explore students’ experience of family structure (whether traditional nuclear, reordered nuclear or single-parent) and of education, to see if there are links between the two.

2) Why? Background to Topic:

a) Demographic changes in family this century.

Eg 1: Today, the annual divorce rate is double that of 1971 and six times that of 1961. If current trends continue, four out of ten new marriages will end in divorce, and 25% of children born today will experience their parents’ divorce.

Eg 2: One in five families with dependent children is headed by a lone-parent, as compared with one in twelve in 1971. 2.3 million dependent children live in one-parent families, as compared with one million in 1971.

b) Media and Political Statements (as above).

c) Existing Research on Family Structure and Students' Education.

Not about young people's opinions.

3) Why Year Nine?

a) Stage of adolescence.

b) SATs.

c) 'Family' in HHC.

4) What Would the Research Involve?

a) Time Scale:

From approximately now until July, 1997.

b) For Students:

One tutor group.

Observation of some tutor periods and lessons.

Interviews with students individually.

Possibly further individual interviews with some individuals.

c) For Teachers:

My presence in some tutor periods and lessons.

Interview with tutor.

Individual interviews with subject teachers who agree to participate.

d) For Parents:

Individual interviews with parents who agree to participate.

NB The layout of the original handout was more compressed!

APPENDIX TWO.

Letter to Parents: January, 1997.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Principal has given permission for some research to be undertaken within school by Mrs. Caroline Hudson from Oxford University Department of Educational Studies. She is looking at students' views of family and education and would like to interview members of 9YLC during the Spring term. I would be grateful if you would return the slip below giving permission for her to interview your child. The slip should be returned to your child's tutor, Ms. Wye, by Friday 10 January.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.
Yours sincerely,

S. Mahn.
Assistant Principal.

.....

Name of student

I do/do not agree to my son/daughter being interviewed by Mrs. Caroline Hudson as part of her research project.

Signed Parent/Guardian

Date

APPENDIX THREE.

FIRST SET OF INTERVIEWS. JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 1997.

Section One: Students' Views on School.

What do you think are the best things about school? Why?

What do you think are the worst things about school? Why?

What is your favourite lesson? Why?

What is your least favourite lesson? Why?

What, overall, is your opinion of school?

Section Two: Students' Perception of School Performance.

What are you doing best at at school? Why do you think that is?

What are you doing worst at at school? Why do you think that is?

Does it matter to you what set you are in? Why/not?

Does it matter to you what marks you get? Why/not?

Do you ever get any extra help with your school work?

(If so) Do you get help with any particular subjects? (If so) Which ones?

(If so) Is the help from: a) your subject teacher? b) an LSA? c) the library? d) your home? e) friends? f) anyone else?

So how, overall, do you think you are getting on at school?

Do you think you are doing better or worse at school than in Years Seven and Eight? Why?

Do you think you will want to stay on at school after 16? Why/not?

Do you know what you would like to do after you have left school? If so, what? Why?

Section Three: Students' Views on Home-School Links.

Do you think homework is important? Why/not?

Do you think homework diaries are a good idea? Why/not?

Do you think parents should write comments in homework diaries? Why/ not?

Do you think school reports are a good idea? Why/not?

Do you always understand the teachers' comments in your school reports?

Do you act on teachers' comments in your school reports?

Do your parents understand the teachers' comments in your school reports?

Do your parents try to make you act on the teachers' comments?

Do you think parents' evenings are important? Why/not?

At (Springfield) School, students can go with parents to parents' evenings. Do you think this is a good idea? Why/not?

Do you go to parents' evenings? How do you feel about going/not going?

How much do you think parents should be involved in school life? Why?

(If appropriate) What areas of school life do you think they should be involved in?

Do you talk to your family much about school? If so, about which parts of school life? If not, why not?

Does your family ask you much about school? If so, about which areas of school life?

Do you think you behave in the same ways at home and at school? How do you behave similarly/differently?

Section Four: Students' Views on Family.

Tell me about your family.

What is your best memory of your family?

Think of the best family you know. What is it like?

Think of the worst family you know. What is it like?

What are the best things about families? Why?

What are the worst things about families? Why?

Do you think families should always stay together? Why/not?

How much time do you think families should spend together? Why?

What rules do you think there should be in a family?

What rules do you think there should be for people your age in a family?

Do you think you will get married? Why/not?

Do you think you will want to have children? Why/not?

What would your ideal family consist of? Why?

So, how would you explain to someone who didn't know, what a family actually is?

APPENDIX THREE.

SECOND SET OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS. APRIL - MAY, 1997.

Section One: Constructs of Family.

Please could you draw how you see a family.

Tell me about what you have drawn.

Is this like your own family? If so, how? If not, how does your own family differ from this?

Do you remember what we were reading about families in HHC last week? What things do you think a mother does? Why?

Do you think a mother and a step-mother do the same things in a family? Why/not?

What things do you think a father does? Why?

Do you think a father and a step-father do the same things? Why/not?

Section Two: Family Networks.

Which members of your family do you see who don't actually live with you?

How much do you see members of your family who don't actually live with you?

How important do you think these relatives are in your life? Why/not?

Do they play any part in your upbringing? If so, what do they do?

Section Three: Special Events.

Tell me about what happens at Christmas in your family.

Tell me about what happens on birthdays in your family.

Have there been any other special occasions in your family which stand out in your mind? If so, what were they? What happened?

Section Four: Life Events.

What do you think are the most important things that have happened to you in your life (eg moving house, getting a dog, an accident happening to someone)? Why were these the most important?

What do you think have been the biggest changes in your life? Why?

Have you ever moved house? If so, how many times? Within the Castletown area? What were your feelings about moving house? Why?

Have you ever changed schools, apart from transferring from primary to secondary school? If so, how many times? Why did you change schools? What were your feelings about changing schools?

Have any of all these events affected how you have got on at school in any way? If so, how?

(Eg, ‘You talked in the last interview about your parents splitting up.’) Do you think that your parents splitting up affected any aspect of your school life? If so, which aspects? How?

Section Five: Relationships with Parents.

How much do you talk to your parents about the things going on in your life?

What kinds of things do you talk to them about?

Do you find it easy to talk to them? Why/not?

How much do your parents talk to you about the things which happen to them?

Do you think your parents worry about you at all? If so, about what kinds of things in your life?

Do you worry at all about your parents? If so, about what kind of things?

Section Six: Family Conflict.

Do you have any problems with anyone in your family? If so, with which members of your family? What are the problems that you have with them? What do you feel about having these problems with this member/ these members of your family?

Do any of the other members of your family have problems with one another? If so, who? What are the problems that they have with one another? What do you feel about the problems these members of your family have with each other?

Which is worse: when you have a problem with someone in your family or when other members of your family have a problem with each other?

Section Seven: Feelings about Family.

What makes you happy about your family? Why?

What makes you sad about your family? Why?

What would you never want to change about your family? Why?

What would you want to change about your family? Why?

(With students whose parents have split up.)

What were your feelings about your family before your parents split up?

What were your feelings about your family whilst your parents were splitting up?

What have been your feelings about your family since your parents split up?

Section Eight: Home and School.

Would you tell anyone at school about things happening in your family? Why/not? What kinds of things happening at home would you tell someone at school about?

Do you think schools should know about about what happens in students' families? Why/ not?

If so, what type of things happening in students' families should schools know about?

Should school know if a student's parents split up? Why/ not?

Should schools take any action over things which are happening in a student's family? Why/ not?

If so, what kinds of things should schools take action over?

Do you think that this school knows enough about what happens in students' families? Can you explain?

Do you think that this school does enough about things that happen in students' families? Can you explain?

APPENDIX FOUR.

EXTRACTS FROM INTERVIEWS.

Louise's first extract and David's extract are taken from the first set of interviews in January, 1997. I had known the young people since November, 1996, and so these extracts are from conversations built on a relationship of two months. In contrast, interviews later in fieldwork are in the context of relationships with students over a more extended period of time. In Louise's second example, I had known her over seven months. In Sara's example, I had known her five months.

1) LOUISE.

a) Example One:

Below are the opening interchanges in the first interview with Louise. January, 1997.

CH: Tell me about your family, Louise.

Louise: Well, it's not the best of families. My parents like they like live together, but they won't like love each other.

CH: Right.

Louise: And so, but then they get jealous of each other, like 'cos my mum's gettin' more love with a different person and my ... my dad's goin', 'That's not fair. You're not allowed to do that.'

CH: Right.

Louise: And so like my mum is like 'avin a go at my dad an' 'cos my mum came in at half past two from goin' out once an' um so my dad thought, 'Well, I'll get her back.' So he came back, he like went out at six at night to go for a drink down the pub an' 'e came back at half past eight in the mornin'. And they wasn't speakin' for like a week.

CH: When was that?

Louise: That was like a couple of weeks ago.

CH: That was a couple of weeks ago. Are they speaking to each other now?

Louise: Yeh, 'cos they thought they'd better do, 'cos of us kids. But they're always arguin'.

CH: And how do you feel about that?

Louise: I think they like shouldn't really, because what I think they should do is split up and like have, 'cos my dad won't move out 'cos 'e doesn't wanna leave us kids. But I said to 'im, 'Dad, if you move out, you could move somewhere close, and it'd be better.' But 'e doesn't understand it like that.

CH: Right.

Louise: Yeh 'cos well about eight months ago they split up for about three months and they weren't like speakin' to each other, but then they, they got back together again an' it's just goin' wrong. It's been going round in circles for absolutely ages now.

b) Example Two: June, 1997.

Louise's step-father had moved out and Louise's mother's partner had recently moved in. In the following, Louise's tone was laden with anger.

Louise: I hope my mum will get a lesson taught her.

CH: In what way?

Louise: That she'll learn not just to love Chris. I know I might just say that 'cos that's how I'm feelin'. Like the other day, she brought back a whole pack of cheese straws, just for Chris. A whole pack of cheese straws like about four in the pack. 'Mum, can I have a cheese straw?' 'No, they're Chris'. 'Mum, can I have a drink of water?' 'No, it's Chris'. 'Mum, can I have a chocolate bar?' 'No, it's Chris'. 'Mum, did you buy us any cheese

straws? Mum, did you buy us any chocolate bars?' An' it's like, 'Chris 'as gotta 'ave 'em. 'E's five years old. Chris 'as gotta 'ave 'em. 'E's got cystic fibrosis.' An' I think sometimes, 'I wish I 'ad cystic fibrosis.' I'd never want it, but the other day she was sayin', 'Yes, cystic fibrosis does have a better life span. They do live till longer.' 'There she is goin', 'E's gotta 'ave chocolate.' 'E's just a spoilt little brat! Oh an' my mum's always with her boyfriend. (Sighs). Just always with her boyfriend! I'm gettin' fed up!

CH: Why are you getting fed up?

Louise: Because he's just always with her. An' it's, 'I think of you kids first.' An' it's like, 'Oh yeh, you think of us first so much that after my dad you let another man in. Because after my dad left, it was, 'I'm never ever ever having another man in this house.' (Said with great emphasis.)

2) David.

Below is an extract from David's first interview, January, 1997. We were approximately 20 minutes into the interview.

CH: What are the worst things about families?

David: (Long pause). Um just when um if you've got when you 'ave parents, if they like split up.

CH: Why do you say that?

David: Because like (long pause) I've been through it so I, I know what it's like and it's like really horrible because they're sometimes arguin' all the time and you don't know what to do.

CH: What did you do?

David: Well, started cryin', 'cos I didn't want 'em to argue an' I just tried to get to sleep an' tried not to listen. There was one time when the neighbour called the police 'cos 'e could 'ear it as well.

CH: Did the police come?

David: Yeh, 'an' I was really upset then. I just didn't know what to do so I just ran away. Well, I didn't run away but I ran down to my mate's house and stayed there for ages. 'An' then my mum came an' got me. She was like okay with me, but she was angry with my dad an' then we went to stay with my aunt for the night till everything had cooled down.

CH: Did it cool down?

David: Yeh, for a little while. Then things started gettin' bad again an' I just thought they would probably split up.

CH: How did you feel about that?

David: Well, I wanted 'em to be together, but knew it would probably be better if they split up 'cos then I wouldn't be in the middle all the time wondering what was goin' to 'appen.

CH: Did either of them talk to you about it?

David: Yeh, they said like, 'There's nothing to worry about.' They said that 'cos whatever happened they'd still love me and they'll always care for me. I knew they still like loved me 'cos they was still talkin' to me, but I dunno really.

CH: What advice would you give someone who was ...

David (Interrupts) Just like try to forget it. Listen to your mum an' talk to someone about it.

CH: Did you talk to anyone about it?

David: No I didn't for ages an' then it just got worse (highly emotional tone) an' every night I just thought about it, couldn't handle it, an' couldn't like, started cryin'. I couldn't handle it.

3) Sara April, 1997.

Sara had been sleeping with Paul, the boyfriend of her older friend, Shaun, for three months. Sara was very keen on Paul but, according to her accounts, Paul was frequently cool to her. Sara was often annoyed and upset, as she

was in this interview, about the way he treated her. She had just given me a long and explicit account of the ups and downs of their sexual relationship.

Sara: Boys are all twats. Fucking twats. None of them are mature enough to have a relationship. They just wanna use you for sex.

CH: What does having a relationship mean?

Sara: It means, 'Shag me 'cos I really love you an' I really wanna share this with you.'

CH: When's a boy mature enough to have a relationship?

Sara: When they're 65. But I lost my virginity when I was 11. That's very, very young. I started smokin', lost my virginity, tried drugs, all in the same year.

CH: What made you do that?

Sara: I had sex the first time to lose my virginity and the second time to see if it was any better than the first. An I just started smokin'. I tried drugs. Then I started drinkin' whenever I got the chance, um, started gettin' into like proper relationships. Yeh, I matured really quickly. I'm more like, like before it would be, like that thing with Paul, like before it would be, 'Oh I can't do that. I'd love to try it, but it's too scary (imitates a helpless tone).' But now it's, 'I'm gonna take the responsibility.' But I don't want my mum to find out, 'cos she knows he's (Paul) really active, really sexually active. An' 'cos she said to me, 'Don't you ever get off with anyone else's boyfriend!' An' I said, 'No, I won't.' But things happen, don't they?

CH: What do you mean by, 'Things happen?'

Sara: Like I don't think I could live my life just doin' things like, 'Oh well, I can't do this because my mum says not. Oh I can't do this because it's illegal, an' I can't do this 'cos, 'cos... (in a helpless tone) ' Like Leanne an' Clare an' that lot. An' so if my mum found out I was goin' out with Paul, I'd just tell her, 'Well, it's alright for you to do it with Steve (her uncle).'

APPENDIX FIVE.

RESEARCH LOG.

1) Example One:

In the following, I was reflecting on the first day of the second week of the first set of interviews (January, 1997).

I feel I'm interviewing much more now as I want to interview. It's only a very subtle shift, one which perhaps would be imperceptible to others, but now it's around their voices. I'm making sure I cover, or try to, the topics, but not like on the first day last week, when I was putting questions slightly before what the students wanted to say. I was leading the interview a bit too much with my questions. I feel that now I have allowed the experiences of the students to lead the interview, rather than a very slightly tick box items on the shopping list mentality. Now the students' accounts are leading.

2) Example Two.

The following extract is part of an account of tutor time (6.2.97.). I have chosen it, first, because it illustrates how tutor time was an occasion to build interpersonal relationships. Second, it is an example of triangulating different types of data in a range of different contexts, over time. The activity of looking at the photos triangulated Louise's accounts of her family over a number of occasions in interviews with me and in informal conversations with her peers, whether, for instance, in tutor time or lessons.

Went to join the big group of boys. Steven asked me when we would be having another McDonald's raffle and if we could exclude previous winners the next time we had one. Johnny reminded me to ask Matty if his father was going to let me have one of his cars (This group of boys had two long-running jokes with me. The first was teasing me about watches, because one day they noticed that I was wearing two watches. The second was about buying a car, because at the beginning of fieldwork I had bought a new car. These boys said that I could have bought one of Matty's father's four cars, several of which were apparently semi-wrecks, from him.). So I asked Matty about his dad's car, and he said his dad would be interested in talking about a price. Tim asked me if I wanted to buy a parker pen, which he brandished in front of me. I asked him why he wanted to sell it, and he said a mate of his had paid £1.25 for it, but didn't like it. I asked how the mate had got it so cheaply. Tim said his mate was always doing that with parker pens and pencils, but that he didn't nick them. I said I liked parker biros. Tim said he'd see what he could do for me, asked me how much I'd be prepared to pay and offered to introduce me to his mate.

I then sat between Julie and Helen (at same group of tables as Louise and Lynn). Julie told me she was grounded for the next week, for always being out of her seat in Mr. Winter's science lesson. Mr. Winter had phoned her mum. Louise said Mr. Winter had phoned her mum too, but that she was still grounded for her last misdemeanour. Julie said she would be missing the Valentine's disco next Tuesday. I asked Julie if she thought her parents would relent and she said it was her mum who had said a week. Her dad apparently thought it was a light punishment.

Helen was telling me about a girl in the latest issue of *Sugar* who'd supposedly had sex with forty boys in two months. I asked Helen what she thought of that and she said, 'Disgusting!' She said that the girl had done it for popularity, because her best friend had supposedly done the same. I asked her if she thought it would make the girl popular and she said no. Tim, who was nearby, was evidently quite interested about the girl who'd had sex.

Louise had a whole pile of photos she and Lynn were looking at. Colin and Tom came over to join them. I commented on one of a wedding, 'That looks a nice wedding!' and that involved me in the photo-taking. Suddenly it was all the actors in front of me! Louise said, 'That's my dad,' and there was a brown-haired man of about my age in front of me, and then Louise said, 'There's my baby brother,' and there was the cystic fibrosis little boy in front of me, in a living room. Louise then said, 'That's the most recent photo of Chris (Louise's baby brother),' and there was a smiling, round-faced little boy in front of me, in a kitchen, with someone at a sink. Louise said, 'That's my mum,' and showed me two other photos. One was of a blonde-haired person at her own wedding. The other was of a slightly plump dark-haired woman sitting in brilliant sunshine in a beautifully kept suburban garden. Louise said it was her nan's garden. I commented that Louise's mum had different coloured hair in each photo and she said her mum was always changing her hair colour.

At that point, I asked Julie what had happened to her strawberry-blonde hair. (Julie had previously dyed her hair what in effect was a rather orange version of strawberry blonde.) Julie said it had all washed out now. I asked Julie if she was her natural colour, and she said that her natural colour was dark, and that she bleached her hair. Julie asked me if I knew about the kind of bleach you could just spray in, and then explained about it.

APPENDIX SIX.
STUDENTS' NRA CERTIFICATES.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

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OF
9YLC
SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL

PARTICIPATED FULLY, FROM
NOVEMBER, 1996 TO JULY, 1997, IN A
RESEARCH PROJECT ON YEAR NINE
STUDENTS' VIEWS OF FAMILY AND OF
EDUCATION, CONDUCTED BY MRS.
CAROLINE HUDSON, FROM OXFORD
UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATIONAL STUDIES.

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APPENDIX SEVEN.

QUESTIONNAIRE: SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL

This questionnaire is confidential. Please answer as fully and as honestly as possible. No teacher will read what you have written.

Please put a tick if you would like to be interviewed about school attendance.

Please circle one of the following responses.

Which school year are you in?

7 8 9 10 11

Which gender are you?

Male Female

Which category best describes you?

Bangladeshi African Caribbean

Chinese Indian Other (please specify)

Pakistani European

In each of the following questions, please put a tick by the answer that describes you. In some questions, you might need to tick more than one answer.

QUESTION 1 Do you think it is important to attend school regularly?

i) Yes

ii) No

Please explain your answer.

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QUESTION 2 Could you improve your attendance at school?

- i) Yes**
- ii) No**

QUESTION 3 Since you have been at Springfield School, has your attendance:

- i) improved?**
- ii) stayed the same?**
- iii) got worse?**

Please explain your answer.

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QUESTION 4 If you have time off school, is this because:

- i) you are ill?**
- ii) you are pretending to be ill?**
- iii) you have to help at home?**
- iv) you are going to the doctor's/dentist's?**
- v) you are going on holiday?**
- vi) of special events eg birthday, Diwali, Eid?**
- vii) you have fallen out with your friends?**
- viii) you are being bullied?**
- ix) you haven't done your homework?**
- x) of other reasons?**

Please explain your answer as fully as possible.

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QUESTION 5 Have you ever skived school?

- i) Yes**

ii) No

If your answer is 'no', please move to question 20.

QUESTION 6 How old were you when you started skiving?

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QUESTION 7 Since you have been at Springfield School, has the amount you have skived:

- i) increased?
- ii) stayed the same?
- iii) decreased?

Please explain your answer as fully as possible.

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QUESTION 8 In this school year, have you skived:

- i) once a term?
- ii) once a month?
- iii) once a week?
- iv) more often than once a week?
- v) less often than once a term?
- vi) not at all?

QUESTION 9 When you skive, do you:

- i) not come to school at all?
- ii) register, and then skive?
- iii) come to school, not register, and then skive lessons?

QUESTION 10 When do you decide to skive:

- i) the day before you skive?
- ii) on the way to school?
- iii) after you get to school?
- iv) none of these?

If your answer is 'none of these', please explain when you decide to skive.

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QUESTION 11 When you skive, do you skive:
i) all day?
ii) half a day?
iii) individual lessons?

QUESTION 12 Do you skive because you don't like school at all?
i) Yes
ii) No

If your answer is 'yes', please explain why you don't like school.
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QUESTION 13 Do you skive because you don't like certain lessons?
i) Yes
ii) No

If your answer is 'yes', please list the lessons you dislike, and explain why you don't like them.

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QUESTION 14 Do you skive for any other reasons?
i) Yes
ii) No

If your answer is 'yes', please explain the reasons why you skive.
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QUESTION 15 Do you skive:
i) on your own?
ii) with friends?

QUESTION 16 Where do you go when you skive?
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QUESTION 17 What do you do when you skive?
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QUESTION 18 Do your parents know that you skive?
i) Yes
ii) No
iii) Don't know

QUESTION 19 Do any teachers know that you skive?
i) Yes
ii) No
iii) Don't know

QUESTION 20 In this school, is skiving:
i) easy?
ii) difficult?

Please explain your answer as fully as possible.
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QUESTION 21 Has Bromcom made any difference to students' attendance at Springfield School?

- ii) Yes
- ii) No

Please explain your answer.

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QUESTION 22 What do you think would help students attend school regularly?

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QUESTION 23 If you don't skive, is this because:

- i) your parents might find out?
- ii) the school might find out?
- iii) you don't want to miss school?
- iv) none of these reasons?

Please explain your answer as fully as possible.

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Thank you for completing this questionnaire.