

A. Emotional Privation

80. The importance of establishing good, affectionate, early attachments has already been mentioned. If this does not happen, the child has lost an opportunity for the optimal early development of a healthy personality, but it may still form a strong attachment in the following months if it has the chance to relate to one or more constant, caring persons. Normally, this person is the mother, but other care-givers can also provide the needed affection. There should be a good relationship with at least one person. Today, "the question is not mothering, it is not fathering; it is parenting. One person can do the job."² Ideally, both parents contribute. "The blend of love and authority, present in all well-functioning united families, is essential very early in the formative years of the child."³ In some cases neither parent is able to fulfil the needed role of a steadfast and affectionate presence in the child's life. Such circumstances have been referred to as "parental deprivation". This is "recognized as a prime cause of delinquency and other personality disorders."⁴ It is generally accepted that "maternal deprivation has a detrimental effect on character development."⁵ The importance of the father, however, should not be overlooked, particularly in the life of the growing boy. "When a healthy father image is lacking, the child finds it hard to define for himself a proper social and sexual role. Deviant behaviour of the order of aggressive antisocial acts or homosexuality may result."⁶

81. Even in the absence of both parents, however, the young child need not suffer emotionally. Affectional bonds may be formed with a substitute caretaker. What is needed is at least one constant, loving person to whom the child can relate.

82. But what of the child who does not have the opportunity to bond with either parent or with any other person who is a stable loving presence in its life? There are many circumstances in which this may be the case: for example, where there is parental death or absence through desertion, mental or physical illness, alcoholisms, other instability in a family or a single parent family in which the parent is forced by economic circumstances to leave the child with changing or unsuitable caretakers. Such family variables as parental death, separation, lack of affection or rejection, have been found to have a significant relationship to the development of the psychopathic personality.⁷ Without at least one constant and caring person in its life, a child will suffer not only from maternal or parental deprivation, but in a more complete sense, from emotional privation.

83. Our witnesses described the results of such privation. In cases where a child had never had a relationship with one adult in which the child's care was paramount, there would be a tendency for the child to have the following characteristics: superficiality of personality; a