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ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT TO PARENTAL DIVORCE: AN INVESTIGATION
FROM THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF STRUCTURAL FAMILY THERAPY

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Significant Aided-Unaided differences are also found: Aided families are perceived as more chaotic, disengaged, and enmeshed than Unaided families; Aided adolescents are characterized by more Externalizing (i.e. acting out) behavior problems than Unaided adolescents; and while all Unaided adolescents fall within the nonclinical normative range on the standardized test on Externalizing Problems, more than one third of Aided adolescents fall within the clinical range on this test. Further, significant differences in mothers' postseparation incomes are found between the Aided and Unaided groups, with the Aided being lower.

Comparisons of the adjustment scores for the combined Aided plus Unaided groups with the test norms of the clinical and nonclinical standardization groups reveal that the adolescents as a group fall between the clinical and nonclinical norms, suggesting that divorce is a stressor for these adolescents which is within the realm of nonclinical, or nonsymptomatic, adaptation.

These findings represent a first quantitative attempt with separated families to (a) demonstrate that individual adolescent adjustment is contingent on structural features of the family, and (b) differentiate in one study between characteristics of Aided and Unaided families and their adolescents. This is an important methodological issue which has not been controlled in previous studies.

(2) Two qualitative clinical case studies demonstrate the pertinence of these family dimensions, both in understanding the plight of clinical postseparation families with adolescents and in guiding their treatment. The first family is characterized by disengagement and a collapsed Generational Hierarchy. The second family is characterized by rigid enmeshment and disengagement in the mother-son and father-son subsystems respectively.

Finally, the family dimensions are employed to understand the successful efforts of a nonclinical, separated family with an adolescent to adapt over a 3-year period after the separation. As far as is known, these case studies are the first systematic attempt to apply these structural family concepts to postseparation families.

Thus, the contribution of this thesis to our current understanding of the adjustment of adolescents to their parents' separation represents a first attempt to (a) quantitatively relate adolescent adjustment to structural dimensions of the family, and to differentiate between characteristics of Aided and Unaided families and their adolescents, and (b) qualitatively demonstrate the applicability of these structural dimensions in the clinical situation, and to understand the successful efforts of a nonclinical family to adapt after a separation.

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SUMMARY

Introduction

Divorce is now commonplace in all Western societies. Weed (1980) has calculated that approximately half of all marriages recently contracted in the U.S.A. will end in divorce, and more than 1 million children are directly affected each year (Spanier & Glick, 1981). In spite of the vast numbers of families and children affected, there remains (a) disagreement about the impact of separation and divorce on families and children, and (b) a serious lack of research on these issues derived from any clinically relevant family therapy theory.

This thesis will examine the impact of separation and divorce on family structure and adolescent adjustment from the general perspective of structural family therapy theory (Minuchin, 1974). Further, adaptive operations necessary to successfully negotiate this difficult transition, and a useful therapy for those separated families who do not, are described.

Review Of The Literature

A review of the rapidly expanding psychological literature relating to the impact of divorce on children revealed the following: A host of variables have been examined and a group found to mediate, to some extent, the impact of divorce on children. These variables pertained, among others, to the preseparation family (particularly hostility between the parents) and the postseparation family where continuing hostility between the parents, aspects of the children's access to the noncustodial parent, and the quality of custodial parenting were important. Also important were characteristics of the child in terms of temperament, age and sex variables, and environmental and S.E.S. factors (notably that less environmental change after the separation and less financial depletion was advantageous).

In terms of the overall effects of divorce on children, findings have been equivocal. While a number of studies did not report that children were negatively affected by divorce, the seminal studies emphasized the deleterious (or disaster) impact of divorce on children. Despite their important contribution, many of these studies were methodologically flawed. They often used unstandardized data-collecting procedures and often tapped limited samples. For instance, those studies that found that the effects of divorce were negative often examined families who had applied

for treatment. Those studies which reported few negative effects were examining, for the most part, families who were not applying for treatment. Unwarranted generalizations, then, tended to be made about the impact of divorce on children and families, beyond the parameters of their samples.

Further, those researchers who emphasized the negative or disaster consequences of divorce were often limited and influenced in their theorizing about divorce by their paradigmatic stance. Specifically, the disaster orientation tends to employ a linear individual model of the child on the one hand as a helpless victim of the divorce and, on the other, as having to shoulder the burden alone. This should be contrasted with the systemic paradigm which emphasizes the circularity of causation, the interdependence of family members, and the patterns that connect them.

In this thesis adolescent children of divorce will be studied. This choice of focus on the adolescent has been made because relatively few research studies have examined the impact of divorce on this population. Further, the methodological and conceptual criticisms described above apply particularly to this limited body of research on the adolescent.

The systemic model that will be utilized in this thesis, that of structural family therapy, was chosen because it is particularly related to issues of adolescents and children. It also focuses on dimensions of structure and organization which change significantly when parents separate.

Orientation And Aims Of The Study

There are two thrusts to this thesis: (a) a quantitative, statistical, and empirical investigation, and (b) an investigation of qualitative data derived from clinical and nonclinical case studies.

A structural family therapy orientation is utilized to examine the impact of parental separation on adolescent children. More specifically, postseparation adolescent adjustment is examined in terms of three core structural variables of the postseparation family. These are:

1. Cohesion, which is an interpersonal dimension of proximity. The pathological extremes of Cohesion are: (a) enmeshment, which refers to an interpersonal overinvolvement at the cost of individual independence, and (b) disengagement, which refers to interpersonal fragmentation, characterized by excessive independence and little support.

2. Generational Hierarchy, which refers to a vertical view of the family with the parents ascendant and responsible for leadership, controls and limits, and

3. Adaptability, which refers to a continuum of family flexibility with dysfunctional extremes of chaos and rigidity.

These variables were selected because recent research, emanating from models other than the family, has tentatively suggested that these concepts of postseparation structure might

be important mediators; because clinical evidence strongly suggests they are; and because these concepts have a long history of being particularly useful clinically with diverse populations such as low income families, psychosomatic families, and the families of adult heroin addicts.

With these concepts in mind, four main areas were explored:

1. Conceptual - One model contends that divorce disastrously shatters the family, which thereafter ceases to be a family. An alternative model is investigated: that the family with children endures, albeit radically reorganized, after the separation. If this is true, then from a family systems framework, postseparation adjustment of children should be associated with key aspects of the reorganizing family's structure, namely Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability.

2. Methodological - As described, findings remain equivocal as to whether adolescents and their families are deleteriously (and disastrously) impacted by divorce, or whether they are not necessarily negatively affected. However, these findings were often derived from studies which have tended to examine either solely a sample referred for treatment or a sample that was not requesting aid. In this thesis, two samples of separated families will be investigated, namely a group which requested treatment, and a group that did not.

3. Clinical - For a sub-group of adolescents and their families, divorce does have a negative impact, precipitating psychopathology of a serious nature for which psychotherapeutic help is often needed and requested. The formal application of the structural family concepts emphasized in this thesis, although widely applied to other clinical populations, has not been systematically employed with separated families. Two case studies will be presented in order to demonstrate the applicability of these concepts in guiding the family oriented therapeutic process.

4. Nonclinical - A case study will be presented of a family with an adolescent that was interviewed over a 3-year period after the separation. During this time the family neither requested treatment, nor needed it. What will be illustrated are the challenges or tasks with which the family grappled for years after the separation, in order for them to remain within the realm of the nonclinical, Unaided or non-disaster families. These tasks and the family's efforts will be discussed primarily in terms of the leading structural concepts of the thesis.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 45 adolescents, between the ages of 12 and 16 years, from 30 families who had separated

within the last 18 months. One group of these separating families, the Aided group, were applying for treatment for the first time. Another group, the Unaided, were volunteers. All were mother custody families, and all assessments of the Aided group took place prior to treatment.

Instruments and Procedure

Adolescent adjustment was rated by mothers on the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (C.B.C.L.). This provided scores for Internalizing (e.g., depression), Externalizing (e.g., anger and acting out), and Total Behavior Problems (an index of "need for help"), as well as Social Competency (i.e., school performance, the amount and quality of social behavior, etc.). The C.B.C.L. has been well standardized and, for purposes of comparison, clinical and nonclinical norms are available within the same age range as the research sample.

Family structure was rated by the adolescents. To assess Cohesion and Adaptability, they completed the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (F.A.C.E.S.), which consists of 96 items. To assess Generational Hierarchy, all adolescents completed the Generational Hierarchy Questionnaire (G.H.Q.), which was constructed by the author as no other instrument of this nature was available. The G.H.Q. consists of 25 specific questions which have face validity with the constructs they are designed to measure. In order to organize these items, a factor analysis was performed which produced the

two independent Generational Hierarchy factor scores that are used: Hierarchical Control refers to rules and limit setting; "Access to Mother's Distressed Affect" suggests a process of the adolescent being exposed to the mother's distressed affect or problems.

Treatment of Results

Adolescent adjustment was examined in terms of Cohesion, Adaptability, Hierarchical Control, and "Access to Mother's Distressed Affect" scores. Further, adolescent adjustment and family structure were examined in terms of the Aided and Unaided groups. Finally, adolescent adjustment was compared with the C.B.C.L. clinical and nonclinical norms.

Results

The Quantitative Investigation

Family Structure and Adolescent Adjustment

There is a significant association between perceived structural properties of the custodial home and postseparation adolescent adjustment. Increased enmeshment and disengagement are associated with curtailed social competencies. Increased chaos is associated with greater Internalizing, Externalizing, and Total Behavior Problems. Greater access to the mother's distress is associated with enhanced social competence.

There is a nonsignificant tendency for a more effective Control Hierarchy to be associated with better adjustment. These are regarded as important findings because they indicate that divorce, ipso facto, is not necessarily disastrous, but that postseparation adjustment is contingent upon structural properties of the reorganizing postseparation family.

Aided-Unaided Differences in Family Structure and Adolescent Adjustment

There are significant differences in perceived postseparation family structure between Aided and Unaided families. Aided families are characterized by greater chaos, disengagement, and enmeshment than Unaided families who, in turn, are often characterized by more functional midrange levels of Adaptability and Cohesion.

When Aided and Unaided adolescents are compared in terms of perceived postseparation adjustment, the Aided adolescents are characterized by significantly more aggressive acting out than the Unaided adolescents who, by way of contrast, are characterized by a positive, greater level and quality of involvement in social activities. Further, when the Aided and Unaided adolescents are examined in terms of the percentage who score within the clinical range, there is a significant difference in distribution on Externalizing behavior, such that all adolescents in the Unaided group fall within the nonclinical range, while more than a third of the Aided fall within the clinical range. In addition, significant differences in mothers' postseparation incomes are found

between the Aided and Unaided groups, with the Aided being lower. Further analyses suggest that income overlaps with the Adaptability and Externalizing variables in differentiating between the Aided-Unaided groups.

These findings are considered important because they refute the idea of a unitary and necessarily catastrophic response of family structure and adolescent adjustment to divorce. They also suggest a reconciliation between the discrepant findings of previous studies. Some of the latter emphasized the negative impact, and these studies appear to be tapping samples similar to the Aided. Other previous studies emphasized that adolescents do not react negatively, and these studies appear to have used an Unaided sample. In addition, these results suggest that the postseparation destiny of families is affected not only by intrafamilial factors but also by extrafamilial forces such as income.

Further findings suggest that the majority of the research sample does not fall within the clinical range on Internalizing or Externalizing Behavior Problems. In terms of general adjustment, the Aided group is comparatively better adjusted than the C.B.C.L. clinical standardization group, while the Unaided adolescents are less well adjusted than the C.B.C.L. nonclinical (normal) group. The composite Aided plus Unaided group falls between the means for the C.B.C.L. clinical and nonclinical (normal) groups. These findings suggest that divorce is a stressor which, for the majority of adolescents,

is within the realm of nonclinical adaptation, given that they are viewed as nonsymptomatic. However, for a minority of adolescents, divorce may be viewed as disastrous, given that they fall within the clinical range.

The Qualitative Investigation

Clinical Case Studies

Two edited clinical case studies of separated families with adolescent children are presented to demonstrate the pertinence of structural concepts, both in understanding the plight of these clinical families and in guiding the therapeutic process. In the first family, the custodial home is disengaged, and the Generational Hierarchy has collapsed. The noncustodial father has been severed from contact with his daughters, one of whom is at high psychiatric risk. In the second separated family, the parents are unable to let go of each other. Within a rigid context, mother and son are enmeshed, and father and son are disengaged. The youngster feels he is going mad and has thoughts about killing himself.

Nonclinical Case Study

The key structural concepts of this thesis are employed to understand a nonclinical, Unaided separated family with an adolescent that worked successfully on the postseparation dilemmas and tasks with which they were confronted without needing or going for treatment. A three year longitudinal study of this family is presented.

Conclusions

The Quantitative Study

1. This is the first discoverable attempt to highlight empirically derived structural properties as mediators of adolescent adjustment in postseparation families. The significant findings provide confirmation with separated families of a basic tenet of family systems and structural theory, namely that individual symptoms are contingent upon dysfunctional organizational patterns.

2. It is the first discoverable attempt to compare, in one study, an Aided and Unaided sample of separated families and adolescents and to contrast these groups with the standardized adjustment norms of a clinical and nonclinical group. The emergent findings are important in that they provide little support for a disaster theory that adolescents are inevitably disturbed clinically as a result of divorce. In fact, the majority appear to adapt to the stresses of divorce without becoming its clinical victims.

The Qualitative Study

1. The empirical confirmation with separated families of a basic systems tenet, that individual symptoms are contingent on dysfunctional organizational patterns, provides a convincing argument for a therapy with separated families that is organized, at least in part, around the structural concepts of this thesis. The two clinical case studies provide corroborative evidence for the usefulness of these theoretical concepts in guiding successful therapy.

2. The empirical finding that the majority of separated families and adolescents in this sample adapt without becoming clinical casualties, during the first 18-months after the separation, directs us to look for the adaptive and coping mechanisms of divorced families. The longitudinal case study presented here, from a structural viewpoint, of one family's successful efforts to cope is, as far as is known, unique.

INTRODUCTION

A clear understanding of the impact of divorce on family members; the creative mechanisms which some participants use to cope successfully with this upheaval; and a useful therapy for those who do not: these are of major relevance to mental health professionals and parents alike. This study is undertaken in order to provide further insights into these phenomena.

Current epidemiological findings indicate that 33% of the U.S.A.'s children experience their parents' separation or divorce by the age of 15 (Furstenberg, Peterson, Winquest-Nord & Zill, 1983). Projections are that approximately half of all marriages currently contracted in the U.S.A. will end in divorce (Weed, 1980). Given this situation, a recent review suggests that psychologists will "find the need for a systematic description of ... factors predictive of parents' and children's divorce adjustment" (Kurdek, 1981, p. 856).

This thesis will examine (a) organizational dimensions and dynamics of families with adolescent children, where the parents have separated, and (b) the psychological adjustment of these adolescent children. These organizational dimensions are derived from family systems thinking; that is, that the family's organization governs the functioning of its members. A viable organization sustains adequate individual functioning, and individual dysfunction is seen as symptomatic of dysfunctional organizational patterns. This thesis will examine the organization, as perceived by the adolescent, of the postseparation family as it relates to the functioning of the adolescent child.

If the systems idea is valid, that individual adjustment is associated with patterns of family organization, then we would expect that adequate adolescent adjustment would be associated with functional patterns of postseparation family organization. And, conversely, adolescent maladjustment would

be associated with dysfunctional patterns of postseparation family organization.

From within this theoretical framework, this thesis will identify and describe three key structurally-oriented dimensions of the family, namely Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability. These dimensions are particularly pertinent theoretically in predicting an adolescent's postseparation adjustment, and this will be described. In order to verify, quantitatively, their predictive utility, the relationship of these dimensions to the adjustment of 45 adolescents whose parents have separated, will be explored. The research sample will consist of two groups of separated families for which previous studies in the area have not been controlled: an Aided group who are applying for treatment for the first time, and an Unaided group of paid volunteers. With these concepts and this population in mind, the purpose of the quantitative study is: (a) to identify the relationship between postseparation family structure and adolescent adjustment; and (b) to identify differences in family structure and, consequently, adolescent adjustment between the two samples of postseparation families, for which previous studies have not been controlled.

The dimensions that are being investigated in this thesis have deep roots in clinical family theory and therapy. In contrast to this is previous divorce research, which is not related to any of the prominent models of family therapy. Two

detailed case studies will be presented to demonstrate how the key dimensions of this thesis can guide the successful therapy of families in which postseparation adolescent psychopathology of a severe nature is manifested.

Finally, a 3-year longitudinal study will be presented of a postseparation family with an adolescent who neither entered nor required therapy. Specifically, some of the tasks and operations of a "good-enough" postseparation arrangement will be explored.

A particular model of divorce underlies the concepts and arguments of this thesis: after the couple has separated, the family unit of parents with children endures, albeit radically changed. Despite - and at times because of - the changes, many tasks still face the family, in particular those related to the parenting of children. To this end, a viable form of postseparation family organization is needed.

This model emphasizes the transformation of the family after the divorce, with possibilities for either an effectual or ineffectual organizational structure. This view is at odds with a prevalent model of divorce as a catastrophic, terminal, rather than transitional, event for the family. From this catastrophe perspective, divorce is the ante chamber to the "broken" family. The emphasis in this disaster model is on the child reacting to the divorce event per se and adjusting to the broken family. This thesis will present an alternative model.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the Introduction, a synoptic overview of the major plan of this thesis was presented.

In the following chapter, the systems perspective as the broad framework for this study is described. Then, structural family therapy theory is presented, highlighting the key family concepts of this thesis, namely Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability.

The Systems Framework

The particular family systems approach (i.e., structural family therapy theory), which is utilized as a framework in this thesis, stems from one of a number of clinical orientations to family theory and therapy (see, for example, Gurman & Kniskern, 1981). At the present time, the most influential of these family therapy approaches or "schools" are: the Bowenian (Bowen, 1961), problem-centered (Epstein & Bishop, 1981), strategic (Haley 1976, 1979), structural (Minuchin, 1974), and symbolic-experiential (Whitaker & Keith, 1981). However, the classifications of these approaches are somewhat arbitrary, as the conceptual boundaries between them are often subtle or unclear. As a consequence, the commonalities and differences among these orientations are much debated (see, for example, Hoffman, 1981; Mackinnon, 1983; Sluzki, 1983).

Generally accepted, however, is the notion that each of the major schools of family theory and therapy is grounded in General Systems Theory (G.S.T.) (Bertalanffy, 1968). Each represents an effort to highlight and translate selected principles of the broad G.S.T. paradigm into concepts that are specifically relevant to family theory and therapy. What follows is a brief description of some of these selected major G.S.T. principles of interest to family theorists. A particular emphasis will be given to those principles

highlighted by the structural family therapists because this thesis will be exploring postseparation structural dimensions of family organization.

As Buckley (1967) has described, G.S.T. emerged in the scientific community after the Second World War as the culmination of a broad shift in scientific perspective that had been evolving over centuries. This change in world view occurred as a result of the dialectic between conceptions of physical and biological science. It led away from concern with inherent, eternal properties to a central focus on the principles of organization per se, regardless of what it is that is organized. In itself, G.S.T. is a generic model. It is intended to apply to entities ranging from subatomic particles to galaxies. Accordingly, the concepts used to describe such wide ranging phenomena become further and further removed from empirical referants.

By definition, a system is a set of interacting parts contained within a boundary. With living systems, that boundary must remain sufficiently permeable, or open, to the environment in order for it to continue living or growing. Yet the boundary also should not be so open that the system melts completely into the environment.

Family systems theorists conceptualize the family as just such an open system: it functions in relation to the wider extrafamilial context or suprasystem (for example, school, government); it is organized internally through a

series of subsystems (for example, spousal, parental, sibling, etc.); it evolves over the life cycle; and it operates according to principles that apply to all systems. Of importance is the notion that the family is not made up of discrete, independent parts (for example, individual personalities), but rather interdependent parts. Thus, change in one member affects other individuals and the group as a whole. This, in turn, affects the first individual in a circular chain of influence, back and forth. In this sequence, every action is also a reaction. Causality is conceptualized not as linear, but rather as circular. Within this interactional system, then, what counts is not the characteristics of individual members, or even the summing up of characteristics of individual members. Ultimately, it is important to study the connections between the parts, the organization of the system and the ongoing patterns that connect them.

These connecting patterns, or linkages, are paramount. They regulate human behavior and outweigh both individual personality features and the import of those historical conditions that initially set an early version of the patterns in motion. It is the abstracted network of these patterns that describes the structure of the family system.

Through universal rules (such as hierarchy) and multiple explicit and implicit idiosyncratic family rules, family interactions and structures are stabilized. These

rules operate as norms within the family, ensuring "familiarity" and continuity. At the same time, however, flexibility is required for a family to adapt to internal change, such as the birth of a child, or the illness of a member. The same is true for external change, such as a move to a new city or the parent losing a job. As individuals and the family shift from one developmental stage to the next, the evolution and development of new rules are required. For example, new rules concerning autonomy and control must be negotiated between parents and child, as the latter moves from latency to adolescence and then to young adulthood. The inability of the family to make these shifts when required, or the inability to maintain the necessary degree of stability and continuity, may be a source of pathology.

From this systems perspective, individual pathology can be understood best in terms of the relationship patterns in which it is embedded and which tend to reinforce the symptoms. To take this one step further, while an individual's functioning might be impaired, the symptoms might be functional, adaptive, and helpful to (and therefore reinforced by) the family context by maintaining its stability. The well-known scapegoating phenomenon serves a similar purpose, in that feuding parents are able to band together by attacking a "bad" child. This understanding of the symptom within its context is a vital conceptual point. Psychopathology is defined not only as an interpersonal problem, but as a

relationship or organizational problem. This concept is also of great practical consequence for the clinician. Rather than intervene on the intrapsychic forces of the individual, change requires an intervention in the dysfunctional patterns in which the symptoms are embedded or, to put it another way, in the context of the symptoms. It is this point of view, now increasingly accepted, that has been described as an epistemological revolution (Hoffman, 1981) and paradigm leap (Haley, 1976) that has altered basic ways both of viewing psychopathology and treating it. It is upon this conceptual substratum that all of the most influential family theories have been developed.

Having outlined these general characteristics and assumptions of family systems theories, we will now focus briefly on one particular model, namely structural family therapy. This structural model was chosen for two reasons. The first is that it is particularly related to issues of children and adolescents, unlike a number of other major family theories such as the Bowenian (Bowen, 1961) and symbolic-experiential (Whitaker & Keith, 1981) approaches. The second reason is that, more than any other model, the structural focuses on dimensions of organization and structure which change significantly and abruptly when the parents separate.

Structural Family Therapy Theory

Structural family therapy developed initially from the efforts of Minuchin and his colleagues while working at an institution serving poor Black and Puerto Rican youngsters from New York City's ghettos (Minuchin, Montalvo, Guerney, Rosman & Schumer, 1967). It was an institution for boys, but the staff made it a research and treatment center for their families. As has been well documented (see, for example, Brodtkin, 1980; Guerin, 1976), this tumultuous period of the late 1950's and early '60's in North America witnessed the national emergence of the family movement. In particular, Minuchin and his colleagues were disillusioned with the traditional talking therapies which focused on the past. They felt keenly the non-efficacy of these therapies with the poor. They were intrigued by the provocative ideas of G.S.T. that were surfacing at the time. They were inspired by the Kennedy-Johnson anti-poverty programs of this period and, in fact, were subsequently funded by them. They were also challenged by these families of the slums who were struggling with day-to-day survival. As a result, Minuchin and his colleagues developed an approach that is founded on the immediacy of the present contextual reality.

Utilizing concepts derived from G.S.T., Minuchin emphasized that the psychological functioning of the individual needed to be viewed as interdependent with the stable, underlying "codes" or structure of his/her family

organization. It is through these structures that individual functioning is regulated and expressed. For the structural family therapist, the unit of intervention is always both whole and part, which "contain each other in a continuing, current, and ongoing process of communication and interrelationship" (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981, p. 13).

Over the years, a number of different clinicians and theorists have influenced the development of structural family therapy. Haley (1976; 1979) worked for several years at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic, to which Minuchin and his colleagues migrated from New York City. Haley contributed auspiciously to the theoretical and technical repertoire of structural family therapy as did Auerswald, who is linked now to the ecological approach (Auerswald, 1968), and Speck (Speck & Attneuve, 1973), who is associated with network therapy. Their influence on the structural school led to the inclusion of systems outside of the nuclear family (such as grandparents, neighbors, churches and schools) in this work.

During the seventies and up to the present time, practitioners of the structural school have maintained their focus on the poor but have expanded also to do research on, and successful treatment of, other populations. The best known of this work is that with the so-called psychosomatic families of anorectics, asthmatics, and diabetics, (see for example, Minuchin, Rosman, & Baker, 1978) and, more recently, families of addicts (Stanton, Todd, & colleagues, 1981). Thus, unlike

most therapies, which have their roots in the middle class and are then adapted to other social strata, structural family therapy was generated from work with poor families and was subsequently expanded to other socioeconomic groups.

Dimensions of Structure

According to the structural family therapist, the family needs particular dimensions of structure in order for it to carry out its essential tasks. The obvious challenge has been to identify these core dimensions of structure.

As will be argued, two dimensions that stand out are the enmeshment-disengagement or Cohesion dimension, and the Generational Hierarchy. A particular property of these two structural dimensions, their flexibility, is also explored. These concepts were first articulated in the early work with the families of the slums (Minuchin, et al., 1967) and then systematically elaborated (Minuchin, 1974). Later, their successful application was described with psychosomatic (Minuchin, et al., 1978) and addict families (Stanton, et al., 1981). More recently, the skills and minute operations required of the structural family therapist when working with these concepts in therapy were detailed (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981).

In order to appreciate the notion of Cohesion and Generational Hierarchy, the underlying concept of boundaries must be described. "The boundaries of a subsystem are the

rules defining who participates, and how" (Minuchin, 1974 p. 53). The clarity of these rules is vital because the family is conceptualized as differentiating and carrying out its functions through subsystems which are formed by sex, generation, interest, or function (Minuchin, 1974). In this regard, the boundaries of a subsystem function to protect the differentiation and individuation of the family and its members, while providing a sense of belonging. This, Minuchin and Fishman (1981) assert, is the family's essential task. The challenge to the therapist is "how to preserve individualization and how to support mutuality" (Minuchin, 1974, p. 128).

Thus, for example, the marital subsystem will have closed boundaries to protect the privacy of the spouses. However, the parental subsystem will have relatively open boundaries, between it and the children, allowing the access necessary for good parenting. The quality of this boundary must be calibrated according to, and dependent upon, the developmental age of the children.

Each of the concepts of Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and flexibility or Adaptability will now be described.

Cohesion

The concepts of enmeshment and disengagement, which comprise the Cohesion (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1980) dimension of family interaction, reflect Minuchin's emphasis on

boundaries. In this thesis, the Cohesion dimension will be one of the key variables examined as it operates in the postseparation custodial home. This is essentially a horizontal dimension of proximity in the family, in contrast to the Generational Hierarchy which is vertically organized. Enmeshment and disengagement refer to extremes of togetherness and differentiation, respectively, between individuals and subgroups in the family, and between the family and its social environment.

While Minuchin and his colleagues coined the terms "enmeshment" and "disengagement," and are most closely associated with the concepts, a wide range of social science disciplines including (social) psychology, psychiatry, family sociology, and anthropology have used these concepts or closely related ones. Olson, et al. (1980) list approximately 40 terms which "despite the creative terminology ... (are) conceptually similar and deal with highly related family processes" (Olson, et al., 1980, p. 130). Of note is that most of these concepts describe extreme poles of the Cohesion dimension, with less attention given to the more moderate, balanced, middle range. This occurs essentially because most of these concepts have been developed by clinicians in situations where such extremes are most represented. Thus, extremely high versus extremely low Cohesion has been labeled as pseudo-mutuality versus pseudo-hostility (Wynne, Rychoff, Day, & Hirsch, 1958); undifferentiated family ego mass and emotional fusion versus

emotional divorce (Bowen, 1960); binding versus expelling (Stierlin, 1974); and enmeshment versus disengagement (Minuchin, 1974; Minuchin, et al., 1978). More balanced areas of Cohesion have been labeled less often, but two terms that reflect this more optimal condition are interdependence (Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979) and mutuality (Wynne, et al., 1958).

Some of the specific dimensions along which family Cohesion can be measured are contact time, emotional bonding, independence, boundaries, emotional and informational space, friends, decision making, and interests and recreation (Olson, et al., 1980; Woods, 1983). At the one extreme of high family Cohesion is "enmeshment", and at the low extreme "disengagement," terms coined and best described by Minuchin and his colleagues (Minuchin, 1974; Minuchin, et al., 1967; Minuchin, et al., 1978). For them, enmeshment and disengagement have implications at all levels: family, subsystem, and individual.

Enmeshment means an interpersonal bunching together. "The enmeshed family is a system which has turned upon itself, developing its own microcosm. There is a high degree of communication ... among members, boundaries are blurred and differentiation is diffused" (Minuchin, et al., 1978, p. 57.) The heightened sense of belonging comes at the cost of individual independence.

Disengagement means interpersonal fragmentation. There are "overly rigid boundaries. Communication is

difficult ... and the system tolerates a wide range of individual variation in members" (Minuchin, et al., 1978, p. 57). There is little connectedness and a distorted sense of independence. Members operate within their own domains, and support cannot be requested.

Empirically, a moderate body of evidence has accumulated over the past few years corroborating the central importance of the Cohesion concept in families. As a recent review article concludes:

In spite of the large variety of concepts used to describe aspects of cohesion and the diversity of operational measures used in these studies, most of the findings have been supportive of the principles and hypotheses in the ... model. The congruence of findings across studies using different conceptual and operational definitions attests to the potency of this dimension (Olson, et al., 1980, p. 144).

As labels for relational patterns, these terms are complex: individuals and subsystems participate within multiple structures, complexly interconnected. When a subsystem is characterized as enmeshed, this describes a dominating, encompassing, and rigid pattern. This is different

from the enmeshment and loss of boundaries that would characterize a moment of great intimacy between a couple, or the early bond of a mother with her infant.

As will be described later, this Cohesion dimension is particularly relevant to those issues concerning the adolescent generally and the adolescent in the postseparation context specifically. Within the custodial home, interpersonal dynamics typically operate which can trigger dysfunctional enmeshment or disengagement.

Generational Hierarchy

While the concept of boundaries demarcates the horizontal dimension of Cohesion, this concept also applies to the vertical dimension of Generational Hierarchy. Formally, the Generational Hierarchy may be defined as the "class of behaviors, normative for the parent (as compared to the class normative for the child) which places the parent(s) in charge of the children" (Woods & Talmon, 1983, p. 351). The issue here is who is in charge.

In essence, this dimension speaks to a view of the family that is not horizontally and democratically organized, but rather one that is hierarchically based, with the parents ascendant. The generational line between parents and child most succinctly defines who is above and who is below. It is also perhaps the most important parameter along which family roles are differentiated. Interviews with adolescents have

continually unearthed gratitude for parental leadership, controls, and limits (Josselson, Greenberger, & McConochie, 1977a, 1977b). A recent review suggests that "adolescents hunger for firm, definite others against whom they can pit themselves (in emulation or defiance) and evaluate themselves. For adolescents, the worst ego experience is not failure but uncertainty" (Josselson, 1980, p. 201). This concept of the family is very much in evidence in the structural model of effective family functioning (Minuchin, 1974) and in the description of, and empirical evidence for, the toxic effects of dysfunctional rigid triads such as triangulation, parent-child coalitions, etc. (Minuchin, et al., 1978).

When children consistently parent their parents by controlling and/or nurturing them, the Generational Hierarchy is reversed. When children consistently live without parental control, or as peers with their parents, or when cross-generational coalitions exist where one parent joins a child against the other parent, the Generational Hierarchy collapses. Most prominently, Haley (1976, 1979) and Madanes (1980) have stressed the importance of this organizational construct for conceptualizing family problems and their treatment. Specifically, they note that most child-adolescent problems include a triangle consisting of an over-involved parent-child dyad (a cross-generational coalition) and a more peripheral parent. Haley suggests that an "individual is more disturbed in direct proportion to the number of malfunctioning

hierarchies in which he is embedded" (1976, p. 117). The association between Generational Hierarchy and family (dys)function, while being clinically widely accepted as an important construct, has also received empirical corroboration (Madanes, Dukes, & Harbin, 1980; Woods, 1981).

It is Haley (1976, 1979), particularly, who is most closely identified with this concept of the organization of family relationships, and this issue became a point of contention between him and Bateson. Ideas of power and control were anathema to Bateson (1979), and he and others (Keeney, 1979) argued that the use of this term reflected a linear, nonsystemic epistemology. Haley (1976, p. 102) countered that power is not unilateral, and that all persons in the system maintain the hierarchical structure by their behavior. In addition, he (Haley, 1979) attacks classical systems theory for its lack of acknowledgement of family hierarchies which

... as it was applied to families, tended to describe participants as equals, which made the theory difficult to use when planning the restructuring and reorganization of the family hierarchy. To consider the power of a grandmother or to support the parents as authorities over a child, was difficult within a theory which tended to equalize everyone as responsive units (p. 15).

As with the Cohesion dimension, this construct is immediately relevant to adolescents in a separation-divorce context where multiple dynamics can typically operate to maintain the failure of parental executive functioning and an ineffectual hierarchy. This will be elaborated upon later.

Adaptability

A third basic concept of structural family therapy, but by no means exclusive to it, is Adaptability (Olson, et al., 1980). This term refers to a continuum of flexibility with extremes of chaos and rigidity. It describes a property of Cohesion and Generational Hierarchy and, as such, is a comment upon these dimensions. It is at a different conceptual level than they are. This concept of flexibility refers to a basic assumption that the family is not a static entity but one that is in the process of continuous change. To some extent, the phases and course of family development can be identified and predicted: Haley (1973) presented the therapeutic techniques of Milton Erickson by organizing them conceptually around the stages of the family life cycle and suggested that symptoms are most likely to occur when there is an interruption or dislocation in the family life cycle. Carter and McGoldrick (1980) write extensively about the importance of this family life cycle perspective for therapy. It is interesting to bear in mind, however, that these stages are rather arbitrarily designated. For example, the notion of childhood has been

described as the invention of 18th-century Western society, and adolescence as the invention of the 19th-century (Aries, 1962), related to the economic, cultural, and political contexts of those periods.

But regardless of our demarcation of the outstanding moments of family life-cycle change, there is consensus that the family is constantly subjected to demands for change. A father is laid off from work, or a child sets off to nursery school for the first time and, in both cases, the spouse and parental subsystems may, in all likelihood, have to change. Change, in fact, is the norm. "A long-range view of any family would show great flexibility, constant fluctuation, and quite probably more disequilibrium than balance" (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981, p. 21).

This construct was developed from a general agreement among systems thinkers (see, for example, Bateson, 1979; Koestler, 1967) that all living systems are governed by a unifying principle of balance between adaptation and self-stabilization. Significantly, when these ideas were applied to the social sciences generally, and to the family field in particular, the rigid and homeostatic tendencies of the system were highlighted (Haley, 1962; Lederer & Jackson, 1968). Possibly, this view emerged because these practitioners and theoreticians were observing and working with particular populations of disturbed families, where rigidity does appear clinically to be a core characteristic. As Minuchin notes,

while describing the psychosomatic family, "if a family is not changing that is a sign of rigidity, unhealthy in itself ... it becomes a cage. The exploration of alternatives is closed. Responses became stereotyped and straitened (sic). Family members are trapped" (Minuchin, et al., 1978, pp. 58-59).

Thus, until Speer (1970) and Wertheim (1973, 1975) developed theories claiming that it was restrictive and misleading to view family systems as purely homeostatic, the crucial importance of the family's potential for change was deemphasized. These theorists of the so-called second cybernetics school clarified that systems need both stability and change, and that it is the ability to change when appropriate that distinguishes functional families from dysfunctional ones. The extreme of change, however, -- chaos -- is also dysfunctional, as exemplified in the disorganized family (Minuchin, et al., 1967). Morphostasis was the systems term used to describe the stability-promoting, homeostatic quality of families, and morphogenesis was the term used to describe the creative, change-promoting quality of the system (Speer, 1970). Both qualities are hypothesized as necessary for a viable family system, which optimally would maintain a balance between the two extremes of morphostasis and morphogenesis. Over the years, an extensive body of research has developed in attempts to determine the relationship between family Adaptability and adjustment. This research is reviewed by Olson, et al. (1980), who concludes that "despite the

diversity of conceptual and operational definitions, the basic curvilinear hypothesis between adaptability and family functioning is generally supported" (Olson, et al., 1980, p. 152).

Again, this concept is fundamentally relevant to the adolescent in the postseparation family. Such families are in the midst of two simultaneous transitions that entail substantial stress: emergence into adolescence, and parental separation and divorce.

In short, these three concepts of Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability are fundamental to (but not exclusive to) structural family therapy. These concepts, too, are especially pertinent interpersonal dimensions along which reorganizing postseparation families can be evaluated, and in terms of which treatment can be planned.

These points will be elaborated later, once the children of divorce literature (with a special emphasis on the literature on adolescent children of divorce) has been reviewed and discussed. Then, a more detailed description of the special pertinence of these concepts will be offered.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the previous chapter the general systems and structural framework in terms of which this investigation will be conducted was described.

The following chapter will focus first on a general review of child oriented divorce-related empirical research over the past three decades. This will include a discussion of the increasingly sophisticated theories and methodologies that are being employed, as well as a description of typical problems experienced by different children at different ages and those variables that are thought to mediate postseparation adjustment.

A detailed description will then be presented of empirical research on the adolescent whose parents divorce. This will be followed by a methodological and conceptual critique of these studies, many of which do not examine clinically relevant variables and employ an often implicit model of divorce that emphasizes its negative impact on children. The argument for an investigation from a structural family therapy viewpoint is propounded.

The Impact of Divorce on Children: Overview of the Literature

In response to the escalating divorce rate and the many concerns of mental health professionals, there is now a rapidly expanding research literature on the topic of divorce, its multiple ripple effects, and its impact on children. Offered below is a brief review of our current empirical understanding of this area. Thereafter, a more detailed description and critique of the all-too-sparse literature on how divorce affects adolescents will be presented.

Recent reviewers of existing research concerning children and divorce (Clingempeel & Reppucci, 1982; Hetherington, 1979; Kurdek, 1981, 1983; Levitan, 1979) commonly conceptualize divorce not as a single event but as a chain of complex processes and changes which often unfold over many years, and operate at multiple individual-psychological, familial, legal, financial, and social levels. The interplay among these component systems is complex: no one study has been able to address them all, and we are unable to say at this time which, if any, is the ascendant system. Nevertheless, there is much that we know, this knowledge having accrued slowly over many years, building on earlier research and correcting previous mistakes.

Interest in studying the impact of divorce on children is relatively new. The early work was done in the 1950s and 1960s, and it explored the relationship between a child's

living in a single-parent household and that child becoming delinquent or showing other manifestations of psychopathology. As Levitan (1979) has described, these single-parent families, also called father-absent families or "broken homes," were seen as a homogeneous group, despite the fact that the father's absence might have been due to death, divorce, incarceration, or some other reason, and might be temporary or permanent. In essence, these families were conceptualized as a negative deviation from the normative two-parent family, with their single-parent status perceived as the most critical fact about them. Invariably, this single-parent status was thought to cause dysfunction in children. These views led to biases and problems in the selection of samples and methodologies and in the interpretation of results (Levitan, 1979). As Blechman (1982) documents, these flawed studies continue to be advanced as support for the position that one-parent families in themselves are detrimental.

One offshoot of this research tradition is the large literature of therapists' impressions derived from their work with clinical populations. These populations, of course, are highly selected and probably tap those children who are the most adversely affected. Not surprisingly, these authors have emphasized the distress of the children and the negative effects of divorce on children's relationships with their parents. They have suggested, for example, that these children are angry at their parents (McDermott, 1968); that the

custodial mother displaces anger stemming from conflicts with the ex-spouse onto her children (Anthony, 1974); that children lose trust in their parents (Westman, 1972), and so on. A few (see, for example, Steinzor, 1969) have suggested that divorce may be a healthier or less pernicious alternative to the continuation of marital conflict. More recently, attempts have been made to compare, systematically, children of divorced families with children from intact families as they present in psychiatric populations. These studies suggest that children of divorce constitute a higher proportion of psychiatric referrals as compared to their representation in the general population (see, for example, Kalter, 1977). Such findings are very difficult to interpret, as it is unclear whether these divorced parents are more sensitive (or oversensitive) to possible problems or whether these children do, in fact, have a higher incidence of psychopathology (Nichols, 1984), and if they do, why?

Both types of research that have been cited -- research connecting single-parent families to child psychopathology, and research stemming from clinical practice with children of divorce -- have a misguided emphasis (Cooper, Holman, & Braithwaite, 1983; Leupnitz, 1979) on the family's physical composition or structure. That is, whether a family is "intact," single-parent, or reconstituted is seen as the explanation, in itself, for children's reactions. Recent work goes beyond these simple formulations and is beginning to

explore aspects of evolving personal, familial, and extrafamilial processes that appear to make the difference for children of divorce.

Two major longitudinal studies have contributed most to our understanding of children's adjustment to divorce. Justifiably, these have achieved the status of classics in the field. The work of Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) brought the more sophisticated methods of clinical research to a study of 131 children, aged 3 through 19, from 60 divorced families residing in California. Most of these children were interviewed repeatedly: at the time of the parents' separation, and then 18 months, 5 years, and 10 years after the separation. Preliminary findings from the 10-year follow-up are now being reported (Wallerstein, 1984).

The other study -- by Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1978, 1979) -- is a sophisticated, comprehensive, multi-measure, and multi-method two-year investigation of the impact of divorce on the preschool-age children of 48 divorced and 48 intact, middle-class parents. Hetherington and her colleagues employed the basic family-structure research design (comparing divorced and intact families) of the single-parent research tradition. However, they carefully matched the samples of children and parents. The test measures were administered at 2 months, 1 year, and 2 years following divorce.

Both the Wallerstein and Kelly studies and the Hetherington, Cox and Cox studies, although different in many

respects, share common strengths. Both are concerned with change over time and, therefore, employ longitudinal designs; they use direct observations of children and their families; to some extent they consider the family as a unit; and to some extent they attempt to explore how aspects of the families' functioning before, during, and after separation and divorce affect the children. Both of these studies concur that divorce results in negative stresses for both children and parents.

The major theme of Wallerstein and Kelly's work has been that children of divorce, when assessed across time, react and adjust differently according to their age and developmental level. For example, at the time of the separation the young preschoolers (2½ to 3½ years) showed regressive behaviors; the older preschoolers tended to blame themselves and to exhibit aggression; the young latency-aged children (7 to 8 years) responded with pervasive sadness and were less able to use denial; and so on. At these first interviews it appears as if, with few exceptions, the preschoolers were most upset by the family crisis. At the 18-month follow-up, this youngest group had deteriorated further (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1975). Also, at this second stage of the study, striking sex differences emerged: boys were more troubled than girls, many of whom appeared to be recovering. Observations at the 5-year mark once again reflected change. Age at the time of the separation and sex were no longer significant discriminating variables in determining the child's adjustment. Instead, the

"overall quality of life" (Wallerstein, 1984, p. 447) within the post-divorce family was the determining factor, but Wallerstein does not define rigorously this "quality of life" concept. At this time, over one-third of the original sample was moderately to severely depressed, with many of the original preschool children represented in this depressed group. However, at the 10-year follow-up, most of the youngsters who had been preschoolers at the time of the separation were doing adequately at school and at home. Wallerstein (1984) raises the intriguing possibility that members of this youngest group, who were initially most disturbed, are currently less burdened than those who were older at the time of divorce.

Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) second important contribution has been to delineate clinically and non-quantitatively a number of variables, none of which are structural, that have a positive effect on children's adjustment to divorce. These variables include (a) the ability of the child to seek out and use support systems; (b) the parents' ability to resolve postseparation conflict; (c) the ability of the custodial parent to resume successfully the parenting role; and (d) the ability of the non-custodial parent to maintain a mutually satisfying relationship with the child. Boys especially, Wallerstein and Kelly found, need a positive relationship with their fathers.

The Wallerstein and Kelly study, however, does have "some notable problems in its design" (Levitan, 1979, p. 9).

One problem is the exclusive reliance on non-standardized clinically-oriented interviews. Secondly, their sample is drawn from the unrepresentative setting of a divorce counselling clinic. These and still other conceptual limitations will be discussed later in greater detail. Nevertheless, these ongoing contributions "invite further, more rigorous exploration" (Levitan, 1979, p. 9).

The work of Hetherington, et al. (1978, 1979), which focuses in depth on a narrow age-range of children over a 2-year time span, compensates for some of the weaknesses of the Wallerstein and Kelly research. In common with Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), these researchers describe in detail the severe stress and disorganization experienced by families in the first year following divorce, and they then document how, at the two-year follow-up, most of the initial debilitating effects had abated (Hetherington, et al., 1978). Of particular interest is that Hetherington and her colleagues, like Wallerstein and Kelly, found that the impact of marital discord and divorce was more pervasive and long-lasting for boys than for girls. However, at the 2-year post-divorce mark, it is interesting to note that boys from divorced families were doing better than boys from high-discord intact families. The findings about how divorce affects parental functioning are particularly revealing. On almost all of many measures of parental behavior, divorced parents in the first year after divorce were coping far less well than non-divorced parents.

In general, both the divorced mothers and fathers made fewer maturity demands and showed less consistency in disciplining, reasoning with, and communicating with their children. Mother-son interactions were especially troubled, resulting in an escalating reciprocal cycle of negative and aggressive parent-child interactions. At the 2-year follow-up, the mother-son relationship was still problematic, but some degree of equilibrium was being established. Low conflict between the parents and general agreement on parenting issues shortened and lessened the period of post-divorce stress and disorganization. Of course, the value of this study is limited by the narrow age range of the children and the demographic homogeneity of the sample.

Although the research studies of Wallerstein and Kelly and of Hetherington and her colleagues remain the benchmark efforts in the field, a host of other researchers have attempted to extend further our empirical understanding of the impact of divorce on children. Many of their findings, however, are contradictory and inconclusive.

For example, while the Wallerstein and Kelly (see, for example, Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) and Hetherington (see, for example, Hetherington, et al., 1979) studies emphasize the deleterious or "disastrous" impact of the divorce process on children, a number of studies (see, for example, Bernard & Nesbitt, 1981; Hingst, 1981; Reinhardt, 1977; Rosen, 1977; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980) do not report negative effects for all children and, in fact, report benefits for many. A recent

review (Longfellow, 1979) suggests that "findings to date are equivocal; they do not permit assertions that divorce has any single, broad-reaching impact on children" (p. 287). Rather than accepting a disaster theory of divorce, Kraus (1979) has noted that some researchers are beginning to conceptualize divorce as also an opportunity for development. Thus, rather than assuming that a child will be affected by divorce in any particular way, researchers and clinicians need to regard divorce as a "life experience which has exposed children to certain challenges and demands without predetermining the emotional valence of the event" (Bernard & Nesbitt, 1981, p. 40). Much more will be said about these concepts later.

In an effort to hone our understanding of children's reactions, many recent investigations with a more restricted scope are seeking to identify mediating variables that influence the impact of the divorce process on children. No final closure has yet been reached on the relative import of each of these variables, or even the directional influence of each variable.

In brief, some of those variables that have been identified as probably mediating children's adjustment to divorce pertain to characteristics of the child, of the parent-child relationship, of the parental relationship, and of the environment and demography. Each is briefly discussed below.

1. Characteristics of the Child

The temperament, age, and sex of the child are mediating variables that have received considerable attention. As regards the first of these, temperament, the New York Longitudinal Study (Thomas & Chess, 1977, 1984) followed the behavioral development of a large cohort of subjects from early infancy to early adult life. The study focused on how temperamental characteristics of the cohort influenced their development. They found temperamentally "difficult" children to be less adaptable to change and more vulnerable to adversity -- divorce being a prime example.

Age of the child at the time of the separation, as well as duration of time since the separation, have also been much explored. As described above, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Wallerstein (1984), have suggested that maladjustment is differently manifested depending upon the age of the child at the time of separation, and then depending upon the time elapsed since the separation. But this area remains one where findings are not definitive and where "confusion exists" still (Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, & McLaughlin, 1983, p. 304).

As regards the influence of the sex of the child, this too is an area where no definitive findings are available. While the common consensus is that boys from divorced families experience greater behavioral, social, and academic difficulties than girls (see, for example, Hetherington, et

al., 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Guidubaldi, et al., 1983), other studies have shown that boys do, in fact, no worse than girls (Kurdek, Blisk, & Siesky, 1981; Reinhardt, 1977). Still other studies have shown that boys do better than girls (Nunn, Parish, & Worthing, 1983; Slater, Stewart, & Linn, 1983).

One further characteristic of the child that has received considerable attention is level of interpersonal reasoning ability and locus of control (Kurdek & Berg, 1983; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980), independent of age. Thus, the child who is better adjusted appears to have an internal locus of control and a higher level of social-cognitive reasoning than does the less well-adjusted child.

2. Characteristics of Parent-Child Relationship

Santrock and Warshak (1979) have found that living with a custodial parent of the same sex is beneficial, but other studies (for example, Kurdek, et al., 1981) contradict this. Instead, the quality of the child's postseparation relationship with both parents has been found to be important for the child (Hess & Camera, 1979) and, in this regard, Jacobsen (1978) has emphasized parent-child discussions on divorce-related topics. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) refer to the ability of the custodial parent to resume parenting successfully. Santrock and Warshak (1979), have emphasized an authoritative parenting stance, characterized by the clear setting of rules and extensive verbal give-and-take. Hetherington (1979) adds to this, emphasizing the continued nurturing of children and maturity demands being made of them.

A number of parameters of the noncustodial parent-child relationship have been explored. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) include the ability of the noncustodial parent to maintain a mutually satisfying relationship with the child. Hess and Camera (1979) and Rosen (1977) have emphasized the availability of the noncustodial parent, while Isaacs (unpublished manuscript) has found that regularity of contact is the more important variable. Jacobsen (1978) emphasized the amount of time spent together, suggesting the more the better. In contrast, Kurdek, et al., (1981) found that those children who saw less of their noncustodial parent did better than those who saw more of the noncustodial parent.

3. Characteristics of the Parental Relationship

A number of studies have shown that low interparental hostility prior to the separation (Berg & Kelly, 1979; Hodges, Wechsler, & Ballantine, 1981; Fine, Moreland, & Schwebel, 1983; Rosen, 1977) is related to the improved postseparation adjustment of the children, and an impressive number of studies have emphasized the deleterious effects on children of postseparation conflict (Hess & Camera, 1979, Kurdek & Blisk, 1983).

4. Environmental and Demographic Characteristics

A number of recent studies are exploring the relationship between environmental change occasioned by the divorce and child adjustment (Kurdek & Blisk, 1983; Stolberg &

Anker, 1983). These studies have shown that lesser environmental change is associated with better adjustment.

Socioeconomic status (S.E.S.) has also been much explored. The maintenance of the family's preseparation S.E.S. level and minimal postseparation financial depletion appears to be advantageous. Recent studies (Coletta, 1979; Svanum, Bringle, & McLaughlin, 1982) have suggested that the typically experienced reduction in S.E.S. of divorced families accounts for much of the deleterious impact of divorce on children. This could be a finding of major importance for the implementation of social policy for families of divorce. However, other recent studies (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1984) suggest that different factors in the single-parent household, in addition to and independent of S.E.S., account for most of the variance in predicting child adjustment.

In short, this general overview of the literature on the impact of divorce on children suggests an appropriately expanding, diverse, and increasingly complex body of knowledge. However, many findings remain contradictory and inconclusive, particularly the issue of whether divorce per se is inevitably disastrous for children. Another issue, concerning the relationship between structural features of the postseparation family and child adjustment, has not been formally explored at all.

In part, this situation reflects the great complexity of the divorce phenomenon, which involves the interplay of

multiple systems. And, in part, the findings are uncertain because, as was stated in a recent review-article (Kurdek, 1983), "the quality of research in this area needs considerable improvement with respect to theory and methodology." (p. 1). In this thesis pertinent variables will be derived from the model of structural family therapy and objective measures will be administered to two samples of separated families.

In the following section, one particular circumstance, that of the adolescent whose parents have divorced, will be examined in greater detail.

The Impact of Divorce on the Adolescent: Review of the Literature

Only nine studies have been found which have attempted to examine the impact of divorce on adolescents. First, the findings will be individually described. Thereafter, these studies will be discussed.

Three studies are essentially anecdotal in nature. In Scotland, Mitchell (1983) interviewed 71 divorced parents and 50 of their now adolescent children approximately five or six years after the divorce. Her interview and qualitative analysis procedures were not reported. Mitchell found that the majority of the adolescents in her sample were living with their mothers and had free access to their fathers. These adolescents felt, however, that their fathers made little effort to maintain contact with them. This left them often

feeling rejected and in limbo, and this difficulty was compounded by the fact that most youngsters felt they had been given no explanation of the separation. Mitchell's (1983) pervading impression of these adolescents is of their "sadness tinged with bewilderment about their parents' decision to end their marriage, and also of the young people's concern for their parental feelings." (p. 186).

Sorosky (1977), in summarizing his impressions as a child psychiatrist in private practice in an upper middle class community, emphasized three issues. He suggested that divorce (a) is a hazard for adolescents because their parents have considerable difficulty, postseparation, setting the consistent, firm limits that adolescents require, (b) gives rise to adolescent sexual and identity confusion when the adolescent daughter experiences her father's leaving as a profound sexual rejection and the adolescent son is placed in a surrogate husband role with his mother, (c) ignites deep fears of abandonment, cynicism of the meaning of "love", and anxiety and uncertainty about the future. He concludes by suggesting that "what these youngsters are looking for, more than anything else, is a reestablishment of generation boundaries in which they can relate to their parents as authority figures, not friends -- to provide loving support as well as firm limits and controls" (Sorosky, 1977, p. 134).

In another report Weiss (1979) proposes a theory about the structure and functioning of the postseparation

single-parent household and the relationship to this of the adolescent's adjustment. In contrast to Sorosky (1977), Weiss suggests that the collapse of generational boundaries enhances adolescent competence. Weiss interviewed over 200 single parents and an unreported number of adolescents. No further details of methodology and analysis are reported. His premise is that the intact family maintains a hierarchy - "an echelon structure" (p. 99) - with both parents ascendant. In the one-parent household this echelon structure is dispensed with, as the single-parent who is emotionally stressed and works full-time utilizes the children as confidants and junior partners in the management of the household. As consequence, Weiss suggests that these changes are functional for the parent and family unit and, in addition, enhance an unusual sense of competence in these adolescents. Preadolescents, however, although often able to adapt to the new responsibilities, do so at a price, harboring unmet needs for nurturing and protection.

Three methodologically more rigorous studies focus on the adolescents' perceptions of their parents' divorce and, in relative contrast to most of the other studies, suggest more positive outcomes. Reinhardt (1977) examined the reactions to divorce of 46 white, middle-class boys and girls from 24 families. Their reactions were assessed by their response to a questionnaire he developed. Reinhardt's results generally indicate that these adolescents did not react to divorce with pain or pathology and, in fact, saw themselves as having to

mature faster and having to assume greater responsibilities than might otherwise have been the case.

Kurdek and Siesky (1980) examined the response to parental divorce of a subsample of middle-class children who ranged in age from 10 to 19 years and were labeled adolescents. From the vantage point of these adolescents, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the adolescents' adjustment to divorce and the extent to which this was related to the adolescents' social-cognitive development, interpersonal understanding, and locus of control. Questionnaire and interview data were utilized. In general, the overall positive tone of the results replicated Reinhardt's (1977) findings. They found that adolescents do not report unfavorable evaluations of various aspects of their parents' divorce. While admitting that hearing about the impending divorce was distressing, as was dealing with the loss of the noncustodial parent, they felt they had acquired greater responsibility and had little difficulty dealing with post-divorce conflict, accepting their parents and contending with peer reactions. They also saw their parents' divorce as a more desirable alternative than living in conflict. Also, the adolescents' locus of control and level of interpersonal understanding were found to color their perception of their adjustment to the divorce.

In South Africa, Rosen (1977) examined data from interviews with 92 children of divorce and their custodial

parents. They ranged in age from 9 to 28 years, a subgroup of whom were adolescents at the time of their parents' divorce, which had occurred 6 to 10 years before the interviews took place. Basically, 40 of this total sample of children (many of whom were not adolescents at the time of parental divorce) stated they did not feel in any way negatively affected by the divorce, while a subgroup felt they had matured. Thirty-one felt they had been adversely affected. The level of parental conflict was the key variable which differentiated those children who did well from those who did not. By far, the most distressing situation for these youngsters was the denigration of the one parent by the other, creating a divided loyalties situation for the adolescent. Of note, too, was that freedom of access to the noncustodial parent was highly valued by the adolescents.

A number of studies, however, are less optimistic in their evaluation of postseparation adolescent adjustment. One such study (Fry & Trifiletti, 1983), which examined adolescents' perceptions of divorce, attempts only a cursory assessment of adolescent adjustment. Essentially, this study was predicated on the assumption that adolescents automatically experience considerable distress at this time. The study had as its purpose the identification of those family characteristics or dimensions of divorce which cause the distress. The subjects were 150 white, lower to lower middle-class Canadian adolescents, half of whom were living

with their mothers and half of whom were living with their fathers. All had been referred to mental health clinics, and all had experienced their parents' divorce in the past 12 to 16 months. Factorial analyses of the contents of 80 minute interviews with each of the adolescents revealed four perceived stress-causing clusters: (a) conflict and distress between the custodial parent and the adolescent as a consequence of both mothers and fathers being unable to enforce discipline effectively, and as a consequence of spousal conflict; (b) parents' affective states which referred essentially to the mothers' perceived state of helplessness and depression, and the father's perceived anger; (c) fears of anticipated events, such as possible abandonment by a parent or being separated from friends in moves to new neighborhoods or cities etc.; and, (d) "parent-adolescent role reversal" (p. 107), by which is meant the parental reliance on the adolescent for emotional support, and quasi-parental responsibility for younger siblings and household management. The clinical implications of these findings are all too briefly discussed.

Hetherington (1972) experimentally investigated the effects of father absence due to divorce or death on lower-class and lower-middle-class adolescent girls, whom she compared with a control group from intact homes. Both experimental groups reported insecurity in relating to male peers and adults, and this was reflected in high scores on tests of anxiety and in the girls' expressed feelings of having

little control over their lives. In addition, the daughters of divorcees were smilingly "overresponsive" and "attention seeking" (p. 25) with males, and they reported earlier dating and sexual intercourse, as well as a greater number of sexual partners.

Probably the most comprehensive study to date is that of Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980). Aspects of this study have been mentioned earlier. They first published their adolescent findings in "essay" form (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974; p. 479) without experimental data and then later in slightly modified form along with the findings of their 5-year follow-up (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Provisional results from the 10-year follow-up have recently been published (Wallerstein, 1984). The 21 adolescents (13 years or older) were a subgroup (14%) of the total sample, which ranged in age from 3 to 19 years. These families were essentially white, well-educated, and affluent. As a general statement, Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) describe these parents as characteristically turning to their adolescent child for "support, comfort, battle alliances and moral vindication ... creating difficulty in maintaining proper distance and separateness" (p. 484). Important to note is that the authors make no effort to correlate these observations with the adolescents' particular reactions which they describe in detail. This point will be elaborated later in the critique. The most common adolescent responses, which are characteristic of the adolescent group as a whole, will be briefly noted. All described the divorce as particularly

painful, the predominant affects being profound anger, sadness, anxiety bordering on panic, a sense of loss, betrayal, and shame. A serendipitous substudy of parents, who had themselves experienced the divorce of their parents during their adolescence, corroborated the experience of pain and its persistence into adult life (in contrast to the experience of parents to whom divorce had occurred at earlier ages).

Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) then attempted to catalogue, in their small sample, the various adolescent-parent interpersonal scenarios they encountered. Approximately a third of the adolescents rapidly took on protective and helpful roles which included shouldering household responsibilities. Their response catalyzed increased maturity. An equal number attempted to distance from the family crisis by accelerating their social activity, which included increased sexual activity. "Some" (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 90) had for years taken a detached position which they maintained during and after the divorce, while a "small group" (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 91), who had previously been involved with the family, became suddenly cool and aloof.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) finally describe, via clinical vignettes, adolescents for whom the divorce precipitated or consolidated more serious psychopathology, placing them at high risk. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) list three syndromes. Two of these, which they term "temporary or prolonged interference with entry into adolescence," describe a

sudden regression to immature, age-inappropriate behavior with accompanying withdrawal and depression. Whether these regressions were transient or more permanent depended on the vulnerability of the adolescent and the extent to which the parent could abstain from pulling the adolescent into his or her emotional world. The third syndrome, "regression following loss of external values and controls," describes sudden delinquent acting out, flight, and depression. Although there is no mention of the incidence of these syndromes, or much more than a cursory explanation of their conceptualization or dynamics, a perusal of the clinical vignettes indicates extremes of Cohesion, extremes of Adaptability, and/or reversals of Generational Hierarchy (all concepts already highlighted in this thesis) in the postseparation family. These inflexible interpersonal scenarios, it might be suggested, set the scene for the psychopathology Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) describe. The 5-year follow-up by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) unfortunately does not differentiate between age and developmental groups. Lumping together children whose age at parental separation varied from 2-18 years, they conclude that one-third of the children were consciously and intensely unhappy and that another 37 percent were moderately to severely depressed. Kelly (1981), however, does comment on the 5-year outcome for the adolescent subgroup specifically. She grimly concludes that, for all the adolescents, the "divorce profoundly affected their ... potential for love and

commitment They seemed not only cautious but haunted by the potential ravages of their own anticipated divorces" (p. 140). Recently, Wallerstein (1984), at the 10-year follow-up of their sample, confirmed these findings and suggested that those youngsters who were adolescents at the time of their parents' separation fared ultimately worse than those who were preadolescent at the time of the separation.

In short, these nine, very diverse studies present a confusing picture. Kurdek and Siesky (1980), Reinhardt (1977), Rosen (1977), and Weiss (1979) suggest that the adolescent is not adversely affected, and they state that a subgroup mature noticeably during this period. Fry and Trifiletti (1983), Hetherington (1972), Mitchell (1983), Sorosky (1977), Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980), and Wallerstein (1984), on the other hand, have suggested that the short- and long-term postseparation functioning of the adolescent is deleteriously affected by divorce. In part, this thesis will address this basic disagreement in the literature concerning the adjustment of adolescents to their parents' separation. As will be described below, those studies that demonstrate the successful adjustment of adolescents appear to tap a sample of adolescents very different to those studies that find unsuccessful postseparation adolescent adjustment. In order to resolve this question concerning the nature of the adolescent's adjustment to parental divorce, two samples of adolescents, drawn from

different sources, will be studied. This has not been done before.

While this disagreement about the effects of divorce on adolescents remains, in one area an important, although still poorly defined and tentative, consensus is emerging. This consensus, which is evident in the speculating conclusions and closing remarks of a number of the studies cited, pertains to a dim but growing awareness among researchers that components of postseparation family structure mediate and shape adolescents' responses to parental divorce. Thus Sorosky (1977) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) all emphasized the reestablishment of generational boundaries, which often collapse at the time of divorce. Fry and Trifiletti (1983) and Weiss (1979) concurred that the hierarchical and echelon structure of the family changes dramatically as adolescents are pulled into relationships of parity with their distressed and overloaded parents. These writers differed diametrically, however, in their views of how such changes affect the adolescent. Rosen (1977) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) described the deleterious effects of the adolescent becoming trapped in a conflict of loyalties, triangulated between the warring parents. A number of authors (Fry & Trifiletti, 1983; Sorosky, 1977; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, 1980) noticed that the family's control hierarchy is disrupted, blocking the parents' ability to provide the firm and consistent limits that the adolescent needs.

In short, the pioneering efforts of these researchers are tentatively but, nevertheless, consistently elucidating dimensions of family structure as mediating the adolescent's responses to divorce. This thesis, in contrast to previous studies, will take as its starting point three carefully defined dimensions of postseparation family structure: namely Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability. Then the relationship between these structural dimensions and postseparation adolescent adjustment will be tested empirically in two samples of separated families.

In the following section, a critique of these studies is presented.

The Impact of Divorce on the Adolescent: Critique of the Literature

Each of the studies summarized above has methodological and/or conceptual flaws which must inevitably limit the validity and general applicability of their findings. Some of these flaws are generic and pertain to all; some are more idiosyncratic. This critique will first focus on issues of methodology (i.e., sample source, the control of important intervening variables, the standardization of measuring instruments), and secondly on conceptual issues.

Methodological Critique

An area that has been weak in all these studies is that of sample selection and description. If we are to understand the spectrum of possible responses of the adolescent to divorce, so that valid generalizations can be made, it will be essential to cast a wide net and evaluate divorcing families: (a) some of whom experience socioeconomic (S.E.S.) hardship as a function of divorce, and some of whom do not, and are able to maintain an adequate level of S.E.S.; (b) who apply for treatment and who do not, this later group implicitly defining themselves as coping adequately, and not needing professional intervention. Each of the studies cited above has limitations in these areas. These limitations, as already mentioned, possibly account to some extent for the discrepancies between studies, some of which found that adolescents adjust well to their parents separation, while others report that adolescents are deleteriously affected.

Close to fifty percent of the sample that Mitchell (1983) approached refused to participate, and she makes no mention of S.E.S. factors, or whether those that she did recruit had been, or were currently, in treatment. Weiss (1979) reports that his subjects are drawn from a "wide range of educational and occupational backgrounds" (p. 98), but he gives no further details. A number of studies utilize "samples of convenience" (Kanoy & Cunningham, 1984, p. 47), from which it is difficult to generalize to a larger population of

divorced families. Thus, Sorosky (1977) drew his sample exclusively from his upper-middle-class private practice. Hetherington (1972) evaluated lower-middle and lower-class families whom she had recruited at a community recreation center. They were not applying for treatment, although Hetherington does not control for whether they were in treatment at the time or had been in treatment previously. Reinhardt's (1977) and Kurdek and Siesky's (1980) white middle-class samples are far from representative, since the former were all acquaintances of, and volunteers for, the investigator; and the latter were drawn from a "Parents Without Partner's" group. In neither of these two studies, which showed generally positive evaluations by adolescents of various aspects of their parents' divorce, had subjects at any time sought professional help, an indication that they either did not have difficulty, or would not admit and reveal their difficulties. Rosen's (1977) sample of white, English-speaking, middle-class South Africans clearly taps only a segment of the white divorcing population, since close to 50% of the families she approached refused to participate. The sample of Fry and Trifiletti (1983) was exclusively white, and all had been referred for treatment and, once again, S.E.S. is not investigated. The sample of Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) tends to be white (88%), although it is moderately representative of different social classes and educational levels. They had all applied for treatment to the California Children of Divorce Project, where research and intervention

continued simultaneously with this sample. No effort was made to control for postseparation S.E.S. or for treatment effects. In this thesis, for the first time in a single study, two samples of separated families with adolescent children were evaluated: the one sample was comprised of families who had applied for treatment, although they had not yet begun this treatment. The other sample was not applying for treatment, and did not define themselves as needing treatment. By comparing these different samples, it is hoped that a reconciliation of some of the contradictory findings between previous studies, which for the most part use one or the other sample, will be provided.

It is now generally recognized that the child's response and adjustment to parental separation and divorce are modified or changed by two factors: (a) the time that has elapsed since the separation or divorce, and (b) the age of the child at the time (Hetherington, 1979; Hetherington, et al., 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Hetherington (1972), Sorosky (1977), and Weiss (1979) fail to account for either of these two variables. Rosen (1977) omits age at and time since separation, while Reinhardt (1977), although reporting that the time elapsed since separation varied from 6 months to 5 years, leaves this factor uncontrolled. Kurdek and Siesky (1980), although dividing their experimental groups according to age at separation and age at the time of the study, omit any reference to and fail to control for time elapsed since the separation,

which appears to have varied widely. Two studies limit their samples to adolescents whose parents have been divorced for a period of 12 to 16 months (Fry & Trifiletti, 1983) and 5 to 6 years (Mitchell, 1983), but the crucial "time since separation" variable is omitted. Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980), however, keep a careful eye on this variable, with their study anchored to particular postseparation time-periods, as already described. With this one exception, all studies are deficient in this regard. This thesis will control for this "time since separation" variable. A criterion for inclusion in this study was that the parents must have been separated permanently within the last 18 months.

A number of these studies may also be criticized for the methods or instruments they used or for the manner in which the instruments were developed or administered. For example, Mitchell (1983), Sorosky (1977), and Weiss (1979) all interviewed their subjects, but they provide no further details of standardization, which makes one suspect that there was none. Reinhardt (unpublished dissertation), for example, while standardizing his Adolescent Divorce Questionnaire, used some of the same samples for prepilot, pilot, and experimental testing. In terms of the bias created by the readministration of a test, this procedure is questionable. In addition, Rosen (1977) and Kurdek and Siesky (1980) have all used only "semistandardized" self-report measures. Rosen (1977) herself concedes the possibility of arriving at ratings in accordance

with preconceived hypotheses. All three studies report relatively favorable outcome, but the validity of these data remain ambiguous unless compared with more objective behavioral criteria of outcome. The essay by Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) is essentially anecdotal, the data on their own admission being "organized and analyzed clinically by visual inspection" (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 325). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) constructed Parent and Child Data forms, which they used to encode a massive amount of data. Each therapist completed these forms for each family, being responsible for families with which they worked clinically. Each therapist rated approximately 1,400 items for an average family with two children. A perusal of these forms indicates that most of the items call for a rater's subjective judgment and, although the clinical skill of the authors is unquestioned, experimental bias and response sets might well have contaminated their results. In addition, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) failed to develop any standardized interviewing procedure, so that the data they finally encoded were collected idiosyncratically by each of the clinicians. In this thesis, the subjective judgment of the test administrators is not an issue. Only standardized tests were administered.

Conceptual Critique

A core conceptual issue will now be discussed. This pertains to the notion that the researcher's view, or

conceptualization of, or bias about, the outcome of divorce will be reflected in the design and measuring strategies employed in his/her work. These conceptualizations and strategies will then ultimately determine the expected outcome as a self fulfilling prophecy.

There should be little doubt that popular stereotypes and prejudice suffuse and influence commonplace notions about divorce and the effect of divorce on children. The most prevalent view is of divorce-as-disaster. This view of divorce and single-parenthood as inherently disastrous possibly springs from the paradigm (Kuhn, 1970) of the two-parent family as the ideal. For Kuhn, the paradigm as a "disciplinary matrix" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 182) offers the scientific community a shared commitment to known beliefs and values that underlie scientific speculation, and it proscribes the "concrete problem-solutions" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 187) to be encountered. In this manner, our assumptions, metaphors, models, and hence pre-formed observations and conceptualizations are selected.

Goode (1963) has described this two-parent ideal family and the cohesive extended family as "the classical family of Western nostalgia" (p. 6), suggesting that this arrangement embodies our romantic yearning for perfection and happiness. Our everyday language of "intact" and "nuclear" families speaks to this ideal of wholeness and perfection which should endure from "start to finish" or, according to religion and socio-legal demands, "till death do us part." Within this

context, anything that breaks becomes flawed, imperfect, and unfortunate.

This is not the place to attempt an analysis of the historical origins of this domesticated two-parent ideal. Single explanation theories abound, but modern historians of the family (see, for example, Goode, 1963; Stone, 1977) consider that an explanation requires an analysis of massive shifts in world views and value systems over many centuries. "Generalizations about family change have therefore always to be qualified by a careful definition of the class or status group, the literate or the illiterate sector, the zealously godly or the casually conformist, which is under discussion." (Stone, 1977, p. 24)

However, one theme does emerge from these recent histories of the family, and that is that the modern two-parent family ideal is "no more permanent an institution than the many family types which preceded it ... nor more conducive to either personal happiness or the public good than the family types which preceded it" (Stone, 1977, p. 425). Yet, the bias against the single-parent family insistentlly remains.

A body of research has documented this bias among teachers, for example, in relation to single parenthood and divorce. Again, this bias reflects the divorce-as-disaster theory. A number of studies have shown that teachers' ratings of children on various dimensions (e.g., academic performance, leadership behavior, and social and emotional adjustment)

consistently favored children from two-parent families over children from divorced families. These teachers' ratings, however, did not agree with - and were contradicted by - more objective measures. Thus Ferri (1976) asked teachers to rate parents' interest in their children's schoolwork. She also checked how often parents visited school. Teachers rated divorced parents as less interested, although the two groups of parents did not differ in the frequency of the school visits. Santrock (1972) asked teachers to rate the moral behavior of father-absent and father-present children. He also administered twelve measures of moral development. A difference between the two groups of children emerged only on teacher ratings. Santrock and Tracy (1978) showed 30 teachers a videotape that focused on the social interaction of an 8 year - old boy. Half were told he came from a divorced family, half that he came from an intact family. The teachers rated the child more negatively on happiness, coping with stress, and emotional adjustment when they thought he came from a divorced family. In short, these studies strongly suggest that teachers base their judgments of children's performance not on their observations of the individual child, but instead on their stereotyped, negative ideas about the impact of divorce on children.

Blechman (1982) has argued that this bias toward the two-parent ideal is consistent with Freudian assumptions that the presence of a mother and father during childhood are

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minimum necessities for appropriate sex-typed identification and normal child development. Further, she describes in this review how anthropologists, social-learning theorists, and sociologists all assert that boys can learn appropriate masculine behavior only from fathers.

Perhaps a powerful, but also elusive and complex, indicator of this pervasive social science view of divorce, ipso facto, as disaster is the vast literature on children who are reared by single-parents. With few exceptions, the core question here is whether these children are at greater risk for psychological maladjustment than children from two-parent homes. For four decades, research has appeared which supports the position that the single-parent family and father absent family (particularly as a consequence of divorce) are, in themselves, detrimental. However, fundamental methodological flaws invalidating or restricting the validity of these findings abound (see, for example, Blechman, 1982; Herzog & Sudia, 1973).

The principal difficulty in achieving clarity is that a profusion of conditions that are known to influence child development are entangled with the phenomena under study, and they are rarely controlled successfully. Income and social class stand out as obvious confounds. These and others have been noted earlier in this critique of the literature on the impact of divorce on the adolescent. Blechman's (1982) critical summation of this vast literature is that "in any area

of child and adult functioning, the null hypothesis of no difference between children reared by one or two parents has yet to be soundly disproved." (p. 180). Yet, despite this and other well known critiques, Blechman (1982) describes how flawed studies repeatedly continue to be advanced as support for the position that divorce (in particular) and single-parent families are detrimental.

We return now to the literature critique on the adolescent and divorce. A number of the studies suggest the possible influence of a basic underlying conceptualization of divorce as disaster. For example, Hetherington (1972), as described earlier, suggested that girls raised by divorced mothers are more forward with men. The popular interpretation of these findings is that father absence produces excesses in heterosexual behavior, which is detrimental to the adolescent's adjustment. An equally plausible interpretation from a framework of divorce as other than disastrous is that girls raised in an unconventional, single-parent family may demonstrate unconventional, but not necessarily maladjusted, heterosexual behavior.

Fry and Trifiletti (1983), Mitchell (1983), Sorosky (1977), and Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980), as already described, all report poor adolescent adjustment to their parents' separation. But all these studies were conducted with clinical populations only, and without the standardized procedures which might have provided less definitive evidence

that adolescents do experience their parents' divorce in this way. Weiss (1979), as described, concludes that some adolescents mature and thrive at this time but, once again, his methodology does not allow us the confidence in his findings for which we are searching.

By way of exemplifying the conceptual slant of many researchers in this field, consider how explicit is the view of one prominent team of researchers of divorce as inherently catastrophic. In the opening paragraph of their book, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) describe a youngster's experience of divorce in vivid metaphorical terms - "her home ... had been blown away by a tornado" (p. 3). Later, Wallerstein (1983) is even more explicit: "The child's experience in divorce is comparable ... to the child who loses his or her community following a natural disaster." (p. 230). Wallerstein's "theory" will be analyzed in greater detail later.

A recent trend is the use of crisis theory in the conceptualization of divorce (Krauss, 1979), because crisis has both pathogenic and growth potential. There are, in fact, suggestions in the literature that loss of a parent is a cause of excellence among the gifted (Eisenstadt, 1978). At the level of methodology, this conceptualization of divorce as a crisis with pathogenic and growth potential require that measuring strategies meet two conditions: the first is that an objective, standardized measure of adolescent adjustment be used to counteract the bias toward diagnosing pathology in

children of divorce. The second is that, in addition to measuring negative responses (e.g., anxiety), strengths, competencies, and coping skills should also be assessed. The formal assessment of competencies in this research is negligible thus far. This thesis will use a measuring technique of adolescent adjustment that meets these conditions: the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist is a well-standardized measure which assesses both pathology (e.g., anxiety, behavior problems, etc.) and competency (e.g., amount and quality of involvement in sports and social relationships). In addition, this study will examine both a clinical and non-clinical population of adolescents and their divorced parents. This has never been done before.

In addition to employing standardized measures of both pathology and competence and administering these to both a clinical and nonclinical population, this thesis is unique in taking family systems thinking and structural family therapy theory as a general framework of orientation. From within this framework, the adjustment of the child to divorce cannot be predicted a priori. It is not assumed that the child will invariably react with pathology to this significant interruption to family life. Instead, adjustment, it is theorized, will be closely associated with the manner in which the family system has been operating up to the point of the separation (a process that will not be studied in this thesis), and the way it reorganizes after the separation. This latter

process, the way a family reorganizes after parental separation, will be studied in this thesis. } MB

We will now consider the basic paradigms and models underlying and influencing a number of researchers' conceptualizations of divorce. Conceptual and ideological fashions change. Earlier research emphasized the threat to the stability of the mother-child bond. But the pioneering efforts of many of the nine studies on the adolescent led these later researchers, perhaps at times unbeknown even to themselves, to surmise that aspects of the postseparation family structure might be central variables in need of consideration. Thus, Sorosky (1977) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) all mentioned the reestablishment of generational boundaries, which they observe often collapse at the time of divorce. Rosen (1977) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) described the negative effects of the adolescent becoming trapped in a conflict of loyalties between the warring parties. Fry and Trifiletti (1983) and Weiss (1979) agreed that the hierarchical structure of the family changes dramatically as adolescents are pulled into relationships of parity with their overloaded parents. But these same researchers differed diametrically in their views of how such changes affect the adolescent.

All these conclusions at this time are tentative, derived from studies that were in search of dimensions, but not focused specifically on dimensions of family structure.

Also, in those studies where a theory of divorce is discernable, (and in most cases the theory is covert and difficult to decipher) that theory paints a picture of a child impacted by divorce-disruption, alone and unprotected. What is never implied is a theory of a differentiated family structure of which the child is a part, which endures while, at the same time, undergoing transition. To exemplify this point, we will now look at Wallerstein's "theory."

Wallerstein: A Disaster Model of Divorce.

Wallerstein is probably the most prolific and influential researcher in the field of divorce at this time. Moreover, it is she who hints that postseparation structural features of the family might be important mediators of adolescent adjustment. For example, Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) conclude their essay by pointing out the "importance of the particular patterning of the parent-child relationship obtaining both at the time of divorce and previously," and how these relate to the capacities of each family member to "hold to the separation of generations" (p. 504).

But Wallerstein's is not a theory of family structure. In essence, she appears to move between two theoretical positions. On one side, Wallerstein and Kelly (1974, 1980) are interested in the post-divorce family. From this standpoint, their theory of divorce can be best characterized as a conflict or stress model of psychopathology.

Wallerstein alludes to this model in her persistent use of the phrase "family ambience," which "profoundly influenced" (Wallerstein, 1983, p. 231) the children. The view espoused here is that an excessive or prolonged high level of postseparation stress or conflict between the parents necessarily infiltrates the youngsters. It osmotically infects and jeopardizes them.

This is not a structural theory. The latter would emphasize not the conflict per se, but whether the conflict was bounded within the family structure. The quality of subsystem boundary permeability vis-a-vis conflict is the key factor in determining the adjustment of the child.¹ In essence, the divorced parents may fight and generate stress but, at the same time, they can maintain an adequate boundary around their conflict such that the children are not utilized and are prevented from intruding.

Let us draw a sharp theoretical line between Wallerstein and the structural family therapists. Wallerstein does not highlight the concept of variation of boundaries in families. Instead, she assumes boundary permeability.

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1. It is a contribution of structural family research with two-parent psychosomatic families (Minuchin, et al., 1978) that has shown that it is not the level of conflict that is relevant. In fact, many of these families compulsively avoid conflict. Rather, the issue is one which concerns the pathways of conflict and the manner in which the psychosomatic child is trapped, or traps himself, in parental conflict in order to detour it. This is a very different theory of family functioning, as compared with Wallerstein's conceptualization.

Structural family therapy, on the other hand, emphasizes the view that the interior of the family is differentiated through boundaries, which may range from extreme firmness to extreme permeability. This thesis, in contrast to previous research in the field, will directly examine boundary concepts in the post-divorce family. Explicitly, the extremes of the Cohesion dimension, enmeshment and disengagement, refer to extremes of boundary permeability and tightness respectively.

Most prominently, however, Wallerstein basically employs an individual, child-development model. The preponderance of her work (see, for example, Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, 1975, 1976) focuses on the specific age-related responses of children to divorce. In this paradigm, what counts is the developmental stage of the children and their adaptive capacities at separation and then at each subsequent research follow-up. What is not examined, or is deemphasized, is the development and structure of the post-divorce family, as system, in which these children are living. Her emphasis is on the child as reactive to the break (i.e., divorce), as opposed to a child in a reorganizing situation.

This individual child-focused model is presented in a recent paper of hers on the psychological tasks of the child (rather than the family unit) of divorced parents (Wallerstein, 1983). Initially, Wallerstein acknowledges the impact of family factors in determining child adjustment: "The child's resolution of the tasks of divorce is profoundly influenced by

the family ambience Certainly, the adjustment within the family is a major influence on the child's capacity to navigate successfully the divorce-engendered problem" (p. 231).

However, Wallerstein (1983) then dismisses this family point of view and states her ascendant conviction:

Yet all of these (family) factors notwithstanding, it is still the child who must carry the burden of mastery and resolution on the way to a successfully achieved adulthood. So there is no necessary determining relationship between the resolutions and the adjustments achieved by either of the adult parties to the divorce proceedings and the outcome for any particular child Therefore, mastery or failure as outcomes require separate scrutiny and understanding of the child.

(p. 232).

In short, Wallerstein's view is not an interactive one. Rather, the child is an entity separate from the family, and the child necessarily must carry the burden alone of coping with his or her reaction to the divorce and its sequelae. This concept is antithetical to a family systems view, where the child is inextricably part of the relational shifts of the family that are associated with divorce. From this systems vantage point, any meaningful understanding of the child

demands an analysis of the child in context. Without this contextual condition, Wallerstein (1983) gravitates to the traditional individual view that "as so often happens, the macabre conclusions to which the child's fantasy constructions lead far exceed the unhappy reality" (p. 234). However, it is precisely the importance and centrality of this "reality" that Wallerstein herself minimizes.²

While describing the six coping tasks for the child of divorce, Wallerstein (1983) does, on one occasion, shift toward an interactional and boundary-oriented (or structurally-oriented) model. This occurs specifically with her second task, which requires the child "disengaging from parental conflict and distress and resuming customary pursuits." (p. 235).

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2. Most recently Wallerstein (1985) has begun to focus on interpersonal aspects of the post-divorce family. She highlights the concept of the child overburdened as parenting diminishes as a consequence of the separation. In particular, she describes children who must become prematurely responsible for their own care, and children who are burdened by responsibility for a troubled parent. However, Wallerstein does not match this contextual conceptualization of pathology with an equivalent contextual conceptualization of treatment. "Supportive or expressive (therapies) ... are not encouraging" (p. 122). She concludes that the "multiple needs of these parents and children ... go well beyond current clinical theory (and) therapeutic technique" (Wallerstein, 1985, p. 122). This implies that the problems cannot currently be treated successfully. Chapters 5 and 6, in particular, of this thesis will demonstrate that relevant clinical theory and technique are, in fact, available, and that a contextual therapy, congruent with an interpersonal conceptualization of pathology, can be effective.

Without forcing it, this task fits comfortably with structural concepts, except in one fundamental regard: Wallerstein's view is that the task is unilaterally the child's, and it is not a reciprocal two-way process between adult and child, or between the adults. For example, "the child needs to find, establish, and maintain some measure of psychological distance and separation from the adults ... with little or no parental help" (p. 235). Also, "this task requires that the child (emphasis added) remove the family crisis from its commanding position in his or her inner world" (Wallerstein, 1983, p. 235), an inconceivable expectation from a systems point of view.

Clearly, Wallerstein does not employ the concept of circular causation or reciprocal involvement which is so fundamental to systems thinking. Instead, a linear model prevails, which leads to the conceptualization of the child, on the one hand, as helpless victim on the receiving end of the divorce and, on the other, as having to shoulder the burden alone of "Surviving The Breakup" (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980).

It is this model of the child alone in the face of the breakup that leads to Wallerstein and Kelly's untested generalization that the "children within our study probably emerged ... considerably better off than a comparable group of children from nonstudied divorcing families by virtue of our limited intervention There would be considerably greater

emotional decline among children in a general population" (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980, p. 307).

In this thesis, in contrast to previous studies, the theoretical position is clear. Structural aspects of the postseparation family will be examined. From this structural point of view, this thesis will examine Wallerstein and Kelly's generalization which is quoted above. With this goal in mind, two samples of divorcing families with adolescent children will be tested. One group, the Aided, applied for child-focused family treatment. They meet Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) criteria for selection. The other group meet the same criteria, but they had not applied for treatment, and were self-defined as not needing treatment. This latter group is the sample that Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) did not evaluate, but whose children they suggest would reveal considerably greater emotional decline than those who did come for treatment. In this thesis, their supposition will be tested.

Also, this thesis will begin with the tentative conclusions of previous research that has suggested that postseparation structural variables are important predictors of postseparation adolescent adjustment. From within the structural family therapy framework, these tentative conclusions will be tested specifically and rigorously, thereby providing both a test of structural theory and another test of the disaster theory of divorce: if postseparation structural variables of the family account significantly for the variance

of postseparation (mal)adjustment, then divorce per se is not necessarily disastrous.

The Clinical Relevance of Research.

One other condition should be met. This is that researchers should examine variables that are of more than academic interest and that have clinical relevance. Recent divorce research has been justifiably criticized as often being "preoccupied with such narrowly defined questions that it is difficult to appreciate their relevance to clinical work ... (with) little mention of contemporary family therapy theory" (McCollum, 1983, p. 55).

None of the nine studies that have been reviewed on the adolescent attempt to relate their findings to the clinical situation, except in the most cursory manner. For example, Fry and Trifiletti (1983) suggest that "perhaps family therapy programs which encourage the parents to seek cognitive feedback from the children concerning the impact of their parenting skills may be useful adjuncts for single parents" (p. 110).

Wallerstein generally devotes little attention to the clinical application of her findings. However, the major clinical issues as conceived by her are revealed indirectly, both by her essentially child-oriented individual model, and by her conceptualization of the "coping tasks" (Wallerstein, 1983) confronting the child of divorce. As described earlier, these coping tasks entail acknowledging the reality of the marital

rupture; disengaging from parental conflict; resolving loss, anger, and self-blame; accepting the permanence of the divorce; and achieving realistic hope regarding relationships. From this perspective, therapy is primarily concerned with the child's efforts to confront intrapsychic sequelae of divorce such as loss, anger, self-blame, and disillusion. She is explicit, too, that this task is not an interactional one for the family. It is the child's task alone to grapple with the effects of this assault on internal objects, in order to pick up the pieces as well as possible. "It is likely, however, that even when these tasks are successfully resolved, there will remain for the child of divorce some residue of sadness, of anger, and of anxiety about the potential unreliability of relationships" (Wallerstein, 1983, p. 242).

Clearly, Wallerstein's concepts of therapy do not emphasize the ongoing life of the child in the reorganizing postseparation family. For her, it is the "first" marriage, the "first" family, the one that is no more, that remains the frame of reference. Modern family therapy, such as structural family therapy, would not emphasize the past. Instead, the focus throughout would be on aspects of the contemporary or current structure of the postseparation family. Of course, every family is more than simply a contemporary unit. It is also a system-with-a-history, and this history is undoubtedly important in shaping the family whom the clinician is asked to help. But although historical forces have shaped the family's

elaboration, it is the contemporary system that maintains those conditions for which the family has sought help and that sustain the symptoms. It is the contemporary family, too, that maintains a margin of freedom for therapeutic change.

Clearly, it would be advantageous to be rigorously researching those aspects of family structure that do have clinical relevance. The goal of this thesis, therefore, will be to pinpoint and research some key contemporary structural components of the family which determine postseparation adolescent adjustment.

As has already been described, these concepts (Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy and Adaptability) all have deep ties with contemporary family therapy theory and, as will be discussed in the next section, are particularly relevant to the adolescent in the divorce situation. The clinical application of these concepts to therapy with adolescents will be described in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

Primarily, this thesis is restricted in scope to a consideration of three structurally-oriented concepts of the family (namely Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy and Adaptability). In the following section, the particular pertinence of these three concepts in predicting specifically an adolescent's postseparation adjustment will be demonstrated. This will lead us to the primary hypothesis. Then, the argument will be made that differences in family structure and adolescent adjustment can be predicted between two samples

(for which previous studies in this area have not controlled), of postseparation families with adolescent children. This will lead us to the secondary hypothesis.

The key concepts of this thesis, which stem from basic structural family therapy theory, reflect a particular model concerning the postseparation functioning of adolescent children. This model views the adolescent as inextricably part of the structure of the family which transforms at the time of parental separation. In these terms, adolescent adjustment and maladjustment is associated with the adequacy of the reorganized postseparation family structure. The concepts of Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability are the central dimensions in terms of which the postseparation family will reorganize.

This view must be contrasted, as has been described, with the most influential model in the field, which emphasizes that the child's adjustment is reactive to the break (i.e., the divorce), and deemphasizes the impact of the postseparation family structure. In this thesis, the focus will be on the postseparation structure of one basic component, or subsystem, of the postseparation family: the custodial home. In all cases, the custodial parent will be the mother. This criterion of living with the mother was introduced because, despite recent social trends and legal changes, by far the most common postseparation arrangement is for youngsters to live with their mothers (Derdeyn & Scott, 1984; Francke, 1983).

Clearly, the custodial home is not the full family system, but it is an extremely salient subsystem. From a systems and interactional viewpoint, it is important to recognize that a larger (invisible) system is operating which includes not only the custodial parent and adolescent, but also the noncustodial parent. The subsystem of custodial parent and adolescent which will be examined in this thesis does not stand in vacuo, but is shaped inevitably by this larger subsystem. The case studies and longitudinal study will illustrate the workings of this more complex, larger postseparation system.

CHAPTER THREE

THE QUANTITATIVE STUDY

In the previous chapter, the argument was made for an investigation of the impact of divorce on the adolescent from within a structural family therapy framework. In this chapter, a quantitative empirical study is presented.

This will commence with the rationale for Hypothesis One which links postseparation adolescent adjustment to the postseparation family dimensions of Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability.

Then, the rationale for Hypothesis Two will be presented. Differences in postseparation family structure and adolescent adjustment are predicted between an Aided and Unaided sample of separated families and adolescents.

The methodology of the investigation is then described. This includes details of the sample that was researched. The options for quantification, which were considered before the questionnaire method was finally selected, are discussed. A description of the three questionnaires that were administered is provided. Arguments are presented for and against analyzing data from the full sample of 45 adolescents, which includes sibling pairs, or from a more conservative sample of 30 "independent" adolescents.

Finally, the results of the investigation, a discussion of these results, and their implications are presented.

Rationale For Hypothesis One

1. Cohesion

As described in Chapter 1, Cohesion refers to a dimension of family interaction in which the extremes are characterized by high family connectedness or enmeshment on the one side, and extreme separateness or disengagement on the other. Enmeshment, therefore, refers to an interpersonal bunching together, which can be associated with a heightened sense of belonging at the cost of individual independence. Disengagement refers to interpersonal fragmentation. Members operate strictly within their own domains and support cannot be requested. The more balanced, middle range reflects the more optimal condition.

More specifically, this dimension is clinically and logically relevant to issues concerning the adolescent generally and the adolescent in the postseparation context in particular.

A primary adolescent interpersonal task in our society is a gradual weaning away, or separation, from parents. It has been observed clinically that components of parental separation and divorce can derail this process. Thus, parental separation can be associated with increased adolescent enmeshment with the custodial parent, as well as with an inability to separate age-appropriately from that parent. Complex processes operate. The adolescent might be drawn into an inappropriate

close and rigid coalition with a needy parent, in order to protect and strengthen that parent. This is a natural trap, since the first postseparation year is typically characterized by escalating parental conflict (Hetherington et al., 1978) and by a greater incidence of health and emotional problems than is found among married adults (Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978). Alternatively, the adolescent might regress under stress or unconsciously take - or be placed in - an infantile or "sick" position. This may occur as a result of a parent's attempt to maintain parental ascendancy and indispensability; to forestall the adolescent's potentially threatening, emerging sexuality; or to maintain continued parental involvement and "togetherness" around the problem adolescent. In consequence, age-appropriate development and autonomy are blocked.

Parental separation can also trigger an adolescent's precipitous departure. Here, distancing and disengagement from the custodial parent may result in an unsupervised and unsupported adolescent. The adolescent might be seeking to escape from the toxic escalation of parental anger, depression, and neediness. Or, he might simply want to find sustenance when the parent, preoccupied with anger or depression, is unaware of or unresponsive to the adolescent's needs for support and supervision. Yet another scenario occurs when the adolescent, in losing the noncustodial parent, loses also a preseparation ally (or coalitionary partner). Being identified with the absent parent, but without his or her actual support, the

adolescent may use distancing to escape the retaliatory wrath of the custodial parent. The distancing adolescent may establish anchorage in socially-acceptable areas, such as school work, sports, or religious activities, or in a stable relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Some adolescents, however, latch on to delinquent groups and activities or drift perilously alone.

In short, components of parental separation can interact with, affect, or derail the necessary task of gradual adolescent separation, resulting in either an enmeshed or a disengaged adolescent. The adolescent will be less likely to function adequately than an adolescent from a family where this dimension of proximity is less extreme.

2. Generational Hierarchy

As described, Generational Hierarchy may be defined as the "class of behaviors normative for the parent (as compared with the class normative for the child) which places the parent(s) in charge of the children" (Woods & Talmon, 1983). The essence here is that the family is a hierarchically-based organization and not horizontally and democratically based.

When children consistently parent their parents by controlling and/or nurturing them, the Generational Hierarchy is reversed. When children consistently live without parental control, or as peers with their parents, or when cross-generational coalitions exist, where one parent joins a child

against the other parent, the generational hierarchy collapses. As mentioned, Haley (1976, 1979) and Madanes (1980) have stressed the importance of this organizational construct for conceptualizing family problems and their treatment. Specifically, they note that most child-adolescent problems include a triangle consisting of an overinvolved parent-child dyad (a cross-generational coalition) and a more peripheral parent. Haley suggests that an "individual is more disturbed in direct proportion to the number of malfunctioning hierarchies in which he is embedded" (1976, p. 117). The association between Generational Hierarchy and family dysfunction, while being clinically widely accepted as an important construct, has also received empirical corroboration. (Madanes, Dukes, & Harbin, 1980; Woods, 1981).

As with Cohesion, this construct is immediately relevant to adolescents in a separation-divorce context. Multiple dynamics can typically operate to maintain the failure of parental executive functioning and an ineffectual hierarchy. A parent preoccupied with anger or depression might be immobilized or unresponsive to an adolescent's need for supervision, control, and nurturance. Possibly, the custodial mother is unaccustomed to assuming an executive role and is ineffectual in that position, a position either filled by the father in the pre-divorce family, or by his image of greater power and authority that served as the effective back-up for the mother. Sometimes, a covert parental contract licenses

abdication: that is, each parent absolves the other from having to take responsibility. Alternatively, a covert, or even overt, abdication "contest" (Montalvo, 1981, p. 286) operates in which each parent refuses to pick up responsibility until the other does; or each avoids responsibility, so as to heap it on the other.

Yet another dynamic is the fear of the interpersonal consequences of achieving executive competency. A mother who becomes competent and self-sufficient no longer needs her former spouse's help. She therefore loses both her former spouse and her control of him. The adolescent, too, may be an active and resourceful participant in these processes. Often angry at his parents for breaking up the marriage and exposed to frequent two-way battles and demeaning criticism of his parents, he revises and deidealizes his perceptions of his parents, stripping them of automatic authority. (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Aware of the tensions and lack of parental cooperation, the adolescent may prey on, divide, manipulate, and outflank the executive system. In consequence, psychopathology occurs.

3. Adaptability

Adaptability refers to a dimension of family flexibility in which the extremes are characterized by chaos and rigidity. This reflects a basic assumption that families are not a static entity, but are in the process of continuous

change. As with Cohesion and Generational Hierarchy, this dimension is fundamentally relevant to the adolescent in the postseparation family. Such families are in the midst of two simultaneous transitions that entail substantial stress: emergence into adolescence and parental separation and divorce. As Minuchin (1974) notes:

One of the most common precipitators (of stress) is the emergence of a child into adolescence. At that time, the child's participation in the extrafamilial world and his status in that world increases. The relationship between child and parents is dislocated. The adolescent should be moved a little from the sibling subsystem and given increased autonomy and responsibility appropriate to his age. The parental subsystem's transactions with him should change from parents-child to parents-young adult. The result will be successful adaptation. (p. 64)

Concurrent with these adolescent-related changes are those inherent in the parental separation and divorce process and those often associated with it. The noncustodial (usually father) parent's departure creates changes at both spouse and parental levels. With the father's absence, the mother will need to care for the family alone. This is often without the

father's pre-separation economic support (fewer than one-third of ex-husbands contribute financially to their families [Kriesberg, 1970]); without the father's assistance in minding the children; without the father's presence as primary disciplinarian or backup authority to the mother; and so forth. Sometimes, mothers often wish, or need, to work soon after the separation. They simultaneously need to continue coping as a single parent with all those tasks previously shared by both parents. Associated with common post-separation downward mobility (Blechman, 1982) and the need to adapt to a lower standard of living (Espenshade, 1979), are relocations. After a separation, many families change neighborhoods, which entails the loss of familiar schools and surroundings and often friends (Kurdek & Blisk, 1983).

Given these forces of emergence into adolescence and separation/divorce, which both demand a degree of flexibility in the family, an adolescent locked into a family that has rigid patterns, or is changing chaotically, will be less likely to function adequately than an adolescent from a family more flexibly balanced.

Hypothesis One

It is expected that the extremes of scores on the Cohesion and Adaptability dimensions will be related to poor adolescent adjustment, while in the case of Generational

Hierarchy, the absence of this organizational structure in the family, or its reversal, will have similar results.

Rationale For Hypothesis Two

"There is more opinion and less fact about the impact of divorce on children than there is about any other topic that concerns the family. Everybody 'knows' divorce is bad for children But how much do we actually know? Not much." (Bohannon, 1985).

If valid generalizations are to be made about adolescents whose parents are divorcing, different populations will need to be sampled. The "treatment variable" (i.e., whether the family is or has been in treatment, or is applying or not applying for treatment) is one such important parameter along which these populations should be defined. As indicated in the literature critique, this variable has not been systematically explored: previous researchers either omitted it (Hetherington, 1972; Mitchell, 1983; Weiss, 1979); selected a sample that is in treatment (Sorosky, 1977; Fry & Trifiletti, 1983; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974, 1980); or selected a sample that is not (Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Reinhardt, 1977).

This serious limitation in sample selection has led to unwarranted and untested claims and generalizations about the overall impact of divorce on children. Thus, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), the most influential researchers in the field,

unjustifiably assert that their own samples of youngsters from divorced families who had applied for treatment, "emerged considerably better than a comparable group of children from non-studied divorcing families by virtue of our limited intervention". (p. 307). For the children in Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) sample, the divorce experience and its aftermath was painful. Their clear assertion is that for the larger population of children of divorce, the experience is catastrophic. A group of other studies (Fry & Trifiletti, 1983; Hetherington, 1972; Mitchell, 1983; Sorosky, 1977; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974), using either clinical samples or samples where this "application-for-treatment" variable is uncontrolled, imply similarly that the impact of divorce on adolescents is deleterious. On the other hand, a number of studies (Reinhardt, 1977; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980) utilizing samples of adolescents who had never sought treatment, found that these adolescents responded generally positively to their parents' divorce, and that divorce sometimes can release a "sense of unusual competence" (Weiss, 1977, p. 106).

The discrepancy between these findings, based on apparently different samples, suggests that there is no unitary or normative response to divorce, despite primarily dire, but at this time unwarranted, generalizations to the contrary. Instead, it seems likely that different populations of divorced families exist. For some of these families, the impact of

divorce on youngsters is negative or catastrophic. This is a pathological outcome, rather than a normative outcome, of divorce. For other families, the impact of divorce on the children is not detrimental and is possibly even competence-enhancing. This would represent at least a nonpathological outcome of divorce. It might logically and reasonably be expected that these latter families, whose experience of divorce is nondetrimental, would not apply for treatment. However, those families who do apply for treatment are more likely to have children who have experienced the divorce negatively or as catastrophic.

Also, if the postseparation adjustment of adolescents in these two samples does differ then, from a systems perspective, it might be expected that the structural characteristics of these families represented in these two samples will differ accordingly. This thesis will also investigate aspects of the structural characteristics of two samples of postseparation families.

No previous single study has compared two such samples of divorced families: one of which had applied for treatment (i.e., the Aided sample) but not yet begun that treatment; and another, which was not applying for treatment, and defined themselves as not needing treatment (i.e., the Unaided sample).

Two components of these samples will be examined and compared: the postseparation adjustment of the adolescent

children in these families, and postseparation structural dimensions of a subsystem (i.e., the custodial household) of these families.

It might be expected that adolescent children in those divorced families who apply for treatment (i.e., the Aided) will be more poorly adjusted than those adolescents in families who do not apply for treatment. Also, from a structural family therapy framework, it might be expected that those post-divorce families who apply for treatment would be characterized by a dysfunctional postseparation structural organization, while those post-divorce families who do not apply for treatment will be characterized by a more functional structural organization.

Hypothesis Two

It is expected that those postseparation families who requested treatment (i.e., Aided) will pretreatment (a) be functioning more toward the extremes of Cohesion and Adaptability; (b) manifest a greater incidence of collapsed or absent Generational Hierarchy; and (c) have an adolescent who is more poorly adjusted than those families and their adolescents who did not request treatment (i.e., Unaided).

Methodology of Quantitative Study

Sample

Forty-five adolescents from 30 families were included in the study. They ranged in age from 12.0 to 16.8 years with an average age of 14.2 years. Twenty-four of the adolescents were males, and 21 were females. On the average, the parents had been separated ten months; the average length of the marriage was 16 years, 8 months, with a range from 11 years to 23 years. Two of the fathers and one of the mothers had been married previously. Using the Hollingshead (1975) four factor social status index, the sample fell into the social class 2 range -- medium business, minor professional, and technical. Twenty-three of the thirty families were white, and seven were black. A more detailed breakdown of the demographics, as they relate to the 30 adolescents (a detailed explanation for the use of this reduced sample of 30 adolescents is provided below) and families, appears in Tables 1 and 2.

Criteria for selection of the adolescents were: (a) that their parents must have been separated permanently within the last 18 months and, (b) that the living arrangement was not shared (time equalized). The adolescent lived more permanently with the mother and visited (or did not see at all) the father. The first of the two criteria (i.e., separation within the past 18 months) was introduced because this period has been

TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AIDED AND
UNAIDED GROUPS: t-TESTS AND MANN-WHITNEY

	TOTAL N=30 Mean <u>(SD)</u>	AIDED N=19 Mean <u>(SD)</u>	UNAIDED N=11 Mean <u>(SD)</u>	T value or Z value (i.e., Mann- Whitney)
Adolescents:				
Age (years)	14 (1.6)	14.1 (1.5)	13.7 (1.9)	.61 (n.s.)
Parents:				
Mothers' Education ^a	5 (1.4)	4.7 (1.4)	5.6 (1.3)	-1.83 (n.s.)
Fathers' Education ^a	5.2 (1.6)	5.0 (1.6)	5.6 (1.7)	-.96 (n.s.)
Length of Marriage (years)	16.7 (3.1)	16.7 (3.1)	16.7 (3.2)	-.01 (n.s.)
Trial Separations	.9 (1.1)	1.1 (1.2)	.6 (1.0)	-1.12 (n.s.)
Duration of Separation (months)	10.2 (5.8)	9.0 (5.6)	12.7 (6.0)	-1.71 (n.s.)
S.E.S. (Hollingshead) ^b	43.8 (14.7)	42.6 (16.0)	45.8 (12.8)	-.59 (n.s.)
Mother's Postseparation Income				-2.32 ^c (p < .02)
Income Drop				-.52 (n.s.)

a Hollingshead (1975) Educational level: 4 refers to high school graduate and 5 refers to at least one year of college or specialized training.

b Hollingshead (1975) S.E.S. range 40-54 refers to medium business, minor professional, technical.

c Due to the fact that the data were collected on an ordinal scale, a Mann-Whitney was done on the ranks of the Income scores.

TABLE 2

DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
AIDED AND UNAIDED GROUPS: CHI SQUARE

	TOTAL (N=30) <u>Freq.</u>	AIDED (N=19) <u>Freq.</u>	UNAIDED (N=11) <u>Freq.</u>	<u>X² Value</u>
RACE:				
White	23	14	9	.26 (n.s.)
Black	7	5	2	
RELIGION:				
Catholic	10	7	3	8.18 (n.s.)
Protestant	6	4	2	
Jewish	6	1	5	
Other/None	8	7	1	
S.E.S.^a:				
Major Business/ Professional	8	3	5	4.51 (n.s.)
Medium Business/ Technical	10	7	3	
Clerical Sales Worker	4	3	1	
Machine Operator/ Semi-Skilled	6	4	2	
Unskilled Laborer	1	1	0	
Sex of Adolescent:				
Males	15	10	5	.46 (n.s.)
Females	15	9	6	

a Hollingshead (1975)

documented as the time of greatest upheaval and distress after the separation. (Hetherington, et al., 1978, 1979). Evaluating adolescents during this period provides, therefore, a challenging test for a nondisaster theory of adolescent adaptation to parental separation. The criterion of living with the mother was introduced because (despite the increase in those arrangements where the youngster lives with the father, or shares time equally between both parents, and despite an increased legal preference in this direction), the most common postseparation arrangement is for youngsters to live with their mothers (Derdeyn & Scott, 1984; Francke, 1983). Since the focus of this thesis is an exploration of the normative responses of adolescents to divorce, criteria for exclusion were: (a) families where either parent had a history of psychosis in the last two years, (b) families in which the adolescent had a history of chronic medical illness over the past two years or psychopathology for which treatment was sought over that same time. These criteria attempt to exclude from the study those adolescents and parents whose adjustment prior to the separation was pathological.

Of the 30 families, 19 were Aided families -- that is, families who applied to the Families of Divorce Service of the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic (P.C.G.C.), Pennsylvania, for child-focused family help in negotiating the process of separation and divorce. The P.C.G.C. is community funded with fees set on a sliding scale according to a family's income.

All testing was done prior to the commencement of therapy, i.e., within the previous week. The remaining 11 families were Unaided families, who met the same criteria as the Aided ones, but who had not applied for treatment. Instead, they had responded to advertisements in the local media to participate in a research project. Each Unaided parent was paid \$25 per interview and each adolescent \$5. Before being accepted in the Unaided group, the parents were informed clearly that a divorce treatment service in the P.C.G.C. did exist for which they were not applying, but that this treatment option was, in fact, available to them. Only after they had defined themselves as not wanting treatment were they assigned to the Unaided group. Of course, this designation does not imply that they are a functional group. This will be tested in this thesis.

Of note, too, is that the Aided and Unaided groups were included not to test the efficacy of treatment, but to allow for the testing of the secondary hypotheses of this study.

Instruments

Having defined Cohesion, Adaptability, and Generational Hierarchy as the core constructs under study in this thesis, it was necessary to confront the issue of methodology. Quantification was necessary because this thrust of the thesis addresses the question of whether greater or smaller occurrences of particular family behaviors or characteristics are associated with higher or lower levels of

adolescent adjustment. One data collection option was the systematic observation of the family unit and coding of behaviors via direct analysis of family interactions. This methodology is based on the assumption that the nature and definition of relationships are manifest in patterns of interaction (Hinde & Stevenson-Hinde, 1976). Numerous interactional coding systems have been developed (see, for example, Bales, 1951; Haley, 1964; Lennard & Bernstein, 1969), all of which require that the family unit under observation be brought together and put to work on predetermined tasks. This method was rejected from consideration primarily because of the nature of the population of families in this study. The majority of these families were in crisis, under considerable stress, and about to begin therapy. It was thought that, at this time, interaction tasks might further complicate and jeopardize the already delicate first phase of therapy. Instead, the questionnaire method was selected to assess both family characteristics and adolescent adjustment.

A second question was who would be the most reliable respondent to appraise either the adolescent's adjustment or the Cohesiveness and Adaptability of the custodial home and the nature of the Generational Hierarchy therein. Would it be the adolescent, the mother with whom the adolescent lived, or the father? The mother was chosen to assess the adolescent's adjustment. The father was not chosen because some youngsters, after their parents' separation, have little or no contact with

the parent with whom they do not live. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that one quarter of their overall sample visited their fathers "infrequently and erratically" (p. 136), by which they mean less than once a month. Adolescents might be expected to visit even less often than younger children and, in fact, in a large, nationally representative sample of United States children aged 11 to 16 years whose parents were separated or divorced, frequent contact (where the child saw the noncustodial father on the average of once a week during the previous year) occurred in only 16 percent of families (Furstenberg et al., 1983). The father, then, would have insufficient information on which to evaluate his youngster and probably even less to evaluate factors in the mother's home. Under these circumstances, the mother's assessment (although subject to bias like those of all other informants) of the adolescent's adjustment was thought to be the most informed across time and situations. In addition, the instrument chosen in this thesis to assess adolescent adjustment was standardized primarily on the mothers' reports of their children's behavior. These issues will be discussed further under "Child Behavior Checklist".

The adolescent was selected to assess the custodial family's Cohesion and Adaptability and to assess the effectiveness of the Generational Hierarchy. Consideration was given to having the mother be the respondent on these variables in addition to evaluating the adolescent's adjustment. This

idea was rejected to avoid the possibility that mother's bias in evaluating the adolescent's adjustment would contaminate and skew her view of the family, or vice versa. Thus, a mother who views her youngster as "mad" or "bad" might be inclined to skew her evaluation of the family toward pathology. Were practical matters not an issue, it might have been of additional interest to have both the mother and the adolescent assess these family variables. Time, however, did not allow this, and in the interest of ensuring independence of observations, the adolescent was therefore selected to evaluate the custodial family's Cohesiveness, its Adaptability, and the effectiveness of the Generational Hierarchy therein.

The following measures were selected and administered in this study:

1. Child Behavior Checklist (C.B.C.L.)
2. Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (F.A.C.E.S.)
3. The Postseparation Generational Hierarchy Questionnaire (G.H.Q.)

Measure 1 was administered to the mother with whom the adolescent lives, and measures 2 and 3 were administered to the adolescent. A description of and rationale for choosing these measures follow.

1. Child Behavior Checklist (C.B.C.L.)

The C.B.C.L. (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983) is used in this study to measure the dependent variable of adolescent

adjustment. It is filled out by one of the parents, an approach that reflects the debatable opinion that they -- rather than clinicians, teachers, or other observers -- provide more reliable and comprehensive pictures of their children's behavior (Miller, 1964; Novick, Rosenfield, Bloch, & Dawson, 1966). This position can reasonably be criticized, as it is not uncommon for parental reports to be unreliable. Thus, parents who decide their children are "mad" or "bad" may tend to focus more closely on the scoreable items (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), while children perceived as "well" may be under-scrutinized and underscored. Achenbach and Edelbrock (1983) recognize this problem, and they argue that parents, nevertheless, know their children best and that items are described in a generally behavioral and value-free way.

The C.B.C.L. consists of 118 behavior problem items plus 20 social competency items which report a child and adolescent's school performance and the amount and quality of his involvement in games, sports, hobbies, chores and social relationships. Examples of behavior problem items, each of which is scored on a three-step response scale, are "cries a lot", "can't sit still, restless or hyperactive", and "steals at home". An example of one social competency item is "list the sports your child most likes to take part in". Then, "compared to other children of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?" (Don't know/less than average/average/more than average). Then, "compared with other

children of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?" (Don't know/below average/average/above average). These items were derived initially from descriptions of child and adolescent problems that are of concern to parents and mental health professionals. Earlier studies (for example, Achenbach & Lewis, 1971) and consultation with a wide range of psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers provided the data for these descriptions. In order to discriminate between sex and age differences for problem behaviors and competencies, differently standardized profiles are available for each sex in the age ranges six to 11 and 12 to 16. These age ranges were chosen because they approximately demarcate changes in cognitive and emotional functioning, physical development and social and educational status.

Standardization data of the C.B.C.L. are impressive. To find out which of the behavior problem items occur together to form syndromes, factor analyses were done on the C.B.C.L.s of 1,800 disturbed children referred for mental health services in the U.S.A. To derive norms for the C.B.C.L., ratings of the clinically referred children were compared with the ratings of a randomly selected nonclinical population (i.e., a group of children who had not received mental health services for at least the preceding year). Comparisons of these two samples matched for age, sex, race, and socioeconomic status show the clinical subjects to have significantly lower scores on all social competence scales ($p < .01$) and higher scores on all

behavior-problem scales ($p < .005$). One week test retest reliability is high ($r = .87$), as are interparent correlations. For 12 to 16 year-olds, there are three social competency scales (i.e., Activities, Social, and School Scales), identical for both sexes, and nine Behavior Problem Scales (for example, Schizoid, Somatic, Delinquent, Cruel, etc.) for boys and eight for girls. Factor analyses of these behavior problem scales yielded two second-order factors and scores corresponding to the Internalizing and Externalizing dichotomy identified in other multivariate analyses (for a review, see Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1978). The Internalizing factor refers to fearful, inhibited, overcontrolled behaviors, while the Externalizing factor refers to aggressive, antisocial, and undercontrolled behavior. A Total Behavior Problem score can also be computed from the Internalizing and Externalizing Scores and, in itself, as a "global index of need for help" (Achenbach & Edelbrock 1983, p. 61) is superior to any of the more specific scales. Achenbach and Edelbrock (1983) recommend that, for research purposes, the Total Behavior Problem score and second-order Internalizing and Externalizing scores be used, rather than the narrow-band scales. In this thesis, their directive will be followed.

The bulk of this standardization data is derived from the mothers' evaluations of the children. Approximately 83% of their clinical and nonclinical standardization samples derive from the mothers' evaluations, while approximately 12% derive

from the fathers' (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). The remaining 5 percent derive from other sources. For this reason, as well as the others mentioned earlier, this study will use the mothers' rating of their adolescents.

The C.B.C.L. was chosen for this study for a number of reasons. The first is that it describes specific behaviors and is not limited to general diagnostic categories. Secondly, it taps not only maladjustment but also the adolescent's positive adaptive competencies. (For the significance of this, see Chapter 2, "The Conceptual Critique"). Thirdly, it has been standardized on both clinical and normal populations. This enabled the making of comparisons to other groups of Aided and Unaided youngsters of intact families, even if these comparisons are made through a parent's eyes. In this way, the possible shortcoming of not having a control group of normal intact families is bypassed.

2. Family Adaptability And Cohesion Evaluation Scales (F.A.C.E.S.)

This self-report scale was developed by Olson, Bell, and Postner (1978). It has as its goal the systematic assessment of two of the three key variables of this study, family Cohesion and family Adaptability. F.A.C.E.S. itself consists of 96 items: six for assessing each of 16 subscales, of which nine subscales comprise the Cohesion dimension; seven additional subscales comprise the Adaptability dimension. F.A.C.E.S. is designed to measure an individual family member's perception of the family across these two dimensions.

The need for the scale originated with the development of the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Olson et al., 1979; Olson et al., 1980) as a guide for diagnosing families and for setting treatment goals. The model allows for the classification of a family into one of 16 possible types, as each of the two Cohesion and Adaptability dimensions are broken down into four levels and, consequently, sixteen (4x4) types. These levels of Cohesion are categorized as disengagement, separateness, connectedness, and enmeshment. Those pertaining to Adaptability are categorized as rigidity, structure, flexibility, and chaos. One of the model's assumptions is that the two dimensions are independent. One thorough factor analytic study (Russell, 1979), utilizing self-report and behavioral measures of both Cohesion and Adaptability, empirically demonstrated the independence of the dimensions. Thus far, three empirical studies have been completed to test the construct validity of the model with couples (Sprenkle & Olson, 1978), with family triads that include a female adolescent (Russell, 1979), and with families with female juvenile offenders (Druckman, in press). All studies support the model in that the more extreme scores on the Adaptability and Cohesion dimensions relate to dysfunction.

F.A.C.E.S. itself was developed by scrutinizing the 16 concepts related to family Cohesion and Adaptability and by generating a large pool of statements that described high, balanced, and low levels of the dimensions. To assess their

clinical utility, marriage and family therapists rated these items on a ten-point scale from low to high Cohesion and Adaptability. Those items that had high agreements among therapists were selected. To test their empirical or construct validity, a large group of young adults answered each item in terms of its applicability to their own family of origin, and those items that had a good distribution of responses were selected. The data were then subjected to factor analysis. Those items that had had factor loadings on different factors which were related to the three levels (high, moderate, and low) of the two dimensions, were chosen. Norms for this test are currently based on a sample of 201 families, with each family consisting of two parents and an adolescent. Fifty-three of these families were in counseling, 31 had a runaway adolescent; and 117 were a non-problem control group. The husband, wife, and adolescent from each of these families took F.A.C.E.S. Thus, data from 603 subjects were produced. Using these data, a factor analysis was done which replicated the initial formulation of the scales, while the internal consistency (alpha) reliability of the total scores for the Cohesion and Adaptability scales was high ($r=.75$ and $.83$ respectively).

In short, current research indicates that F.A.C.E.S is a well-standardized and promising tool. It is also the only one available that thoroughly evaluates the two key dimensions under study here. In addition, the test authors have worded

the items so that they may be easily answered by an adolescent sample. Of note is that this test was designed for intact families. However, as it was administered with reference to the postseparation custodial parent's home, four items were minimally adapted to this circumstance (e.g., "the parents check with the children before making important decisions in our family" was changed to "mother checks with the children...").

In order to explore the relationship between the Cohesion and Adaptability dimensions of F.A.C.E.S. and adolescent adjustment, the Cohesion and Adaptability scores were organized statistically in a particular manner. Cohesion and Adaptability, as already described, are bipolar scales with dysfunction at the extremes, and functionality in the mid-range. This thesis examines the manner in which distances from the midpoint on Cohesion and Adaptability are related to adolescent adjustment. These distances or deviations from the mean scores were derived by subtracting each subject's Cohesion and Adaptability score from Olson's (1979) Cohesion mean and Adaptability mean respectively. These absolute scores of deviation from the mean were then called Deviation from the Mean Cohesion (Dev. M. Cohesion) and Deviation from the Mean Adaptability (Dev. M. Adaptability). Correlational analyses were then conducted between the Dev. M. Cohesion and Dev. M. Adaptability scores and the C.B.C.L. scores. Interestingly, when the F.A.C.E.S. Cohesion and Adaptability scores were

looked at in a linear and non-bipolar way, the deviations on either side of the mean on the two dimensions cancelled out with regard to the correlations with the C.B.C.L. dimensions, thus justifying the deviation from the mean approach taken here for the purposes of the correlations.

3. The Postseparation Generational Hierarchy Questionnaire (G.H.Q.)

The primary goal of this questionnaire was to get a postseparation measure of the Generational Hierarchy construct in this study. As no instrument of this nature was available, it was necessary to construct one (see Appendix 2). The following steps were used in the scale-construction process.

Again, it was necessary to confront the issue of methodology. In order to bypass problems encountered as a result of the relative "softness" of the subjective data of self-reports and to maximize the veridicality of this measure, the questionnaire, to a large extent, was a "behavioral self-report" questionnaire, referring most often to objective behaviors (e.g., how often does your mother cry in your presence?). This "newly emerging method, just beginning to be more fully utilized ... bridges the gap between self report and observational data ... (and) could be useful for research on concepts relevant to interpersonal dynamics." (Olson, 1977, p. 119).

The next step involved generating a pool of items that would tap key behaviors of mother-adolescent interaction.

Specifically, this pool should reflect behaviors that define either (a) the maintenance of the Generational Hierarchy, or (b) its reversal, compromise or collapse. In total, 25 specific questions were generated (see Appendix 2) which had face validity with the constructs they were designed to assess. Fourteen pertained to rules and their importance in the postseparation home (i.e., Questions 2a, 9a-k, 10 and 11). Originally, a pool of ten rules was checked by two senior clinicians experienced in working with adolescents. They slightly modified and added to the pool to produce the 14 items finally administered. Five addressed the appropriateness or reversal of the nurturing hierarchy (Questions 2b, 3, 4, 5 and 8). To what extent, these questions asked, is the adolescent organized to parent the mother? Finally, three items covered the prevalence of generational boundary violations (Questions 2c, 6 and 7); two covered the existence of cross-generational coalitions (Questions 15 and 16); and one asked whether the adolescent perceived himself as triangulated (Question 17).

In addition to this pool of Generational Hierarchy items, a number of other questions were added to tap the adolescents' perception of the quality of their relationship with their mothers (Question 1) and the "amount of contact" (how often they talked to and visited) and quality of relationship with their fathers (Questions 12, 13, and 14). One question (Question 18), the "Self-Anchoring Striving Scale" (S.A.S.S., Cantril & Roll, 1971), supplemented these items as a

rapid measure of the adolescent's self-esteem. Specifically, the adolescent is shown a picture of a ladder symbolic of the "ladder of life", with steps numbered from ten at the top (standing for the best life in their own terms) to zero at the bottom (representing what they think would be the worst possible life). They are asked to indicate on the ladder on which step they feel they stand at the present time. The scale is referred to as "self-anchoring" because the respondent expresses a judgment on the basis of his or her own scale of values. It is felt to generate a rough measure of the respondent's current sense of well-being and optimism, and it has been used in cross-cultural research in some 60 countries. (All the items and questions of the Postseparation Generational Hierarchy Scale are included in Appendix 2).

A factor analysis was used to examine the structure of the Generational Hierarchy construct. In preparing these Generational Hierarchy items for the factor analysis, a scoring dilemma needed to be resolved. The 14 rule-related items (subsequently dropped to 13, as Q9g was obviously only applicable to the female subjects) were, in total, more than the sum of the nurturing hierarchy, coalition, triangulation, and boundary violation items. This loading on rules might, then, inappropriately weight or skew the subsequent factor analysis.

To deal with this, Questions 9a-k were reduced to a single composite Sum of Rules score. This action is justified

primarily on theoretical grounds. These ten rules were selected to cover a span of commonplace parental rules encountered in the household of an adolescent. The purpose of the measure was to determine how important these ten rules were in the family. A Sum of Rules was therefore computed as the best indicator of the importance generally attached to rules. A frequency distribution of the adolescents' Sum of Rules scores showed sufficient variability among subjects to warrant including these scores, in this form, in the factor analysis.

Organized in this way, the previous 14 rule-related items were reduced to four, of which Sum of Rules was one. Next, in order to examine the structure of the Generational Hierarchy construct, a principal components analysis, of the now 15 generational hierarchy items, was performed.

Using an orthogonal (varimax) rotation (Harris, 1975), six independent factors which had eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were generated. Of these six, the first two accounted for 53.1% of the variance and, upon examination, revealed two meaningful and coherent concepts. These were retained as a basis for constructing two hierarchy factor scores.

To construct these factor scores, an item was retained only if the factor loading met a cutoff criterion of $\geq .40$. In the first factor, six items met the cutoff criteria; in the second, three items; while on the remaining four factors, which were not explored further, only one or two items met the criterion. No item on the first two factors which met the

TABLE 3

GENERATIONAL HIERARCHY QUESTIONNAIRE FACTOR
LOADINGS FOR FACTORS 1 AND 2

	<u>Factor 1</u>	<u>Factor 2</u>
Discuss mother's problems	.47	
Mother cries in front of adolescent	.80	
Adolescent sees mother upset	.58	
Mother asks about adolescent's time with father	.59	
Adolescent knows when mother is upset	.69	
Adolescent feels divided loyalties	.42	
Mother and adolescent fight physically		.51
Sum of Rules		.61
Strictness of rules since the separation		.68

cutoff criterion appeared in both factors. This indicates that the concepts do not overlap. (The two factors, the high loading items that constitute them, and their factor loadings are listed in Table 3). The included high loading items were then weighted according to their factor coefficients to produce the final Generational Hierarchy factor scores that are used in this thesis. The selection of summarizing names for these final factor scores is always somewhat arbitrary, and is therefore vulnerable to criticism. The names are important, however, as they should reflect the variables' essential meanings. The two hierarchy factors were subsequently labeled "Access to Mother's Distressed Affect" and "Hierarchical Control". Following is an explanation of how these names were derived.

Of the six highloading items of factor 1, the highest of these by far refers to the adolescent's exposure to the mother's crying. Of the remaining five highloading items, three of these tap a similar concept of the adolescent's involvement, in some manner, with the mother's "problems" or "upset". Of the remaining two, one of these (viz., the mothers' asking the adolescents about their relationships with their fathers) suggests a quality of boundary permeability or violation and, as such, is indirectly similar conceptually to the notion of involvement or exposure to the mother's problems or upset. The loading of the triangulation question in the factor is the lowest of the six items, and it is not regarded as central to the factor's meaning.

In short, an examination of the highloading items of Factor 1 suggests a process of the adolescent being exposed to, having access to, being sensitive to, or being involved with the mother's distressed affect, problems, or difficulties. Thus, the name assigned is "Access to Mother's Distressed Affect". A high score on this factor refers to more access, a low score to less access.

Of the three highloading items that constitute Factor 2, the higher two pertain to the importance of rules in the household and the "strictness" or consistency of their enforcement. Loading in the opposite direction to these rule items is an item which refers to physical fights between the adolescent and the mother, implying a breakdown of adequate executive functioning.

In short, an examination of the highloading items of Factor 2 suggests that a concept is being tapped which refers to rules, parental limit-setting, and hierarchical control. Thus, the name assigned to this factor is "Hierarchical Control". A high score refers to effective hierarchical control, a low one to ineffective control.

Of interest is that the two cross-generational coalition items that were hypothesized as components of Generational Hierarchy are not, in fact, highloading items on either of the two factors. They do not highload on any of the six factors. An examination of these coalition items reveals that, for each, high equivalency of their means and standard

deviations is suggestive of a highly skewed distribution. Further examination showed that most subjects endorsed this item, resulting in insufficient variability for it to be a useful discriminating item.

Procedure

All adolescents were first administered the G.H.Q., without their mothers present. They then privately completed F.A.C.E.S., during which time the test administrator was available to answer queries, if called upon to do so. The administration of tests with each adolescent took approximately one hour. Then the mother (usually without the test administrator present) completed the C.B.C.L. Afterwards, the test administrator gathered brief demographic information from her. The mother was usually occupied with these tasks for less than half an hour.

Subjects in the Aided group completed their tests during the week prior to their commencing therapy. Most of the testing was done in the P.C.G.C., although a small proportion of the Unaided parents and adolescents were seen in their homes. There were three test administrators: a clinical psychologist on staff at the P.C.G.C., a graduate student in psychology, and the author of this thesis.³ The assignment

3. See page 145 for the issue of experimenter bias.

of researcher to family was not systematic and was contingent upon time and logistical considerations of the family and interviewers. However, if one of the test administrators had been assigned as a therapist to an Aided family, that therapist automatically could not serve as the test administrator for the family.

Statistics

Firstly, the demographic nature of the sample was examined. In order to test for demographic differences between the Aided and Unaided groups, t-tests for differences between groups, Mann-Whitney tests, and Chi Square analyses were performed (Tables 1 and 2). The choice of test was based on the appropriateness of the test to the scale: interval, ordinal, or nominal data respectively.

To test the primary hypothesis of a proposed relationship between the family-based variables (of F.A.C.E.S. and the G.H.Q.) and adolescent adjustment (as evaluated by the C.B.C.L.), a series of Pearson correlations were computed. To examine whether postseparation income accounts for those associations that were found, partial correlations controlling for income were employed.

To test the secondary hypothesis of proposed differences between the Aided and Unaided groups, Chi Square analyses of categorized F.A.C.E.S. scores were computed and

t-tests of Aided versus Unaided G.H.Q. factor scores and C.B.C.L. scores were performed. To examine whether postseparation income accounts for those differences between the Aided and Unaided groups that were found, analyses of covariance controlling for income were employed.

There is an issue as to whether to use all of the 30 mothers' C.B.C.L. "observations" of their 45 adolescents. From a formal and purist statistical point of view, the utilization of all 45 C.B.C.L.s assumes independence of observations within families, an assumption that needed to be checked statistically. To this end, C.B.C.L. sibling scores were correlated. If these correlations were high, one interpretation of that finding is that sibling observations are not independent. In fact, three of six correlations (the Activity, Social, and Externalizing scales) of C.B.C.L. scores of sibling pairs within multiple-child families (Table 4) were significant. The more conservative stance in these circumstances would necessitate that only one C.B.C.L. per family be used. In those Aided multiple-child families where only one adolescent needed to be assigned, the identified patient (I.P.) was selected. In the Unaided families, the adolescent about whom the mother reported being most concerned was selected. In one Unaided family, a mother could not make this designation. In this case, the oldest adolescent was assigned. Four mothers failed to respond to C.B.C.L. school subtest items, which reduced the sample on the school subscale to 26.

TABLE 4

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SIBLINGS' SCORES ON
 ACHENBACH C.B.C.L. (N=15), F.A.C.E.S. DIMENSIONS (N=14)
 AND G.H.Q. FACTOR SCORES (N=15)

	<u>r</u>	<u>p Value</u>
<u>C.B.C.L.:</u>		
<u>Social Competence:</u>		
Activity	.62	.02
Social	.73	.01
School ^a	.17	n.s.
 <u>Behavior Problems:</u>		
Internalizing	.38	n.s.
Externalizing	.69	.01
Total	.50	.10
 <u>F.A.C.E.S.:</u>		
Cohesion	.19	n.s.
Adaptability	.72	.01
 <u>G.H.Q.:</u>		
Access to Mother's Distressed Affect	.10	n.s.
Hierarchical Control	-.06	n.s.

^a For School Scale N=13

Aside from these formal statistical reasons for utilizing the smaller sample of I.P.s, this sample will provide also the more challenging and rigorous test of whether a disaster theory of divorce, as espoused by many researchers, is justified. By evaluating the adjustment of those adolescents perceived as most disturbed by the separation (i.e., the I.P.s), and excluding those perceived as less disturbed (i.e., the non-I.P.s), the sample is stacked in favor of the disaster theory. If, then, these I.P.s are found not to score within the clinical range (i.e., catastrophically maladjusted), then we can more confidently reject the applicability of the disaster concept for this sample. For these reasons, the reduced conservative sample of 30 C.B.C.L.s will be used.

However, the utilization of the full sample of 45 C.B.C.L.s can also be justified. First, there is evidence that the sex (see, for example, Hetherington, et al., 1979) and age (see, for example, Hetherington, 1979) of children differentially determines their reaction to divorce, such that it should not automatically be assumed that siblings will respond in like manner. Second, the C.B.C.L., as has been described earlier in detail, is a well standardized and relatively "objective" measure of child adjustment, such that the independence of the mother's assessment (or observation) does have credibility. Third, the control of reducing sample size from 45 to 30 C.B.C.L.s reduces simultaneously the statistical power of the test, a conservative position that runs the risk

of a Type 2 error of accepting the null hypothesis of no difference when differences, in fact, exist.

For these reasons, the full sample of 45 C.B.C.L.s (reduced to 40 on the School Scale because five mothers failed to respond to this item) will also be used.

In contrast to the C.B.C.L., different reasoning applied to the statistical analysis of the F.A.C.E.S. protocols (that were completed by the adolescents) in multichild families. As described with the C.B.C.L., the mothers were presumably rating, on objective measures, independent siblings in multichild families, which did warrant the inclusion of all 45 C.B.C.L. protocols. With F.A.C.E.S., however, adolescent siblings were ostensibly rating the same family (i.e., the family in which they both lived). Both the Chi Square and the correlational statistics that are used in this thesis to analyze F.A.C.E.S. data require independent observations and, as the siblings would be rating the same family, only one F.A.C.E.S. protocol per family might seem justified. For this reason, the reduced, conservative sample of 30 F.A.C.E.S. protocols will be used. As with the C.B.C.L., in those multiple-child families where one sibling needed to be assigned, the identified patient (I.P.) was selected. Two adolescents failed to answer more than 10% of the 96 F.A.C.E.S. items. These F.A.C.E.S. protocols were, therefore, dropped from the study, with 28 subsequently being analyzed.

On the other hand, it can be argued that F.A.C.E.S. does not provide an absolute and objective assessment of a single unitary family structure. Instead, to a great extent, each adolescent assesses his or her perception of his own idiosyncratic position in the family structure which, as is often observed clinically, might be different for any two siblings. To illustrate, let us look at two items from the Cohesion (enmeshment-disengagement) dimension. The first ("It seems as if we agree on everything") is an enmeshment item, the second ("Family members do not turn to each other when they need help") is a disengagement item. As per the instructions, the adolescent will rate these items with reference to the custodial mother-headed household. From a systemic viewpoint, it would be commonplace clinically to observe a complementary dynamic: one adolescent being proximal or enmeshed ("It seems as if we agree on everything"); and the other being distant or disengaged ("Family members do not turn to each other when they need help"). In the clinical situation with a dysfunctional family, it would not be unusual to observe that, as the more distant adolescent moves towards closeness, the proximal adolescent either resists the sibling's entrance, or exits.

In short, each adolescent inhabits a personal and particular family structure, which is not necessarily the same for all siblings in the family. In fact, when F.A.C.E.S. correlations for siblings are computed, the correlation between siblings on the Cohesion dimension is found to be

nonsignificant (see Table 4). This suggests that siblings do, in fact, perceive their position in the family structure as different. For these reasons, the full sample of 45 F.A.C.E.S. protocols (reduced to 42 because a total of three adolescents failed to answer more than 10% of the 96 F.A.C.E.S. items) will also be analyzed.

In line with this reasoning, to use the full sample of 45 F.A.C.E.S protocols, similar reasoning is applied to the statistical analysis of G.H.Q. protocols in multichild families. Here, adolescents do not rate their perceptions of the entity "family" (as with F.A.C.E.S.), but rather their idiosyncratic perceptions of aspects of their own personal relationship with each of their parents. Although it could be argued that in multisibling families, family forces pull these relationships (or the perception of these relationships) toward commonality or sameness, this stance runs the risk of a Type 2 Error. It is not taken here. Instead, at the risk of a Type 1 Error, each adolescent's perception of aspects of his or her personal relationships with the mother and father is regarded as an independent observation. This position is taken both because previous research (Rosman, 1981) has found significant differences between siblings in their perception of aspects of their relationship with each of their parents, and because the G.H.Q. correlations for siblings on the two factors were nonsignificant (see Table 4). For the G.H.Q., then, the full sample of 45 was retained.

For a summary of the instruments in this thesis, the respective respondents, and respective sample sizes, see Table 5.

TABLE 5
INSTRUMENTS, RESPONDENTS, AND SAMPLE SIZES

<u>INSTRUMENT</u>	<u>RESPONDENT</u>	<u>CONSERVATIVE SAMPLE N</u>	<u>FULL SAMPLE N</u>
C.B.C.L.	MOTHER	30	45
F.A.C.E.S.	ADOLESCENT	28	42
G.H.Q.	ADOLESCENT	45	

Results

1. The Relationship of the Family-Based Variables (of Cohesion, Adaptability, Access to Mother's Distressed Affect, and Hierarchical Control) to Adolescent Adjustment

A major question posed by this investigation concerns the nature of the relationship between the postseparation family based variables (of Cohesion, Adaptability, Access to Mother's Distressed Affect, and Hierarchical Control) and adolescent postseparation adjustment. It was hypothesized that postseparation adolescent adjustment would be associated with the adequacy of the families' efforts to reorganize along these central structural dimensions after the separation. To assess these proposed relationships a series of correlations were computed between each of these independent and dependent variables. The more conservative analysis, employing the smaller sample of 30 I.P.s, is summarized in Table 6. The same analysis, but employing the full sample of 45, is summarized in Table 7.

As already described, for those particular computations which involve F.A.C.E.S. dimensions, Deviations from the Mean Cohesion and Adaptability scores were computed. This provided scores of distance from the midpoint of functionality.

Family Cohesion and Adolescent Adjustment

With the more conservative analysis of the smaller sample (Table 6), there is a significant negative correlation between Deviation from Mean scores on Cohesion and the C.B.C.L.

TABLE 6

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN FAMILY-BASED VARIABLES
AND C.B.C.L. ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT
("CONSERVATIVE" SAMPLE, N=30)

	<u>F.A.C.E.S.</u>		<u>G.H.Q.</u>	
	<u>Dev. M. Cohesion^a</u>	<u>Dev. M. Adaptability^a</u>	<u>Access to Mother's Distressed Affect</u>	<u>Hierarchical Control</u>
<u>Achenbach C.B.C.L.:</u>				
<u>Social Competence:</u>				
Activities	-.30	-.10	.10	.01
Social	-.48xx	-.01	.38x	.05
School ^b	-.22	-.15	.17	.10
<u>Behavior Problems:</u>				
Internalizing	.14	.37x	.02	-.26
Externalizing	.09	.23	-.01	-.19
Total	.12	.26	.10	-.22

Note: High scores on F.A.C.E.S. dimensions refer to extremes. High scores on G.H.Q. factor scores refer to high "access" and effective "control." Low Social Competency and high Behavior Problem scores indicate poor adjustment.

a For Cohesion and Adaptability Dimensions (n=28)

b For School Scale (n=25)

x p <.05

xx p <.01

TABLE 7

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN FAMILY-BASED VARIABLES
AND C.B.C.L. ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT
(“FULL” SAMPLE, N=45)

	<u>F.A.C.E.S.</u>		<u>G.H.Q.</u>	
	<u>Dev. M. Cohesion^a</u>	<u>Dev. M. Adaptability^a</u>	<u>Access to Mother's Distressed Affect</u>	<u>Hierarchical Control</u>
<u>Achenbach C.B.C.L.:</u>				
<u>Social Competence:</u>				
Activities	-.31x	-.13	.18	.01
Social	-.45xx	-.12	.34x	.06
School ^b	-.07	-.14	.16	.06
<u>Behavior Problems:</u>				
Internalizing	.09	.36x	-.05	-.24
Externalizing	.08	.34x	-.06	-.17
Total	.12	.34x	-.01	-.19

Note: High scores on F.A.C.E.S. dimensions refer to extremes. High scores on G.H.Q. factor scores refer to high “access” and effective “control”. Low Social Competency and high Behavior Problem scores indicate poor adjustment.

a For Cohesion and Adaptability Dimensions (n=42)

b For School Scale (n=38)

x $p < .05$

xx $p < .01$

Social Scale ($p < .01$). This indicates that the more the adolescents see their families either as extremely close (enmeshed) with limited individual autonomy or, at the other extreme, as having low bonding (disengagement) with high individual autonomy, the more the mothers rate the amount and quality of the adolescents' involvement in social relationships as poor.

Although, with the conservative sample ($N=30$), the remaining Dev. M. Cohesion - C.B.C.L. correlations are nonsignificant, they are consistently in the expected directions. The negative Dev. M. Cohesion - Social Competency correlations are relatively higher (although, of course, nonsignificant) than the positive Dev. M. Cohesion - Behavior Problems correlations. This suggests a trend of increased enmeshment or disengagement associated with a decrease in normal adolescent activities and school performance, but little association with Externalizing (acting out) and Internalizing (anxiety and withdrawal) behaviors.

When the full sample ($N=42$) is analyzed (Table 7), the picture that emerges remains consistent with, and similar to, the reduced sample. The significant negative correlation remains between Deviation from Mean scores on Cohesion and the C.B.C.L. Social Scale ($p < .01$). In addition, the direction of the correlation between Dev. M. Cohesion and the Social Competency scales remains in the anticipated negative direction, and relatively higher than the correlations between

Dev. M. Cohesion and Behavior Problems. These latter Dev. M. Cohesion - Behavior Problem correlations remain in the anticipated positive direction. The one change is that of the correlation between Dev. M. Cohesion and the Activities Scale. Whereas this correlation ($r = -.30$) was nonsignificant when utilizing the conservative sample, it ($r = -.31$) is significant ($p < .05$) when utilizing the full sample, although the magnitude of the correlation remains much the same. This significant finding indicates that the more the adolescents see their postseparation families either as extremely close (or enmeshed) with limited autonomy or, at the other extreme, as disengaged with high individual autonomy, the more the mothers rate as poor the amount and quality of the adolescents' involvement in activities such as sports, organizations, and jobs.

Family Adaptability and Adolescent Adjustment

With reference to the conservative sample (Table 6), there is a significant positive correlation between Deviation from Mean scores on Adaptability and C.B.C.L. Internalizing scores ($p < .05$). This indicates that the more the adolescents perceive their families as chaotically organized (adolescents did not rate their families as rigidly organized), with little stability or consistency, the more they manifest Internalizing behaviors (i.e., anxiety and withdrawal) as rated by the mothers.

Although the correlations of chaos with Externalizing and with Total Behavior Problem scores are nonsignificant, they are consistently in the predicted direction and relatively high. The negative correlations of the chaos score with the Social Competency scales are low at best. Overall, this analysis suggests a general trend of greater chaos and less stability being associated with more Internalizing and Externalizing behavior problems, but there is no apparent association with social competency.

When the full sample (N=42) is analyzed (Table 7), the same basic pattern emerges. The correlations between Dev. M. Adaptability and the Social Competency scales remain weak. The correlation between Dev. M. Adaptability and Internalizing, which was significant, remains significant at the same probability level ($p < .05$). However, the correlations between Dev. M. Adaptability and Externalizing and Dev. M. Adaptability and Total Behavior Problems, which were previously in the hypothesized direction but nonsignificant, are now both significant ($p < .05$) and in the hypothesized direction. To be specific, the more the adolescents perceive their families as chaotically organized (adolescents did not rate their families as rigidly organized), with little stability or consistency, the more they manifested Externalizing behaviors (i.e., aggressive acting out), and the higher they scored on the "global index of need for help" (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983, p. 61).

Access to Mother's Distressed Affect Factor Score And Adolescent Adjustment

Beginning with the analysis of the conservative sample, there is a significant positive correlation between increased adolescent Access to Mother's Distressed Affect scores and C.B.C.L. Social scores ($p < .05$) (Table 6). In addition, the correlations with Activities and School scales, although nonsignificant, are in the same direction. This significant finding and trend runs counter to predictions. The correlations with Behavior Problems, however, are negligible.

When the full sample ($N=45$) is analyzed (Table 7), the findings are close to identical with those of the more conservative statistics. The significant positive correlation between increased adolescent Access to Mother's Distressed Affect scores and C.B.C.L. Social scores ($p < .05$) remains, and the correlations of this factor score with Activities and School Scales, although nonsignificant, remain in the same direction. The correlations of this factor score with the Behavior Problem scores are now consistently in the opposite negative direction, but these correlations remain negligible.

The interpretation of this finding will depend on the meaning assigned to the factor itself. As noted earlier, an examination of the higher loading items in the factor suggests that the adolescent is exposed to, has access to, is sensitive to, or is involved with the mother's distressed affect, upset, and difficulties. Such exposure, access, sensitivity, and

involvement are associated with increased social competence. As mentioned in the section discussing the construction of the G.H.Q., the loading of the triangulation question in this factor is the lowest of the six questions, and it is not regarded as central to the factor's meaning.

The Control Hierarchy and Adolescent Adjustment

Regardless of whether the conservative or full samples are analyzed, none of the correlations of the Control Hierarchy Factor Scores with either the C.B.C.L. Social Competency or Behavior Problem Scales achieved significance (Tables 6 and 7). However, inspection of these correlations reveals a consistent trend, on both samples, of greater effectiveness of the Control Hierarchy being associated with lower Internalizing, Externalizing, and Total Behavior Problem scores. The positive correlations with Social Competency scores are also in the expected direction, but they are so low as to be negligible.

Further and more convincing evidence for an association between the Control Hierarchy and effective family functioning is provided by two sets of analyses (Tables 8 and 9) which go beyond the primary hypotheses of this thesis.

The Control Hierarchy and the Adolescents' Perception of Quality of Relationship With Each Parent, and the Adolescents' Perception Of Self

These analyses go beyond the hypotheses of this thesis. Three correlates to the adolescents' perception of the

Control Hierarchy were explored briefly (Table 8). Only one set of data will be presented for each of these analyses and for those presented in Table 9. Of course, for Table 8, which is derived completely from G.H.Q. data, the full sample of 45 is automatically used as was discussed under statistics. However, for C.B.C.L. and F.A.C.E.S. data (Table 9), both the conservative and full sample might have been presented. Instead, because these data are somewhat auxiliary to the primary hypotheses of this thesis, only the more conservative statistics derived from the smaller sample will be presented.

Of interest is that there is a significant positive correlation between the adolescents' perception of greater effectiveness of the Control Hierarchy and the adolescents' perception of a qualitatively better relationship with their mothers ($p < .01$) and fathers ($p < .01$). Thirdly, there is a significant positive correlation between the adolescents' perception of greater effectiveness of the Control Hierarchy and a better rating of self on the S.A.S.S. (Cantril et al., 1971) ($p < .05$). For a description of the S.A.S.S., see the Generational Hierarchy Questionnaire.

Family Structure and Adolescent Adjustment Scores With Adolescents' Perceived Amount and Quality of Contact with the Father

As described, this too goes beyond those issues directly related to the hypotheses of this study. These "amount" and "quality" scores are derived from G.H.Q. questions

TABLE 8

CORRELATIONS OF ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTION
OF HIERARCHICAL CONTROL (SCORES) WITH
ADOLESCENTS' (a) PERCEPTION OF QUALITY OF
RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER; (b) PERCEPTION OF
QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHER; AND
(c) PERCEPTION OF SELF

	HIERARCHICAL CONTROL (N=45)
a. Relationship Quality With Mother	.42xx
b. Relationship Quality With Father	.40xx
c. Self rating on S.A.S.S. ¹	.30x

1. See the "Generational Hierarchy Questionnaire" for details of the S.A.S.S.

x $p < .05$

xx $p < .01$

TABLE 9

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE ADOLESCENTS'
PERCEIVED AMOUNT AND QUALITY
OF RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR FATHERS, AND F.A.C.E.S.,
G.H.Q. FACTOR SCORES, AND C.B.C.L. SCORES

	<u>Amount of Talk</u>	<u>Amount of Visiting</u>	<u>Quality of Relationship</u>
<u>F.A.C.E.S. (N=28)</u>			
Dev. M. Cohesion	-.19	-.39x	-.08
Dev. M. Adaptability	-.43x	-.34	-.39x
<u>G.H.Q. (N=45)</u>			
Access to Mother's Distressed Affect	-.04	-.21	-.25
Control Hierarchy	.19	.14	.40xx
<u>C.B.C.L. (N=30)</u>			
Activities	-.12	.18	.10
Social	.06	.32	-.01
School ^a	.00	.08	.08
Internalizing	-.49xx	-.50xx	-.40x
Externalizing	-.04	-.21	-.21
Total Behavior Problems	-.25	-.35x	-.33

Note: High scores on "amount of talk and visits" indicate "more" and high scores on "quality of relationships" indicate "better." High scores on F.A.C.E.S. dimensions refer to extremes. High scores on G.H.Q. factor scores indicate high "access" and effective "control." Low Social Competency and high Behavior Problem scores indicate poor adjustment.

^a School Scale N=26

x p < .05

xx p < .01

(see Appendix 2). The adolescents' perceived amount of talk with their fathers is Q12; their perceived amount of visiting with their fathers is Q13; the perceived quality of their relationship with their fathers is Q14. The correlations of these scores with F.A.C.E.S., G.H.Q. factor scores, and C.B.C.L. scores are presented in Table 9. There are significant correlations between the amount of talk with fathers and the Dev. M. Adaptability ($p < .05$) and Internalizing ($p < .01$) scores. These correlations are negative, suggesting that the less the families are perceived as chaotic and the more they are perceived as structured and flexible, the more these adolescents talk with their fathers, and the less they manifest Internalizing behaviors.

There are also significant correlations between the perceived amount of visiting with their fathers and Dev. M. Cohesion scores ($p < .05$) and two C.B.C.L. scores, namely Internalizing ($p < .01$) and Total Behavior Problem ($p < .05$) scores. These three correlations are negative. They suggest that the less the families are perceived as enmeshed and disengaged, and the more they are perceived as functionally connected and separated, the more the adolescents visit their fathers and the fewer Internalizing and Total Behavior Problems they manifest.

Finally, there are also significant correlations between the perceived quality of relationship with their father and Dev. M. Adaptability ($p < .05$), the Control Hierarchy

($p < .01$), and one C.B.C.L. score, namely Internalizing ($p < .05$). All these correlations are negative, with the exception of Control Hierarchy, which is positive. These suggest that the more effective the Control Hierarchy, the more the family will be perceived as functionally structured and flexible, the better their relationships with their fathers and the fewer Internalizing problems they will manifest.

Income and Postseparation Adolescent and Family Adjustment.

The issue here is whether the mothers' postseparation income, or a preseparation to postseparation decrease in income (henceforth called income drop), significantly accounts for the above-described associations between dimensions of family functioning and adolescent adjustment.

The first step is to explore whether the mother's postseparation income or income drop are significantly correlated with either family or adolescent postseparation adjustment.

When analyzing the data from the conservative sample ($N=30$), a significant correlation is found between the mother's postseparation income and Hierarchical Control ($p < .04$), such that the higher the income, the more effective the mother's perceived control (Table 10). None of the other correlations between income and the family and adolescent adjustment variables are significant, although income is marginally associated with Dev. M. Adaptability ($p < .09$), Internalizing

($p < .08$), Externalizing ($p < .08$), and Total Behavior Problems ($p < .07$). For each of these marginal correlations, the higher the mother's postseparation income, the better family and adolescent adjustment are perceived. None of the correlations with income drop approach significance (Table 10).

When the full sample is analyzed, the mother's postseparation income is significantly correlated with Dev. M. Adaptability ($p < .02$), Internalizing ($p < .02$), and Total Behavior Problems ($p < .02$), such that the higher the income, the better family and adolescent adjustment are perceived (Table 10). Income is also marginally associated with Hierarchical Control ($p < .06$) and Externalizing Behavior Problems ($p < .07$), again suggesting an association between higher postseparation income and better family and adolescent postseparation adjustment.

No significant or close to significant associations are found between income drop and family and adolescent adjustment (Table 10).

In short, these analyses do suggest a positive association between the mother's postseparation income and postseparation family and adolescent adjustment.

Given these associations between income and family and adolescent adjustment, the final step is to examine whether the mother's postseparation income accounts for the significant association between family and adolescent adjustment variables. To recapitulate: Dev. M. Cohesion is correlated with Activities and Social Relationships; Dev. M. Adaptability

TABLE 10

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MOTHERS' POSTSEPARATION
INCOME AND INCOME DROP, AND
FAMILY AND ADOLESCENT POSTSEPARATION ADJUSTMENT

	<u>Postseparation Income</u>				<u>Income Drop</u>			
	<u>Conservative Sample</u>		<u>Full Sample</u>		<u>Conservative Sample</u>		<u>Full Sample</u>	
<u>F.A.C.E.S.:</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>p Value</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>p Value</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>p Value</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>p Value</u>
Dev. M. Cohesion	-.05	n.s.	-.09	n.s.	-.13	n.s.	-.12	n.s.
Dev. M. Adaptability	-.33	.09	-.36	.02	.12	n.s.	.02	n.s.
<u>G.H.Q.:</u>								
Hierarchical Control	.38	.04	.28	.06	-.07	n.s.	-.04	n.s.
Access to Mother's Distressed Affect	-.24	n.s.	.02	n.s.	.15	n.s.	.10	n.s.
<u>C.B.C.L.:</u>								
Activities	.26	n.s.	.13	n.s.	.02	n.s.	.08	n.s.
Social	.12	n.s.	.07	n.s.	-.01	n.s.	-.02	n.s.
School	.06	n.s.	-.03	n.s.	.09	n.s.	-.06	n.s.
Internalizing	-.33	.08	-.35	.02	-.03	n.s.	.05	n.s.
Externalizing	-.33	.08	-.28	.07	.20	n.s.	.09	n.s.
Total	-.34	.07	-.34	.02	.13	n.s.	.11	n.s.

is correlated with Internalizing, Externalizing and Total Behavior Problems; and Access to the Mother's Distressed Affect is correlated with Social Relationships.

When income is partialled out, four of the six correlations remain significant, and two lose significance (Table 11). It should be noted that the two correlations which lose significance (Dev. M. Adaptability with Externalizing and Total Behavior problems) were significant originally only at the .05 level. These findings indicate that the mother's postseparation income overlaps with, and may account for, some of the association between certain family and adolescent adjustment variables.

Summary of Results Related to Hypothesis One

In summary, the central correlational analyses reveal that there are significant associations between three of the four postseparation family based variables, (Cohesion, Adaptability, and Access to the Mother's Distressed Affect) and adolescent adjustment. In addition, the auxiliary analyses suggest that the Control Hierarchy is associated with the adolescents' perceived quality of relationship with both parents and self-rating. This is a confirmation of Hypothesis One: that postseparation adolescent adjustment is associated with the manner in which the family reorganizes around core structural dimensions after the separation.

TABLE 11

RELEVANT PARTIAL CORRELATIONS BETWEEN FAMILY VARIABLES AND
 ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT, CONTROLLING FOR MOTHERS'
 POSTSEPARATION INCOME

	<u>Conservative Sample</u>		<u>Full Sample</u>	
	<u>r</u>	<u>p Value</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>p Value</u>
Dev. M. Cohesion/ Activities	-.36 (-.30)*	.04	-.34 (-.31)*	.02
Dev. M. Cohesion/ Social	-.49 (-.48)	.01	-.43 (-.45)	.01
Dev. M. Adaptability/ Internalizing	.33 (.37)	.06	.28 (.36)	.05
Externalizing	.06 (.23)	n.s.	.23 (.34)	n.s.
Total	.13 (.26)	n.s.	.23 (.34)	.09
Access To Mother's Distressed Affect/ Social	.49 (.38)	.01	.39 (.34)	.01

* The numbers in parentheses are the original, first order correlations, prior to income being controlled.

This finding must be qualified; the mothers' postseparation income is also associated with postseparation family and adolescent adjustment, and income accounts for some of the association between certain postseparation family and adolescent adjustment variables.

2. Aided - Unaided Differences

The second question posed by this investigation concerns the nature of this divorcing population. Specifically, are there differences in postseparation family structure and adolescent adjustment between those postseparation families with adolescent children who requested treatment (the Aided group) and those that did not (the Unaided group)?

Also, how do the Aided (i.e., clinical) and Unaided (i.e., nonclinical) adolescents, as well as the composite combined group of Aided plus Unaided adolescents compare, in terms of level of adjustment, with the clinical and nonclinical norms of the C.B.C.L. standardization sample?

These analyses will provide evidence of the extent to which the reaction to divorce of these adolescents from different samples of separated families is within the clinical (or disaster) range. In addition, further elucidation will be obtained of possible differences in postseparation family structure between different samples of separated families.

Aided - Unaided Demographic Differences

To test for demographic differences between the Aided and Unaided groups, t-tests (between groups), Mann-Whitney tests, or Chi Square analyses were performed for interval, ordinal, or nominal data respectively. No significant differences between the Aided and Unaided groups were found with respect to the age or sex of the adolescents, the race, religion, educational level of each of the parents, the length of the marriage, the number of separations prior to the "final" separation, the time elapsed since the final separation, preseparation S.E.S., and preseparation to postseparation Income decrease (Tables 1 and 2). However, a Mann-Whitney did reveal a significant difference between the Aided and Unaided groups on mothers' postseparation Income ($p < .02$) (Table 1), the Aided mothers' income being lower than the Unaided mothers' income. Both the issue of the relationship between the mothers' postseparation income and the family structure and adolescent adjustment and Aided - Unaided differences are addressed later.

Aided - Unaided Differences on F.A.C.E.S.

To test for Aided - Unaided differences on the F.A.C.E.S. Cohesion dimension, subjects' perceptions were divided into Olson, et al. (1978) separated - connected (this mid-range group was collapsed into one) and enmeshed - disengaged (this group is composed of the two dysfunctional extremes, collapsed into one) categories. A Chi Square

analysis of the more conservative, reduced sample does suggest a close to significant difference in distribution between the Aided and Unaided families, as perceived by the adolescents, within these categories (Table 12). However, the degree of significance is only at the .09 level, while .05 is the usually accepted cutoff. Within this sample, eighty percent of the Unaided group fall within the mid-range separated - connected category, as compared with 38.9% of the Aided group. The opposite occurs at the extremes of disengagement and enmeshment. There, 61.1% of the Aided group cluster within these two categories, as compared with 20% of the Unaided group.

Using the full sample, the Chi Square analysis reveals a significant difference in distribution ($p < .02$) between the Aided and Unaided families, as perceived by the adolescents, within these categories (Table 13). Within this sample 85.7% of the Unaided group fall within the mid-range separated-connected category, as compared with 42.9% of the Aided group. The opposite pattern occurs at the extremes of disengagement and enmeshment. There, 57.1% of the Aided group cluster within these two categories, as compared with 14.3% of the Unaided group. This indicates that there are differences in perceived postseparation family Cohesion between Aided and Unaided samples of separated families.

To test for Aided-Unaided differences of the F.A.C.E.S. Adaptability dimension, subjects' perceptions were divided into categories defined by Olson, et al. (1978) as representing structured - flexible (this mid-range group was

TABLE 12
 DISTRIBUTION OF COHESION SCORES FOR THE
 AIDED AND UNAIDED GROUPS AND POOLED
 "CONSERVATIVE" SAMPLE (N=28)

	N (%) Within <u>Aided</u>	N (%) Within <u>Unaided</u>	N (%) Within <u>Pooled Sample</u>
<u>F.A.C.E.S.:</u>			
Separated/Connected	38.9	80	53.6
Enmeshed/Disengaged	61.1	20	46.4

χ^2 (df = 1), N=28 = 2.87, $p < .09$

Note: The Chi Square is based on N per cell and not on percentages.

TABLE 13
 DISTRIBUTION OF COHESION SCORES FOR THE
 AIDED AND UNAIDED GROUPS AND POOLED
 "FULL" SAMPLE (N=42)

	<u>N</u> (%) Within <u>Aided</u>	<u>N</u> (%) Within <u>Unaided</u>	<u>N</u> (%) Within <u>Pooled Sample</u>
<u>F.A.C.E.S.:</u>			
Separated/Connected	42.9	85.7	57.7
Enmeshed/Disengaged	57.1	14.3	42.9

χ^2 (df = 1), N=42 = 5.36, p < .02

Note: The Chi Square is based on N per cell and not on percentages. The frequency within cells on this table is identical to that on Table 15, by chance.

TABLE 14
 DISTRIBUTION OF ADAPTABILITY SCORES FOR THE
 AIDED AND UNAIDED GROUPS AND POOLED
 "CONSERVATIVE" SAMPLE (N=28)

	<u>N</u> (%) Within <u>Aided</u>	<u>N</u> (%) Within <u>Unaided</u>	<u>N</u> (%) Within <u>Pooled Sample</u>
<u>F.A.C.E.S.:</u>			
Structured/Flexible	44.4	80	57.1
Rigid/Chaotic	55.6	20	42.9

χ^2 (df = 1), N=28 = 2.03, p < .15

Note: The Chi Square is based on N per cell and not on percentages.

TABLE 15
 DISTRIBUTION OF ADAPTABILITY SCORES FOR THE
 AIDED AND UNAIDED GROUPS AND POOLED
 "FULL" SAMPLE (N=42)

	<u>N (%) Within Aided</u>	<u>N (%) Within Unaided</u>	<u>N (%) Within Pooled Sample</u>
<u>F.A.C.E.S.:</u>			
Structured/Flexible	42.9	85.7	57.1
Rigid/Chaotic	57.1	14.3	42.9

χ^2 (df = 1), N=42 = 5.36, $p < .02$

Note: The Chi Square is based on N per cell and not on percentages. The frequency within cells on this table is identical to that on Table 13, by chance.

collapsed into one) and rigid-chaotic (this group comprises the two dysfunctional extremes collapsed into one) family organization. A Chi Square analysis of the more conservative, reduced sample (Table 14) does not suggest a significant difference in distribution between the Aided and Unaided families, as perceived by the adolescents, within these categories. However, trends are evident. Eighty percent of the Unaided group fall within the combined mid-range structured and flexible category, as compared with 44.4% of the Aided group. The opposite occurs at the chaotic extreme. There, 55.6% of the Aided group cluster within the chaotic range, as compared with 20% of the Unaided group. No families are rated in the rigid range.

When the same analysis is performed on the full sample, the trends that were described above now become significant. Specifically, there is a significant difference in distribution ($p < .02$) between the Aided and Unaided families, as perceived by the adolescents, within these categories (Table 15). Within this sample 85.7% of the Unaided group fall within the combined mid-range structured and flexible category, as compared with 42.9% of the Aided group. The opposite pattern occurs at the chaotic extreme. There, 57.1% of the Aided cluster within the chaotic range, as compared with 14.3% of the Unaided group. (No families are rated in the rigid range). This significant finding indicates that there are differences in perceived postseparation family

Adaptability between Aided and Unaided samples of separated families.

Aided-Unaided Differences on G.H.Q.

To test for Aided-Unaided postseparation differences in Generational Hierarchy, t-tests (between groups) were performed on both the Access to Mother's Distressed Affect and the Hierarchical Control factor scores. Neither tests yielded significant results (Table 16).

Of note is that the G.H.Q. is the only instrument that was administered directly by the test-administrators, and where their knowledge of the Aided or Unaided status of the adolescents potentially might have led to experimenter bias. However, since the differences between the Aided and Unaided groups on the two G.H.Q. factor scores are not significant, this possibility was not explored further.

Aided-Unaided Differences on C.B.C.L.

To test for Aided-Unaided differences in postseparation adolescent adjustment as perceived by the Mother, t-tests (between groups) were performed on the six C.B.C.L. scores. First, these analyses were performed on the conservative sample. Although none of the differences between the groups on specific social competency scales and behavior problem scales are significant, a trend is evident. On all social competency scales, the Unaided group scores are higher than those of the Aided. On the behavior problem scales, the

TABLE 16
 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN G.H.Q. SCORES FOR
AIDED AND UNAIDED GROUPS: t-TESTS

	<u>Aided</u> (N=30)	<u>Unaided</u> (N=15)	<u>T Value</u>
<u>G.H.Q.:</u>			
Access to Mother's Distressed Affect ^a	-.05	.11	-.20 (n.s.)
Hierarchical Control ^b	-.08	.16	.55 (n.s.)

a A high score on this factor refers to greater "access".

b A high score on this factor refers to effective "control".

opposite trend is found (Table 17). Thus, although the differences between the Aided and Unaided groups on no one scale are significant, the Aided group, when compared with the Unaided group, on five independent scales (the Total Behavior Problem scale is not independent of the Internalizing and Externalizing scales), is always the more poorly adjusted. The probability of this occurring is $(1/2)^5$ (see Siegel, 1956), given it was anticipated that the Aided group would be less well-adjusted. This suggests a trend that the Unaided adolescents are seen by their mothers as more socially competent, and as having fewer behavior problems than the Aided adolescents.

When the same analyses were performed on the full sample, the same trend is evident: on all social competency scales, the Unaided group scored higher than the Aided; and on the behavior problem scales, the opposite trend is found (Table 18).

However, when the analysis is performed on the full sample, a significant difference between the Aided and Unaided groups emerges on the Externalizing Scale ($p < .03$). And a close to significant difference between the groups is evident on the Activities Scale ($p < .06$). These findings indicate that the Aided group is characterized by significantly more aggressive acting out behavior than the Unaided group, and that the Unaided group is characterized by a close to significantly greater level of quality of involvement in social activities.

TABLE 17

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT SCORES
FOR AIDED AND UNAIDED GROUPS: t-TESTS ON
"CONSERVATIVE" SAMPLE (N=30)

	Aided (N=19)	Unaided (N=11)	T Value
	Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)	
<u>C.B.C.L.:</u>			
<u>Social Competence:</u>			
Activities	43.05 (12.72)	49.64 (7.62)	-1.56 (n.s.)
Social	40.95 (12.43)	45.09 (7.23)	-1.01 (n.s.)
School ^a	40.67 (8.64)	44.00 (10.14)	-0.86 (n.s.)
<u>Behavior Problems:</u>			
Internalizing	59.05 (10.61)	57.82 (6.23)	.35 (n.s.)
Externalizing	61.12 (12.54)	54.82 (7.18)	1.52 (n.s.)
Total	61.32 (13.60)	57.37 (7.79)	.88 (n.s.)

a For School scale Aided (N=18) and Unaided (N=8)

TABLE 18

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT SCORES
FOR AIDED AND UNAIDED GROUPS: t-TESTS ON
"FULL" SAMPLE (N=45)

	Aided (N=30)	Unaided (N=15)	T Value
	Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)	
<u>C.B.C.L.:</u>			
<u>Social Competence:</u>			
Activities	43.43 (12.69)	49.13 (7.32)	-1.91 (.06)
Social	42.30 (12.02)	46.00 (6.72)	-1.32 (n.s.)
School ^a	40.75 (10.67)	43.50 (8.66)	-0.79 (n.s.)
<u>Behavior Problems:</u>			
Internalizing	57.60 (10.20)	55.80 (9.12)	.58 (n.s.)
Externalizing	59.60 (12.20)	53.07 (7.29)	2.24 (.03)
Total	59.6 (12.71)	55.13 (9.99)	1.19 (n.s.)

a For School scale Aided (n=28) and Unaided (n=12)

Another way of looking at this relative adjustment of the adolescents in the Aided and Unaided groups is to look at the percentage of adolescents in these respective groups who scored within the clinical range (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983, p. 64) on C.B.C.L. scores. As the Internalizing and Externalizing Behavior Problem Scales have been documented as better predictors of clinical classification than the social competency scales (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983), only these two scales will be examined here.

On Internalizing scores, using both the conservative sample and the full sample, the Chi Square analysis does not suggest a significant difference in distribution between the Aided and Unaided adolescents, within the clinical and nonclinical ranges, as perceived by the mothers (Tables 19 and 20).

However, on Externalizing, whether using the restricted, conservative sample or the full sample, the Chi Square analysis reveals a significant difference in distribution ($p < .04$ and $p < .02$ for the conservative and full samples respectively) between the Aided and Unaided adolescents within the clinical and nonclinical categories (Tables 21 and 22). Within the conservative sample, 100% of the Unaided adolescents fall within the nonclinical range. In the Aided group 57.9% of the sample fall within the nonclinical range, as compared with 42.1% in the clinical range. With the full sample, the pattern is similar. One hundred percent of the Unaided group fall

TABLE 19

DISTRIBUTION OF AIDED AND UNAIDED
 ADOLESCENTS SCORING WITHIN THE CLINICAL AND
NONCLINICAL RANGE ON INTERNALIZING (N=30)

	<u>N</u> (%) Within <u>Aided</u>	<u>N</u> (%) Within <u>Unaided</u>	<u>N</u> (%) Within <u>Pooled Sample</u>
<u>INTERNALIZING:</u>			
Nonclinical	57.9	81.8	66.7
Clinical	42.1	18.2	33.3

χ^2 (df = 1), N=30 = .88, $p < .35$

Note: The Chi Square is based on N per cell and not on percentages.

TABLE 20

DISTRIBUTION OF AIDED AND UNAIDED ADOLESCENTS
 SCORING WITHIN THE CLINICAL AND NONCLINICAL
 RANGE ON INTERNALIZING (N=45)

	<u>N</u> (%) Within Aided	<u>N</u> (%) Within Unaided	<u>N</u> (%) Within Pooled Sample
<u>INTERNALIZING:</u>			
Nonclinical	63.3	86.7	71.1
Clinical	36.7	13.3	28.9

χ^2 (df = 1), N=45 = 1.64, $p < .20$

Note: The Chi Square is based on N per cell and not on percentages.

TABLE 21

DISTRIBUTION OF AIDED AND UNAIDED ADOLESCENTS
 SCORING WITHIN THE CLINICAL AND NONCLINICAL
 RANGE ON EXTERNALIZING (N=30)

	<u>N</u> <u>(%) Within</u> <u>Aided</u>	<u>N</u> <u>(%) Within</u> <u>Unaided</u>	<u>N</u> <u>(%) Within</u> <u>Pooled Sample</u>
<u>EXTERNALIZING:</u>			
Nonclinical	57.9	100	73.3
Clinical	42.1	0	26.7

χ^2 (df = 1), N=30 = 4.35, $p < .04$

Note: The Chi Square is based on N per cell and not on percentages.

TABLE 22

DISTRIBUTION OF AIDED AND UNAIDED ADOLESCENTS
 SCORING WITHIN THE CLINICAL AND NONCLINICAL
 RANGE ON EXTERNALIZING (N=45)

	<u>N</u> <u>(%) Within</u> <u>Aided</u>	<u>N</u> <u>(%) Within</u> <u>Unaided</u>	<u>N</u> <u>(%) Within</u> <u>Pooled Sample</u>
<u>EXTERNALIZING:</u>			
Nonclinical	63.3	100	75.6
Clinical	36.7	0	24.4

χ^2 (df = 1), N=45 = 5.43, $p < .02$

Note: The Chi Square is based on N per cell and not on percentages.

within the nonclinical range, while 63.3% of the Aided fall within the nonclinical range, as compared with 36.7% in the clinical range.

These findings and trends of differences in adjustment between the two groups provide support for the hypothesis that there is no unitary reaction of adolescents to divorce, or that adolescents in the Aided group tend to be more disturbed than those in the Unaided group.

In order to assess the overall level or degree of disturbance of these adolescents and the extent to which they fall within the clinical (or disaster) range, comparisons with C.B.C.L. clinical and nonclinical norms are required.

Assessing the Level or Degree of Adolescent Adjustment

In order to determine and place in perspective the level of adjustment of these postseparation adolescents, comparisons with the C.B.C.L. clinical and nonclinical norms are necessary.

When the Aided and Unaided C.B.C.L. scores for the conservative sample (of I.P.s) are separated for sex and compared against Achenbach's male and female clinical and nonclinical norms, a consistent trend is found (Tables 23 and 24). On social competency, all but one of the Aided means for both males and females (i.e., 5 out of 6 scores) was higher than Achenbach's clinical group. On behavior problems, all of the mean scores for males and females (i.e., 6 out of 6

TABLE 23

ACHENBACH'S CLINICAL AND NONCLINICAL MEAN SCORES FOR FEMALES, COMPARED WITH AIDED AND UNAIDED MEAN SCORES FOR FEMALES AND COMBINED SAMPLE (AIDED AND UNAIDED FOR MALES AND FEMALES) MEAN SCORES (N=30)

	Achenbach's Mean Scores for Females ^a		Females		TOTAL SAMPLE
	<u>CLINICAL</u>	<u>NON CLINICAL</u>	<u>AIDED</u>	<u>UNAIDED</u>	
N	86	84	10	5	30
<u>C.B.C.L.:</u>					
<u>Social Competence:</u>					
Activities	41.8	49.1	40.9	45.4	45.5
Social	37.7	50.2	43.7	44.8	42.5
School	35.4	49.6	38.0 ^b	38.0 ^c	41.6
<u>Behavior Problems:</u>					
Internalizing	65.4	49.4	60.7	62.4	58.6
Externalizing	65.8	49.5	63.0	60.2	59.8
Total	70.0	50.1	65.4	63.8	59.2

a Middle S.E.S. group

b For Aided school scale (n=9)

c For Unaided school scale (n=3)

TABLE 24

ACHENBACH'S CLINICAL AND NONCLINICAL MEAN SCORES FOR
 MALES, COMPARED WITH AIDED AND UNAIDED MEAN SCORES
 FOR MALES AND COMBINED SAMPLE (AIDED AND UNAIDED
 FOR MALES AND FEMALES) MEAN SCORES (N=30)

	Achenbach's Mean Scores for Males ^a		Males		TOTAL SAMPLE
	<u>CLINICAL</u>	<u>NON CLINICAL</u>	<u>AIDED</u>	<u>UNAIDED</u>	
N	88	81	9	6	30
<u>C.B.C.L.:</u>					
<u>Social Competence:</u>					
Activities	41.9	49.7	45.4	53.2	45.5
Social	35.5	49.5	37.9	45.3	42.5
School	36.2	49.7	43.3	47.6 ^b	41.6
<u>Behavior Problems:</u>					
Internalizing	65.0	50.4	57.2	50.4	58.6
Externalizing	66.2	50.6	59.0	50.3	59.8
Total	67.1	50.0	56.8	52.0	59.2

^a Middle S.E.S. group

^b For Unaided school scale (n=5)

TABLE 25

ACHENBACH'S CLINICAL AND NONCLINICAL MEAN SCORES FOR FEMALES, COMPARED WITH AIDED AND UNAIDED MEAN SCORES FOR FEMALES AND COMBINED SAMPLE (AIDED AND UNAIDED FOR MALES AND FEMALES) MEAN SCORES (N=45)

	Achenbach's Mean Scores for Females ^a			Females		TOTAL SAMPLE
	<u>CLINICAL</u>	<u>NON CLINICAL</u>	<u>AIDED</u>	<u>UNAIDED</u>		
N	86	84	13	8	45	
<u>C.B.C.L.:</u>						
<u>Social Competence:</u>						
Activities	41.8	49.1	41.5	47.1	45.3	
Social	37.7	50.2	44.2	46.9	43.5	
School	35.4	49.6	39.2 ^b	40.0 ^c	41.6	
<u>Behavior Problems:</u>						
Internalizing	65.4	49.4	60.3	59.6	57.0	
Externalizing	65.8	49.5	61.9	56.0	57.4	
Total	70.0	50.1	64.5	59.5	58.1	

^a Middle S.E.S. group

^b For Aided school scale (n=11)

^c For Unaided school scale (n=6)

TABLE 26

ACHENBACH'S CLINICAL AND NONCLINICAL MEAN SCORES FOR
 MALES, COMPARED WITH AIDED AND UNAIDED MEAN SCORES
 FOR MALES AND COMBINED SAMPLE (AIDED AND UNAIDED
 FOR MALES AND FEMALES) MEAN SCORES (N=45)

	Achenbach's Mean Scores for Males ^a			Males		TOTAL SAMPLE
	CLINICAL	NON CLINICAL	AIDED	UNAIDED		
N	88	81	17	7	45	
<u>C.B.C.L.:</u>						
<u>Social Competence:</u>						
Activities	41.9	49.7	44.9	51.4	45.3	
Social	35.5	49.5	40.9	45.0	43.5	
School	36.2	49.7	41.8	47.0 ^b	41.6	
<u>Behavior Problems:</u>						
Internalizing	65.0	50.4	55.5	51.4	57.0	
Externalizing	66.2	50.6	57.8	49.7	57.4	
Total	67.1	50.0	55.8	50.1	58.1	

^a Middle S.E.S. group

^b For Unaided school scale (n=5)

scores), without exception, were lower than Achenbach's C.B.C.L. clinical means. The identical pattern is found with the full sample (N=45). This suggests that the Aided group, in terms of both males and females, is a better-adjusted group than Achenbach's C.B.C.L. clinical group.

When the Unaided sample's C.B.C.L. mean scores are separated for sex and compared against the C.B.C.L.'s male and female nonclinical group, the opposite trend is found. On social competency, with both the conservative and full samples, all but one (i.e., 5 out of 6 scores) of the Unaided scores are lower than Achenbach's nonclinical means. On behavior problems, with the conservative sample, all but one are equal to or higher (4 out of 6 scores are higher) than Achenbach's nonclinical means. With the full sample, the trend for the behavior problem score is stronger: 5 out of 6 scores are higher. This suggests that the Unaided group for both males and females is less well adjusted than Achenbach's C.B.C.L. nonclinical group.

Another way of looking at this is to compare (with the conservative sample) the C.B.C.L. social competency and behavioral problem mean scores for the total or composite Aided and Unaided sample (N=30) against C.B.C.L.'s clinical and nonclinical normative population means. When this is done, all six scores fall between the C.B.C.L.'s clinical and nonclinical groups, whether using his male or female norms (Tables 23 and 24). When the full sample is analyzed (N=45), the identical

story is revealed (Tables 25 and 26). As a group, therefore, the adolescents in this thesis, when assessed on the C.B.C.L., present as better adjusted than the C.B.C.L. clinical standardization sample, but less well adjusted than the C.B.C.L. nonclinical sample.

One final way of looking at the relative adjustment of this adolescent group is to look at the percentage of adolescents who scored within the clinical range (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983, p. 64) on C.B.C.L. scales (Table 27). As the Internalizing and Externalizing Behavior Problem Scales are better predictors of clinical classification than the social competency scales (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983), only these first two scales will be examined here. Using the conservative sample of I.P.s (N=30), 33.3% of the adolescents can be classified as falling within the clinical range on the Internalizing scale, and 26.7% on the Externalizing scale. When the full sample is analyzed, still fewer adolescents fall within the clinical range: on Internalizing 28.9%, and on Externalizing 24.4% of the sample fall within the clinical range. Clearly, the majority of the sample fall within the nonclinical (i.e., non disaster) range.

Income and the Aided-Unaided Differences

The issue here is whether the mothers' postseparation income, or a preseparation to postseparation decrease in income, significantly accounts for the differences found

TABLE 27

PERCENTAGE OF ADOLESCENTS WHO SCORED IN THE
CLINICAL AND NONCLINICAL RANGE ON C.B.C.L. SCALES^a

	<u>Conservative Sample (N=30)</u>		<u>Full Sample (N=45)</u>	
	<u>% in Clinical Range</u>	<u>% in Nonclinical Range</u>	<u>% in Clinical Range</u>	<u>% in Nonclinical Range</u>
<u>C.B.C.L.:</u>				
Internalizing	33.3	66.7	28.9	71.1
Externalizing	26.7	73.3	24.4	75.6

^a The clinical range is defined as > 63 for Internalizing and Externalizing Scales (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983).

between the Aided and Unaided groups on F.A.C.E.S, G.H.Q., and C.B.C.L. variables described above.

The primary task was to explore whether the Aided and Unaided groups differ for these two income variables: the mothers' postseparation income or income drop. In fact, as already described, there was a significant difference ($p < .02$) between the Aided and Unaided groups on the mothers' postseparation income (Table 1), with the Aided mothers' incomes being significantly lower. There was no difference, however, between the Aided and Unaided groups on income drop (Table 1).

The reader will remember that previously described analyses demonstrated, with the full sample, significant differences in distribution between the Aided and Unaided families on Cohesion ($p < .02$) (Table 13) and Adaptability ($p < .02$) (Table 15), as well as differences in Externalizing Behavior Problems ($p < .03$) between the two groups (Table 18).

The reader will also remember that previously described analyses demonstrated a significant correlation, with the full sample, between income and Dev. M. Adaptability ($p < .02$) and a marginal correlation ($p < .07$) of income with Externalizing Behavior Problems (Table 10).

The final step, therefore, is to employ an analysis of covariance to examine the difference between the Aided and Unaided groups on Adaptability and Externalizing Problems, when the mother's income is partialled out. This analysis need not

be done with the Cohesion dimension, because income is not significantly associated with that dimension.

When income is controlled for in this way, the analysis of covariance with the full sample (Table 28) reveals no significant differences ($p < .27$) between the Aided and Unaided groups on the Adaptability dimension, although a previous analysis of variance had revealed a close to significant difference in Adaptability ($p < .06$) between the Aided and Unaided groups.⁴

These findings indicate that income overlaps with the Adaptability variable in differentiating between Aided and Unaided families.

Similarly, an analysis of covariance (Table 29) indicates that income overlaps also with Externalizing Problems in differentiating between Aided and Unaided adolescents.

Summary of Results Related to Hypothesis Two

In summary, analyses reveal that there are significant differences in perceived postseparation family structure (Cohesion and Adaptability) and adolescent adjustment (Externalizing) between the Aided and Unaided groups, with the Aided group being more disturbed. This is a confirmation of Hypothesis Two. However, this finding must be qualified: the

4. The Chi Square analysis (Table 15) of the differences in Adaptability between the Aided and Unaided groups used categories instead of continuous data distributions and, therefore, could not be directly compared with the covariant analysis.

TABLE 28

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE

DIFFERENCES IN ADAPTABILITY BETWEEN
AIDED AND UNAIDED FAMILIES, CONTROLLING
FOR POSTSEPARATION INCOME ("FULL" SAMPLE)

<u>Source of Variation</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>D.F.</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Significance of F</u>
Covariates: Income	1479.85	1	1479.85	6.11	.02
Main Effects: Aided-Unaided	302.84	1	302.84	1.25	.27
Total Variance Explained	1782.70	2	891.35	3.68	.03
Residual Unexplained Variance	9452.33	39	242.37		
Total	11235.03	41	274.03		

TABLE 29

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE

DIFFERENCES IN EXTERNALIZING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS
BETWEEN AIDED AND UNAIDED ADOLESCENTS, CONTROLLING
FOR POSTSEPARATION INCOME ("FULL" SAMPLE)

<u>Source of Variation</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>D.F.</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Significance of F</u>
Covariates: Income	441.38	1	441.38	3.50	.07
Main Effects: Aided-Unaided	187.36	1	187.36	1.48	.23
Total Variance Explained	628.74	2	314.37	2.49	.10
Residual Unexplained Variance	4671.04	37	126.25		
Total	5299.78	39	135.89		

mothers' postseparation income overlaps with the Adaptability and Externalizing variables in differentiating between the groups.

Further, when the Aided and Unaided adolescents and combined adolescent group are compared, in terms of adjustment, with standardized C.B.C.L. clinical and nonclinical norms, adolescents tend to be coping with slightly greater difficulty than a normal, nonclinical group of adolescents; and the majority of these postseparation adolescents cannot be categorized within the clinical range.

Discussion

1. The Relationship of the Family-Based Variables (of Cohesion, Adaptability, Access to Mother's Distressed Affect, and Hierarchical Control) to Adolescent Adjustment

A primary focus of this study is an exploration of the relationship between a number of postseparation family variables and postseparation adolescent adjustment. It was hypothesized that postseparation adolescent adjustment would be associated with the adequacy of the families' efforts to reorganize after the separation, along the structural dimensions of Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability. Various significant relationships and trends emerge from the analyses used in this investigation. In the following discussion, the immediate implications of these findings will be developed and speculated upon.

Family Cohesion and Adolescent Adjustment

As hypothesized, results with both the conservative and full samples (Tables 6 and 7) suggest that increased enmeshment or disengagement (i.e., deviation from mid-range levels of Cohesion) are associated with curtailed Social (i.e., relationship) Competencies ($p < .01$). Analysis of the full sample also indicates that increased enmeshment or disengagement are associated with a curtailed amount, and poor quality,

of adolescent involvement in Social Activities ($p < .05$) such as sports, jobs, and organizations. The relationship of Cohesion with Behavior Problems, although in the anticipated direction, is nonsignificant.

The significant relationships with social competencies are as anticipated, all the more so because somewhat more subjects clustered in the enmeshed than disengaged category (Chapter 6 will focus on and explore dynamics of one such mother-adolescent enmeshment and the therapy thereof). Enmeshment, by definition, coopts or inhibits autonomy and differentiated functioning outside of the family. It would be expected to erode the quality and quantity of the adolescents' involvement in activities, peer relationships, and school performance.

The absence of a significant relationship between Cohesion and Behavior Problems is more surprising. This result indicates that, while extremes of Cohesion, as defined by Olson, et al. (1978), block exploratory behavior and curtail competency, they do not erode the adolescent's functioning to the extent that pathology occurs. This finding is contrary to a large body of theoretical, empirical, and clinical evidence already described (see, for example, Minuchin et al., 1978; Olson et al., 1980), which does link Cohesion generally, and enmeshment in particular, with psychopathology. One explanation for this finding might lie in the measure of enmeshment of Olson et al., (1978). An examination of the

F.A.C.E.S. enmeshment items suggests a somewhat benign concept implying we-ness, togetherness, or groupness. This is only superficially similar to the concept of Minuchin and his colleagues (see, for example, Minuchin et al., 1978), which is far more extreme and involves a rigidly destructive and coercive force whereby autonomy is violated. This level of enmeshment does not seem to be tapped by F.A.C.E.S.

Family Adaptability and Adolescent Adjustment

Results suggest that, as hypothesized, greater chaos and less stability (i.e., deviation from mid-range levels of Adaptability) are associated with more Internalizing ($p < .05$) and (with the full sample) Externalizing ($p < .05$) and Total Behavior Problems ($p < .05$) (see Tables 6 and 7). There is no association between chaos and social competency scores. The relationship of postseparation family chaos and disorganization with increased behavior problems is as predicted. (The family described in Chapter 5, in part, portrays this scenario of family disorganization associated with behavior problems).

It is of interest that no adolescents rated their families as rigidly organized. Possibly, the very nature of this population of families sets up a bias against their being perceived and characterized as rigid. These families are caught within the double context of divorce and adolescence, both of which demand change. No perceived change in the face of these forces is almost inconceivable -- a possible explanation for the absence of this category.

But more puzzling is the absence of the expected relationship between chaos and social competency. A negative relationship between these variables had been hypothesized, but this did not emerge. One explanation is that a subgroup of adolescents in the high-chaos families attempt to escape the turmoil and save themselves by exiting the family and anchoring themselves in extrafamilial relationships and interests. They thereby maintain, according to the C.B.C.L. definition of this construct, high levels of social competency. But this is probably not true of all such families; other adolescents might be unable or unwilling to leave. Possibly, these two sub-groups of adolescents from high-chaos families cancel each other out statistically, and they work against the expected correlation.

Another possible explanation can be found in the relatively moderate level of pathology of this sample. When compared with the mean scores of Achenbach and Edelbrock (1983), this sample falls between their clinical and nonclinical standardization groups on all social competency and behavior problem scales.

It could be speculated that, despite their behavior problems, these adolescents have not decompensated at this time and still maintain their activity, social, and school levels. Possibly a more disturbed sample, if such a sample does exist, or this same sample evaluated further down the line, might show low social competency scores if the level of chaos remained the same.

Access to Mother's Distressed Affect and Adolescent Adjustment

The finding (with both the conservative and full samples) of a significant positive correlation between the factor Access to Mother's Distressed Affect and increased Social Competence ($p < .05$) was completely unexpected and, in fact, runs counter to what was predicted (Tables 6 and 7). This finding suggests that the more adolescents perceive that they are exposed to, have access to, or are involved with the mother's distressed affect and problems, the higher the mother's rate the amount and quality of the adolescent's involvement in social relationships. The association between the "access" score and the amount and quality of the adolescent's involvement in activities and school performance, although nonsignificant, tends in the same direction. The correlations with behavior problems are negligible.

The previous prediction, here proved false, was based on the rationale that increased exposure to the mother's hurt would inappropriately blur the generational boundary. The adolescent would be pulled to parent the mother and would be burdened and overstressed. The end result would be a pathological reversal of hierarchy.

Instead, what is found is that the youngsters do better when exposed to the mother's distress. This is an important finding, and it involves a number of issues. The above rationale, on which the now disproven hypothesis was based, incorrectly assumed that the exposed youngster would

inevitably also be deprived of appropriate parenting -- that the two phenomena ('exposure' and 'appropriate parenting') would be mutually exclusive. This need not be so. Instead, it is possible that this factor is a shadow of a mutually supportive process where the mother is appropriately attuned to the youngster's vulnerability and where generational boundaries are not irreparably ruptured. An examination of the items that constitute the factor (Table 3) indicate that they are in no sense inherently pathological. In fact, it is hard to imagine that a parent could hide distress while dealing with a life event as encompassing as divorce. In fact, such secrecy would probably be pathological in itself. The case study in Chapter 6 addresses, in part, the pathogenic effects of secrets and sham in creating debilitating enmeshment.

What the finding suggests is that the youngster's exposure enhances social competence. One can speculate as to the meaning of this relationship. Weiss (1979) suggests that in the two-parent household the presence of the other spouse acts as a deterrant to either parent confiding in the children. However, in the postseparation family, adolescents particularly, easily become friends, confidantes, and peers (albeit younger peers) of the parents. Also, they are required to make a greater contribution to the functioning of their family and decision making than are younger children. Weiss suggests this often encourages their "sense of unusual competence" (p. 106). But there are other possible

explanations. Could it be that exposures to the mother's pain facilitates their dealing with their own distress? Or, could it be that the mother's sharing reveals a trust or confidence in the youngster which enhances their relationship and facilitates the youngster's social development? Or, is it that those youngsters who report an increased awareness of their mother's distress are themselves the more socially aware and adept youngsters -- that, in fact, this finding taps an underlying social factor?

This finding raises numerous issues, not the least of

The absence of a relationship between Control Hierarchy and social competence can possibly be explained as an artifact of our sample. As with the negligible chaos - social competency correlations, it is possible that in our sample, which is only moderately disturbed, adolescents maintain social competence despite behavior problems.

Further and stronger evidence for the Control Hierarchy as a determinant of effective family functioning is provided in the following brief section which, although not directly a part of the major hypotheses, does shed further light on them.

The Control Hierarchy and the Adolescents' Perception
of Quality of Relationship with each Parent, and
The Adolescents' Perception of Self

Of interest (Table 8), and going beyond the central

Chapter 5 is, in part, organized around the reestablishment of an effective Control Hierarchy.

Family Structure and Adolescent Adjustment
Scores and the Adolescents' Perceived Amount
and Quality of Contact with the Father

The issue here goes beyond the major focus of the study. To recapitulate, these "amount of talking" and "amount of visiting" and "quality of relationship with father" scores are derived from the G.H.Q. (see Appendix 2). A number of

findings are generally corroborated and, more particularly, are found here to be linked to more positive functioning in the custodial home as well.

The meaning of these findings raise challenging questions, at this time possibly unanswerable. Is it that the healthier custodial family releases and delivers a healthier adolescent to the father, which optimizes the possibility that the father-adolescent relationship will be positive? Or is it that more, and qualitatively better, contact with the noncustodial parent makes the mother's task with the adolescent easier? Or, is this a reciprocal interactive process? In other words, is a well functioning custodial home the prescription for a positive adolescent-father relationship, or vice versa, or is this a two-way systemic process?

But there might also be superordinate parameters untapped in this study that explain these associations. For

problem solving or communication skills that they brought with them from the preseparation family?

In short, these findings merely open some doors on parameters for future research. The questions that will need to be asked, in order to understand these findings further, will concern the relative hegemony of idiosyncratic personality-bound variables or more systemic characteristics of the families.

Income and Postseparation Adolescent and Family Adjustment

family and adolescent functioning, while a less adequate income stresses the family and the adolescent.⁵

Of note is that all correlations between preseparation and postseparation income drop and the family and adolescent variables are nonsignificant. Logically, if postseparation income is correlated with the family and adolescent variables, but income drop is not, then preseparation and postseparation incomes are similar, and the significant correlation with postseparation income reflect, probably, preseparation income status as well. Thus, families that had less income both

accounts only marginally for, the significant associations between family and adolescent variables. Furthermore, and even more striking, is the absence of a relationship with income drop. This contradicts the findings of a number of other

The empirical data offered in this thesis confirms this view of a coherent link between perceived structural properties of the custodial home and postseparation adolescent adjustment: increased enmeshment or disengagement is significantly associated with curtailed social competencies; increased chaos is significantly associated with greater Internalizing, Externalizing, and Total behavior problems; greater 'transparency' of the generational boundary, where the adolescent is more exposed to the mother's distress, is associated with enhanced social competence; and a more effective Control Hierarchy is associated with the adolescents' perception of a better relationship with both parents and a better self-rating.

In short, the assembled data indicates that separation and divorce, ipso facto, are not necessarily disastrous for adolescent adjustment. Instead, postseparation adolescent adjustment is contingent upon structural properties of the reorganizing postseparation family.

2. Aided-Unaided Differences

The second issue posed in this thesis concerns the nature of this divorcing family, from two points of view: namely, the structure of these postseparation families, and the postseparation adjustment of their adolescent children. Specifically, are there differences in postseparation family

structure and adolescent adjustment between those postseparation families with adolescent children who requested treatment (the Aided group), and those that did not (the Unaided group)? And, how do these Aided (i.e., clinical), Unaided (i.e., nonclinical), and combined Aided plus Unaided groups compare with the clinical and nonclinical norms of the C.B.C.L. standardization sample?

The origin of these questions is the influential contention in the literature that divorce results in clinical (or disastrous) consequences for adolescents, although a small number of lesser known studies contradicts this viewpoint. Because 'divorce-as-disaster' data provides the substance and direction for much theorizing about divorce, the validity of these data and point of view are of considerable consequence.

Data analysis does indicate significant differences between the postseparation structure of families that applied for treatment and those that did not, as well as differences between the adjustment of Aided adolescents when compared with Unaided adolescents.

Aided-Unaided Differences in Family Structure

According to the adolescents' perceptions, there are differences in postseparation family Cohesion and Adaptability between the Aided and Unaided groups. Specifically, (with the Full sample) Aided families are characterized by greater chaos,

disengagement, and enmeshment than the Unaided families ($p < .02$). This latter group is more often characterized by mid-range levels of Adaptability and Cohesion (Tables 13 and 15).

Thus, when different samples of separated and divorced families are examined in terms of key properties of structure, significant differences are found between these groups, such that those families that present for treatment are likely to be characterized by dysfunctional efforts to reorganize after the separation. In contrast, those families that do not apply for treatment are perceived as reorganizing in ways that are functional. Thus, there are postseparation differences in family structure between different samples of divorced families, and these differences can be predicted according to whether these families apply for treatment or not.

Previous studies, as far as is known, have examined neither the structure of separated families along these dimensions, nor the differential manifestation of these structures in these Aided and Unaided samples.

Aided-Unaided Differences in Adolescent Adjustment

When Aided and Unaided adolescents are compared in terms of postseparation adolescent adjustment, a consistent and cumulative body of evidence indicates that the Aided adolescents are more distressed than the Unaided adolescents.

According to the mothers' perceptions, Aided adolescents tend, on the C.B.C.L., to be less socially competent and to have more behavior difficulties than the Unaided adolescents. Specifically, Aided adolescents (in the Full sample) are characterized by more aggressive acting out behavior than the Unaided adolescents ($p < .03$) (Table 18). By way of contrast, these Unaided adolescents are characterized by a positive, greater level and quality of involvement in social activities than the Aided adolescents ($p < .06$) (Table 18).

Also, disregarding significance for a moment, a strong trend should be noted: with both the conservative and full samples, on all social competency scales, the Unaided group score higher than the Aided, and on the behavior problem scales, the opposite trend is found (Tables 17 and 18).

Further, when we examine the percentage of adolescents in the Aided and Unaided groups who score within the clinical range on the C.B.C.L., there is a significant difference in distribution (the probability varying between $p < .04$ and $p < .02$ depending on whether the conservative or full sample is used) in terms of externalizing behaviors, such that all adolescents in the Unaided group fall within the nonclinical range while between 42.1% and 36.7% (conservative and full samples respectively) of the Aided fall within the clinical range (Tables 21 and 22).

In short, the preponderance of evidence indicates that Aided adolescents are less well adjusted than those adolescents whose families do not apply for treatment.

The Aided group in this thesis match Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) sample on all selection criteria, with the exception that Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), as has been described previously, have no Unaided sample. Nevertheless, they assert, as has been described in Chapter 2, that such a group of families who do not apply for treatment would be worse off than those who do. Their pessimistic conviction is here proved false. In fact, those Unaided families and their youngsters who do not apply for treatment are better off when compared with the Aided in a number of respects: they are characterized by more functional patterns of postseparation reorganization, and the adolescents are better adjusted.

Assessing the Level or Degree of Adolescent Adjustment

Having demonstrated that the Aided and Unaided groups can be differentiated according to both perceived family structure and perceived adolescent adjustment, and that the Aided are always less well adjusted, it remains for us to determine the comparative level of adjustment of these groups against an external standard. This is provided by the norms of the carefully selected and well matched clinical and nonclinical standardization samples of the C.B.C.L., which cover the identical age range (12 to 16 years) as this research sample. To recapitulate, this comparison is relevant because influential research suggests that adolescents are effected disastrously by the breakup, but this claim is not based on the evidence of standardized psychometric assessments.

When these comparisons are made, a consistent and convincing refutation of any general divorce-as-disaster theory emerges. This is evident even when the conservative sample (N=30) of I.P.s is used, which is 'loaded' in favor of a disaster outcome, because it contains only those adolescents about whom the custodial mother is most concerned. Thus, these Aided (I.P.) adolescents are a better adjusted group, on both social competency and behavior problem scales, than the C.B.C.L. standardization clinical group. In fact, when using the conservative sample of I.P.s, only 33.3% of these adolescents fall within the clinical range on the Internalizing scale, and 26.7% on the Externalizing scale (Table 27). These percentages decline even further when the full sample is analyzed. Thus, the great majority of these adolescents, drawn from both Aided and Unaided samples, cannot be categorized within the clinical (or disaster) range.

However, as a group, the adolescents in this thesis can be categorized as falling in between the C.B.C.L. clinical and nonclinical standardization samples: they are better adjusted than the C.B.C.L. clinical standardization sample, but are less well adjusted than the nonclinical (normal) group. Three findings (see Tables 23, 24, 25, and 26) demonstrate this. In terms of both Social Competency and Behavior Problem Scales the (a) Aided adolescents tend to be better adjusted than the C.B.C.L. clinical group; (b) Unaided adolescents tend to be less well adjusted than the C.B.C.L. nonclinical (normal)

group; (c) the composite group of Aided plus Unaided adolescents fall between the means for the C.B.C.L. clinical and nonclinical (normal) groups.

In short, for those adolescents evaluated in this thesis, divorce most accurately should be seen as a stressor which, in most cases, is not linked with difficulties which are of clinical or disaster proportions. On the average, these adolescents are adjusting with only slightly more difficulty than a normal nonclinical group. This finding suggests that, in the majority of cases, divorce is within the realm of normative adaptation, whereas for a minority of adolescents, this is not the case. For them, divorce may be viewed as disastrous.

Income and the Aided-Unaided Differences

The issue here is whether either the mothers' postseparation income or income drop significantly accounts for the differences found earlier between the Aided and Unaided families and their adolescents. This is addressed in a stepwise fashion:

A significant difference in income ($p < .02$) is found between the Aided and Unaided groups (Table 1), with the Aided mothers' incomes being significantly lower. There is no difference, however, on income drop between the Aided and Unaided groups. Logically, this suggests that these differences in income between the Aided and Unaided groups

predated the separation, such that those families that subsequently entered the ranks of the Aided group were poorer to begin with. Thus, those families that seek treatment after the separation suffer (and probably have suffered preseparation) the additional strains of limited or impoverished resources. Those Unaided families that do not apply for treatment are, to some extent, sustained by a higher postseparation (and probably also preseparation) income. Once again, this is not to suggest that income drop does not occur (see Espenshade, 1979, for powerful examples of postdivorce income drops), but rather that the absolute level of income is most important.

When the differences between the Aided and Unaided groups on Adaptability and Externalizing were reexamined, controlling for income, these analyses suggest that income overlaps with the Adaptability and Externalizing variables in differentiating between the Aided and Unaided groups. It must be understood that this does not imply that Aided and Unaided groups cannot be differentiated according to the Adaptability and Externalizing variables. Rather, income accounts for a proportion of common variance with the Adaptability and Externalizing variables, so that they are not independent of each other in distinguishing the groups.

In short, these findings suggest that families of divorce are affected by external, extrafamilial forces such as income. To some extent, the postseparation destiny of families

and adolescents is not only an internally bounded interpersonal phenomenon, but it is also contingent on the families' position in the economic hierarchy of society. In itself, this is an unremarkable finding. More remarkable would have been our forgetting that extrafamilial forces impact the family decisively.

A risk in this discussion is to conceptualize the direction of influence as being from "outside into" the family, (and then, possibly, "into" the adolescent). However, given that correlational analyses were used, direction cannot be determined. Also, given that this thesis is based on the theoretical concept of the family as a dynamic, open system, influence is likely to be two-way, back-and-forth. Thus, for example, it is likely that adverse conditions, such as low income, lead to overcrowding, etc., which leads to increased frustration, etc., which becomes, in turn, a hinderance to effective family functioning (e.g., more chaos), which subsequently severely strains individual functioning (e.g., greater Externalizing Problems). A comprehensive systemic model must also include the reciprocal process of personal disturbance leading to family dysfunction, which becomes a barrier to effective economic functioning. The process is circular.

This conceptualization of pathology enlarges the pool of potential intervention strategies and provides new avenues for rendering service. In addition to intervention via the

family (as is described in detail in this thesis), these findings suggest also that the pathological or 'disaster sequence' can be altered by interventions at a financial level. This issue goes to the heart of welfare policy decisions, and it will not be elaborated upon here.

The salience of the economic factor in determining outcome has implications for the disaster theory of divorce. Given this larger picture, divorce as disaster is not merely a function of negative personal (e.g. loss) and interpersonal familial (e.g., chaos) forces, but it is more likely to occur in a family that has fewer funds and external props.

Conceptual Summary of Results Related to Hypothesis Two

The issue underlying Hypothesis Two concerns a prevailing theory of divorce which contends that parental separation and divorce results in clinical or disastrous consequences for families and their adolescents. In contrast to this view, it was hypothesized that divorce has no unitary or necessarily disastrous impact upon the structure of postseparation families or the adjustment of adolescents. This view was then explored in two groups of separated families with adolescent children: a group that requested treatment, and a group that did not.

The assembled empirical data refutes the idea of a unitary and necessarily catastrophic response of family structure and adolescent adjustment to divorce.

Specifically, the Unaided families, who do not apply for treatment, are characterized by higher postseparation incomes and more functional patterns of postseparation reorganization than the Aided families. The Unaided adolescents are better adjusted than the Aided. Whichever way one looks at it, these Unaided adolescents generally are not catastrophically effected by the divorce, and the majority are able to adapt to the stress of this experience without becoming clinical casualties.

Implications of Findings

These findings have three major implications. The first is an empirical confirmation with divorced families of a basic tenet of family systems theory in general, and structural family therapy theory in particular: this is that the family's organization governs the individual functioning of its members, such that a viable organization sustains adequate individual functioning. Individual dysfunction is seen as symptomatic of dysfunctional organizational patterns. The results of this study confirm this theoretical position, because a coherent and hypothesized link was found between structural properties of the custodial home and postseparation adolescent adjustment. This corroboration of theory is consistent with Rachman and Wilson's (1980) emphasis on the importance of theory as a rationale for research: "Where possible, ... studies should be

designed to collect evidence that bears on significant theoretical questions. One should attempt to determine whether the observed effects can be accommodated by existing theory" (p. 11). As far as is known, this is the first empirical examination of this systems/structural theoretical tenet with separated families.

The second implication concerns our theorizing about the impact of divorce on postseparation family structure and adolescent adjustment. An influential view in the literature has been that divorce results in consequences of clinical magnitude for families and their children and this, in turn, has led to a conceptualization of divorce as a disaster. The assembled data of this thesis refutes this notion of a unitary and necessarily catastrophic response of adolescents and their families to divorce. When evaluated along particular structural dimensions, in fact, many families after a separation are able to reorganize in ways that are functional. Many adolescents, too, are able to adapt to the stress of this period without becoming clinical victims of divorce.

The third implication of this study pertains to therapy. While the majority of adolescents and their families in this study adjust adequately after the divorce, a subgroup have difficulty sometimes of serious proportions. For them, divorce might be characterized as disastrous. For these adolescents and their families, psychotherapeutic help is often needed and requested. In these circumstances, mental health

practitioners would like to be helpful, but are often restrained by their theoretical orientation. For example, Wallerstein (1983) relies on a body of knowledge which is concerned, on the one hand, with the interlocking conflicts of the adults, but is limited both theoretically and practically with integrating the parents legitimate concerns for the welfare of their children. On the other hand, her therapeutic paradigm for helping children appears to lack a total family perspective, because she emphasizes the internal psychodynamic plight of the child. Thus, her focus is mainly on separate interventions for parents and children, which does not allow family members to grapple face-to-face with family processes and problem solving.

In this thesis, an empirical association was found in divorcing families between dysfunctional properties of family structure and adolescent maladjustment. As has been described earlier, these structural concepts are not clinically arbitrary, but have been widely and systematically applied in the family therapy of different populations. For example, there has been extensive use of structural family therapy with the treatment of low-income families (Minuchin, et al., 1967); with so-called psychosomatic families having children suffering from asthma, diabetes, and anorexia nervosa (see, for example, Minuchin, et al., 1978); and with the families of adult drug addicts (Stanton, et al., 1979). The formal and systematic application of these structural concepts to the family therapy

of separated families with adolescent children has not yet been done. In the following chapters, two case studies will be presented to demonstrate the applicability of these structural concepts in guiding the therapeutic process. In a third case study, these concepts will be employed to demonstrate one family's successful efforts to reorganize after a separation.

In addition, the purpose of the case studies is to expand the scope of the empirical study and fill some gaps. In particular, the case studies will go beyond the almost exclusive focus of the quantitative study on the custodial home. Aspects of the noncustodial father's relationship with the youngsters will be explored, as well as the postseparation parental relationship. Theoretical concepts seldom fit the multiple facets of complex phenomena perfectly, like a glove. The case studies will explore somewhat beyond the three concepts of the empirical study, in order to get closer to the complexity, to the flesh and blood of three real families.

In the first family, the custodial home is disengaged, the Generational Hierarchy has collapsed. The parents, caught up in rage and fear, have no contact at all with each other; and the father hardly sees his adolescent daughters, one of whom is at high psychiatric risk. In the second family, the parents are physically separated, but unable to let go of each other emotionally. They attempt to shield their adolescent son from knowledge of this. Within this rigid context, the mother and son are enmeshed, the father and son disengaged. When seen

in therapy, the son feels he is going mad, and he has thoughts about killing himself. Concepts which were useful in organizing therapy to help these families will be described. Finally, the basic structural concepts of the thesis will be employed to understand a third family that worked effectively, without having to go for treatment, on the postseparation dilemmas and tasks with which it was confronted.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE QUALITATIVE STUDY: METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, the pertinence of the family-based dimensions (of Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability) in predicting adolescent adjustment were demonstrated quantitatively.

In the following four chapters, aspects of qualitative case studies are presented. This commences in this chapter with a discussion of the methodology and rationale for these qualitative case studies. Thereafter, three case studies are presented.

Two of the case studies are clinical, and they are presented in order to demonstrate qualitatively the pertinence of these particular concepts in understanding the plight of families, and in guiding the therapeutic process. The third is a nonclinical case study. Structural concepts and others are used to explore the successful efforts of a family with an adolescent to cope after the parents' separation.

Three case studies of separated families with adolescent children are presented. Two of these three case studies are descriptions of the process of family oriented therapy in which these clinical families were engaged. The therapy was conducted by the author. The third case study is a three-year longitudinal description of one family's successful efforts to adapt after the separation, without needing or receiving therapy. The interviewer was the author.

The clinical cases described are two of approximately 30 separated families with adolescent children who were seen in therapy by the author after they had applied for help to the Divorce Service of the P.C.G.C. over a four-year period. With few exceptions, these families willingly agreed to allow the therapy sessions to be videotaped, and all of these families signed the relevant 'videotape release' document (see Appendix 3). Those few families who refused to grant video permission were reassured that their refusal would not in any way affect the service rendered them. Of those clinical families who were videotaped, the limited availability of videotapes and videorooms dictated that only the therapy of a small number of families was videotaped in its entirety, from start to finish. Of this subgroup of videotaped clinical families, two were finally selected for presentation in this thesis. They were selected both because these families met, in all respects, the selection criteria for the Aided families of the research

sample, and because they were thought to best exemplify a range of the highlighted structural concepts of this thesis.

The transcription of the dialogue from the videotapes, the subsequent editing of these transcriptions, and their final analysis and interpretation were all done retrospectively by this author after the termination of treatment. Editing is necessary because it is not feasible, in terms of space, to present the full transcript of therapy. Further, the purpose of these clinical case studies is primarily to illustrate a structural family therapy orientation to this population of families and to illustrate, too, the applicability of the key structural concepts (i.e., Cohesion, Generational Hierarchy, and Adaptability) in this endeavor. The importance of such an explicit theoretical framework cannot be deemphasized. The claim that observations provide theoretically neutral, objective, knowledge or facts has been challenged both by scientists and by philosophers. Heisenberg (1958) pointed to the implausibility of "objective" observation, and Toulmin (1953) showed how theory and assumptions logically precede observation. So, too, a therapist must have an assumptive framework in terms of which "facts" are generated. Particular issues become salient, meaning is given to observations, and a direction is charted. In this respect, the structural model is offered as a useful framework for working clinically with separated families. In these presentations the deadends, plain mistakes, redundancies, etc., that are part and parcel of the

process of therapy are purposefully omitted to a large extent, although they are not necessarily flaws in the therapy or irrelevant to the final outcome. The focus is on what is hypothesized to be the outstanding dynamics of the therapy. These broad features are described, in all the case studies, in the paragraph(s) preceding each transcript. The interpretation of the micromoves of the family and therapist are immediately available in the commentary in the column opposite the relevant transcript. Throughout the case studies, all names and identifying particulars have been changed in order to protect the anonymity of these families.

The nonclinical, 'normal' family, which is described in Chapter Seven, is one of the 15 'Unaided' families of the original research sample. Besides participating in that study, the separated parents of this family agreed to participate in a 3-year longitudinal study. The purpose of the latter study was a general one: to follow a separated family as they evolved over time, in order to learn, in a more inductive manner, about the adaptive measures they invent, which are revealed in their struggles and triumphs. The motivation for this case study is to begin to fill a gap in the literature on divorce. That which is available thus far tends to be primarily clinically oriented, and it tends to emphasize concepts of risk and dysfunction rather than coping and creative problem solving. As Ahrons (1981) has noted, this omission deprives divorcing

families and clinicians of a normative frame to guide them as they undertake, or attempt to assist in, this complex journey. However, as is often the case with normalcy, many of these "good enough" adaptive processes and structures are established relatively quietly and unremarkably, amidst what are frequently the mundanities of everyday life. Through living with and dealing with these unsensational small details, the family unselfconsciously negotiates the larger structures, some of which are being examined in this thesis.

Essentially, only the parents in this family were interviewed, although the son Evert -- by then 16 years old -- agreed to participate in the final interview. Apart from this single occasion, Evert was not invited to participate in the interviews. This focus on the adults was chosen because of financial and time constraints and because the adults, who had made the decision to separate, were therefore viewed as the pivotal decision-making unit of the family. It was thought they were in the best position to facilitate this exploration. Ideally, a study would be conducted of the interplay of all participants, through concurrent and conjoint interviews with the adults and adolescents, but that was beyond the scope of this endeavor.

The design was to meet alone with each of the separated partners on four occasions, over three years, with the intention being to space each interview approximately eight months apart. An hour and a half was set aside for each interview. However, scheduling difficulties forced

postponements of interviews and on one occasion, the omission of an interview. The father missed one of four scheduled interviews. Table 30 shows the dates of the interviews with each member of the family. These interviews were conducted at the P.C.G.C., and they were videotaped with the consent of the participants, who were paid \$30.00 per interview. As was the procedure with the clinical families, the videotapes were retrospectively transcribed, edited, and analyzed by the author.

The interview format was relatively open-ended. First, the participants were asked to summarize their view of how they and the family were progressing. The interviewer, taking his lead from this summary, would follow up with questions about particular issues mentioned, then move to more general issues. The latter always included the participant's perception of his/her relationship with the youngster, of the other spouse's relationship with the youngster, and of the relationship between the spouses. If relevant, the involvement of extended family, lawyers, and new boyfriends or girlfriends was explored.

The purposes of keeping the interviews relatively open-ended were to minimize the imposition of too many predetermined notions and to maximize the exploratory nature of the investigation. Ultimately, of course, this ambition is circumscribed by the many conceptual biases that inevitably shape and guide what we select to see and how we then interpret

TABLE 30

DATES (MONTH AND YEAR) OF INTERVIEWS ONE THROUGH
FOUR FOR MEMBERS OF THE DALE FAMILY

<u>INTERVIEW NO.</u>	<u>FATHER</u>	<u>MOTHER</u>	<u>SON</u>
1	11/1980	6/1980	Not Invited
2	9/1981	6/1981	Not Invited
3	--	1/1982	Not Invited
4	10/1983	8/1983	8/1983

Note: Mr. and Mrs. Dale separated in July, 1979.

what we select. The interviewer avoided advice-giving or "therapizing." However, even though "advice" was never given and, in fact, never overtly sought, it should not be assumed that these interviews were neutral experiences for this family. In addition to anticipating monetary payments, they described "benefits" from these interviews, such as an opportunity to talk through their experience with an interested listener, as well as a biannual stock-taking and measure of change. The interviewer's questions helped them to organize their experience, and they suggested areas for future scrutiny. At times, the parents may have interpreted the interviewer's noncriticism as reassuring legitimization of their situation. Possibly, at other times, they may have interpreted his silence as disapproval.

However, over the three-year interview period, members of this family were able to deal successfully themselves with those difficulties that did arise and did not, at any time after the separation, seek out or require professional help.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISENGAGEMENT AND HIERARCHICAL COLLAPSE IN THE POSTSEPARATION FAMILY: A CONTEXT FOR ADOLESCENT CRISIS

In this clinical chapter, a family will be described in which postseparation disengagement and a dysfunctional Generational Hierarchy are associated with serious adolescent acting-out behavior. Transcripts from the therapy of this family have been chosen to illustrate the usefulness of these structural concepts in guiding the therapy process.

As has been described, parental separation and divorce can, on occasion, create dysfunctional family processes in which children are deleteriously caught, or can exacerbate pre-existing dysfunctional processes. Adolescent children, one of whose major tasks in our society is a gradual weaning away, or separation from parents, are caught in particular ways, which can result in clinical problems of a severe nature.

This clinical chapter will describe how parental separation can be associated with an adolescent's precipitous departure and psychopathology. Here, distancing and disengagement from the custodial parent and the collapse of the Generational Hierarchy in a chaotic household, results in an uncontrolled and unsupervised adolescent. This is often the result of the rigidification of a common postseparation situation. Namely, both parents become depressed and preoccupied. They cease to meet the adolescent's need for connection and nurturance (i.e., Cohesion dimension), structure (i.e., the Adaptability dimension), and control (i.e., the Hierarchy dimension). Typically, parenting is diminished, or pseudoparenting masquerades in its place. Usually, this is for a brief period only, and either with or without minor adolescent acting-out, parental functions are recovered or reinstated. Adolescent pathology occurs, however, when parental functions remain dormant and paralyzed, and when postseparation structure remains dysfunctional. Then, even escalating acting-out does not restore the parents to their

necessary positions, and we see, clinically, the catastrophic consequences of a divorce.

To illustrate these common processes and the therapy thereof, transcripts from the treatment of a particular family have been chosen. The transcripts are excerpted from a total of 28 sessions over a period of approximately eight months of therapy.

Four processes of a problematic divorce will be detailed here: (a) the family's drift towards disengagement, as parental nurturing functions diminish or collapse; (b) the insufficiency of guiding and controlling functions of the Generational Hierarchy; (c) the distortion of a consistently accurate view of family reality; and (d) the disappearance of even minimal parental cooperation and unity, which is another manifestation of the collapse of Generational Hierarchy. In this family and others, a combination of these somewhat overlapping processes was associated with serious adolescent acting-out.

The Family: A Preliminary Diagnostic Picture

The Jarrets were an attractive, bright, upper middle-class family with three daughters. The mother (the custodial parent) applied for treatment five months after she and her husband separated, ending twenty years of marriage. The couple's marital difficulties had increased during the

previous three years, culminating in the wife's discovery of her husband's involvement with another woman. Soon after, he left to share an apartment with a male work colleague. His much younger girlfriend, whom he saw often, lived nearby.

When the mother and her daughters were seen together, the mother stated that she wanted to "improve communication," especially with the middle daughter. She explained tearfully that she had "been incapacitated because of depression, and they (the children) have been very kind to me and very good during that, but I think they also have been neglected because they had problems, personal things that came up with each one of them and didn't have anybody to come to. And, I feel very guilty because I wasn't available when they needed me." When asked what contact her daughters had with their father, Mrs. Jarret stated that they didn't see him. "To be quite honest with you and all the girls, I'd love it if they never saw him again. I would like it if when he did call, they would just say, 'Forget it, I don't want to see you.'"

In this family, Karen (17) was upset by the separation, but strengthened by her relationship with her steady boyfriend. She maintained good grades in high school, and she avoided becoming a parental substitute. Sue (16), however, was badly shaken and depressed. She had no steady boyfriend, and she had previously been close to her father. She was now breaking rules and having difficulty with school and social relationships. Janet (14) was somewhat depressed

and angry, but generally able to stay within the rules, although also having some difficulty at school.

The picture that emerged during the first interview was of three daughters who had each, to a greater or lesser extent, been abandoned as their parents disengaged and moved into orbits of their own. The mother, for her part, had experienced her husband's affair and subsequent departure as a profound narcissistic blow that precipitated a clinical depression. She suffered and raged deeply, preoccupied with revenge. She exposed her daughters to continual tirades against her husband, partly because she lacked self-restraint and partly because a previous therapist, oriented toward uncensored sharing, had advised her that such behavior was "good communication". Clearly, the mother gave her daughters little support or structure, and few limits.

The father, for his part, had abandoned the parenting turf. In some ways, he was, enjoying his "release" from the family. His backing away also stemmed from guilt and confusion as to his continuing role. Additionally, of course, his wife strove to keep him away from the children. Only the eldest daughter, contrary to her mother's prohibitions, kept up contact with him. The family, previously close, was now fragmented or, as has been termed thus far, disengaged.

Reversing Disengagement and Forging Connections

In this situation of family disengagement or fragmentation, common strategies employed by an adolescent are distancing and attempts to relatch elsewhere. Common, clinically observed, dynamics underpinning this disengagement have already been described in Chapter Three.

1. Establishing Mother-Daughter Connectedness

In the Jarret family, the first therapeutic task was to reduce disengagement by reestablishing crucial affective connections. This step most directly involved the mother and her second oldest child, Sue. Sue's profound depression was obvious, and she was seen alone to explore the possible specific sources and depth of the depression and to assess suicidality. She described what was discovered in the empirical study: the significant association between the extremes of Cohesion (in this case disengagement) and difficulties with social relationships and activities. She related that, over the past five months, she had had two abortions. Only her mother knew of the first and, at that time, neither parent knew of the second. She described, amid sobs, that she felt "like why am I here? You know, what's my purpose here in life? I'd just rather be dead sometimes." She felt desperately lost, without support or direction. For her, the effects of divorce had been disastrous.

There was no dilemma as to the specific course of action needed. Sue was seriously vulnerable, needy, and alone. The task was to galvanize the family resources in order to connect and sustain her. This process was initiated immediately by meeting conjointly with Sue, her siblings, and her mother. Quite clearly, the session was single-minded in its intent.

Mo: (angry) Your grades are very, very poor, and I don't think that changing to another school is going to change your grades all that much. You have to do it.

The mother's angry attack is striking and immediately noted.

Sue: (defending herself) I know, Mom, that's what I've been trying to tell you. I want to do it, but I don't want to do it in that school because I don't like being there.

Sue defends.

Mo: Well, what I was emphasizing then was that you have to -

Mother attacks.

Sue: Well, it seems like you have no confidence at all in me.

Sue defends and asks for affirmation.

Mo: Well, I was just adding to the fact that what I am saying, Sue,

Mother continues her attack, and Sue's request goes unheard.

is (her voice rises in anger) --

Th: (softly and leaning forward) Can you hear, though, what Sue just said there? Because that's quite important. She feels that you don't have any confidence in her.

(Silence)

Mo: (more softly, but then increasingly angry) I guess I don't, Sue, because you haven't demonstrated it. You're a very capable young lady and very smart, and you just fritter away your time.

Th: (softly) Something's happening here, Fran. You're concerned, I hear it, and your concern is coming out sort of angrily. You're worried for your daughter, I can hear that. But somehow or other, the concern is not really getting across. The concern and the care, and that's what Sue needs to be hearing at the moment --

Disengagement prevails.

This tone of softness is an attempt to create proximity and intimacy (i.e., re-engagement) and to counter mother's prevailing angry affect. The content and affect is viewed here as a vehicle to redirect mother toward support.

Mother briefly accommodates herself to my attempt, and softens, but then she rebuffs the attempt. She attacks again.

To indicate directly and shape what is required, mood and content are modulated. I first position myself alongside mother, acknowledging her worry and joining her. Then the way she comes across is clarified; her anger is pinpointed; and

she is encouraged to respond differently.

Mo: But right now --

Th: (softly, but firmly) Well, right now, I really have to come down on this, Fran. Sue really has been depressed, and I think is depressed, and school is important, you're right. But you're the most important person for Sue. She only has one mother, and Sue needs you bad, very bad. She really needs your support and your care.

Support and challenge are offered simultaneously. Sue is framed as frail and needy, and mother as the only one who can protect her.

Mo: But she's got that, and she knows it.

Th: (with emphasis) She doesn't. That's what she needs to hear from you.

Mo: But she's -- I do -- I don't know what else I can do to demonstrate that.

Mother feels hopeless. She does not "know."

Th: Maybe you can find out from Sue, because that's what Sue is questioning. She's scared about whether you are concerned, whether

The suggestion is made that the solution for mother is simple. She can "find out" from her daughter. Con-

she can get from you what she needs. She's really scared --

* * *

Th: Let's stop this for a second. Try to get Sue to say to you what it is that she needs, so that she knows that you really care and support her. Because, right at the moment, I know she's doubting that; and you are terribly important for her. She's got to know clearly, Fran, that you're with her. Try to find out from her. Try to get her to express what it is she needs. And, Sue, help your mother with this.

Mo: Sue, is there anything else, other than my show of lack of

nectedness is thereby encouraged.

Mother and Sue talk further, but again the pattern of redundant conflict and disengagement rapidly recurs, necessitating another effort to nudge mother and daughter toward rapprochement.

Again, the effort is to increase the proximity between mother and Sue. But, in addition to challenging mother, Sue's help is sought, implying that she is a participant in the disengagement. This makes it clear to mother that it is not all up to her. This enhances mother's cooperation.

confidence in that conversation,
what else can I do? And, Sue, I
do have all the confidence in you,
all the confidence in the world.
Because I do know that you
are capable. Is there anything?
What else can I do to show you?

Sue: (sobs softly) Sometimes, I'm
afraid to talk to you. I don't --
I don't know how to come and
start it.

Mo: (softly) Why?

Sue: I don't know why. Maybe if we
just sit down sometimes and
start talking --

Mo: (softly) I do. How many times
have I just come up to your bed-
room and sat down on the floor
with you and talked with you?

Sue: (softly) Not so much.

Mo: (tenderly) Sure I do.

Sue: (softly) You don't come up to
the third floor much, Mom -- I
know I don't come downstairs too
much where you are. I just want
to be able to talk a little bit

From this point on, the
mood change, which has
been slow and incremental,
continues more rapidly.

more easily with you, and I just need help in starting that.

Mo: Is that what you need, is that what you're afraid of --

Sue: Starting it -- yes.

Mo: And I can be more supportive starting conversations? Is there anything else, any other areas? Can you think of anything else where I might be supportive for you? Sue (with deep feeling), I do love you and care about you so much.

(Mother's eyes fill with tears).

Sue: (whispers) I know, I love you too -- (a quiet silence)

Th: This is tough stuff, it's hard.

The intense affect of the session is increased still further, and their effort acknowledged.

Sue: I'm going to try -- hard.
(Mother reaches her hand out to Sue, who responds. They hug, then kiss.)

The session ends on a more hopeful note of closeness, and engagement.

This was clearly a stressful session, full of affect, drama, and tension. The mother was urged to begin to transcend

her own sadness, anger, depletion, and neediness in order to sustain her daughter. This message was repeated relentlessly, creating increased intensity. Also, the request was mostly one-sided: The mother must change. The reality, however, is truly dyadic and dialectical, with Sue, to some extent, withholding herself from her mother. Although aware of the complementary dynamic, interventions were partisan; here, truth was goal-directed. Other aspects of the complementary dance could be worked on later.

It would be naive to assume that this single session punctured, once and for all, the youngster's isolation or broke up the rigid, unprofitable, disengaged transactions she had with her mother. This was the first step. Ensuing sessions with the mother and her daughters, the father and his daughters, and the siblings alone reworked the same themes and consolidated connection and change in this area.

A session like this can occur because the therapist has already formed a therapeutic alliance with the parent, in which the latter feels understood and valued. This was accomplished in earlier contacts with Mrs. Jarret alone. Without such preparation, she probably would not have been able to tolerate the stress of the maneuver. In families of divorce, this prior "joining," or rapport, is especially important as a prelude to the successful employment of often stressful procedures to follow. Too much haste in moving on to "more compelling," child-focused issues generally increases resistance and the probability of dropout later in therapy.

This approach is somewhat at variance with a more traditional systems approach, in which the therapist orients himself to the whole. Here, the therapist connects strongly and more horizontally with the part (i.e., the mother alone), in order to be in a position later to maneuver the whole -- or its subsystems -- more vertically. But it is not only during this early phase that I met alone with the mother. I did so throughout the therapeutic process, avoiding becoming stuck on issues of parenting and on her dealings with her husband.

For instance, Mrs. Jarret had not worked outside of the family since the birth of her first child. I expressed an interest in the details of the jobs she once held, mobilizing hopes and aspirations. Initially, Mrs. Jarret was uncomfortable talking about herself as separate from her children or her husband, but I drew on those separate aspects of self. This was done through the careful use of asides, the small talk, as she and I walked together from the Clinic lobby to the therapy room. Later, she got a job and spontaneously began to bring material from that experience to the therapy. She started to share her simple discoveries: her pride in new, small accomplishments and the stirring of feelings of mastery at work. I responded to her thrill of independence upon receiving her first pay check, and I deliberately encouraged the discussion of that feeling. On another occasion, I prolonged her description of pleasure in being with two new female friends, drinking beer and telling racy, feminist jokes.

Therapy was guided by the assumption that, if the woman could not emerge neither probably, could the mother. This would handicap the family work.

2. Re-engaging the Father

Central to the process of forging connections is the task of reengaging the father. A basic clinical axiom of work with postseparation families is that children do better when they maintain regular contact with the noncustodial parent (Hetherington, 1979; Rosen, 1977). As noted, the Jarret children's access to their father had been virtually severed. They had lost at least a potential key source of support because of this disengagement from him.

Once a therapist has determined that the severance is not the result of real dangers (e.g., the father is not homicidal or psychotic), he or she must intervene to "convert" the mother to another way of thinking about the father and his continuing parental role. In this process, the therapist will be redrawing clear generational boundaries to remove the youngsters from the parental battle, detriangulating them. The goal is for the mother to allow, and preferably encourage, the children's contact with their father. The therapist delivers this basic message to the mother: you lose, you do not win, if you succeed in keeping your children from their father. This message shakes the mother's rageful belief that withholding the children benefits her because it is a mortal blow to her

ex-spouse. Usually, a careful tracking of the various "consequences" of the father having no contact with them suffices. Persuasive leverage is gained by tapping current or available affect. A number of strategies can be useful here. Resonating with the mother's rage is the notion that "the children will never learn how difficult he really is; then they're yours completely, and he gets off the hook; you will get no help from him while he enjoys himself and takes no responsibility for their care." Resonating with her genuine wish for the best for her children, and her guilt if she does less than this, is the notion "a girl (or boy) needs a father to learn how to relate to men (or how to be a man in the world)." Fear and threat, too, are powerful persuaders. "If they have no contact with their father, they'll blame it on you and hate you for it. It will destroy your relationship with the children."

Underlying this approach is the principle that, although as husband and wife the two have been divorced, as parents that is not the case. The goal is never to divorce one's children. The father needs to stay involved.

A number of the above strategies were used here to shift the mother to permit the father's involvement in the therapy process with the children. Once I invited him, he readily agreed to participate. The clinical decision for the therapist to contact the father rather than put the onus on the mother to obtain the father's participation, is of some

consequence. Therapists sometimes fear that the former approach is a setup for the therapy to become a losing battle because the therapist has irrevocably stepped in between the parents or because he has shifted responsibility for initiative in treatment from them to him. That is not necessarily the case. With a highly volatile separation, the therapist can initially respect the distance between the spouses, and himself secure the separate involvement of both parents. Later, he can place responsibility squarely on them both, and bring them face-to-face.

Unquestionably, the goal is to obtain the father's participation. If the mother successfully makes that initial contact and, if the parental relationship is thereby enhanced, all the better. The risks of placing the initiative on her are that she might feel rushed or coerced by the therapist, be overstressed by the task, or be turned down by the father. When these risks are judged clinically to be high, the therapist should himself move quickly to obtain the father's participation. When the request is carefully phrased, very few fathers are reluctant. When there is reluctance, the therapist must actively intervene to persuade the father in the telephone conversation. To be on target, the therapist attempts some understanding of the reasons behind the father's reluctance. A father may fear he will become the victim of a coalition or conspiracy of his ex-wife with the therapist. He may misunderstand the purpose and duration of the therapy. Or he

may want to stay away because he is afraid he will be provoked to physical violence if brought face-to-face with his ex-wife. He may then see abandoning ship as the lesser evil. The therapist must learn to dismantle the objections and deal with the fears. It will usually suffice to explain that the therapist, out of respect for the father's position in the family, needs his help in understanding the plight of the youngsters in full perspective. If relevant, the therapist should reassure the father that he will not have to become friendly with his ex-wife or face her. Such contact is best left to a later stage of therapy.

Sometimes, therapy is refused, putting total responsibility on the available parent to invent new ways of resolving the impasse and involving the other parent. Sometimes, the use of lawyers or the judicial system is encouraged to secure the other's participation. If it is clearly established that a father will not participate either now or later, the focus of therapy must shift to the single parent, who must be assisted to give up the crippling preoccupations with and dependence upon the ex-spouse, i.e.: you cannot afford to wait for his help in dealing with the youngsters. You are it.

Restoring the Control Hierarchy

At the time that affective connectedness or reengagement was first being forged, another important

dysfunctional aspect of the family was noted. The daughters, Sue in particular, were running wild and unsupervised. At the same time that the family's nurturing capacities had collapsed, so, too, had its guiding/controlling functions. As has been demonstrated earlier in the quantitative study, ineffectual Hierarchical Control is associated with a trend of increased Internalizing, Externalizing, and Total Behavior Problems. Also, effective Hierarchical Control was significantly associated with enhanced relationships with both parents, and better feelings about the self. Probably, Sue's fear and depression were a function not simply of deficient family nurturance and disengagement, but also of her harrowing existence. She was cutting school, smoking a great deal of marijuana, periodically ingesting LSD, and coming home at all hours of the night or not at all. In addition, she had had two abortions since the separation five months before. Clearly, structure and control, in a situation of disorganization and chaos, were crucial. Without them, her depression would persist; and she would remain at high risk.

A situation like this sometimes poses a dilemma for the therapist: whether to take a track emphasizing engagement and nurturant support, or a track emphasizing controls. Issues of support and control are synergistic and not antithetical. Matters of love and power co-exist as aspects of family life, and most often they are worked out simultaneously in the therapy. For example, a mother's statement, "Don't you dare

try that again," after her daughter has just made a suicide attempt, combines both messages. In the work with the Jarrets, nurturance was emphasized first, because a focus on issues of power in a family evaluated as characteristically conflict-avoiding might have prematurely overstressed them. Also, Sue truly was alone in the world. Supportive contact with parents and siblings was absent, and she was no longer seeing her boyfriend. The hope was that, by starting out with engagement and support issues, she would be more open to controls when later applied. Nevertheless, the process is invariably complex.

Multiple dynamics typically operate to maintain the failure of the Control Hierarchy. These have already been described comprehensively in Chapter Three.

1. Countering the Siblings' Challenge

The restoration of a parent to an effective executive or control position in the family hierarchy is seldom easily accomplished. In the Jarrets' case, Mother, a characteristic avoider of conflict, found it difficult to challenge her daughters. Also, dealing with her daughters by herself was a new experience. Prior to the separation, her husband had been the first executive, or his image of authority had backed her up. For the mother to feel competent with her daughters and to continue her psychological separation from her husband, she would need to assume the executive position alone. The task

was made more difficult by the fact that Sue had grown to cherish her harrowing freedom. She had been totally and prematurely unfettered for close to a year, and in seeking emotional shelter she had become immersed in a delinquent subculture that had become her primary system. She would not easily submit and surrender the freedom to which she had grown accustomed. Also, if Sue submitted, she would then be entrusting herself to her mother's care. Therein loomed a threat. Sue had already been abandoned once when her mother became self-absorbed. To test her mother's resolve, Sue challenged her repeatedly. Only by withstanding her daughter's salvos could Mrs. Jarret prove herself trustworthy and establish the stability which the members of this chaotic household needed.

Th: I think that this really is an important thing, and I know Sue is going to be pretty mad at me (laughter). But I really think that rules are required, and that some of the fear that (looks at Sue) you've been talking about has to do with really being free and very vulnerable, and rules are protective and that's where your mom is coming from. Now, precisely

By predicting the daughter's challenges, in a teasing way, it is hoped to curtail them somewhat, thereby minimizing the possibility of sabotage.

The value of protection is employed to encourage boundary-making and the

what the rules are is something for you people to negotiate with your mother -- but rules are a necessity, even though they can be a little tough. Okay, why don't you go ahead, Fran, and work it out.

Mo: Well, I just gave you a compromise time of 1:00 a.m.

Janet: Who, all of us?

Mo: Well, let's talk about that.

Karen: Well, I think that I don't often stay out till 2:00, but when I go to a party or something, it's an older group of people I go out with, and they don't have a time, and so the parties don't really start until --

Mo: Well, you do -- you have to think of your age in relationship to them. You can't --

Sue: Why?

Mo: Because she can't keep their hours.

Karen: 2:00 is not too bad. They stay out later. They stay out till 4:00 or 5:00. I'm not asking

creation of a family hierarchy.

Sibling opposition begins immediately. Mother will be besieged.

The skill of the siblings in resisting mother should not be underestimated. They use a variety of strategies:

1. Pragmatics and logistics.

2. The reasonableness of their request.

3. Their own maturity and

for that. But whenever I'm
out, if I'm driving, I'm going
to leave when I get tired --

Mo: Well, how about 2:00 for Karen?
(Mother rubs her head, as if in
pain).

Janet: 1:30 for Sue, and 12:00 for me.

Sue: No, I don't think it's fair.
The age thing, I don't think
it's right at all.

Mo: Why?

Sue: Because it's just not fair. We
all do the same kind of thing,
we all go to parties.

Mo: (her voice like that of a
little girl) No. you don't
do the same kind of things.

responsibility.

4. Fairness (morality, in effect); an effort to paralyze mother by using guilt.
5. Shifting mother's criterion for determining curfews away from age.

In the face of this collective challenge, mother begins to remove herself from the executive position. In other circumstances, it is likely that Sue would have prevailed. I intervened to prevent that, again delineating the necessary hierarchy, supporting

mother's stance, and
extending the struggle.

Th: The issue though, is what you
feel is safe for them. The
position that you're coming
from is a concerned, protec-
tive one, and for them to say,
"That's what we do," is not
good enough, because you now
are determining what they'll
be doing and what's safe. So
you're going to be calibrat-
ing for them how far they can
go. And your judgment is sound.

Mo: Unfortunately, they don't think
so.

Th: They're going to challenge,
that's for sure. They'd be
silly if they didn't. They're
not going to let you get off
the hook lightly. They know
you well, exquisitely well,
and they're going to give you
a tough time. But your judg-
ment's good, so go with it.
And they need your protection.

For the first time, the
power element of the
struggle is emphasized.

Mo: I do feel very strongly about the times. I really can't see any justification in your being out any later. I think it's plenty of time for you to have a good time, and it's a decent time for you to be able to get home.

Mother, encouraged, asserts herself. The power struggle will rapidly emerge. Will mother meet the confrontation and stand firm, or be toppled? The test is severe.

Karen: What time is that?

Mo: 2:00, 1:30.

Sue: But, Mom, Karen's going to have to be picking me up a lot now, until I can at least get my license.

Mo: Well, then you'll have to work that out with Karen.

Sue: I still don't think it's fair.

Mo: Sue, you do have friends who drive.

Sue: (shouts) I can't have my friends driving me everywhere.

Mo: (girlish whine) Why? I drove them everywhere.

Sue: No, you didn't drive all of these friends everywhere.

Mo: Not this group of friends that you're with. But I certainly have driven other kids around (sighs). What about Merle? Someone from her family, her friends drive her all the time. (With resolve) Sue, the thing is that if you really wanted to, you'd get a ride, and you will. You must have your rides arranged before you go. And if you don't have somebody who will bring you back on time, then you may not go. What time were you getting home when you were down at Mary's?

Sue: (mumbles) 1:30 or 2:00.

Mo: (firmly) So, you have to leave that party a half hour earlier. Is that clear, is that all right with everybody now? Is everybody set on that? (all but Sue nod agreement.) Sue, are you?

Sue: (with resignation) There's nothing I can do about it.

Mo: Okay.

Mother first tires to accommodate.

With the transaction extended beyond its usual endpoint (Sue refusing -- mother retreating), Mother, for the first time, goes beyond her usual range and makes a firm demand.

Sue accommodates to her place in the hierarchy.

Generally, as the parent begins to take the executive position in the Control Hierarchy, and the new vertical structure slowly emerges, the youngster predictably tests the new arrangement. Over the following weeks, Sue tested. Mother held. The father's involvement, however, remained minimal, sporadic, and insufficient, and acting-out continued. His resistance needed to be understood and countered. The father's participation in the functioning of the Control Hierarchy was beyond the scope of the quantitative study. In the clinical situation, however, it is often an important aspect of the postseparation family system.

2. Countering Rigid Coalitions which Subvert the Control Hierarchy

During parental separation and divorce, it is common for preexisting dysfunctional, cross-generational coalitions to be perpetuated or exacerbated, or for new ones to emerge. In fact, in the quantitative study, the majority of adolescents reported that they were participants in cross-generational coalitions (see the G.H.Q. in the Instruments section in Chapter Three). The existence of such a coalition can tenaciously block the necessary functioning of the Control Hierarchy. It might be hypothesized that Mr. Jarret's resistance was linked dynamically to his continuing relationships with the central characters: his wife, girlfriend, and daughters. For example, his withdrawal from

executive effectiveness might have been a misguided attempt to prevent his competence from undermining his wife's tentative efforts at limit-setting, or might have been precisely designed to undermine her efforts. He may have felt totally disengaged from his wife, having already transferred his allegiance and commitment to his girlfriend, effectively abandoning his parental executive position in the hierarchy. Or, possibly, he was operating in coalition with his daughters by default, by failing to counter their acting-out. (In fact, the father's coalition with Sue had already been noticed in sessions.)

The following transcripts illustrate a combination of the second and third possibilities above, indicating a complex father/girlfriend/daughter troika. The father had left town for a week on business and returned to his apartment, which he shared with a friend, Don, to find it virtually ransacked. The father and daughters were in the session. Mr. Jarret described it this way:

Fa: (angrily) Sue, you know I was really, really ripped!	Father is angry because Sue has intruded on him. His anger is narcissistic. This will be therapeutically utilized.
Th: What happened, Michael? Just put me in the picture.	
Fa: Well, Don came back from being away - he was away also - to find both toilets blocked up,	

overflowing, one on the second floor, down through to the first floor. His room, all his clothes that were on the bed thrown on the floor, his shade pulled up and askew and tied to the bicycle. The tapes all over the floor in the living room and some of his - a significant amount - of his Valium, taken. There was only one person who had the key to the place, and that was Sue.

For approximately 40 minutes, the therapeutic work was sharply focused on this particular incident. Extending the focus in this way introduces a degree of flexibility into the system, because the repertoire of father-daughter behavior is pushed beyond its rigid and limited current level (i.e., they are peers) and expanded to include hierarchical behavior. Specifically, the strategy was to keep father angry and to convert him from a protective to an attacking position, so as to create distance between him and his daughter and to elevate him to a position of authority in the Control Hierarchy. Later in the session:

Fa: It seems to me, Sue, you can think now who was there with you on Friday. (Angrily, and very firmly) This is not a hard question.

Sue: Dad, I'm not sure if Ben was there. I'll find everything out for you this weekend.

Fa: This weekend is too late!

Sue: Before this weekend, I'll go back, and we'll talk.

Th: (looking at his watch) Okay. We're running out of time. What's the arrangement then? Sue will get back to you before this weekend, and then you'll have an explanation. Okay -- and then you'll take it from there.

Fa: (nods) Yes.

Th: Okay, I want to talk to Dad.

With my encouragement, father demands information and takes an uncustomarily firm stand.

To highlight that father is now in a clear executive position and that a generational boundary has been drawn, the decision is made to punctuate the experience by ending the session at this point.

The intention is to meet briefly with father alone, to help him consolidate this experience.

Karen: (looks at therapist) Wait, I think there's another issue that has to be talked about.

The following sequence shows how the three siblings pull together, challenging and attempting to topple father from his recently assumed executive position. It is a pull toward homeostasis, or nonchange, at a time when flexibility is called for.

Th: (warily) Okay?

Karen: Sue, should I start it for you?

Sue: No. It's just one time I slept over there, Dad, and you went out and wanted to know what time I wanted to get up in the morning; I said about 7:30. The telephone rang at 7:00. It was Janet calling me. You weren't there, and I heard you coming in at 7:30.

Fa: That's right.

Sue: And you hadn't been in all night.

Fa: That's right.

Th: Okay.

Sue: Why didn't --

Th: We really don't have time here. There are other things I want to do. We can handle this next time. I know that you had things to bring up (points to Karen). We got caught in something that I think is very important.

Janet: (firmly) No, I think that's important, and I'd really like to know where you were. Really!

Fa: I was at Eileen's (his girlfriend) house.

Janet: Well, that's wonderful that you leave someone who's under your responsibility for the night with nobody. (Her voice rises in an anguished cry).

Fa: (shocked) With nobody?

Sue: (softly) Don was there.

Karen: Well, the thing is, we're expected to come home, so you should be expected to come home. You can go out, but you should come home at night.

I see the challenge coming and attempt to block it by refocusing on the specific theme of the session and its importance.

The effort to block is rebuffed.

Father is accused of delinquency.

With father now under attack, Sue's coalition with him emerges, and she tries to defend him. The oldest daughter disciplines father.

Fa: Yes, I told Sue what happened. Father is on the defensive.
I told her we were working on
something that had to be in.
We worked till 3:00 in the
morning.

I then halted the session. The siblings left the room, and Mr. Jarret was seen briefly alone.

The above interpersonal sequences reveal a powerful dynamic. Sue's extreme acting out, together with my relentless highlighting of this event in the session, forced the father to take a firm, executive posture that broke the coalition with his daughters (i.e., if he went lightly on them, they would go lightly on him).

The father was stung, his authority undermined. He was ready to retreat. At this point, the therapist must take charge. There are a number of alternatives. He might decide to sympathize with the father's skill at making himself vulnerable to his daughter's attack, or he might ask how the father's father might have handled a similar situation, and so on. Here the decision was to refocus and restore the father to his parental position by playing on his fear, guilt, and sense of parental responsibility.

(Father and I are alone in the room)

Th: I'm really pleased this happened. Sue's acting out is framed
So, now you have some sort of as a positive, useful

idea as to what the hell is going on.

Fa: (shakes his head hopelessly)
No, I don't have any idea, I really don't. I don't know if I have an idea. I know Eileen and I had to discuss something that night.

Th: Well, I'm not talking about that.

Fa: Well, I'm --

Th: (interrupts, talks seriously) I'm talking about Sue (point to Sue's seat). Over those days, it sounds to me that she was pretty much totally delinquent. You were guessing about drugs a couple of weeks ago --

learning experience for father, who should now clearly see the full dimensions of her behavior. The language used is designed to arouse his indignation.

Father is still preoccupied with the expose that has occurred. He has been derailed and relinquishes his appropriate executive stance.

Father's preoccupation is selectively ignored as the process of reinstating the hierarchy begins.

Fa: I know she had a long talk with Don. He told me about it. Sue said she has a couple of beers now and then. She may smoke a joint now and then, but no drugs.

Father moves to exonerate Sue. He readily accepts this reassuring, second-hand account. His attitude is a further manifestation of his coalition with Sue and his proclivity to abdicate executive responsibility.

Th: Do you believe that?

Fa: Well, I don't know, she's been pretty --

Th: (leaning forward) The Valium was missing. She doesn't even seem to know what the hell is going on. It's outrageous. I mean your description of the way the house was is pretty incredible. She's bullshitting you, and she and her friends are into delinquent stuff. I think this is a message loud and clear that you should not be surprised by anything that she gets into. And, that's why I'm pleased.

Father's perception and stance are challenged. I lean toward him, speaking in a very definitive manner, and I vividly repaint the incident. I suggest that this is only the beginning, forewarning him of the likelihood that Sue would continue to act out.

Fa: I won't be surprised anymore.

Clarity, Distortion, and the Intergenerational Dialogue

In this next section the characteristics of the intergenerational dialogue are described. They are described for two reasons: (a) because the dialogue is a basic experiential, and often necessary, facet of the therapeutic process and (b) because the importance of the concept of the hierarchical nature of the family is illustrated in an unusual manner. The concept provides a guide around common pitfalls of the dialogue, as will be discussed after an example of the dialogue itself has been presented.

A basic parental function is to socialize children to see the world relatively clearly. During parental separation and divorce, this task requires that parents talk with their children and provide relatively accurate and consistent information. Parents modulate this information according to the age and needs of the child. (Possibly the finding of the quantitative study of a significant positive relationship between access to the mother's distress and the adolescents' social competence refers to a facet of this larger process.) The goal is to provide children with a useful way of understanding their parents' divorce. This includes an effort to leave both parents respectfully elevated, to free the children of responsibility for the breakup or for reuniting them and, finally, to reassure the children of continuing parental involvement and protection. Most parents are able to

accomplish this. The child, although upset by the split, begins to accept it, or at least to recognize the futility of fighting it.

In more disturbed and conflicted situations, this process may not occur. Instead, a relatively accurate portrayal of the divorce reality is sacrificed to the internal needs of each spouse, or it is advanced as evidence that he or she is impeccable and the other spouse is to blame. (In the following chapter, the pathological interpersonal impact of secrets on a family is described in detail.) Adolescents, like young children, often receive contradictory explanations, or they are presented with highly skewed, hollow, and distorted family mythologies. Such distortion is a bilateral process. On the one hand, a spouse values having an adolescent in his or her camp, perhaps to speak out against or harass the other spouse or to provide reassurance when he or she privately feels less than virtuous. On the other hand, adolescents -- especially in relatively dysfunctional situations -- become greatly interested in their parents' perceptions as they seek data for making sense out of the relative uncertainty and chaos of their lives. The dislocation of the separation process has threatened not only the previous stability of their external world but also their fundamental ideas of who their parents, their family, and they themselves are and will become.

Some adolescents, in the face of contradictions or skew, retreat and block out. That is rare. More often, they

become embroiled in, and distressed by, the contradictions. Or they become hooked on a single, skewed mythology. The advantages of the latter are simplicity and freedom from ambiguity, characteristics that may be welcomed by the anxious adolescent whose life is so much in flux. With the skewed explanation, one spouse is elevated and the other denigrated. The adolescent will tend to move into coalition with the former, though at the risk of jeopardizing the relationship with the latter.

In this situation of contradiction and distortion, the therapist needs to facilitate a dialogue between each parent and his or her adolescent children, who invariably participate eagerly. The dialogue usually contains recurrent and predictable themes. Preeminent among them are questions about how the separation came about, how both parents are and will be behaving as ex-spouses and parents, and what the nature of the new postseparation family will be. For the adolescent to question, indeed vigorously interrogate, his or her parents is not uncommon. The adolescent typically attempts to cross-validate and untangle the web of parental accusations, conflicts, rationalizations for, and sometimes plain lies about the marital split. It is not unusual for the adolescent to quiz the parents about the various property, child-support, and visitation arrangements that are being negotiated. But of central importance is the development of an understanding of how the split came about.

In the dialogue with the Jarrets below, the father talks with his daughters about the breakup of the marriage and attempts to clarify for them his own and his girlfriend's participation in it. This dialogue is sponsored as the themes are keys in determining how the father and his girlfriend (later to be his wife) will be perceived and what sort of postseparation relationship they will have with his daughters.

Sue: But, see Dad, we didn't know everything that was going on. Mom is certainly to blame. But it was just that we saw you saying, "I'm leaving," and Mom saying to us that she wanted you to stay around so that you could work out your problems and everything.

Karen: Yeah, also, from what I understand, Mom was trying to make the marriage work. But she didn't want Eileen in the picture. And you weren't ready to give up Eileen. So, therefore, I do see it as your fault, because you didn't want to give up Eileen to try to make the marriage work.

The children declare they had insufficient information. Given this, and what mother told them, it is their understanding that father ultimately is to blame for the marriage ending.

Mother was virtuous. There is a denial of the serious difficulties of the marriage. Structurally, the girls' blaming of father is an aspect of their coalition with mother.

Fa: That's right. I didn't want to try to make the marriage work any more than I had tried for eight or nine years. The trying had stopped, as far as I was concerned. The marriage was over, as far as I was concerned. Does that make sense?

Father moves to correct their perception and fantasies. The structural aspect of the process is that he disrupts their coalition. Thematically, he attempts to answer their queries about his commitment to the marriage and whether he had acted responsibly or not.

Karen: No. Because --

Fa: I guess that's what I don't understand. Why it doesn't make sense to you?

Karen: Because you didn't try again.

Fa: Well, I guess there's a point when you just say to yourself -- it's not worth it. I am not an unintelligent person. I am a reasonably reflective and thoughtful and caring person, who does not make impetuous decisions usually. I do make some impetuous decisions, but

Father is apparently candid in his answers. He is consistent in his viewpoint and demanding of respect. He maintains his elevated position in the hierarchy while simultaneously showing flexibility. This will strengthen his position

this was not an impetuous decision. This was simply not this carefree, casual kind of thing that you intimate it was.

Karen: Well, that's the way I see it.

Soon as Eileen comes on the scene, that's when I see the problems.

Fa: But you didn't see the problems?

Sue: (addressing Karen) You weren't there, you -- (her voice rises.)

Th: (interrupting Sue with voice and hand) Hang on, hang on, Dad can talk for himself. Karen -- Karen, are you saying that when Eileen entered, the problems started? Is that essentially what you're saying?

with his children.

This is the first explicit statement of the role of the girlfriend in breaking up the marriage. I will soon pick up on this theme.

Sue tries to assist her father.

The fantasy, if present, that father's girlfriend is to blame has significant implications. It would kill the possibility that the children could ever have a good relationship with her in the future. Father would be seen as a cork -- passive, buffeted, and at the mercy of outside influences. The children would be unable to respect him. Also, the

fantasy would deflect responsibility from the parents' real marital difficulties.

Karen: That's my understanding.

Th: (turns to father) Is that so?

The notion that father was pirated away is questioned. It is a fantasy that father might be expected to foster, given his guilt and proclivity to avoid conflict and responsibility.

Fa: No.

Karen: That's what you say. That's not what Mom says, and it's not what I see. It's not that you didn't have problems before. She didn't think this was ever going to happen until Eileen came onto the scene, and it probably wouldn't have. If you didn't have somebody else to turn to, you wouldn't have separated from Mom.

Karen clings to her (and probably also to her mother's) idealization of the marriage.

Fa: I would probably still be living in the same house, going through

the same forest; that's what we have been doing.

Th: (expressing surprise) Is that so? Again, father is encouraged
You would really have continued to take responsibility for
living there? his actions.

Fa: Well, I don't know how long or how much longer it would have lasted, because it was just getting worse and not better. Every time we'd sit down, we'd go over it, and we'd try different things -- it just didn't work. I don't know how long that would have ended up going on. If anything, I would have stayed there for you guys, so that there would have been that semblance of the family. I don't know how long that would have lasted.

Karen: Well, I'm sure it would have been easier for me to accept the divorce if no one else had been involved. Because I see it as Eileen's fault the marriage broke up.

Fa: But, don't you think that's a little strange, Karen. By

Eileen's fault, I assume that
you mean it's my fault.

Karen: Well, yours and Eileen's.

Fa: (points at himself) Mine.

Father finally takes responsibility. It is likely that the daughter's fantasy of the father being snatched by an evil witch has been dented. This increases the possibility that he will be seen as a substantial figure, and that the girls can further develop their relationship with him (and with his girlfriend) in the future.

Karen: No, she knew what was going on. She knew that you were married.

Fa: Yeah, she did, but whose decision was it to walk away?

Karen: Yours and Eileen's, probably.

Fa: (with great emphasis) It was mine. It was mine.

This kind of dialogue has potential for rapid maturation. It also has the potential to disrupt therapy. Time and again, the family therapist encounters difficult questions of judgment, essentially relating to the relative usefulness and limits of the dialogue. A common dilemma is how to facilitate this important intergenerational dialogue without jeopardizing often fragile intrafamilial boundaries and hierarchies. In working around this dilemma, it is useful to remember that the family ultimately is hierarchically organized.

Some general guidelines must suffice. For example, it is important to time the dialogue for a particular phase of therapy. A necessary prerequisite is the basic hierarchical structuring of the family. The adolescent will be ready to reevaluate contradictions and distortions only when assured of continuing dual parental protection. Further, the therapist must prevent the dialogue from becoming interminable or from producing continuing fog rather than clarification. Challenges are often met by repetitious, defensive counter-challenges. The imposition of firm time limits will usually contain the discussion, preventing it from generating extreme anger and anxiety or from serving as a red herring that diverts attention from difficult issues. The dialogue may also be dysfunctional when it becomes a forum for perpetuating cross-generational coalitions. If this occurs, the therapist needs to intervene. Finally, the dialogue can become a tool to topple an executive or it may inadvertently precipitate the disengagement and

flight of a parent. To avoid this, the exchange should always be respectful and carefully monitored by the therapist. If it appears that the siblings are scoring with impunity and that a parent's authority is being jeopardized, the therapist must intervene and make sure the session ends with the parent still appropriately elevated.

Reuniting the Parental Executive System

As has been described many times in this thesis, the establishment of separate parental hierarchies that allow for protective limits is an indispensable task. In the quantitative study the focus was on the custodial parent as key executive. Such hierarchies not only provide the beginnings of the necessary parental mantle but also increase the adult's sense of parental mastery and competence. But it is necessary now to go beyond the quantitative study in order to get closer to the complexity of a real family: here the parents' individual achievements will be insufficient, so long as they remain ultimately divided. In the Jarrets' case, the parents had neither seen nor hardly spoken to each other in the eight months since the separation. It must be expected that the adolescent will skillfully exploit the split and his or her acting-out will continue. It becomes mandatory, then, to reunite the parents. This level of analysis, which directly involves the nature of the coparental relationship, was beyond

the scope of the quantitative study. Often, however, this is a pivotal issue in the therapy and involves a process that is frequently delicate and requires careful preparation and pacing. In a high-conflict divorce, a conjoint session, prematurely convened, can often be counterproductive.

Here, the process is initiated as the mother is asked to contact her husband.

Th: But I'm interested in you and Michael working something out.

(waves his hand between two imaginary people) You have to have --

Mo: I can't, I can't. (shakes her head firmly) No, I just don't know how I could sit in a room with him.

Mother's worst fears surface immediately. It is too early to bring the two face-to-face.

Th: No, I'm not talking about necessarily -- that's one alternative, sitting in a room. But there are other ways of doing it. In Africa, we do it with drums. (The therapist smilingly drums on his knee.) Can you -- you any good at it?

Humor is employed to decrease mother's anxiety and suggest to her alternative strategies.

Mo:	(smiles) I'd have to learn. I don't know, I --	
Th:	(waves his hand in a spiral in the air) Smoke signals -- letters.	Mother remains skeptical.
Mo:	Much later, I think maybe -- mm -- I can't think of anything but -- mm -- anger with Michael.	Mother counters and procrastinates.
Th:	But, how are you going to communicate to him that you want the kids in at 12:00, 12:30, and 1:30?	Mother's protestations are ignored, and she is reminded of the task.
Mo:	You'll have to do it (smiles) -- mm -- I don't know.	Mother counters by abdicating and transferring responsibility.
Th:	I think that you have to find a way, even if it's a letter.	Responsibility is passed back, with a concrete suggestion.
Mo:	Well, the girls already know.	Mother counters again, this time utilizing the youngsters as go-betweens.
Th:	It needs to go from you to him. This is going to keep cropping up, and you're going to need a way of passing him	Appropriate generational boundaries are requested.

messages that concern the kids and where you want his cooperation and agreement. It's necessary. I don't know how you're going to do it, (very firmly) but it has to be done (pause). Also, so that he can be held accountable. If he comes in next week, and he says he's spoken with you, and the agreement we have agreed to is this, then he has to answer to that. As long as there's no really agreed and stamped arrangement, he's not accountable for anything. He can just keep switching and changing eternally.

Mo: Mmm. (Nods)

Th: And then he won't meet his responsibilities, which he needs to do for the kids. It will help you, and it will help the kids if you could have some sort of way to communicate what you want from him.

Mo: That's going to be most difficult right now, but I -- you're right, it does have to be done.

The request is then punctuated with a firm statement.

Mother's commitment to the task is equivocal. To motivate her, I draw on her anger at her husband.

Mother acknowledges the need.

Mrs. Jarret followed through and called her husband. Thereafter, they spoke to each other occasionally, remaining a tentative parenting unit. However, their sense of parental self, as well as effectiveness together, was still fragile and tenuous. A level of continuing anger, mistrust, and fear ensured this. Their moves were uncoordinated, and they still used the children to carry messages. Predictably, the divided parental unit fell easy prey to their daughters' manipulations.

This scenario heralded the important final stage of therapy: both parents were brought together face-to-face for the first time since the separation. The children were not present. The preparations for this meeting had been developing throughout the therapy. Both parents had, by this time, developed a sense of their own individual parental competence. For the mother, this parental ego was a single important island of self-esteem, where previously there had been only devastation. As described earlier, the work alone with Mrs. Jarret was necessary to help her expand her life. Mr. Jarret did not require that. Thus, both parents entered the session feeling relatively good about themselves. The therapeutic necessity for one or more joint sessions had been seeded much earlier, and mentioned periodically, resulting in a desensitization of anxiety. Over time, both parents had come to trust the therapeutic process, and both had been briefed individually on what would take place during the session. The mother was the more anxious. Light hypnotic exercises and imagery were used

to help her through the session, and I joked with her about how she should beautify herself and what she should wear. So that the parents would not collide with each other in this first joint venture, their attention was focused on the skill of the youngsters at outmaneuvering them.

Th: Let's now go through possible scenarios. Things that might happen with Sue. And we're focusing now on Sue because, quite frankly, Sue is the one that I think is at highest risk. I think she has a lot of potential. She's bright and can do well, but I think she has great potential to fail. She can be irresponsible and real loose. And she's smart. She really knows how to exploit differences between the two of you. So the two of you have got to be together on this. Let's go through some possible ways in which she by-passes you, or plays one against the other, or puts something over on you. I know a few

The task of the session is defined as helping Sue to succeed, not fail. To this end, the parents will need to cooperate.

Sue's behavior is framed as calculated and divisive. They are her victims. Both parents are asked now to participate in a goal-oriented, concrete process intended to join them together and differentiate them from Sue.

things she does to you, but let's just go through them, so that you are sort of aware. (Short silence; turns to father). Do you want to start?

Fa: Well, she does a lot of last-minute calling. She creates a crisis situation and then needs an exception to a rule to bail her out, whether it's a ride home or coming late. Not her evening curfew, she's real conscious of that.

Th: Okay, so it's last-minute stuff. What's the problem with that, what are the implications of that?

Fa: Well, I think she is not assuming that responsibility to plan something, and there seems to be things that she probably could plan more easily.

Father picks up on the previous framing.

Elaboration is requested. The objective is not only to obtain further necessary information, but also to reinforce father's new alignment as an executive no longer in coalition with Sue.

Th: Does it mean, then, arrangements are made that are loose, and you don't have the details?

Fa: I have the sense I don't have enough details of this dance group that she is in. I was concerned when they had a rehearsal, and I felt I learned about it real late.

Th: Do you know what Michael is talking about?

Mo: Yeah. It leaves you wondering is that, in fact, what she is doing -- (father begins to interrupt). It leaves me wondering that.

Fa: I think I wonder less, although as those items build up --

Implied here is, "Do you agree with your husband?", thereby promoting parental cooperation.

"Wondering," here becomes an indicator of good parenting. That is, well-founded skepticism is part of being an effective parent.

Father's "wondering less" reveals his coalition with Sue. This indication of the coalition may have emerged in reaction to the therapist's first move, immediately above, to

Th: (points to father) I think you would wonder less, because in relation to Sue, you can be pretty gullible.

Fa: Well, I think you've said before that I could be pretty gullible in relation to all of them.

Th: (looking father in the eyes and suggesting an intimate knowledge) Yes. You might well wonder less. I can understand that. I know. Okay. But this is something that she does.

Fa: Yeah -- Okay.

forge parental cooperation. This dynamic is at the core of the dysfunction. Father's participation in the cross-generational coalition is rapidly challenged. Respecting the fragility of the parental relationship, mother is not asked to confront father. I remain central through most of the session. This is a necessary intermediate step.

Father appears to accept the challenge. He subsides.

Th: All right. What can you do about it. Because if this is recurring, if this is the pattern, then this is a maneuver. This is one of the things that she is doing to bypass you in some way. What can you do about it?

Fa: Well, one of the things that makes me less doubting is that I have a sense that school operates on a "let's do something" basis. I don't perceive as much planning and as much structure in that school as there are in other schools. The school decides at the last minute, kind of thing.

Th: But you said yourself that this is happening to both of you, so let's not try to whitewash it.

Fa: No, I don't mean to whitewash it.

Th: You said yourself that the dance thing was probably planned a long

The framing of the parents as victims of Sue's calculated manipulations is reiterated.

Father again exonerates Sue, maintaining his coalition with her. Here he transfers blame from Sue to society. Microcosmically, this is the dynamic process that stunts the development of conscience.

Father's dysfunctional position is again challenged. A clear tug-of-war is operating.

time in advance. How come you were only notified just before? I think that what you need to do there is find out what's going on. Be intrusive. Phone whoever needs to be phoned.

Mo: Those kinds of things come up a lot. She did a lot of this around the prom. She wanted very much to be allowed to stay overnight. First, it was they were all going to the beach right after the "after" party. I said no. The next thing, it was staying overnight at Mary's house. Again, I said no. Then she had brunch immediately following the "after" party. It just seemed she was creating situations one after the other.

Fa: I don't mean to be an apologist for Sue. But it is just a shade over a week before Karen's graduation, and Karen doesn't know what parties there are afterward and this that and the other thing.

The system is delicately, but rigidly, balanced. As mother takes a critical and demanding executive position, father disqualifies her by supporting Sue.

Mo: I don't know what you're saying.

Fa: Well --

Th: What you're doing is you are being an apologist for Sue. Let's really try and simply acknowledge that this is one of Sue's strategies. You know it's happening too often.

(Father shakes his head, obviously dissatisfied)

Th: What's wrong, Michael?

Fa: Well, I have problems handling that. That is, I don't have evidence that shows me that that is exactly what's happened.

Th: You know, you're not going on terribly much evidence here because Sue, first, is smart, and the second thing is that you're not following it up. You need to be following up.

Fa: Okay, let me ask you this. If Sue comes, in a situation like the prom, and says, 'Can I stay at Mary's and we're going to sleep for three or four hours be-

Father is again challenged and asked to transcend his current stance.

fore we go down to the shore',
should we acknowledge to Sue that
we don't trust her as far as we
can kick a fire plug? If
Karen did that, my guess is that
we wouldn't follow that up.

Th: Well, two things. First, Karen It now becomes mandatory to
is older, she's 18, and she real- provide the "evidence" that
ly has not had the sort of diffi- father is asking for, and
culties that Sue has. Now we're that mother has concealed.
talking about Sue, of cutting I turn to mother, for whom
school, of the Valium incident, I have been running inter-
when she really ransacked your ference. She must now con-
place (I look toward mother). front him.
I don't know if you want to
throw in anything more, Fran?

Mo: I think that -- I do. And I
will have to ask you, Michael,
that this will be in strict
confidence. I think that I
have to tell you this just to
show you where my fear comes
from. Sue has had an abortion,
one that she has told me about,
and I fear that she has had a
second one.

Fa: (stares at mother, shocked)
Well, that sure does change things
some. That's something I didn't
know.

Mo: She was supposed to have told you. It was mother's responsibility to have told father. She did not.

Fa: Well, she didn't.

Mo: She wanted to wait until a
better time. And when I asked
her if she had discussed it with
you, she said "That's in the
past, let's let it alone." It
is in the past. But I am very
much afraid for her.

Th: (silence) I think it's the re-
sponsible thing to let Michael
know about that.

Mo: I had thought that, too, but I
also left it up to Sue to tell
him, and she hasn't. (Father
anxiously taps the floor. He
is visibly shaken. There is a
silence and he asks mother some
further questions about when the

abortion was and who the father was.)

* * *

Th: But this is some of what's been going on. One abortion, at least; Valium incidents that might just be the tip of the iceberg; cutting school; and probably lots of things that you simply don't know about. But these are powerful telltale signs. You can't go back to that: Sue is right -- there is stuff that has gone by. But at least, for the two of you to know what the risks are, the direction in which she is moving. She has potential to do well and potential to self-destruct. And that's it. So, the two of you really need to be together on this. And you need to be intruding into her life to find out what's going on. . .

To encourage parental cooperation, this moment is used to emphasize graphically the lethality of the situation.

The past cannot be erased, but they must now take responsibility for dealing with their daughter in the future.

Their necessary tasks are laid out.

Mo: (anxiously) How much control can you have without her turning the whole thing around?

Th: How do you mean?

Mo: I mean if I hold her back and say you can't do this and you can't do that, she'll defy me in other ways. I lose something if I do that to her. She'll quit talking to me altogether. You know, she'll use a lot of things.

Th: That is another one of her maneuvers. What she says to you quite simply is, 'Mom, you do that, and I won't talk to you. I'll be very angry with you.' And that scares you; you're going to lose contact with her. Does she ever do that with you? (Looks at father).

(Father nods in agreement.)

Th: Same thing?

Fa: She did the whole thing with the trashing of the house.

Mother's fears surface as she anticipates her daughter's defiance.

Beyond fearing her daughter's defiance, the mother's ultimate fear is that Sue will reject and abandon her.

The parents are again depicted as victims. This is done in order to arouse their indignation, erradicate their sense of helplessness, and mobilize their assertive parenting. As this theme is repeated, it becomes more familiar to them -- until it is accepted.

Th: Yes, well, that's the way she goes on that one. And you get scared, both of you feel real guilty, and she rides on that. Maybe I haven't done enough for her, maybe she's justified in being angry with me. That's the line she uses. And I know it twists your guts. I've seen it happen with you, Fran.

* * *

Th: Okay, these are some of the things that you're really going to have to be very vigilant about and keep checking in with one another. We're going to have to pull this to a close now. I think you have a fair idea of some of what's ahead of you. It's going to be quite a long thing, but in

I utilize my knowledge of both parents to reassure them and consolidate their commitment to the task of standing up to their daughter.

The session proceeds for another 15 minutes as the parents anticipate Sue's resistance and, with encouragement, search for new ways of managing. The parents are given a time frame, one that is purposely softened for them. Father is expected to want the last word. If he disagrees, he will express it by emphasizing the urgency of the situation. That is precisely the note on which to end the session.

a way, it's going to be quite a short thing. She's now 16-1/2 or something. She's probably going to be out of the home at 18. So, it's just two years you are talking about. Some 700 days.

Fa: Less than that.

Th: You're talking about very little time. But my guess is there's going to be round after round. So, relax. Roll up your sleeves. You can expect this to keep on happening a while. Don't be surprised by that, okay? Let's stop now. I'm very impressed by the way you two handled this. I'm really impressed.

The session ends with the use of metaphors connoting the power issues that are being played out.

The goal of the session was achieved: the parents had begun to accept the necessity of taking a stand and working together as parents ascendant in the hierarchy. Their acceptance in the face of other resistances remained fragile and needed to be therapeutically consolidated. To that end, further sessions were held with both parents together and with the parents and Sue. As the parental alliance is gradually

forged, the therapist must begin to move from his previously central position, increasingly facilitating more parental interaction and encouraging their self-directed initiative. This approach is important because the tendency toward parental abdication can be encouraged unwittingly if a therapist is too helpful. He must dodge their various efforts to keep him in charge.

Sessions were gradually spaced out, and they were convened only after the parents had come together privately and had resolved problems with their children, problems that occurred with diminishing intensity. Therapy was then terminated. An 18-month follow-up gave evidence of enduring positive change. Sue had graduated with good grades from high school, was holding a responsible job, and was considering going to college. The parents had not become amiable, but they continued to check on her, and with each other, and were pleased to find they could trust her more. Sue, too, was pleased with the changes in her life.

Summary

In those situations where the impact of divorce is disastrous, we commonly find that spouse separation gives rise to familial disengagement of varying degrees and hierarchical collapse, which precipitates pain and psychopathology among the children. The case described in this chapter demonstrates a

useful way of viewing intrafamilial processes and working with postseparation families with adolescent children who are in this unfortunate situation. The guiding principle of the therapy is to facilitate restoration of parental functioning and a rearranged reintegration of the post-divorce family. Separation and divorce, although indeed a family affair, need not herald the death of a family when children are involved. For most, separation can be a transition, and not an end. The well-being of parents and children can be protected as the family continues, albeit drastically altered in structure, and attempts to remain a viable, self-propelled, and interprotective unit.

CHAPTER SIX

THE UNSEPARATED SEPARATED FAMILY: WORKING WITH RIGID ENMESHMENT AND DISENGAGEMENT

The family of the previous chapter shattered catastrophically after the separation. Other separated families are unable to change in ways that are necessary, after the separation. In this chapter, a family will be described in which the parents were unable to let go of each other emotionally. The mother-son dyad drifted toward crippling enmeshment. The father-son relationship became increasingly disengaged. The therapy of this rigidly dysfunctional system will be described.

Another dysfunctional divorce scenario is characterized by fundamental difficulties in negotiating the boundary changes required in a separation. In particular, the therapeutics of rigidity, enmeshment, and disengagement will be illustrated. In contrast to the couple in the previous chapter, the spouses in this family are unable to achieve closure on their relationship, which they maintain, permeated with ambivalence, ambiguity, and often duplicity -- for an extended period. Amid this complex physical and emotional climate, the mother-son and father-son relationships move increasingly toward extremes of rigid enmeshment and excessive distance, respectively, placing the youngster at risk.

In this rigid interpersonal field, the overall goal of therapy is to enhance the repertoire of transactional options, in order to give flexibility and choice a chance. This entails moving the family beyond sham and secrets which, as will be illustrated, can become a glue to enmeshment and rigid nonchange. Anachronistic relationship threads that endure, despite the split, and penalize family members must be actively disentangled. New threads must be developed that will form the fabric of the functional postseparation family.

Often, the dynamics that produce such symptomatology are not immediately apparent. A diagnosis, in the sense of a thorough understanding of symptoms and their development in context, evolves gradually over time. Intervention is related to and, in part, follows this evolving diagnosis, as well as the skills of the therapist and what the patient and family

allow. The case of the Barron family was chosen to illustrate a view of the connection between the son's symptoms and the family's style of interaction (a connection that has already been demonstrated in the quantitative study), as well as to describe the particular treatment.

Ron and Linda Barron were in their mid-thirties. Both worked, he as a branch manager for a car dealer and she as a cosmetics representative. They had been separated for 16 months, and their formal divorce was imminent. The separation occurred after many years of unhappiness. The father, in fact, had wanted to leave some 10 years prior, but he had yielded to his wife's (catastrophising) argument that his leaving would damage their son Miles.

Miles, who at the time of the treatment was 16 years old, had lived with his mother since the separation. He saw his father occasionally. Mrs. Barron applied to the Divorce Service of the P.C.G.C. because she was concerned about her son. She had discussed this appointment with her husband, who was present at the first interview.

In the early sessions, it was apparent that Miles was seriously depressed. He was crying at home. He felt hopeless and confused. He felt he was going mad and had thoughts about killing himself, although he was not actively suicidal.

Enmeshment as Seen in Coopted Choice,
Depression, and Hopelessness

Hopelessness and a generalized negative expectation are generally seen as a central psychological core of depression (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979). For a person in this state, choice as an active process is experienced as extremely limited, or even absent. Suicide, then becomes the expression of a choice of last resort, when no other "better" choice is felt to exist. Fundamental to the psychotherapeutic endeavor is the correction of the patient's misconceptions of himself as powerless and the world around him as entrapping. Research (Beck, et al., 1979) suggests that such a therapeutic approach is legitimate and useful.

When the patient is a youngster still living with his parents, his experience of powerlessness and pessimism might accurately reflect the extent to which the family system narrows the possibility of, or commandeers, choice. Enmeshment heightens the sense of belonging but, by definition, comes at the often debilitating cost of individual autonomy. In such a situation of coopted autonomy, the therapist must work not only with the patient's nonuseful world-view, but also with the family system. The goal is to deenmesh the system by loosening the rigidities and expanding the repertoire of allowable transactions. As the range of transactions expands, choice is enhanced, autonomy emerges, and depression is diminished.

Th: (looking at Miles) What sort of idea do you have about why you're here, and why your parents are here with you?

Miles: (mumbles, clearly depressed and angry) I've no idea. I have no idea. I had no choice in the matter.

Miles immediately delineates an aspect of his depression: he feels trapped.

Th: How do you feel about being here?

Miles: I don't want to be here.

Th: Would you like to check out with your folks about what their idea is?

Miles: No. It wasn't my idea.

Th: Okay. (looking at Mr. & Mrs. Barron) Let me find out from the two of you. How can I help? What's the situation?

Mo: Well, Miles is failing in school. He's lost interest, feels hopeless, and doesn't see anything good happening in his future. And, I've tried to help him and haven't been effective, obviously.

Notice that, after a brief initial statement concerning Miles' performance and behavior, Mother speaks about his feelings. It might be that she, in fact, knows him well and that he has spoken to her of his

Th: What have you tried to do?

Mo: I tried to talk to him and tell him that he's young, and he has everything to look forward to. He can do anything he wants to do. He's an intelligent person and ... we live together, and we've had close relations throughout his life and ... he feels comfortable talking with me, so I listen.

Th: And is there anything you can share about why you think Miles is down, not making it in school, and feeling hopeless?

Mo: Well, I feel that he feels that his father deserted him and that he's angry, and that he's incapable of vocalizing that to his father.

Th: Miles, what do you think of that? How does that fit in with the way you see things?

Miles: (his head is buried in his chest; he speaks in a clipped way) Doesn't.

Th: How do you see things?

feelings. It might be, however, that she is guessing about what is on his mind, a classic clinical characteristic of enmeshment.

Mother's theory puts the onus on the father. It is rather typical for the partner who has been left to blame the one who left.

Miles rejects his mother's theory. Again, he suggests that his despair is a

Miles: I don't. I don't have a choice
how I see things; I have no
choice.

Th: How do you mean?

Miles: I don't have a choice in
whatever I do. Everybody
is running my life.

Th: In what sort of way?

Miles: (angrily) Every way.

Th: Mom and Dad? Dad? Mom?

Miles: Everybody.

Th: (acknowledging) Everybody ...
So, you feel you have no control
over your life.

Miles: (depressed, heavy). Yeah.
Pretty much. I guess you could
say that.

Th: Can you give me a few details
about the way in which you feel
your life's being controlled by
everybody? Talking about your
family ... One example is being
here today, right? (Therapist
points to the floor)

Miles: (quickly) Yeah.

Th: (quickly) Okay.

function of restricted
choice. His vision of
the world has been
coopted. He has no
decision-making power.
The system has
excluded him from
choice.

I begin to ask Miles to at-
tack his parents, but I
realize that this is pre-
mature, and instead join
Miles on a concrete,
immediate issue.

Miles: (slow and depressed) Another
is doing things around the
house ... (Deep sigh. Shakes
his head hopelessly.) I just
have no control over what I do.
Everybody's telling me what's
wrong with me, except for me.
Which is dumb, because they don't
know. That's what really bothers
me.

Miles complains that his
autonomy is being violated.

Th: That they don't understand you?

Miles: (angrily) No. That they think
they do. They think they do, and
they don't. That's all.

Th: (turns to father) How do you see
it?

Fa: It's not that, er we're trying
to tell him what's wrong
with him. We don't know what's
wrong with him. And all we want
to do is help to find out what's
wrong. To make things better for
him.

Th: Mmm. Have you spoken to Miles
about this?

Fa: Er, no. Er, there's, er, a
difficulty in communicating be-

The father alludes, for the
first time, to the disen-

tween Miles and I at that level. gagement between himself
It's tough. I guess we're not and Miles.
very open ... all the time.

Miles feels without hope and controlled by others,
with no options for choice. Further exploration reveals how
pervasive this control over Miles has, indeed, become.

Mo: He just fell apart. He couldn't
do anything. He wouldn't do
anything. He was having times
where he was crying. Deep sob-
bing, uncontrollably. And he
was not able to take the re-
sponsibility even for knowing
when to get up or when to eat.
So I talked to Ron about it, and
I felt I was going to have to
tell Miles everything that need-
ed to be done and guide him,
'cause he was in such a crisis he
was incapable of doing it for
himself. So that's been happening
for about the last month. When
I've literally had to tell him
what to do, how to do it, what His every move is con-
time to do it, etc. trolled.

Miles: (mumbling) And it hasn't changed a thing.

Mo: Well, it's changed because he does do it. He doesn't rebel. Things are getting done. His homework is getting done. He's on a schedule.

Th: Miles, how do you mean it hasn't changed anything?

Miles: (depressed) Nothing has changed. I get the things done, and that's all.

Miles implies that even though he complies behaviorally, he rebels and suffers psychically. He feels lifeless, like an automaton.

As the session continues, Miles participates little. His mother suggests that Miles' depression is related to seeing his father in a new light, after the separation. Miles, clearly angry, rejects this idea. "Don't assume, don't assume anything," he says, implying that his mother continues to make presumptions about his feelings.

At this stage of the session, the primary structural diagnosis is evident. The Mother-Miles relationship is inappropriately and intensively enmeshed. Mrs. Barron "assumes" what is on her son's mind and crowds him so that he feels coerced and without choice or space. Mr. Barron's

relationship with his son, on the other hand, is a distant, disengaged one, offering little in the way of a balm to the mother-son intensity.

It should be noted that this structural arrangement of mother-son overinvolvement, in which Miles feels robbed of choice, and the existence of a peripheral father, is a rather commonplace one in our society. But it does not necessarily produce symptomatology of the seriousness seen here. In and of itself, the diagnosis of the structural problem is a surface one, and it is insufficient as a full explanation. Nevertheless, it seemed likely that even partial amelioration of this mother-son enmeshment would bring some relief.

The discussion was moved on to other issues. While ostensibly gathering information about Miles' reaction to the separation, I was also approaching the key issues for Miles of choice, control and, ultimately, autonomy.

Th: (to Miles) And talking about
your own family now, was your
parents' separation a surprise
to you?

Miles: No!

Th: What sorts of warnings did you
have about it?

Miles: (mumbling) I dunno, I just knew;
that's all. Nothing, er, I just
knew. It was a surprise on the
outside, but on the inside I

knew. I knew a long time before that.

Th: How do you mean, surprise on the outside but not inside?

Miles: I dunno, can't explain.

Th: Can I take a guess, and you tell me if I'm wrong?

My respectful tracking avoids "assumptions". In this interpersonal field, where people easily presume, I must be careful to 'model boundaries' by asking consent when attempting to guess. This is more than the usual social etiquette: it is a depiction of deenmeshment.

Miles: Sure.

Th: Nobody said anything about it, but you just felt inside that it was coming?

Miles: Yeah. Yeah.

But, soon thereafter, as seen in the transcript below, Miles angrily scolded me, saying "people jump to conclusions". I responded by confirming that, "yes", what Miles said did count. His thoughts and feelings should not be presumed. However, Miles was not yet in a position to protect himself from the presumptions and intrusions of others and to fight for

his appropriate space. As a transitional prop for Miles, a "ground rule" was suggested.

Th: But, somehow you felt good there and ...

Miles: (interrupting) No, I never said that.

Th: Did you feel good there?

Miles: (exasperated) Yes, but I still never said that. People jump to conclusions.

Th: By the way, Miles, I appreciate that you tell me I jump to conclusions with you. And, clearly, (turns to parents) this is something that Miles is pretty sensitive about. About people reading his mind, clairvoyance, things like that. And I think he's pretty "on" there. He's right. And I'd like to suggest a little bit of a ground-rule here. That you really, and I too, refrain from doing that - trying to guess Miles' mind. Which is not to say that you shouldn't ask and try to figure

The "there" (opposite) refers to a recent vacation Miles had spent with an uncle.

This intervention is linked closely, in terms of time and content, to Miles' obvious anger. This linkage enhances my credibility.

The intervention is a bilateral directive, with the goal being deenmeshment:
(a) the parents must re-

out what is going on, but that you try to refrain from second-guessing what he's thinking and what's going on inside ...

(turns to look at Miles) And Miles, as you're doing with me, and your mother, you carry on with that. So if I jump in and say, hey, you're saying this and thinking this, you say "No, it's not where it's at, at all."
(to Miles) Is that okay with you?

Miles: (nods in agreement) Yeah.

Th: And I can see that you're pretty angry, pretty pissed off with everybody jumping in and ...

frain from intruding and

(b) Miles must defend his turf.

Here, I reach for Miles' buried affect. The attempt is to mobilize his anger, so that he can defend himself against his mother's encroachment and, as a result, lessen his depression. Sensitive to Miles' clear difficulties in this area, I suggest an extreme of anger, expecting him to reduce it. Miles then does so, but affirms that I'm on target.

Miles: (interrupts) It's annoying.

Th: Annoying. Yes.

Miles: That's what bothers me most
(laughs bitterly). It really
bothers me, as you can see.

Th: (Nods encouragingly)

Miles: That's what me and my mother
fight about. (with emphasis)
It bothers me. (looks at
mother) Think about it. That's
how we get into fights (Miles
rubs his palms vigorously on
his thighs, as though discharg-
ing tension).

Th: (turns to mother) What do you
think?

Mo: I'll definitely try to correct
it. (silence)

Miles: I do it, too. All the time.

Th: You do what?

Miles: I do the same thing, and I get
annoyed when I do it, because
I know it's annoying.

Having attacked his
mother, an attack which
would create boundaries
between her and him, Miles
reverses this possibility
by sharing responsibility,
and thereby absolving her.

Th: A word of warning. Really to everybody, but especially to the two of you (looks at parents). It's not going to change around overnight. I anticipate that you will continue with this for quite awhile. And, Miles, you're going to have to say - (therapist snaps his fingers) "you did it again." (Miles smiles) Because it's a bit of a pattern that's been set up, and I don't know how long this pattern's been in operation. But patterns and routines don't change around, die, easily. So, if possible, expect that it is going to continue ... for a while, anyway. (Miles nods) Which is not to say that you have to accept it. Okay. You really have to let them know when they start reading your mind. But I

His reversal maintains their symbiosis and reveals the reciprocal nature of enmeshment.

The parents are then helped to anticipate and prepare for difficulties in the execution of the task.

think it's going to happen, and
(looks to mother) your task is
going to be to try to capture
it before it starts happening.

Mo: Seems fair.

Miles: (addresses the floor) All you
gotta do is think about what
you say. A lot of people do
not do that.

Th: All right. This is a small
start. Let's see how it goes
for the week.

Enmeshment: An Historical Perspective

In order to understand the intensity of the mother-son
enmeshment, some exploration of the history of this
arrangement, which goes beyond the scope of the quantitative
study, was necessary. Was it of recent origins, postdating the
separation, or did it precede the separation? In the next
session, the therapist met alone with each family member.
Although post hoc reconstructions are of dubious validity, the
consistency of Mr. and Mrs. Barrons' independent perceptions
suggests an answer. First, Mrs. Barron indicated that her
present fusion with Miles had evolved slowly over time, even

before the parents split. When they did split, the predisposition for mother-son enmeshment was high.

Th: How was Ron's relationship with his son?

Mo: (silence and then deep sigh)
Terrible.

Th: And has it always been?

Mo: Yeah. It has always been mm, I was always the go-between. If something wasn't right, Ron would tell me, and I'd tell Miles. And, er, I can't think of one time they were really close ... God, that's terrible.

Th: How was that for Miles?

Mo: Dreadful. 'Cause he idolized his father.

Th: Why do you think this was? That Ron never got to know his son, and you were in the middle?

Mo: I dunno. Miles would always come in from school, and he'd sit down and tell me everything that had

The enmeshment of the mother-son dyad must be seen within the context of the larger system: mother evolves a role of mediator, because father and son are disengaged. She thereby becomes more enmeshed, and father and son more disengaged. It is a system in motion, a concept that is not taken into account in the cross-sectional quantitative study.

happened during the day, and at dinner time he'd always have a conversation with me. It was like Ron was the third wheel. He was just there. He never participated, and if something exciting was going on, I was the one Miles related it to. It wasn't as if Ron would sit down with Miles and say, "What happened today Miles?"

Th: He was just out there on the side.

Mo: Because he put himself out there. Enmeshment is always multidetermined: The father's superaffiliation (or enmeshment) with his job is a force which facilitates the mother's enmeshment with her son.

And I don't know why. And I told him he missed a lot. But he was so wrapped up in his career. That took so much time. And he was so concerned about going out and having a good time.

Th: But he wasn't there as a father, or for you as a husband. So you and Miles must have become pretty close.

Mo: Very close. Very close.

Th: The image I have is of each of you two turning to each other, because Ron was off. Talking at dinner, Miles telling you about the day, and you telling him.

Mo: Yup. We did. You're right. Because Ron was away a lot. He traveled a lot. He traveled 50% of the time.

Th: Oh, so he was also physically absent.

Mo: Yes. Yes. So, it just kind of evolved, so that Miles and I shared that because Ron wasn't there, physically.

Th: Did Miles become sort of like a replacement husband?

Mo: In the last few years he did.

Then Mr. Barron, in a separate interview, confirmed that he had not been eager to enter between mother and son.

Th: How would you describe your relationship with Miles?

Fa: Er (long silence, during which he sighs and fidgets anxiously) I

think it's, er, shit, I dunno.

It's not a ... I'm trying to avoid using "close" or "distant",

but maybe they are appropriate.

It's not close, in that he

doesn't typically want to come

and talk to me about things. He

uses his mother for that, and al-

ways has. It's understandable,

because I was never at home a lot.

Th: Does he use friends for that as well?

Fa: No, just his mother. He, er, has very few friends.

Th: What do you think about that?

Fa: I would like it to be different, if I had a choice. But I have to work for that. I can't just expect it to happen.

This reflects a finding of the quantitative study of a significant correlation between increased family Cohesion and lower social competence.

Glue for Enmeshment: Secrets and Sham

Much of the mystery of enmeshment concerns those affects that maintain the fusion. The rather common phenomenon, during divorce, of secrets and sham sheds some light in this realm, because a relationship that hinges on secrets and sham expresses an enmeshment that is most difficult to dissolve. Families, such as the Barrons, who are blocked in the process of separation are commonly characterized by a pervasive and unusual degree of deception, secrets, and sham, which ultimately hold them together in the grip of pathological enmeshment.

Jules Henry (1965) describes sham as:
a combination of concealment and
pretense ... The capacity for sham is
universally human ... The real problem is
not whether to sham, but to understand when
to drop the mask and when to put it on. It
is a social obligation ... There is an
ever-widening series of circles where sham
is more and more expected, tolerated and
even required but when this model is
reversed, i.e., if sham is present in the
family and truth in the outer world ...,
then we have pathology. (pp. 99-100)

More specifically, secrets and sham create in a family an atmosphere of mistrust and deviousness. Members are kept in the dark about each other, and inner needs are hidden. Perhaps the secrets are futile attempts to deenmesh. Instead, members become increasingly demanding and intensely curious, an atmosphere that enmeshes them further. They wind up vulnerable and dependent, and they attempt pseudoemancipatory stabs, which ultimately fuse them still more. Possibly, this point of view (and Miles' fusion with his mother) is reflected in one of the more unexpected findings of the quantitative study. That is, that the less the adolescent has access to the mother's distressed affect and problems, the less the amount and poorer the quality of the adolescent's social relationships.

Miles quickly alluded to this phenomenon when, during the second session, I met alone with him. Miles wanted no more phony "talk"; he wanted his mother to "tell" him.

Th: How about your mother? How's she doing?

Miles: I dunno. I've no idea. She doesn't tell me anything. It makes me extremely mad. But ... Miles talks first of being "mad," though in his subsequent comment he reduces the intensity of this affect to "bothers". In comparison with the

Th: How do you mean?

Miles: It bothers me. She doesn't tell me anything. She doesn't tell me where she's going. She doesn't tell me when she's going to be home. She doesn't tell me anything ... So I don't tell her anything. Because I know it bothers her. So, fine. I can play the game, too. That's why I'm never home, 'cause she won't tell me anything. We have nothing to talk about.

Th: What would you like to talk to her about?

Miles: I wouldn't. I would like to have her tell me what's going on.

Th: You'd like her to talk to you about what sort of things.

Miles: (angrily) "Not talk." Tell me what's going on with her life.

first session, however, his aggression range is expanding.

There is an increasing reciprocity of silence between them.

This is pseudoemancipation -- a "rubber band" phenomenon, in which he moves away, but psychologically never "looks" away; and then springs back into enmeshment.

Even making allowance for his feeling that he

Where she's going. Who she's seeing. When she's going to be home.

has a right to know about his mother's life, possibly beyond what is appropriate, the outstanding consideration is that he feels deceived.

Th: You want to know just what's going on with her!

Miles: Yeah. She won't do that.

Th: Have you asked?

Miles: No, I won't 'cause then she'll get defensive and mad.

Th: So you don't know a way of getting through to her, because she tightens up and get defensive and mad.

Miles: She will avoid the subject. If I ask her like, "Where you going tonight?" "Oh, I'm going out." "Who you going with?" "Oh, people from work." It's always "people". Always "people". It's not a person, or it's not girls, or it's not guys. It's always (exasperated) "people".

Although mother intrudes on Miles -- "jumping to conclusions" and guessing his mind, as we have seen -- the dyad is also permeated with secrets. Mother shares nothing of her own life with her son. Instead, an atmosphere of innuendo, mistrust, and things left unsaid prevails. Probably, she feels guilty "taking for herself", and fearful perhaps that Miles will hold her back. But consider the associated fallout on Miles' relationship with his mother, and on the family in general. Mother never tells Miles enough, so he becomes curious. Enmeshment is propelled.

Then, as Miles put it, "She doesn't tell me ... so I don't tell her." Dialogue, reciprocity, and sharing -- so fundamental to intimacy -- are blocked. The thematic possibilities and affective wavelength of the relationship are throttled. A festering, ever-expanding, subterranean world of unmet needs and unarticulated issues is created. Miles' real vulnerability will increase and, ill-prepared to separate, he will cling more desperately, maintaining the enmeshment. In addition, if the mother doesn't reveal herself, and Miles doesn't "know" her, he can never learn how strong she is.

Her secrecy, in fact, is an enmeshment maintainer. A son can only leave his mother (for his father, or for an expanding extrafamilial life), if she's seen to have a life; and this, Miles is prevented from seeing. But Miles does not only not know. He also intuits the nature of the secrets she keeps from him: that is, his mother is developing new

relationships. He reads between the lines. But if he discerns that his mother feels he shouldn't know, he may see her as protecting him from "dirt," possibly from danger. This perception feeds his sense of vulnerability. The ultimate fear might be that she will abandon him for a new relationship. For all he knows (because he has not been told, and he hasn't asked), father abandoned ship; he may have just cut out on his mother. He had not been told of their difficulties and, in fact, they had pretended to have a happy marriage ever since their wedding day. Both spouses had secretly not wanted to marry, and both had separately revealed confidentially to me that they had seriously considered fleeing the night before the wedding. Understandably, Miles was scared. He clung more intensely.

It is for these reasons that Miles courageously pleaded to be "told." The therapeutic task is to dispel the sham by bringing the secrets into the open. Miles, in these circumstances, does have a right to know. His mother has abdicated her obligation and abrogated his right. Miles' fighting for his right is, in part, the therapy and will replace the sobbing. In essence, his right to know is also his right to grow, a factor leading toward eventual competent emancipation.

The overall task will not be easy. Therapy will need to work against the extreme rigidity of the system. This rigidity is associated with Miles' pessimism about the possibility of anything changing, his ambivalence about

unearthing dark secrets, his fear of his own neediness, and his fear of his own anger, which he might see as likely to damage his mother or drive her away. The therapy, too, must work against the rigidity which emerges from still other sources: from the mother's many defenses, which deny Miles' needs, and from the father's nonhelpful coalition with her.

In the next excerpt, Miles struggled aggressively as he claimed his right to know. He was fighting off the secrecy that surrounded him, revealing areas where his parents had been misleading him. The stakes are high; Miles' success in this endeavor will greatly facilitate his deenmeshment from his mother, and it will enhance the likelihood that he could connect with his father. The excerpts from this session are intentionally extensive, in order to convey the tenacity of a rigid system and the intense struggle that is sometimes required to change such a system.

Fa: Miles feels he don't have a problem.

Th: And you're not so sure about that.

Fa: Well, I'd like to believe that. I dunno. Yeah.

Th: Well, I think you guys should talk with Miles about this, now.

Mo: Well, I have spoken to him about it, and we disagree.

Th: And you disagree how? What's the status of your disagreement?

Mo: Miles says he doesn't need to come here, and I disagree with that.

Miles: (angrily) How do you know that? You're never home. (Mother sniggers as though that's absurd and looks at father, who laughs along with her.) You haven't been around me for the last two weeks. How would you know? So don't say anything. You don't know that. You have no idea in your mind whatsoever. So just be quiet!

Mo: (harshly) Well, I have a real clear idea in my mind, Miles.

Miles: Well, you're entitled to your opinion.

Fa: (to therapist) Miles was very irritated tonight about. ...

Th: (interrupts father) Hang on. Excuse me a moment. Miles, you're saying that your mother

Mother disparages Miles' perception, then cues father to collude with her in this. He joins her. This dynamic will be repeated a number of times -- and works against change.

As conflict between Miles and mother emerges, father enters, breaking that interaction. I keep father out and bring the conflict

hasn't any idea of what's going on.

Miles: (angrily) She hasn't been around me for the past two weeks.

Th: And you sound pretty mad about that.

Miles Er, no. I'm just saying I'm mad because she opens her mouth and doesn't know what she's talking about.

Th: Why don't you put your Mom in the picture, then?

Miles: (angry) I just told her that there's no big conflict about it. I just said what I had to say.

Th: (to mother) What do you think? Your son's saying you open your mouth, and you don't know what you're talking about.

Miles: (interrupting) In this instance.

to the surface again.

Miles begins again to deny his anger, but then stays with it. He implies that she continues to make presumptions about his feelings.

Scared that the level of conflict might be too much, Miles now modulates it by a time-binded quali-

Th: (blocking Miles with his hand)
Hang on, hang on. We've spoken
about this before, Miles. You
say your mother often opens her
mouth when she doesn't know
what she's talking about.
You've said she guesses your
thoughts, so it's not just this
instance. (to mother) What
do you think about this?

Mo: Well, I think he's wrong, ob-
viously. I think if it was
bothering him that he didn't
feel I was spending enough
time with him, then he should
have said something about that.

Miles: (shaking his head, completely
exasperated) I never said that.
Never said that. I'm just dis-
agreeing. ...

Mo: (interrupting) You see, I'm
assuming something because of
his attitude, and his attitude
is that he's not comfortable

fication, implying that
this doesn't happen all
the time.

Again, I must work to pre-
vent the conflict from
being submerged.

Mother misinterprets
Miles, suggesting that
his real wish is only to
be infantilized.

The effort to mobilize
Miles' aggression pays
off. He disagrees, and
disengages from his mother.

with what's been going on in the past week, and he's stated that on the way over here and just now. He's angry, and he's been treating me badly.

Th: And he's saying that you've been treating him badly.

The objective is to get the mother to refocus on her son's needs.

Mo: And he's saying that I don't know what's going on ...

Miles: (interrupting) That I've been treated unfair because I have to tell her wherever I go, what time I'm going to be home. I have to leave her a note. And (yelling desperately) she doesn't do any of that. None whatsoever.

That annoys me to death! I told you that on the way over here.

Notice the suicidal language.

Mo: (softly, patronizing) I just said we had a discussion about it.

Mother does not respond to, or acknowledge, Miles'

Miles: Yeah, we did have a discussion about it, and you just said that you know exactly what's going on with me. You think I need to come to therapy, but you haven't been around for the

plea. Instead, she implies that the matter has already been discussed and resolved.

past two weeks, Mom, so how do you know? (yelling) We've had dinner together once this week. I don't have a problem with it; (laughs bitterly) I really don't.

Mo: You obviously do.

Miles: I don't. All I want to know is where you are at, in case I have to get hold of you, and what time you're going to be home. That's all I wanna know.

Miles has just formulated and articulated a clear view of reality. But, in the subsequent comment, notice what happens to this adult effort. First, Miles' expression of reality is mocked by mother, who laughingly disclaims his truth. Then, father seems to follow her. Without the support of the therapist, Miles would be lost. Why does father join mother? Possibly this is a manifestation of a "delinquency contract", where each exonerates the other's irresponsibility, just so long as each conceals it.

Mo: (laughing) Miles, you make it sound like I've been nowhere in sight for two weeks. It's not true. (mother looks to father, who joins in the laughter).

Th: (very serious, leans forward,
toward and close to mother) No!
Miles is talking very straight to
you. Very straight.

Mo: (more seriously) Yes, he is.

Th: And very clear.

Mo: And it's not so. He acts
like

Th: All right, then talk with
your son about it.

Mo: I did. I already told him
that he's absolutely wrong.

Miles: (hopelessly resigned) Fine.
Your're right. Okay, it's no
big deal. I don't need to
come here anymore, then. You
two can come for a million
years, I don't care. But I
don't need it. So everything
is fine. You can do whatever
you want.

Emasculated, Miles
regresses into de-
pression.

Th: Hold it a second. (looks to
mother) Miles is saying that he
doesn't know what's out with you.

Here, to preempt regression and premature closure,
mother and son have been pushed to deal again with each other.

Their transaction is urged way beyond its usual end point. Below, with the mother refuting Miles' reality, Miles attempts to supply the evidence. Mother then switches levels. It is no longer "what" happened that's at issue, but "why" it happened. She is a slippery fighter.

Mo: Miles is saying that I don't know what's going on with him because I haven't been around.

Miles: No, you haven't been around me.

Mo: That's not true.

Miles: (sighs) You've seen me maybe four times in the last two weeks.

Mo: Why is that, Miles?

Miles: Because you've been out, and I've been out. I'm home, and you're not. Your coming home at 9:30 a.m. isn't my idea of being around.

Mo: (dismissingly) Oh, come on.

She tries to silence him.

Miles: (furious) Come on, what! The dog woke me up at 6 o'clock. I heard you come into the house at 9:30, so don't "oh come on" me.

Might Miles also be exposing his mother's behavior to his father?

Mo: (defensively) How many times was that?

Miles: (yelling) Once. And then you're home at 4, 5 o'clock in the morning the other nights.

Mo: (defensively) Oh.

Miles: (bitterly) Yeah.

Th: (interrupting) Excuse me a moment. (turns to father) Would it be okay if you would step out for a moment and wait in the lobby?

Fa: Sure. (gets up and leaves)

As the content now suggests that Mrs. Barron has a sexual life, a boundary is demarcated by asking father to leave the room. While parents in divorcing families must be addressed together around their shared functions, which endure to some extent despite the split, the therapy must also support the realistic boundaries of their divorced status. In the excerpt above, as Miles increasingly reveals content from mother's private life, it appears appropriate to support a firm boundary. Thus, father is excused from the session.

Miles feels not only depressed, but despairing, on the verge of exploding in anger. The affect of the cumulative power of mother's defenses (and father's) becomes evident. It is of homicidal proportions. "She can annoy me to the point that I almost kill her," he says. This rage is the psychological flip-side of Miles' deep depression and

hopelessness. In an attempt to unbalance the field's forces, I join Miles.

Th: (addresses mother softly) See if you can tune into what Miles is saying. He's saying it really passionately, and he's being straight and honest with you.

Mo: What's he saying?

Th: What do you think he's saying?

Mo: That he's annoyed because I should tell him every minute of where I'm spending my time. Is that what you're saying?

Mother again distorts Miles' request. For Miles to demand more is for him to be a baby; therefore, he had better not ask.

Miles: (poignantly) You don't tell me anything. "Where are you going?" "Over to New Jersey." Terrific. Good, wonderful.

Mo: What would you like me to tell you?

Miles: (firmly) Where in New Jersey, Mother, or leave a phone number or something, where I can reach you. That's all I want. That's all I want.

Mo: Why?

Mother is scared her son might block her expanding life.

Miles: (incredulously) So I can get hold of you if I need to. That's why. Why else, Mom? You'd have no idea what I was doing. I could fall off a bridge, and you'd have no idea.

Miles' request is quite reasonable. He also expresses suicidal fantasies.

Mo: (maliciously) Well, you do have another parent.

Feeling cornered, mother detours and distracts.

Miles: Oh yeah. I do. Shame he's away all the time, isn't it.

Mo: (triumphantly) Aah. So.

Miles: Doesn't bother me. You guys decided I was going to live with you, so you've got it.

Th: Stick with what's going on between the two of you. Because what's going on between the two of you is good. You guys are talking straight about something that's very important. (sympathetically) And let me share something with you. That you (to mother) spoke to me last time about the fact that

I (1) pull them back on track and begin to move them across the threshold toward demystification; (2) utilize as leverage my connection with each, established previously in individual sessions, to coax them further; (3) frame their process

there were things you wanted to talk to your son about, but had neglected to do so. Miles spoke to me about the fact that he wanted to know more about your life - about the things that you wanted to tell him about. Nothing special. No big deal. Happens all the time. That you're living a life, and he wants to share some of it, wants to know something about it.

Miles: I don't want to know anything about it. I just want to know where she's at.

Mo: That's sharing my life.

Miles: (again, hopelessly resigned) You don't have to share anything. That's fine with me.

Mo: (sympathetically) No, it isn't. That's not fine with you at all. And the fact is that I haven't told you about it because of a lot of things. I haven't been comfortable with it, initially, and I didn't know if it would be a big deal for you. And obvious-

as "everyday," thereby decontaminating it.

Mother concedes both her fear and her misreading of her son's need, his need to

ly, by not telling you, it has turned into a big deal. But I met somebody, and I've been seeing him occasionally. And I've been spending a lot of time with him. And the difficulty is, he's 24 years old.

know.

Mother still obfuscates by contradicting herself when she says first that she sees him "occasionally", and then that she spends a "lot of time with him."

On one level, it might appear as if Mrs. Barron, by revealing details of her personal life to her son, violated a generational boundary and perpetuated precisely the enmeshment which the therapy aimed to counter. However, when mis- or incomplete information and denial underpin the enmeshment, the therapist must test the assumption that less infantilizing withholding and more straight talk on mother's part will become a vehicle to assist differentiation. The desired result here is that, by knowing, Miles' need to know will become less compelling. As he begins to see his mother more clearly, distance is placed between her and him. "Knowledge", in this sense, frees him and restores choice. Of course, the therapist must be ready to monitor what and how much Mrs. Barron reveals. But these revelations from mother to son never became excessive. Mrs. Barron and Miles did not venture beyond what was appropriate.

Mother talks further about her new relationship, but the therapy will not dwell on this, which is secondary to the larger issues of intrusion, her not telling Miles enough, and

her infantilization of him. These are all components of the enmeshment against which the therapist is working. For example, when Miles at one point cries, his mother leans over and sensually rubs his neck, then his thigh. When Miles then angrily shakes her off, the therapist says, "16-17 year-olds often don't like to be touched," using a developmental framework to establish boundaries. When she later suggests that the secrets and enmeshment are "just recently," Miles, when invited to resist her, sobs "No, its been going on for the past ... God knows how long." The therapist then asks her why "talking straight to Miles is so difficult."

Mo:	Er (thinks) Because I don't want him to be hurt.	This is a reference to their pattern of conflict avoidance, which promotes their enmeshment.
Miles:	(depressed) But think. You're hurting me more by not telling me.	
Mo:	(sadly) Yes, I'm beginning to realize that. I didn't think that was true before. But I'm learning that lesson very fast. (Silence)	
Th:	(Whispering, but with powerful conviction. Looking at mother, but clearly indicating Miles.) He's a good guy, this. He talks very straight. He really does.	I warmly support Miles' growth-promoting efforts. The intensity of this

Mo: He's a terrific person. He is.
I love him a lot.

Th: He's saying that by withholding
from him, you hurt him more.

Mo: Yes ... Ignorance is bliss, it's
not, is it? (mother smiles and
shakes her head, as if she has
learned something.) What would
you like to know, Miles?

Miles: (negatively) I don't know, Mom.
At this point, I don't want ...

Th: (interrupts) Yes, there's a lot.
It's been going on since God
knows when.

Mo: Yes. A lot. Since Lord knows
when. When something bothers
you, you're just going to have
to come out with it and tell me.

support runs counter to
Miles' earlier efforts to
minimize the conflict with
his mother.

Mother's is a statement
of separation.

Miles, in response, begins
to neutralize his mother.
This is an aspect of
Miles' contribution to the
enmeshment. When she is
ready to disengage, he is
not. This reveals the
rididity of the subsystem.
Anticipating Miles' homeo-
static balancing effort, I
enter to join Miles with
his own phrase and under-
line his competence.

Miles: You knew it bothered me - you knew it bothered me. You just didn't want to face it. I've spoken to you about this before. Come on, Mom, don't play dumb. You knew that it bothered me. You didn't want to face it. You wanted to see what you wanted to see, that's all. That is all.

Mo: I'm really amazed.

Miles: Amazed at what? Why? Because I've grown up, and you haven't realized it.

Mo: Haven't I realized it?

Miles (sneeringly) I don't know if you've realized it or not, Mom.

Mo: Why did you say that?

Miles: I don't need you there to hold my hand all the time, I really don't.

Mo: (sadly) Well, there are some times when it would be nice if you could hold my hand, wouldn't it?

Miles pushes aside hypocrisy.

Miles describes the rigid hierarchy that has prevailed, in which his assertion of himself is denied.

Mother is amazed at how deeply her son knows her.

As Miles talks of his growing maturity, mother asks if she still has a place. Her only model for herself

Miles: No. Because I can do pretty close to everything on my own, except for drive. Get around, I can really get around on my bike, too. I can cook, clean, talk to myself funny, too.

is that of caretaker of a vulnerable child; otherwise, she is nothing.

This model of the mother (i.e., mother to a small, vulnerable child) is now anachronistic and will need to be replaced. She cannot see another role for herself as mother, and she saddens. Miles, on the other hand, overshoots, moving from enmeshment to statements of pseudoautonomy and self-isolation. He says he can be completely self-sufficient. He is possibly also saying that alone in a despairing moment, he went "crazy," talking "funny" to himself. Both mother and son operate in extremes.

Mo: Everybody can do that, Miles.
It's just that we're talking about something else entirely.
Emotionally, you need other people.

Miles: That's what you think.

Mo: No, that's what I know.

Miles: (bitterly) How do you know?
Because it happened to you?

Mo: Mmm.

Miles: Well, I'm not you, Mom, face it. Miles clearly asserts
I'm not you. I may be from your his separateness.
side of the family, but I'm
not you.

Th: Okay. If I can interrupt. You
are not your mother, and (looking
at mother) your son is different
from you. I think you've
learned a few things from your
son today. He's not like you.
He does want to have it straight.
To know what it's about.

Ya. It's tough. I want to con-
gratulate both of you for making a
good beginning

Miles: (to mother, as the session ends) Can
I have a comb? (She gives him her
comb from her bag)

Miles' last gesture, asking his mother for a comb,
finds something she can do for him that restores her, in a
small way, to her accustomed responsible position, where she is
needed. This supports her, while he tries to emancipate
himself in a larger sense.

Disentanglement of Parental-Spousal Threads

Some therapists believe that couples unconsciously never divorce, remaining always psychically linked (C. Whitaker, Personal Communication, January, 1982). But, if the spouses are to evolve new and differentiated postseparation lives, some considerable degree of interpersonal and psychic unglueing will be inevitably necessary.

It is rare for this task to be easily accomplished. It is rare, too, for this process to occur symmetrically for the couple. Commonly, the process is more lopsided, with one partner's intense attachment outlasting the other's. Usually, such an attachment is transitional and adaptive, enduring for a while as the person assembles significant new life supports.

When the couple have children together, their process of uncoupling becomes exponentially more complex, since some parental ties must remain, and others must alter. Thus, developing the new relationship requires maintaining, developing, altering, and dropping different strands of the preseparation parental-spousal relationship. Usually this is more than a naturally evolving psychic process. It involves an active reworking of old strands.

This process of maintaining, developing, altering, and dropping different relationship strands is conceptually similar and comparable to both the normative transformation of parent-child ties within a developmental framework, and the

general orientation to working against dyadic or family enmeshment.

The risks for the couple, which the therapist must monitor, are that strands of their spousal and parental relationship may become muddled and fused; and that other strands, that have become anachronistic and need to be dropped, are not. They may become frozen, or they may continue to be utilized.

Mr. and Mrs. Barron struggled in this realm, muddling and fusing strands to their own, and their son's, detriment. At the service of their own relationship the mother, as has just been illustrated, and the father, too, inappropriately shut Miles out. For example, because the mother felt threatened that she would be replaced by one of the father's girlfriends, she forbade the father to expose or even tell Miles about that side of his life. The mother's expressed fear is rather commonplace early in divorce, but here the father allows this to control his own private life and his relationship with his son. To avoid any conflict with her, he agrees to keep Miles "in the dark" as he put it: the infantilizing shutout of Miles was symmetrical and contractual.

In this realm, too, Mrs. Barron's enveloping possessiveness (and enmeshment) ameliorates slowly, yielding in part to gentle, repeated discussion and ventilation, but also to more direct handling. At a later session, alone with Mrs. Barron, I speak to that side of her ambivalence -- her strengths -- that seeks change.

Th: What is this strange thing? A direct suggestion is made
Here you are, having a great that her response is ana-
time with a man, James, (mother's chronistic.
boyfriend). You know that he's
(your husband is) with a woman
or women, but your son is only
allowed to enjoy you with James.
He is not allowed to enjoy his
father, to get to see some of
his father's life.

Mo: (resisting the therapist) Oh, Notice how mother struggles
but he does, that's where you to throw me off, but I
are wrong. He absolutely does. persist.

Th: Well, he doesn't. He doesn't
get to see his father with women.

Mo: Well, er, he does. He told me
that he did last night. Miles
told me that he did. So he does,
in fact.

Th: All right. So he does, in fact,
but without your blessing.

Mo: (looks skeptical) Er, well, the Time is warped: mother
incident that you related, hap- argues that what is
pened a long time ago, after the happening "now" happened
separation. a long time ago.

Th: Yes. But apparently you still
feel ...

Mo: (interrupts) And now (pause), I still feel that way because ...
Yes, you're right.

Th: Look, your bond with Miles is tight, not fragile. Tempestuous, yes. But tight. Too tight. No one's going to come into his life and become another mother to him. I understand your fear, but the reality is you are his mother, and always will be. But I understand your feeling, and I think you are going to have to ...
(therapist looks around the room searching) put that feeling into a manila envelope or something

Mo: (smiles and acknowledges) Yes, I know. I know.

Th: ... And not let it get in the way of things.

Mo: Of things, yes.

Th: Because it will railroad the nice things that are happening at the moment. Which are that Miles is getting to know your

A language of boundaries (i.e., deenmeshment) is spoken. I do not try to take her "alive" feelings from her, but urge her instead to contain them.

life, and his father's life; and things are becoming more open.

Mo: Yes, absolutely, and we're all better for it.

Th: So even though you have the feeling, stick it away somewhere.

Mo: Yes, that's going to happen. Yes.

Th: And he and his father need to know openly from you that it's okay that their lives go the way they have to.

Mo: (slightly shocked) They both need to know that?

Th: (gently, but emphatically) Yes. They need to forge whatever they want to, together. It's a father and son. You're not going to get in the way of that, in the same way that you don't want him getting in the way of your relationship with your son.

Mo: (agrees) Yes. That's true. But, I also feel like Ron and Miles need the time just to be together.

Th: They have to work that out.

Mo: I know they do. And, it's not going as well as I'd hoped.

Mrs. Barron's engulfing and enmeshing style includes the wish to de-

Th: They have to work it out for fine and control the
better and worse. There's not father-son relationship.
much you can do. She is encouraged to
Mo: You're right. There isn't. suspend this desire and
I understand. back off.

Binding the couple more than a year and a half after the separation are relationship strands maintained, as will be seen, by a complex motivational mix of unresolved mourning, dependency, and duplicity. The manner in which these strands have become anachronistic, yet are still maintained, can often be revealed unexpectedly. For example, in a late session, the mother is complaining that the father, when returning Miles from a visit, parked in the driveway in such a way that her car was blocked. When tracking this episode, it emerged that the mother was leaving to visit her boyfriend, but didn't want to reveal this to the father: as a woman "alone", she still has a hold over him. She conveys to him that she is still in love with him, and is suffering, needing his money and his favors. This is at the service of maintaining togetherness and nonchange. As this is explored further, she reveals that "he comes over to make love to me every week ... or to have sex with me", and that this has continued throughout the separation. Mrs. Barron's modication, from "love" to "sex", probably reflects her increasing movement from involvement with Mr. Barron to disengagement from him. But with the secret

broken that she has a lover, the emotional divorce becomes more likely. She is not quite ready for that.

Consider, then, the situation. Some eighteen months after the separation, Mr. and Mrs. Barron remain sexually intimate. He comes over freely, and she takes no responsibility for telling him to leave. It is up to him. Meanwhile, both Mr. and Mrs. Barron are having affairs. The couple simply absorb the new into the old. Again, their proclivity to homogenize, rather than differentiate, prevails. They are in a cobweb, acting as though they are separated when they are not. For Miles, this arrangement is difficult. Of course, they conceal from him that their physical relationship continues. He is having to behave as if his parents are separated, while he knows they are not. He carries the burden of knowing when, according to his parents, he shouldn't know -- and probably would rather not. Remember Miles' initial symptoms. No wonder these included feelings of confusion and fear that he was going mad.

Problems with "endings" (or boundaries) are at the core of the family's difficulties. An aspect of the therapeutic task is to help Mrs. Barron let go of her husband, to help her, as she says, "get on with it". It is what she wants, but she has been too scared to face. For Miles to proceed with his life, his mother must proceed with hers. Of course, much of the therapy has been dealing, in one form or another, with this issue. Possibly, the fact that Mrs. Barron could reveal in therapy that she was still sexually involved with her

ex-husband and the manner in which she said it (i.e., "to make love ... or to have sex with me"), suggests she is nearly ready to drop this involvement. The fact that she does have a boyfriend facilitates this process considerably.

These changes necessarily entail the affective tasks concluding the end of the marriage: working through the natural themes of transition such as sadness, loss, fear, and anger. The therapist must be there for her, both to facilitate this task and for the rough moments she will have.

Here, a month later, she is beginning to "let go." Her description of rock-bottom affect is very honest.

Mo: The situation since we started coming here has changed dramatically between us, (i.e., she and her ex-husband) and how we relate to each other.

Th: How has it changed?

Mo: I'm beginning to cut the ties. And I'm not sure that I wanted to do it. But I think you're right. That's why I've thought about it, and I've decided I won't be able to grow and progress. And I was holding Ron to a position he didn't

want to be in necessarily, but he felt responsible that I was helpless and that he had to be involved in my life somehow. Because I was sharing everything with him and, in fact, you said - "you've separated but you're still married." (with emphasis) And, you were right! It was because I was sharing all the aspects of my life with him.

Th: Including what happens here.

Mo: Yes, including everything. I'm hoping that by doing this I'll be better for it.

Th: Is it difficult?

Mo: (nods slowly) Yes, it is.

Th: You're missing the tie with him?

Mo: (sadly) Mmm, yeah. (mother sighs deeply, and then cries. She and the therapist sit quietly. She dries her eyes.)

He saw her as "helpless" and "unleavable" because she shared selectively with him. She withheld from him that she was, in fact, developing a life of her own.

After each therapy session, father would call mother, who would relate what had transpired. "This" refers to mother's efforts to distance from her husband and create a boundary between them.

Th: (tenderly) Do you know what the tears are about?

(Silence)

Mo: Yes, I do ... (long silence, as mother collects herself). I dislike endings ... they're very difficult.

At the risk of oversimplification, this is, in essence, a core problem for each family member.

Th: What part of it is so difficult?

Mo: Just giving up. That's what is so damn hard just saying it's over, and it's finished. And maybe this is the only way I can get rid of it?

Th: Of?

Mo: (softly) The sadness. For a year and a half it's been there like a toothache, almost. Sometimes if I would let it, it could overwhelm me. It's letting something die.

The episodic sex with Mr. Barron, which had continued since the separation, could not obliterate the sadness of the separation.

The Therapy of Disengagement: Weaving New Connections

Much has been written in the family therapy literature about therapeutic techniques for promoting deenmeshment or the disengaging of enmeshed systems. Possibly, this emphasis reflects the idealization and ascendancy of the value of

independence in our Western society. Less, however, has been written of the therapeutic techniques for connecting distant or disengaged dyads. With regard to the family triangle, it often seems to be assumed that, if the "offending" overinvolved dyad can be pried loose, then the other, more distant, relationship will naturally or spontaneously heal. The underlying idea is that when the impediment of the overinvolved dyad is removed, the youngster will naturally rotate to the previously underinvolved relationship. This sometimes occurs, but often does not. Its occurrence cannot be taken for granted. When an improved relationship does not naturally evolve, the therapist must then actively "get to work" on assembling linkages.

The work that Mr. Barron and his son did on their relationship required active sponsorship in therapy, in order to avoid their drifting again to disengagement. Over many years, and not just as a consequence of the separation, distance and strands of shallowness prevailed, in spite of a regular visitation arrangement. To facilitate Miles' deenmeshment from his mother, as well as to offer father and son an opportunity for intimacy, the therapy focused on expanding and deepening the connections between the two.

In such a situation, the process of father and son getting to know each other will be slow, with their both perpetuating the shallowness through all manner of rapid sweeping under the rug, leaving both with unmet needs. This pattern becomes for them a reciprocal, self-fulfilling bind which confirms their worst perceptions of each other: for the

son, an image of his father as rejecting; for the father an image of his son as unreachable. The job in therapy, in various way, is to actively prevent this sweeping under the rug. The therapist must labor against their rushing by slowing down and prolonging; against their mumbling by rendering clear and amplifying; against their glossing over issues by repeating them; against their holding back by pushing forward; against their giving up by persisting.

This process is facilitated by the careful orchestration of subsystem composition. I decided to meet with father and son together as a dyad, without the mother. The goal was to place them in an enactive mode and seek to reverse their efforts to erase issues and keep their distance. I also decided to meet alone with each of them to identify and highlight issues, ignite motivation, and consolidate gains. In effect, the plan was to work in flow, back and forth from part to whole, whole to part.

Father-son connectedness was explored via the metaphor of telephone calls. The arena which is chosen here is little discussed in the literature but is singularly pertinent to separated families -- that is, contact with each other "over and above the (visitation) arrangement." Contact outside of the schedule can signify a relationship that is genuine and spontaneous: an "off-schedule loving," as it were. Clinicians often see the pathological consequences when rules that govern off-schedule contact are too loose or too rigid. When the rules are too loose, participants tend to feel intruded upon;

and when the rules are too rigid, participants tend to be left yearning for contact beyond the allotted time. The limited relationship that Mr. Barron has with Miles reflects, in part, a rigidity that inhibits off-schedule contact and leaves both father and son disappointed.

Th: Do you think your son would phone you if he wanted to spend time with you, over and above the arrangement? Would he call? Because you're talking about his reticence. Why don't you check it out (i.e., talk to Miles about this)?

Father-son connectedness is explored via the metaphor of telephone calls. I will not stay central, because my centrality would maintain their disconnection. Instead, I am attempting an enactive mode.

Fa: (to therapist) Well, er. Let me say this first. About a year ago or so, Miles may have tried to call me a couple of times and couldn't get me, and decided that I was never home and never called again. I don't know how true that is. It's a gut feeling I have. Er, so I don't know.

Father knows that he was not available to his son.

Th: Check it with Miles.

Again, an enactive

Fa: (turns to his son) Would you do that?

mode of face-to-face encounter is pressed.

Miles: Yeah, I have done it, but you're not home. It doesn't give me that idea you're never home, but I usually wait 'til you call me 'cause then ... (his voice trails off)

Fa: What kind of times did you call? (Miles doesn't respond) Were you upset because I wasn't there?

At first, father explores digitally, but then moves to the more pertinent affective issue. Miles' denial is the first of many that will follow and is at the service of protecting both his father and himself.

Miles: (quickly, defensively) Oh no, no.

Fa: (quickly) Okay ... let me ask you this. You have my numbers at work. Would you ever think to call me there?

The mumbling by Miles and the rushing by both father and Miles, to the point where they often speak simultaneously, maintain the shallowness of their dialogue and avoid depth.

Miles: Yes. I have but ... (he mumbles almost inaudibly, behind his hand) there are 50 people to go through.

Fa: (not listening, enters quickly over Miles' mumbling) Okay.

Well, that's one way to get to me.

Th: Hang on. (slowly) What Miles said there was that to get to you he has to go through 50 people. In other words, it's one hell of a process.

Miles: Not really. It's just - okay, wait a minute. Hold. I hate that. It bothers me. (laughs bitterly) Hold. I hate that (laughs).

I backtrack to amplify and articulate what Miles was attempting to hide. Miles' mumbling is a rather typical adolescent move, asking without asking, and then later accusing the other of not being interested. Saying "not really," Miles first makes his patterned automatic reaction to his parents, in which he downplays any complaint of his parents. But then, taking courage, he is bitterly forthright.

Fa: (laughs anxiously) Well, I don't know how to get around that because if you call over there, Pat will give me the message and ask you to hold if I'm on the line, and come in and tell me. That will hurry up the process a little (silence).

Th: I'm hearing underneath this that
Miles is saying that you're very
difficult to get hold of, and
you're saying...

Miles: (interrupts) But then again, I'm
very difficult to get hold of too.

Having expressed a need, albeit somewhat camouflaged, to reach his father, Miles again retreats. His timing is exquisite. He protects his father, just as Mr. Barron is being held accountable. The therapist then provokes father - indicating that Miles has "given up" on him. The challenge is for the father to retrieve his son. But yet again, Miles retreats. He says, "it doesn't bother me when I can't get through because I know I'm very difficult to get hold of too". Both his own and his father's vulnerability are shielded in this interprotective move. However, father now does not completely buy Miles' defense, but he does not push further either.

Fa: (skeptically, but supportively)
Yeah, but ... (silence)

Th: I have a feeling Miles is saying I then take the provoca-
he's sort of given up on you tion further.
(father) in some way.

Miles: No I haven't given up at all. Miles sustains his pro-
Oh, God. tectiveness of his father.

Th: (Therapist holds his gaze on father) At some level, that's what I hear, and your gut got that.

Fa: Yup. Well I think it's got there. Yeah. That he's given up getting to me off the scheduled day, and I don't like that.

Th: Mmm. Schedule. (therapist leans his body from father across in the direction of Miles, nonverbally indicating linkage). Do you ever (i.e., father) get to Miles off the schedule?

Fa: Occasionally.

Miles: But I'm not easily contactable.

In spite of Miles' efforts to make this theme "disappear", I prolong it. Father agrees and appropriately grounds the dialogue, once again, in the issue of off-scheduled contact.

Both verbally and nonverbally, I address the flexible reciprocity essential for a meaningful relationship.

As Miles in the transcript above signals father "to back off", father, instead, in the transcript below "hangs on", courageously digging deeper and preventing Miles from using his defense of self-isolation. As this process continues, it will work against father and son remaining disengaged. In part, the successful outcome of this process of connecting father and son will depend on father not underestimating Miles' tenacity in blocking his father out.

Thus, a little later in the session, Mr. Barron returns to the salient issue:

Fa: But you're right. The issue of Miles' feeling comfortable about reaching me. How do we solve that? I've got to believe you gave up because you couldn't get me a couple of times and ... How do we turn that around?

Miles: We can't. I don't know.

Fa: What would you like to see happen? If I could make anything happen.

Miles: I don't know.
(Silence)

Miles' pessimism and negativism makes father's task extremely difficult.

Fa: How about if I had a direct phone for you? (taps his son on his knee in a friendly way) A red phone, a hot line (smiles, and Miles smiles in response) What do you think?

The process and content of their interaction are here congruent.

Miles: Doesn't make any difference.

Fa: Do you think you would call if you knew you'd get right to me?

Miles: Dunno.

<p>Fa: (struggling to reach his son) Okay, er, all right. Is having to go through someone, is that really the issue or ... could it be that maybe you think I don't care if you call me, so I don't make myself available.</p>	<p>Courageously, father digs deeper and becomes more honest.</p>
<p>Miles: (moves about anxiously) It doesn't bother me going through people, you know ... (silence)</p>	<p>As Miles signals his father to "back off", father is encouraged to "get back on".</p>
<p>Th: (looks to father) I think you raised a good point. (looks to Miles) Did you hear what your father said?</p>	<p>The intervention both acknowledges father's effort and further encourages connectedness.</p>
<p>Miles: (shakes his head) No.</p>	
<p>Th: No, I thought not. (to Miles) You came in very quickly. (to father) Say it again. You said something very important.</p>	<p>Repetition is encouraged to counteract Miles' tendency to make issues "disappear".</p>
<p>Fa: Is it because you don't like going through people, or is it because you feel I don't care enough to make myself available?</p>	
<p>Miles: No, it wasn't that, because I know you did make yourself available.</p>	

Fa: (gently) Yeah, but somehow,
Miles, you're not that bashful
talking to people I work with.

Miles: (his voice rising in consternation)
I just didn't get a chance to
call. That's all there is to it.
It doesn't make a whole lot of
difference.

Fa: (appeasing) Okay. I'm just try-
ing to get an understanding here.
(Silence)

Th: (slowly, quietly) Yes. This is
difficult, because I think for a
long time the two of you have had
a more distant relationship and
er, you're in the process of re-
thinking what it is that you
want -- remodeling it. And these
are good, important issues you're
talking about. (pause) I agree.
It goes further than whether
Miles can get through to you on
the telephone, and having to
wait on hold (turns slowly to
Miles) It goes further than hold,
hey?

Miles: (nods) I guess. Yes.

Th: You've been on hold for a long time ... Miles' original metaphor is repeated.

Fa: (nods and interrupts) Yeah. I've got a feeling that probably it goes to - if he didn't have to hold, do I really anyway want to talk to him, when I pick up the phone. (Father and therapist nod quietly at each other. Miles looks at the ceiling.) Miles walls his father out.

Yeah. If I had time to talk to Miles ... that's where it's at ... probably. I always have time to talk to Miles. The fact is that I never got the message across so he knows that ... So. Father accurately posits the necessary solution - to convey that he is there for Miles.

(long, poignant silence).

Dyadic sessions, such as the above, alternate with individual ones. Relationship issues identified in the individual sessions can then be purposefully utilized to weave connections. By way of example Miles, alone with me at a later session, revealed his idealized perception of his father.

Miles: My dad seemed out of reach to me because he was never there. I knew who he was, but he seemed out of reach, like a god, as it were.

In part because the father was seldom there, but also because of secrecy and misinformation, Miles saw his father as somewhat unreachable -- flawless perhaps, without problems. As Mr. Barron works to repair the gap in his relationship with his son, he must work to let Miles see him as fallible, down to earth, reachable, and easy to come to. The overall task in therapy was to uncover this issue with Miles, and then, as in the transcript below, cross-check and mark it as a fitting issue for father to deal with in his relationship with his son.

Th: A problem for Miles is that he feels he has to be strong, that he has to be good, that he has to be brave, self-sufficient.

Fa: Well, Miles always saw me as the superstar in his eyes. Always fixing cars. Always going out to work. All the promotions I always got.

Th: Then you've got an important goal. To get him to see you as

someone different. You are not only the superstar. Hell, you have problems, and when you were his age, had problems. Where to go, what to do, how to do it. Does he know that?

Fa: I think he's seeing that a little bit now. It's not only personal problems. He's always seen me where I could take anything and in five minutes fix it. Or at least in his eyes I can. And now being involved in things (together), like this car for instance, something different happened. We tried to do something, and my instincts told me I was not going to fix it. But he wanted to put it together. So, instead of following my instincts, I followed his; and I didn't fix it. We had to take it apart again. But it looked like my decision to do that. So, there was something that Dad didn't fix. Dad was wrong. Well, that's okay.

Father and son had evolved a project together: to buy an old car for Miles, work on it, and fix it together. To be helpful to his son, and in the interests of improving their relationship, father becomes "unnatural", going against his instincts. In this context, such duplicity is a form of consideration. Mr. Barron is big enough not to have to compete with his son.

I can handle that. My ego can handle that these days. So even something like that. It was important for him to see that I screwed up somewhere.

Th: Sure. Great.

And, in another session, I met alone with Mr. Barron to further promote his efforts to get through to Miles. One aspect of their disconnection involved father-son "tit-for-tat", retaliatory standoffs, which had no clear beginning. Miles, unable to reach his father, would withdraw angrily and rebuff his father's efforts to reach him. Father, in turn, feeling rejected, would not make it easy for Miles to reach him either. In this session, my primary appeal to Mr. Barron was for staying power -- for him not to give up on Miles. The task required father's persistence and tenacity - not intrusiveness - to "be there" when Miles was ready. On this occasion, the father was shown a videotape segment of him and his son interacting during an earlier session. Mr. Barron was encouraged to focus on and dissect a specific moment of father-son disconnection when Miles eluded him. The video was used to highlight and consolidate changes already begun in the father-son relationship, as well as to mobilize motivation for more targeted change.

As Mr. Barron in subsequent sessions became more skilled at recognizing such moments, he sustained his

availability, refusing to give up. Gradually, Miles became more open and trusting.

In the next excerpt, from a session a month later, father and son both speak of how they are revising their ways of dealing with each other: father, trying to attune himself more sensitively to his son's needs and not to emerge intrusive; Miles, trying to hide less. The task in which they are engaged is one of renegotiating the boundary issues of openness and privacy. They check directly as they monitor new ways of being together.

Fa: I think Miles feels open. He's been having some problems with his girlfriend and, not that he goes into detail, but he wasn't feeling too hot, and I asked him what's bothering him, and he didn't get defensive. Which has been a trait. He said he'd had a little problem last night.

I guess I could ask you, Miles, after you told me that, and I think I let it go at that point. Before, I used to hound you all the time. Was it better this time?

Miles had met this girl who was his own age, about a month earlier.

Mr. Barron has discovered that by disengaging and "letting it go" at the crucial moment, he retains the threads of engagement, because Miles doesn't back

Miles: Yeah. You used to hound me every five minutes. What's wrong? What's wrong?

Th: And you would not respond.

Miles: Well, it's not that I wouldn't respond, but I'd get defensive and say, "nothing, nothing, nothing".

Fa: Yes. I'd just drive him further into an emotional state by asking him.

Th: You'd sort of put Dad on hold.
(Both father and son respond by nodding in agreement and smiling broadly in recognition.)

Miles: Keep asking me, and I'll teach you (laughs warmly).

off. He then asks Miles for feedback. Miles acknowledges his active defense of isolating himself.

A few weeks after this session, therapy with the family ended. Miles, at this time, was enjoying his relationship with his girlfriend, and he was spending two weeks of a summer vacation with his father, with whom he felt he was getting along well. His relationship with his mother, however, remained tense. But Miles was no longer depressed, and he and his mother preferred to leave things as they were.

At the two-year follow-up, Miles continued to do well. He had left high school prior to completing grade 12,

and he had gone on to work first in a cycle shop and then for a restaurant chain. There he worked long hours as an assistant manager, was well liked, and was about to be promoted to manager. Away from work he spent time with a girlfriend with whom he had been involved for six months, and he tinkered with his car. He described his relationship with his mother as "much better. We have our things; we go at each other, but nothing like that (when they entered therapy). Then I wasn't expressing anything." Over the two years, there had been no recurrence of the major depression that brought Miles into therapy initially. His parents now had no contact with each other. His father had been transferred out of state, but despite the distance, he and Miles remained in touch.

Summary

Modulated change is required of a family in which the spouses are divorcing. When the family becomes stuck in this process, unable to change, relationships become strained and the youngsters, in particular, are unable to proceed with their developmental tasks. In this rigid interpersonal field, the guiding principle of therapy is to enhance the repertoire of transactional options. This is done by helping the family disentangle those threads of their relationship that are anachronistic from those that must endure. This is done also

by helping them to develop new relationships in a drastically reshaped postseparation family, in which the potential for growth is enhanced.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOME CHARACTERISTIC OPERATIONS AND TASKS OF AN ADEQUATE OR "GOOD ENOUGH" SEPARATION

In Chapters Five and Six, the relevance of the family-based concepts to an understanding of the therapeutic process was presented via two clinical case studies.

In the following Chapter, these structural concepts and others will be used to explore the successful coping efforts of a family who did not enter or require treatment, after a separation.

An understanding of a phenomenon is expanded, and hopefully deepened, by the study of the variousness of that phenomenon. The two previous chapters have examined dysfunctional arrangements of the emerging postseparation family, in which the adolescent's development is penalized. But the literature on divorce, because it tends to be primarily clinically oriented, provides little in the way of "role models of successful divorced families" (Ahrons, 1981, p. 426). This chapter will look at an example of a "good enough" postseparation arrangement, where the parents were successful in shepherding their adolescent youngster -- whose name is Evert -- through this period without professional help.

Evert Dale is now almost 17 years old, and he continues to do well four years after his parents' permanent separation. Without confronting the complex issues of what constitutes "normalcy" and "psychological health", this youngster -- when evaluated according to most reasonable criteria -- must be regarded as progressing adequately or "well enough". When last seen, he had developed into a good-looking, lanky young man who makes comfortable contact, has an engaging smile, and leads a busy life. There were no indications that he was depressed or particularly anxious. He is in his final years in high school, is doing quite well there, and is preparing himself for college. He has always been an enthusiastic and talented chess player, having won many trophies, and has a group of friends who have played together over the years. More recently, he has been showing an interest

in heterosexual exploration, going along to parties with friends and beginning to date. Last summer he worked odd jobs to make money. He borrowed additional funds from his family to buy a racing bike and is testing himself with friends in road riding.

When Evert was last interviewed, his modest parents were pleased with their son's accomplishments:

Mo: Almost 17 years old in North Philadelphia is a Philadelphia, and he's never high-crime area of the had trouble with negative type city. things. I think he has done pretty well!

And in a separate interview:

Fa: Evert's doing fine, I'm proud to say. He's been no problem and doing very well in school. He seems to have his head on right.

I: You must be proud.

Fa: Yes. Very, very.

The Dale Family

Paul and Cindy Dale are a black, working-class couple who met and began dating in their adolescence. They married when he was 20 years, and she a year younger. A year later, their only child, Evert, was born. Throughout the marriage and

up to the present time Mr. Dale, often working long hours, was a road construction worker for the City of Philadelphia. It was a job in which he felt stuck, and which he "hated with a passion". But it provided, as he put it, "a check on Fridays". His wife worked initially as a typist, and then she moved into an increasingly successful and rewarding secretarial job. Serious difficulties in the marriage began to emerge at least two years prior to the separation, and the couple briefly entered marital counseling together. Some months later, Mr. Dale withdrew from counseling, while Mrs. Dale continued to meet with the counselor on an ad hoc basis for the next year. Difficulties between them increased. She found him rigid and unappreciative, and they fought constantly. She feels they grew and developed differently. Mr. Dale tends to blame their failure on his job and his own inability to communicate and deal with his frustrations. In July, 1979, 14 years after they had married, Mrs. Dale left with their son, who was 13 years old at the time. They stayed a month with a female friend of Mrs. Dale's, and then she found an apartment in which she and Evert still live. This apartment is in the general neighborhood of both the family house where Mr. Dale still lives and the houses of his and her parents (Evert's grandparents), whom she and Evert see often.

Mother-Son Relationship

As had been described, potential hazards (and benefits such as enhanced social competency) exist for the custodial

parent and her adolescent youngster during the crucial postseparation period. The pull of personal needs, at a time of fundamental structural change, creates tensions and forces which test the capacities of the participants. The previous two case studies have indicated how, during this period, these tensions and forces can lead to extreme and rigid enmeshment and disengagement, as well as to collapsed hierarchies.

Looked at from a slightly different perspective, the challenge at this time is to maintain adequate Cohesion or proximity. What is needed is a degree of connectedness that allows for intimacy and support without engulfment and, at the same time, allows for separation, individuation, and autonomy without isolation. In a context of appropriate proximity, an appropriate Control Hierarchy exists, whereby the parent is clearly "in charge", but where flexibility is also a hallmark.

In the following excerpts, different facets of this 'healthy' mother-son relationship are explored. In the manner that different tributaries lead to the psychopathology of enmeshment and disengagement, for example, health is also multidetermined. And, as is often the case with normalcy, many of these healthy processes occur relatively 'quietly' and unsensationally as family members negotiate the often mundane details of daily life.

1. A Developmental Perspective

Mrs. Dale's relationship with her son had always been a close one. After the separation, this closeness was

maintained. It evolved over the years as Evert moved from early to middle adolescence. Despite the major changes in the family, there is no evidence that this closeness slipped significantly into overinvolvement, or that the mother utilized Evert inappropriately, even when she herself was needy.

In this excerpt from I-3, Mrs. Dale's elastic developmental perspective is revealed: she is encouraging of her son's gradual movement toward autonomy, but does not feel the change will bring loss of closeness.

I: Do you think you're closer with him than you were before?

Mo: I think I'm closer, but a different close -- um, I guess because I respect the fact that he is now a sixteen year-old boy. The closeness is not the same. He's not the kid that I used to put up in my arms and cuddle. I still feel close, but it's not the same. He's more able to communicate a lot of things to me about himself, and I communicate things to him, and we get to talk about a lot of things that go on, outside our house, like with my in-laws or

Mother has a respectful developmental sense, a sense of change over time. She describes: 1. Evert's increasing movement toward an adult two-way relationship.

with things on television or something like that. Some things I don't do that I used to do, like watch TV. Like he even said yesterday, "I'm no longer discussing TV programs because you're a party pooper - you fall asleep, you can never watch till eleven o'clock anyway." But, um, it's a pleasurable-type closeness, but it's still not the same. He doesn't have the need for some of the things I have to offer as "mommy". He does have the need for some of the things that I have to offer as a mother. I find myself more like a maintenance person for him, a support system. I've instilled a lot of things in him and now it's just a matter of keeping the guidelines there to help him keep going further. I want him to go and learn things for himself and also give me my space, so I can do things for myself and

2. How, in gently teasing her, Evert assumes briefly (and then explores) parity and ascendancy.

3. How he no longer needs nurturance.

Mother defines her role now as respectfully (and confidently) encouraging and affirming him -- from the "acorn to the oak", as it were. Mother indicates that she intends to encourage Evert's independence, not choke him.

know that mom's still around,
type thing.

2. A Secure Sense of Self

A fundamental facet of mother and son's ability to maintain closeness without enmeshment and engulfment is that both are solidly grounded in a secure sense of self, of who each is. Mother obviously scrutinizes and honestly takes responsibility for herself. Evert appears to internalize his mother's respect for boundaries. One result is that clear boundaries are maintained between them, and a differentiated style develops, with Evert not accepting inappropriately assigned blame, and with mother taking responsibility for her own inappropriateness. Although not applicable here, one possible danger was that Evert might become "too differentiated", and not allow others to affect him. His asset, then, would have become a defense and a liability.

Mo: But he doesn't seem to take it
personal if I holler just at him,
if he hasn't done anything.

He'll say, "What's with that
coffee - you're drinking too
much coffee." I think it was
one day this week in the morning.
I was getting ready to leave, and
something he had done that was

Evert protectively allows
his mother an alibi.

very minimum, but I raised my voice at him. I'm very on edge because of the hives, and they were getting on my nerves, and he was sitting in the back of the car and said, "do me a favor, it's a nice day out, don't have one of those caffeine fits on me, I can't handle it at this point." You know, you can't do anything else but laugh. I said, "okay". And, at that time, I hadn't even had any coffee. So he said, "It must be in your system...." He won't let you put anything on him. He'll tell you, "I didn't do it. It's not my guilt, I ain't gonna deal with that type thing." And he responds that way all the time. And I think that's my way of talking, so he picks up the same kind of language that I use. He will tell you he's not paranoid, 'cause that's the way I respond.

Mother recognizes her own responsibility for her inappropriateness. Evert's "caffeine statement" is a dyadic signal that she is going too far. Mother was probably "down", and Evert's response makes her laugh, a time-tested "anti-depressant". Her laughter is genuine appreciation of her son's accomplishment in dealing with her. Evert will not allow his sense of self to be eroded. Imagine the alternative sequence if he snapped back defensively at her. Evert's behavior is familiar to mother. She sees herself in him, and likes it. In the manner that his mother carries herself with confidence, so Evert does the same.

3. Defending the Generational Boundary

But Evert's movement toward independence, grounded in a secure sense of self, is not necessarily an omnipresent or continuous phenomenon: moments of regression, when he inappropriately crosses boundaries, are also a part of this process toward independence. In this sense, adolescence is often described as a time when young adult and preadolescent features coexist in the youngster. This particular adolescent quality takes on added significance in the postseparation family. With the father absent, the adolescent often moves inappropriately to fill or protect the space vacated, to become not just a young adult or young man, but also his mother's husband. In the following transcript, an incident is described where the adolescent moves to trespass the generational boundary, and the mother counters this delicately.

I: How about your relationship with
Evert these days?

Mo: He tries to play the big daddy.

I: In what way?

Mo: Like yesterday, I was at my
mother's, and I was mentioning
that I was going out for this
dinner date. I have an al-
lergy reaction, so there's a
lot of foods that I can't eat.
So I was saying I didn't want

to go out to dinner with this new friend and break out in these hives and scare this person. And Evert said, "New friend?" in a bass type voice. I said, "I beg your pardon," and he said, "What do you mean -- new dinner date?" I said, "A new dinner date." He said "Oh." Then he let it go. But then what he did when I was at home, and I'm talking to this person on the phone, and he knew it was a male on the phone, he went in the refrigerator and when he came back past me, he had taken some ice off the freezer, a little piece, and while I'm on the phone, he put it down in my blouse. So I ignored that and kept on talking . So I got off the phone, and as I was doing something in the kitchen, he tried it again. He put the ice down there. I said, "Hold it, it wasn't funny the last time,

Mother first describes Evert as adult-like and paternal. She senses that he is trying to control her, and she immediately protects her own turf by signaling him, "I beg your pardon." This implies "watch it". At the same time, she protects Evert's defenses by not disclosing the issue of a new man. She could have said, "I don't belong to you or your father," but instead she lets this go. The "ice" maneuver is intended to distract her from heterosexual experimentation, from the rival on the phone. Evert's insecurity and neediness propel this move. Evert is pushing the

that was uncomfortable for me, so don't do that again." And he looked, like, hurt with this sad look on his face, which works every time on me. And he said he didn't mean to do it, and I said, "Oh, no, you meant to do that. You meant to put the ice in. You may not have meant for me to have that reaction, or for it to be uncomfortable for me, but you meant to do it." He said, "I apologize, I didn't mean to make you cold." I say, "okay", but you could tell he was hurt, his feelings were hurt. So he went on out of the room.

limits, and he goes too far.

I: What do you think was going on?

Mo: "Get off that phone, lady."

I: "Get off the phone, lady"?

Mo: It's okay to share a little bit, but it's like he has to make sure that whoever this is, it's not going to take 100% of me. So he kind of walks around to see how important this phone call is, or how important anything

Mother is finely tuned to Evert's sense of vulnerability.

is to me, to make sure he has a little space, er, some space, as far as the relationship with me is concerned.

Mother unconsciously senses that he needs more than "a little." He needs "some" space.

4. Problem Solving: When the Self is Not Enough

A prevailing view is that the range of difficulties encountered by adequately functioning families is similar to that encountered by dysfunctional families. A key difference, however, is that functional families solve their problems, while dysfunctional families do not (Epstein, Bishop, & Baldwin, 1982). The Dale family clearly had many problems with which they needed to deal. In a generic sense, the description of the family presented here is throughout either directly or indirectly concerned with their efforts to resolve potential or actual difficulties. With few exceptions, they were successful. Here is another example.

During the first year after the separation, Evert's grades began to slump for the first time in his school career. Here, his mother describes her manner of dealing effectively with this concern.

I: Anything that you handled particularly well with Evert that you think was special?

Mo: I think I handled the school situation very well. I think

Mother knows when and how to galvanize community sup-

knowing that there's certain things that you're capable of doing, but there's also things that you may need someone else to be supportive in helping you to do. Going to school feeling very emotional, almost tearful, about what was happening, and in the back of my head I'm hearing Paul telling me that Evert's not making it. It was going to be my fault because I left. So, I say to myself, "Well, if you go in there, you're going to find out what they have to say." And see, first I was ready to ground Evert for life almost. You're flunking in school, blah, blah, blah.

And after I talked to the teacher and counselor, I realized that I allowed myself to go through a process of missing my husband, being depressed. It's unfair not to allow him to have it. To go home and ground him doesn't serve any purpose. I need to find out why he's not making it. So, after

port to work for her. She confronts the problem squarely, in spite of guilt and the fear of her husband's reaction.

Mother controls her own defenses, and she is sufficiently open to utilizing the experts she has sought out.

I talked to the counselors and teachers, I came and talked to him, and I told him I had been really ready to ground him. And I just told him, "I can't do that 'cause something's going on, that you're not doing the work like you usually do. And that's what I'm more concerned with."

Evert's grades subsequently improved, and when seen in August, 1983, he had just been selected to represent his school in a "Who's Who" Book of excelling all-arounders.

Father-Son Relationship

It is now generally agreed that a positive outcome for children of divorce is related to the quantity, quality, and regularity of contact with the noncustodial parent (see, for example, Hess & Camera, 1979; Jacobsen, 1978; Rosen, 1977). Difficulties occur when the custodial parent undermines or attempts to sever that relationship, when the noncustodial parent withdraws from the relationship for any of many possible reasons, or when the relationship itself is deleterious.

No family dyad, however, is ever pure and exclusive. Obviously, to some extent, a relationship will be shaped by contextual forces. The mother's participation in the

father-son dyad (i.e., the triangle of mother, father, son) must be considered if the nature and development of the dyad is to be understood. Therefore, the oscillating closeness and distance of the father-son relationship will be explored in terms of this larger father-mother-son system.

1. Visitation

In the Dale family, visitation was never formalized either legally or in terms of "when" and for "how long". Father and son have "open" access to each other and do not need, as Mrs. Dale says, "her permission".

Mo: There is no arrangement as far as the visitation, legal, or anything like that. You know, really the arrangement is set up where the only thing different is that Paul and I are in two different houses. If Paul wants to see Evert, sometimes Paul will call on Friday night and say can he speak to Evert. It's set up between him and Evert. When Evert gets off the phone from talking to his daddy, he'll tell me, "My daddy wants me to come over and spend the night with

Mother implies that, although the spousal relationship has been discontinued, the father-son dyad still exists.

him." And I'll just say "okay".

Paul doesn't have to feel he needs permission. Evert knows you do not need permission to stay at your daddy's.

The implication here is that Evert can be with his father when he wants or when his father wants. But is visitation totally "open" as is suggested, or is it constrained by operative norms or rituals (other levels of signaling) which, although unarticulated, govern transactions? It is unlikely that the single-parent family could maintain stability and coherence if the noncustodial parent entered and exited with his son unpredictably and at whim. In this family, Mrs. Dale is not the sort of person who would tolerate unexpected intrusions. The most likely hypothesis is that the trio has developed set times when father will call if he is going to call, and other times when he will desist from calling. For example, it might be tacitly agreed that he will not call between 7:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., when he might disturb dinner and Evert's homework. Certainly, the family system is not rigid and bolted into exact hours and days, but neither probably is it totally open or chaotic. In their own way, it seems that the parents have satisfactorily solved the task of setting the "when" and "how" of visitation. Most probably,

this "open door" policy is in actuality only relatively open, and only possible when respect and consideration prevail.

2. A Complex Relationship

Evert's relationship with his father is a complex one. Prior to the separation, the relationship was secondary to Evert's relationship with his mother. After the separation, contact between father and son was never intense, and it tended to be irregular. Weeks, and sometimes months, went by when they would not see each other. At other times, they would see each other more often. An evolution in their relationship is discernible, various factors influencing this movement. Certainly, Mr. Dale's relationship with his son was less than optimal. Mr. Dale lived with some sense of regret that the relationship was not closer, and Evert, although expressing satisfaction with the relationship, probably denied some yearning and regret. In spite of regret, Mr. Dale and his son clearly loved each other and treasured their relationship. Mr. Dale's description of his relationship with Evert reveals many important ingredients that do not conform to enculturated "ideal" images of what the father-son relationship should look like. Possibly most important is that Mr. Dale does not try to fool himself. He is aware of his capacities and incapacities as a father. This awareness allows him to give to his son when and where he can, and to make allowances for alternate opportunities for his son when he cannot. But this sensibility contains within it seeds of vulnerability, in that father might

too easily derogate his own capacities, or accept the vision of the "good" father as mediated by his wife (i.e., "the father Cindy would like me to be").

At the first meeting with Mr. Dale, the interviewer asked Mr. Dale why he had seen so little of his son over the past months.

I: Visits stopped for the summer?

Fa: Yeah, it stopped for the summer.

I: And it hasn't started up since school started. Is there a particular reason why?

Fa: It's me, and I know it's not right, but I got to bring myself around to it.

I: Did you enjoy it when it was happening, having him at home?

Fa: Yeah, there were times when I did enjoy it and times when I didn't enjoy it. All kinds of things started running in my mind. I know I'm not the ideal father or father that Cindy would like me to be. I wish I were like my brother, the one in Tennessee. He has three boys, and he has a father quality

There is a mix of a number of forces:

1. Derogation of himself as a father.
2. An exacerbation of this derogation by his acceptance of his wife's image of him.

that I would like to have, but I know it's not there. I've tried, searched my soul, but I don't have the same make-up, and I envy him for that quality. He's really good with kids, and Evert likes to go down there. He spent all last summer down there.

3. Honest acceptance of personal limitations.

4. Attempts to provide compensation for his limitations.

3. The Mother's Triangular Influence

Mrs. Dale sincerely wants Evert to have the best possible relationship with his father. To this end she is careful not to place any impediments that might block this process, and she actively removes those that appear. Her dilemma is how far she can go to pursue their growing closer. What are the limits of this endeavor? Beyond what point does she cease to be useful to the father-son dyad and, even in the name of helping, unintentionally impair that relationship? A philosophical issue is also raised concerning the extent to which a person has the right to urge and manipulate others to "want what they should want".

There are many ways in which Mrs. Dale actively and overtly facilitated her son's relationship with his father. One way involved her diagnosing their misunderstanding of each other in an important area in which she moved to correct that misunderstanding.

In an intact family, given the proximity and immediacy of nonverbal and verbal signals, and a degree of day to day regularity, assumptions are easily made. Not everything must be overtly transacted and negotiated anew. After a separation, however, assumptions cannot be made with the same degree of certainty -- at least initially. As the family structure changes radically, new rituals will need to be established and consolidated before the participants can place confidence in their automatic assumptions.

Mo: Well, they sometimes play games with each other. Evert will take for granted that if his daddy stops past my mother-in-law's on Friday, that means that he wants him to come to his house. I'm the one that brought it to the light that that's not the way it's been working, 'cause I was talking to Evert, and Evert explained it to me. I said, "Well, your daddy may not know that you want to come to his house, so if you don't call and tell him, then he has no way of knowing." Then he'll say, "Well, if he wants me to come over, he'll come past."

One cannot easily "take for granted" in the early postseparation period.

New rules must be negotiated in this postseparation period.

So I told Paul that just this last week. Paul started laughing. He said, "Cindy, I never thought of it that way. Sometimes I come past, and sometimes I'm home Friday nights doing nothing alone, and Evert could come over, but I may be at the other end of the city and never think of coming past." So I said that their communication is not together, and he said, "Well, I'll check on it." Now it's all arranged between him and Paul.

Paul's "laughing" and comments suggest that he relates objectively and receptively to what his wife tells him.

What was erroneously "assumed" is now "arranged."

Mrs. Dale not only removes impediments between Mr. Dale and Evert, but she also actively intercedes to preempt Mr. Dale's withdrawal from his son and push for his involvement when she diagnoses that it is insufficient.

In fact, in the early postseparation years, as Mr. Dale himself described, he did drift from his son. Mr. Dale's enveloping depression at this time was causally related to this. Wallerstein and Kelly (1982) have suggested that the relationship between the noncustodial parent and the child is not necessarily qualitatively continuous from pre- to

postseparation. A father previously close might become disconnected; a father who was more distant before the separation has the opportunity later to establish greater proximity. Mrs. Dale actively deals with Mr. Dale in a manner designed to propel proximity.

Mo: I went over there one Sunday. Paul was out there waxing his car with a buffer. And I walked over thinking, "Here this man is taking a whole day waxing his car and he don't even have time, even if it's an hour to spend with his kid." That was my first time saying that pissed me off, 'cause I was so angry when I saw him, and he asked me then what was wrong with me. I said, "Nothing, I just come to get my mail, and I'm leaving." But when I got home I called him up on the phone and said we got to talk, and he said, "Well, we can talk now." So we were talking on the phone, and I let him know how I felt about him not spending any time with Evert, and I said you need it

Rather than allow an issue to be avoided, both parents move to surface it.

just as much as Evert. And he says, "Well, how do you know?" I said, "Cause you love the boy. In another three or four years you'll have to make an appointment to see him because he'll have his own life, and that's going to bother you." I says, "I'm not going to ever say anymore to you, I hope I don't anyway, about you spending time with Evert. But he's here. That's why I didn't move to Jersey. I moved where Evert is walking distance from you. You can always have access to Evert. It's me that you don't have access to. Evert is your son, you see him."

Although she is challenging Mr. Dale, her presentation of the issue addresses a positive attribute: his love for his son.

Mrs. Dale's efforts to encourage the best possible relationship between father and son appear, as far as can be discerned, nobly motivated. Throughout, she is dealing at the periphery of the boundary to the father-son subsystem, and being a person who is sensitive to boundary issues, she must deal constantly with the question of when to respect and when to crash that boundary. In her eagerness to propel the

relationship between Mr. Dale and Evert, Mrs. Dale at times goes too far, but she is apparently sensitive enough to recognize this and desist.

I: Anything that you think you have not done particularly well?

Mo: I think sometimes, I may say the wrong things verbally. I was talking to Evert, and we were talking about not seeing his daddy as often, and I said, "How do you feel about not seeing your daddy?" He said, "It's all-right, I see him when he can see me." He wouldn't come out with it, and I'm trying to pull it out of him. And I said to him, "If you had a son, would you see your son more than once a week?" He said, "Yeah, I guess so." I said, "Well, why would you see him more than once a week?" He said, "'cause he's my son, and I care a lot for him," and I dropped it 'cause after I brought that out, I didn't know what to do with it. I thought about it

later, maybe I was jumping the gun asking a question like that, it still didn't serve any purpose. He still didn't talk about how he felt about the separation, and I felt like I had almost opened up a can of worms not knowing what to do with those worms, now that I had them open. I didn't know what to do with them. He seemed like he was dealing with it.

Despite such moments of "overkill", Mrs. Dale's efforts to bring father and son closer appear to have turned out well. Impediments were removed, misunderstandings resolved, and Mr. Dale's possible withdrawal from a significant role in his son's life prevented.

Mrs. Dale's efforts to bring father and son together also had other results. One was that Evert and Mr. Dale, in overt or covert alliance, expelled Mrs. Dale from continuing in her role of encourager. It might be hypothesized that the mother's directing and maneuvering, while actively and positively creating proximity, was also spoiling of the spontaneity and integrity of their relationship. In that their relationship appeared at some level to be under her auspices,

it lacked a self-propelling strength. In the name of helping, she might also impair.

In any event, Mr. Dale and Evert backed her off. We can speculate about the dynamics here. Was it that Mrs. Dale's maneuvering was initially necessary, then later became anachronistic? At that point, she may have been nudged out either by Evert independently, by Evert with his father's blessing or instigation, or by Mr. Dale himself. Or was it that Mrs. Dale's orchestrations drew them together in a way she did not intend -- namely, in embattled alliance to expel Mrs. Dale? Or did the system operate in oscillations, with Mrs. Dale pushing proximity, Mr. Dale and his son drawing together and then pushing her back, their drifting apart again as a consequence, her being pulled back in (or actively entering), and so on? Here, at the third interview, Mrs. Dale described how eight months earlier, after an interview at the P.C.G.C., Evert staked a boundary around his relationship with his father, excluding his mother.

Mo: And these interviews help. Last time I was here, Evert was with me. Usually when we leave, we compare notes. What did he ask you, and did he ask you the same thing? It kind of helped me because my way of answering, I had a different

feel about he and his father's relationship. And his answering was that his relationship was a lot more positive than what I expected it to be. I was thinking it should be more. But he said it was enough for him, that he was satisfied. It helped a lot. He said, "Why would you say it isn't enough. That's not what I told them." I said, "Did you tell them the truth." He said "yeah". I said, "Well, I guess I see things different, but the way you see things is what's good. And what's good enough for you is good enough for me." He said "Yeah".

In the fourth interview with Mr. Dale, he describes with considerable clarity and honesty his perception of the triangular dynamic.

I: How has his mother helped your relationship with him, if at all?

Fa: She's always been trying to upgrade it -- my seeing him more.

But she got to a point where she kind of backed off, because she realized she was being pushy. And it seemed that I would take my time about seeing Evert even more.

I: Is that what was happening?

Fa: I think so. If I'm pushed, I get kind of stubborn. She spoke to Evert also, and he understood more, better than she did. She told me that.

I: He understood what?

Fa: Er, he understood me, my ways. Maybe because he feels the same way. He takes his time, too. I had to sit down and talk to her about it. And, he told me he told her, "Me and my daddy understand one another," and maybe he does.

I: Do you think her pushing helped in any way, or was it only negative?

Fa: No. I don't look at it as only negative. At the time, it used to get under me. It stuck in the back of my mind, what she was trying to do. And it would like pop up

periodically, especially when I hadn't given him time. So she got her point across.

At interview four, Mr. Dale continued to see his son approximately monthly, and at that interview he expressed some sadness that he does not see more of his son: "I don't bug him too much. I miss him - a hell of a lot". There is a suggestion that his (character) style -- a tendency toward interpersonal passivity, sluggishness, and disconnection, of which he seems almost proud -- has become a guiding principle for him, setting limits to his relationship with his son. Now when he "misses" his son and tries to depart from that principle, he realizes he cannot push Evert too far, as Evert has, over the years, accepted his father's self-definition. But there is another theory as to why the father has great difficulty asking, let alone demanding contact: that this is a manifestation of a defect in our culture's idealization of the strong male.

4. Accepting Imperfection and Limitations

Over time, Mrs. Dale grew to accept the level of relationship established between Mr. Dale and Evert. She was probably reassured that father and son had achieved some intimacy, and Evert at least -- and probably Mr. Dale, too -- had let her know that her help was no longer needed, and that they were satisfied with the relationship. It also appears

that Mrs. Dale developed a heightened respect for the uniqueness of her son and his father, and for their own level of relating. It might not be what she wanted, but it was what they wanted.

Mo: I now have learned to accept Evert as Evert. I don't try to make him into being something else, because I don't want to be something that I'm not. I've learned to accept that what Paul does, that's Paul. If he's happy the way he is, then I have to learn to accept it, and if I cannot accept it, just stay away from it.

I: What do you think of Evert's relationship with his father?

Mo: I think it's comfortable for what he can get out of it. I don't think he can get anymore out of his father, as far as emotional stuff. They're just buddies, just friends. Evert will always come and tell me the most personal stuff 'cause I listen. His daddy, he can

joke around with, but that's it.
I'm all ears for Evert, but not
Paul. And Evert kind of accepts,
that's what daddy's like, and you
ain't gonna change him.

5. Future Hopes

When last seen at I-4, tentative first moves had occurred which opened the possibility of father and son drawing still closer. Specifically, there was talk in the air of Evert going to live with his father. The mother and Evert had been "cooking up" this idea and in separate interviews described the origins of the plan in different ways. The mother suggested that Evert had been the initiator, while Evert ambiguously implied that she might have been the initiator. Could it be that each, in transferring responsibility, was protecting the other against feeling abandoned? And in a separate interview, Mr. Dale, with delight, described the possibility from his perspective:

Fa: Well, he and I, er, I mean his
mother and I, have talked about
it. He has had ideas about moving
in with me (smiles delightedly)
while he attends college. I told
her that's fine. That's no prob-
lem with me at all. As a matter

of fact, even just knowing that he was thinking in that direction made me feel good.

I: How would it be for you if he came to stay with you during college?

Fa: It wouldn't create a problem. For one thing, he'd be eighteen. Quite a young man. It's not a whole lot of responsibility, like when the separation happened, she had the responsibility of bringing him up to this point. It's not that much responsibility involved. I have thought about it often, and it tickled me pink, that he wanted to do this (smiles).

I: You haven't spoken to him?

Fa: No. But, er, you know, I'm gathering all this so that when we get a few days together, I can inject some of this and see where he's coming from. I wanna ask him. Should make an interesting weekend (laughs freely).

The Control Hierarchy

The issue addressed here is: who, if anyone, is effectively "in charge" of Evert? In this family the issue is somewhat more complex than usual, as a number of adults, only one of whom is the custodial parent, are involved in the day-to-day life of Evert. In addition to spending time with both parents, Evert has close and frequent contact with both sets of grandparents. In fact, over 3-month summer vacations, Evert spends more time with his grandparents than with his mother. During the school term, however, he spends only an occasional night at a grandparent's house.

Within this complex three-generational network, the adults on both sides must make and enforce rules and limits sometimes separately and sometimes together. For both Evert and the adults, lines of authority must be clear, responsibility for this authority upheld, and Evert's consent (and obedience) obtained.

Within such a three-generational network, even in an intact family with its normative tensions, considerable margin exists for misunderstanding and the undermining of one adult by another. In a separated family where three generations are involved, potential problems multiply. A depressed and depleted parent might abdicate responsibility to the first generation, who may be reluctant to pick it up or may pick it up only erratically. Or, the first generation might rush to rescue, and thereby infantilize, the second generation, who may

be unable or unwilling to push their parents off, and may then lose leverage with their own youngsters. Or, the conflict of the separating second generation might proliferate, involving the first generation in an escalating "clan" conflict, where the two sides battle and undermine each other in the one realm that they must still uphold, the nurturance and control of the third generation.

In the Dale family, these hazards were avoided, and clear lines of authority were established and respected. While Mrs. Dale was clearly ascendent, she was, as will be illustrated later, receptive to Mr. Dale's input. Aspects of this effectively functioning Control Hierarchy will be illustrated within three systems: the mother and son dyad; the separated couple and their son; and the three generations of grandparents, mother, and son. Thereafter, a crucial property of the effectively functioning Control Hierarchy, its flexibility, will be illustrated.

1. Mother and Son and the Control Hierarchy

Demonstrated in the following transcript is the existence of a responsible Control Hierarchy with the mother ascendent or, stated differently, the absence of abdication. This absence of abdication does not involve dramatic confrontations with her youngster. Instead, this phenomenon is characterized by relatively unremarkable, everyday occurrences. The youngster tries to get away with something and tries to slip by, and his mother holds him accountable. Mrs.

Dale's reactions to these seemingly innocuous little tests -- to which she responds immediately, without guilt and, for the most part, wisely -- define nonabdication.

I: Sometimes we find that when members of the household change, people have to take on more or different responsibilities, so that maybe Evert makes his bed now and didn't before, or something like that. Have you noticed any such change in your household?

Mo: Well, he's doing the same types of things that he did when he was with his daddy. Keeping his own room clean. He doesn't have a lot of chores to do. He just has to keep his own room clean. At my mother-in-law's he has two chores: cleaning off the dinner table and sweeping the steps. He knows that his main project is to make it in school. He doesn't have to go sell newspapers and all that kind of stuff, just finish school. Once in a while

Evert continues with the tasks that were always expected of him. Mother regards this as automatic, a sine qua non. Apart from chores, there is one major project expected of him: to succeed in school.

I will tell him to vacuum the apartment and, to give you an example, a couple of Saturdays ago I said, "Evert are you going to stay home this evening?" He says, "Yeah, I'll be home." Later on in the afternoon I asked him to vacuum, and an hour later he says, "I think I'll go down and stay at grandmom's house," which is Paul's mother. I said "You're really something. You didn't decide to go down there until you had a chore to do." He tried to tell me, "Just cool out, Mommy, I just felt that I needed to go visit her." I said, "Okay, but you're going to vacuum before you leave. You can escape as long as you vacuum before you leave." He said, "okay".

I: Generally speaking, you don't feel that he has additional chores?

Mo: Even though he's fourteen, he is still a kid, and certain things

Notice the sequence:

1. Mother makes a demand.
2. Evert challenges it subtly.
3. Mother immediately meets his challenge.
4. Evert responds and saves face.
5. Mother allows that.
6. But sticks to her demand.
7. Evert accedes.

This is as clear a hierarchy statement

parents are responsible for. And him as a child, he's responsible for making sure that he finishes school and do good marks and not become a discipline problem.

And he's not.

I: And he makes his own bed?

Mo: Yeah, he makes his own bed.

I don't do anything in his room. Even clothes. For instance, sometimes he may not put his clothes where the dirty clothes go. Well, then he doesn't have clean clothes. I don't go looking for them, I don't go looking under beds and all that stuff for them dirty clothes or anything like that. If he's at my mother-in-law's and he wants me to bring him something, and I go in the drawer to get it, and the drawer is all messed up, when he comes home everything is on the floor 'cause I tell him "don't send me in there unless you know the drawers are together and where I can find what I'm looking

as any.

Notice the boundary issues: Evert's room is not hers, it is his. However, this is an opportunity to propel his autonomy and self-reliance:

1. If he doesn't do what he should as regards dirty clothes, he goes without clean ones.
2. If he does ask her to enter his room and help him, she'll only "help" under specific conditions. He, therefore, had better remain responsible. Mrs. Dale has counterposed Evert's privacy with conditions to that privacy.

for. If not, they're on the floor." So that helps him to kind of keep things together in his bedroom.

Mrs. Dale's executive ascendancy is obvious, but her authority is not spontaneously sustained. As mentioned, Evert is with his two sets of grandparents a great deal, and during such periods of physical distance from Evert, Mrs. Dale must at times work hard to retain her position and make sure all other members of the family accept it. Notice the preventive aspects to her move. She was vigilant and moved rapidly to recover authority as soon as she intuited that "something was going on". She moved before it got too bad. Here is another example:

Mo: For example, I came down to watch television at my mother's, and we watched the show together. And there were other people around. And Evert got up and walked - left. And it was like 11 o'clock or something, but he didn't say "bye" or nothing. He just left. And I sat there for a while thinking he's coming back in the house or something, while

One might speculate whether this same system could operate effectively if she had two or three more children. Could an executive who was on her own maintain the same degree of vigilance Mrs. Dale exhibited, or would some of her authority need to be delegated

he didn't. I waited on the steps among grandparents and a while, and then got in the car "parental" children? and went home. Well, my feelings were hurt. I felt he could have said, "see ya later", or something. So I called after I got home, and he was back, and I explained it was rude to walk out the door without saying "see ya later, Mom." He heard me, listened, and said "okay", and I just hung up. But I think what I wanted was an apology, but he didn't. So on Monday, I came to talk to him.

So I was really worried. I felt something was going on, and I needed to get my position back as far as he was concerned, because he's been at my mother's all summer. So that was...

Mother senses that her executive position is being eroded. She quickly moves to correct that.

I: So what did you think was happening there? You say: "To get your position back"?

Mo: The discipline or the parenting had to be set back there again. The whole summer had been spent at my mother's, and I know what

it's like there. And I wanted to get him back to knowing that there are certain things that he has to do as far as I'm concerned - out of respect. I don't care whose roof you are under, I'm the one who sets the rules because I'm the one that is actually taking care of you even though his grandmother does, too. But I'm the one who has to set the rule as far as what goes on. So I wanted to get back the position where he shows the kind of respect. Now he comes to me and says, "I'm off, see ya later, I don't want you to be getting upset by me walking out the door." Which means to me that he's showing respect and did hear what I said. And he didn't need to say "sorry" for doing it 'cause he followed through by doing other things.

Mother feels that Evert's fundamental esteem for her is slipping. Mother's discrimination is important. Even though he is now living with his grandmother, it is she who allows that, and she is the final authority.

2. The Coparental System and the Control Hierarchy

It was not only Mrs. Dale who was vigilant. Mr. Dale too -- although much less central in his son's life and, as

described, tending not to intrude -- was watchful and cognizant of his responsibilities. When the need arose, he would take the initiative not only in dealing with his son but also, if necessary, to contact his ex-wife. Together as executives, the Dales, for the most part, cooperated to ensure Evert's continuing successful development and to avoid his being derailed.

This cooperative task of the separated couple is notoriously fraught with hazards. At the most obvious level, a couple who were not able to resolve difficulties while living together must now reach accord on parenting issues where there is often great divergence in values, philosophy, and style. But beyond that, this turf is often the battleground on which the conflicts of the spouses are fought, jeopardizing the youngsters. As a "solution", it might be that the noncustodial parent (usually the father) opts out and relinquishes his responsibility in order to avoid conflict. Possibly he avoids "seeing" (potential risk) when he should see, or even if he does see, doesn't move on it. This passive defense remains ultimately a nonsolution for the youngster.

In short, the challenge for the couple is both to maintain sufficient control to avoid intruding their own spousal conflicts onto this turf where they must cooperate. They must override their dislike or even abhorrence of each other, to ensure "objectivity," receptivity, and responsiveness to each other's input for the good of their youngster. In this one realm, they remain nondivorced.

In the next segment, Evert's parents must deal with a core adolescent theme: heterosexual experimentation. The relevant issue here is not so much which of the parent's views is the "correct" one, but rather their manner of dealing with each other and Evert around this issue.

I: It sounds like the two of you (i.e., father and mother) are pretty friendly. What do the two of you fight about?

Fa: (Surprised). What, now?

I: Yeah.

Fa: (laughs) I had my first argument in maybe a year or longer, a few weeks ago. And it was a discrepancy. My son's seventeen, and there's this young lady on his grandmother's block, and she's twenty. Well, one evening I stopped by at my folks' to see if Evert was there. They said he was at his grandmother's (i.e., maternal grandmother), so I went up there hoping to run into him. He was out, so I asked them to get him to call me. He called

at nine-thirty. He said he was going out again, riding with a friend. So I said, "Where could you be going on a bike this time of night. It's bad enough in a car." He said, "Well, we're going in a car." I said, "Well, who?" He said, "A friend who lives on the block." I said, "Well, who's the friend?"

(laughs heartily) 'Cause I felt that I was being strung along to the point where he was hoping I wouldn't keep pursuing. So I said, "Who's the friend?" So he gave the young lady's name, Sharon.

I: Do you know her?

Fa: No. So I said, "Who's Sharon? The twenty year-old I've been hearing about?"

I: Who had told you?

Fa: Evert's mother, her mother, my mother.

I: Everyone!

Evert is constantly signaling his father to back off. Father doesn't, however. For a stylistically "laid back" man, father's persistence is all the more heroic and is responsible. His not doing that would render him an impotent peer to his son.

The network is tightly knit. The adults keep each other informed about Evert and his circumstances. One might speculate that possibly a subtle social process has operated here, whereby father is asked to take

over this task, and he obliges.

(Both father and therapist laugh)

Fa: So he says, "yeah". I say, "Is this her car you going out in?" He says, "yeah". "Where ya going?", I says. He says, "Riding". I said, "Evert, between you and I, I don't like the idea. Have you talked to your mother?" He said "no", but he was going to call her. So I said, "You give her a call and see what she says." So I gave it fifteen minutes, and I called her - and maybe I'm wrong - but she didn't seem to think anything was wrong, and she said, "What's wrong with this?" And I said, "What's right? She's a twenty year-old woman, taking your seventeen year-old son. It could be just, you know, a friendly thing. But you know how you women are. He's a seventeen year-old boy whose been doing damn good at

Father does not assume that mother accepts Evert's plans. He first inquires and then directs Evert to Mrs. Dale, who is primarily "in charge" of Evert. There is no hint that father is putting her down. Father follows through and calls Mrs. Dale. She grants him the opportunity to convince her, and he does not passively leave the matter up to her, but expresses his view forcefully. Father's concern is that his son might, at this important time, be

school, and he doesn't need anything getting up here (points to his head) and fouling up anything." So she knew my temper was up. I asked her, too, "Do you know the girl, seen or talked to her?" She said, "No". "And you figure its all right for him to go out with her?" And she said, "Well, I'm wrong, I'm wrong, I'll call him back." And I hung up.

I: And what happened?

Fa: She called Evert. Now I haven't spoken to her about this since, but Evert told me he was allowed out, but he had to be back at curfew - midnight. Now, see, I'm not totally disagreeable, I had to voice my opinion. I didn't like it, and I told him and said why. She chose to let him out anyway, but warned him of the curfew. They went out and got some food. I don't

engulfed or overly infatuated and obsessed by this relationship. Father's question, "Do you know the girl?" is an instruction that she should know her. Father's injunction is clear. Can Mrs. Dale now receive his message, evaluate it objectively, not feel diminished or subordinated if it has validity and, if necessary, act on it?

The "pathway" rules are sophisticated and clear.

know what else she said to him, because he never takes my conversations with him to his mother, and the other way. I'll get a chance to talk to her about it. So I left it alone. We've been separated over four years, and her taking care of him by herself. And I have no qualms about how she raised him.

I: Do you think she's a bit loose with him?

Fa: I do, at times. But that's me, and I know it's me. It was one of our problems in the house when we were together. And I've learned to deal with it. I've learned to look at myself and see the old upbringing that I had, and how it's come out in me. Some of the things you round off; some of the things you let go; and some you have to hold on to because it means that much to you. But, I laid back. So far, there has been no problem, and I don't want to be the one to disrupt his

Evert maintains the privacy of his relationship with each parent, and they in turn do not intrude and "pump him". Father, instead, will talk directly to Mrs. Dale at a later time.

Mr. Dale applies limits to himself. He knows Mrs. Dale has heard him, and he has no desire to escalate their differences. He respects her parenting skills and is also objectively critical of his own excesses and biases, which he attempts to contain. Father is standing back but ever watchful; he reserves the right to step in if Evert gets in deeper. Of course,

flow. Now, if I see where the side action is starting to interfere with school, then you got a problem out of me.

things are likely to be different now. Mother will be more careful, as will Evert. Father's perspective is a long-term, future-oriented one: life as journey and as flow.

3. The Control Hierarchy Within the Three Generational System

Effectiveness in an executive system is linked to at least two conditions: the executives must support each other, and there must be some understanding between them of what to do as contingencies arise.

Evert's anecdote below, as it pertains to his grandparents, his mother, and himself, reveals some of these workings to us.

I: I've heard from teenagers that there's an advantage staying in two places, 'cause they can tell one person one thing, and another something else. They can play different caretakers off to their own advantage.

Evert: You mean, like not tell her (i.e., mother) that I'm doing something she might not let me do?

I: Yup.

Evert: Not really. Because if I do, my grandmother would tell me to ask my mother. 'Cause one time, there's this bus that takes a bunch of people to a blueberry farm. And they pay you according to how many pints of blueberries you pick and how many hours you work. And I wanted to go. And had already set arrangements, and it leaves at 3 a.m., and it gets back in the evening. And I spoke to my grandmother, and she was saying she wasn't sure and everything, and she told me to ask my mother. My mother said she wants to think about it a while. And then she called back and told me I couldn't go.

Mo: Did I give you an explanation?

Evert: You didn't know the people, basically. You weren't sure if it was safe.

Mo: You see my mother wants to say "no", but she finds it difficult

The executive system is cooperatively linked.

The rule appears to be that, if it is a borderline "call", grandmother must defer to mother.

It is, in fact, grandmother's pre-

to say "no" to Evert, so her way was to give the decision to me. And she thanked me: "Thanks for letting me off the hook."

I: Is that a problem? That your mother can't say no?

Mo: It's not a problem I can't handle with her. It's like I don't mind her calling to ask me, 'cause I would have blown my stack if she'd said yes and let him go.

I: Does that happen?

Mo: No. My parents and in-laws are very careful not to take my position away from me, as far as I am Evert's parent. By me not allowing it, they're not able to do it. My in-laws, from the day of the separation, never said anything to me about the separation. And all I said was, "your relationship with Evert will be the same. Nothing changes except Paul and my relationship." And from that day, it's fine. I work out with her rules for her household. She

rogative to pass the buck and transfer responsibility to mother, who must, and does, claim it.

Mother describes her own role in not allowing herself to be undermined, i.e., in maintaining her ascendancy.

cooks her dinner at certain times,
and that is the time he has to
be home. If you're not going to
be home, you have to call her.
And he follows these rules.

4. Flexibility: A Necessary Condition of the
Effective Control Hierarchy

A rule system that is (and is experienced as) only rigidly restrictive and suffocating, without room for negotiation, will be counterproductive and infantilizing, the source per se of pathology. Rules are effective only so long as they facilitate the development of the adolescent, and so long as the adolescent consents to respect the executives. The executives, therefore, must uphold a system characterized by a degree of flexibility and by a discerning respect for the youngster's input.

Mo: But if he can't make curfew, Mother is respectful of
he calls and says he's alright. Evert's developmental
He might not say where he is need for privacy.
(mother laughs), but being 16,
17, I realize he might not want to
always say exactly where he is.
But, he'll always call, so that I
won't have to worry that he's
safe. And he has a level head.

And his grandparents respect him,
as my husband and I respect him.
A lot. So the grandparents do the
same thing.

I: Evert phones, says he's going to be late, but doesn't say where he is. Now you've told me before, this is a family where you respect and don't intrude onto each other's turf. But let's say you were worried about where he was, whatever, what would you do?

Mo: I'd have to say, "I'm worried, where are you?" You see, too, the way his life is set up, most of his whereabouts are either around chess or around something I know about. But if I'm worried, I'll ask. Like, if he's in someplace where he doesn't have any business.

But respect for privacy could be, at the extreme, an abdication of parental responsibility. I explore to see how modulated and calibrated is mother's respect for the boundaries which define Evert's privacy.

These boundaries are permeable, and mother emphasizes that her flexibility is anchored in her deep knowledge of and trust in her son.

An ingredient of the flexible hierarchy is the extent to which the youngster has the resources, and is given the freedom, to speak out against over-protectiveness to safeguard

his autonomy. In the following anecdote, Evert reveals that he does have this capacity. Notice Evert's communication repertoire. Epstein, et al. (1982) define two conditions of adequate communication: clarity and directness. Although usually these qualities are most important, the benefits of camouflaged and indirect communication should also be noted. Evert is clear, direct, and subtle.

I: Are you the sort of guy, Evert, who would ask, or speak up, if something was happening, and you didn't like it?

In other words, does Evert have the resources and freedom to struggle against infantilization processes and for appropriate autonomy?

Evert: (smiles broadly) Yeah, sure. She can tell by my attitude. Usually, I get quiet, or I suggest other ways. So with a party, she wanted to pick me up, but I didn't want that. You know, your Mom showing up. So I got a ride (to my grandmother's) and phoned my mother soon as I was in.

Mo: Well, one example is my mother. She gets very upset, and has high blood pressure, things like that.

And a lot of times he wants to get a point across to her without a big fuss. So, recently he wasn't feeling good, 'cause he went out to work without eating. My mother, she goes crazy if he doesn't eat. She'll call me to tell me that he hasn't eaten. But my attitude is, a 16 year-old who can go a full day without eating, and your stomach didn't get cramped up, all power to you. If you got money in your pocket, and you don't go eat, I'm not going to be worried by that. But she goes off, like it's her fault he's not putting food in his mouth. So he got sick this one day, and she called me and I said, "Well, okay, maybe he learned he shouldn't do that." But she fussed about it, and he wanted to tell her she had a nerve fussing him if she doesn't even do what the doctor tells her. But he said he thought

twice about it. But a couple of days later, he managed to get that point across to her -- but he just thought of a more appropriate time.

I: (looking at Evert) How did you do it?

Evert: Well, I was talking to my Mom on the phone and...

Mo: (laughing) she (grandmother) on the other line.

Evert: No. She was in the kitchen.

Mo: Oh yes, that's right.

Evert: And I was talking to my mother about going out, what I was planning to do, and my grandmother said, "Now don't you go out without eating," and I said to her (indicates his mother), but I said it loud enough for my grandmother to hear, "I don't believe how upset she gets about me not eating. One time this happened, and she gets upset; and with her the doctor is always telling her not to eat salt and every-

Evert can disagree with his mother in a very "direct" and "clear" fashion (Epstein, et al. 1982), and his mother is respectful of that.

thing; and everytime you turn around, she's got something with salt on it."

Mo: So I said to him over the phone, "You got your point across." He said, "yup." (laughs)

I: So you're a master at sending messages where you want them to go. (Mother and Evert laugh in agreement.)

On the Avoidance of Rigid Cross-Generational Coalitions and Triangulation

One final component of the Generational Hierarchy that must be examined is the extent to which, and manner in which, parents and youngsters maintain appropriate generational boundaries by preventing or blocking the deleterious development of cross-generational coalitions or triangulation processes. As was described in Chapter One (see Generational Hierarchy), rigid cross-generational coalitions and triangulation processes have been linked both theoretically and clinically with psychopathology (Haley, 1976). The postseparation period is commonly regarded as a time when these processes are typically exacerbated.

Relatively speaking, these processes have a reciprocal component. On the one hand, a parent (in the case of the coalition), or both parents (in the case of triangulation),

pull for the support of the youngster. On the other hand, the youngster agrees to side with one parent against the other (i.e., coalition), or "tolerates" being triangulated. When these processes do not operate, either the parents do not pull for the youngster's support, or they are sharply or subtly signaled to "get off" when they do. Both components are illustrated in the two excerpts that follow, for in the Dale family the parents, for the most part, refrained from doing this, and Evert possessed the psychological freedom and assertiveness to resist or circumvent generational boundary violations when they occasionally occurred.

I: Does it ever happen that Evert takes your side against Paul, or takes Paul's against yours?

Mo: Are you kidding? He's strictly against doing that. He doesn't allow you to put him in that position. If he finds that he's going to be put in the middle, he tells you right out, without even giving you a pro or con about whatever you're talking about or whatever you're asking, and that's even with other people around. But that's been that way since we separated. He knows, and I

Notice the countertriangulation forces:

1. Evert does not tolerate, for a moment, being put in the middle.

believe he feels, that he is not the cause of the separation, and whatever goes on between mommy and daddy is between mommy and daddy. We don't put him in that position either. We're very careful about that. I'm pretty sure that Paul does not discuss negative things about me or ask Evert anything about what I might be doing. I don't do that either with Evert. Like, some people will say, "Does daddy have a girlfriend?" I mean, one time Paul was giving a lady and her daughter a ride to work when he was giving Evert a ride a couple of times, and I might have mentioned something like, um, "Where does she, does she live right across the street?" He says, "What are you, a cop? I don't know where she lives," which refreshed my mind that he doesn't want to be in that position. He makes it very

2. Evert's parents responsibly avoid triangulating him.

3. Ultimately, this is the predominant force -- Evert makes them "uneasy"

uneasy for you to put him in if they trespass.
that one.

The Introduction of a Parent's New Partner

Fifty percent of divorced women and a somewhat greater percentage of divorced men remarry within 3 years following the divorce (Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984). This is not to mention the vast numbers who develop intense postseparation heterosexual relationships without remarrying. A generic issue, then, for postseparation families is if, when, and how to introduce one's partner to one's youngster. At one extreme are those parents who maintain little or no boundary around a new relationship, or social relationships in general, exposing the youngsters rapidly and possibly intensively to these relationships. Underpinning this overexposure is often parental narcissism, or simply poor judgment, or an attempt to signal the other spouse, via the youngster, of the presence of the new partner and the end of the marriage. Dangers inherent at this extreme of premature exposure or overexposure include: (a) that the youngster might fear that involvement with the parent's new partner could jeopardize the youngster's relationship with the other parent or be seen as disloyal to the other parent; (b) that overexposure to the initially high sexuality of these new relationships is often, in itself, stressful for a youngster; (c) that, if the new relationship does not last, there is a risk of a painful and damaging loss

experience or serial losses following closely on the trauma of the parental separation itself. These losses might impair the youngster's potential to trust in relationships.

At the other extreme are those parents who maintain a rigid boundary, keeping their youngsters in the dark. Underpinning this behavior is guilt, or fear that the youngster will curtail the new relationship, or fear of the consequences -- either legal or interpersonal -- if the other spouse knows. It's a rare adolescent who does not sense that something is afoot from which he or she is excluded. As parental fear or guilt usually underpins this total sequestering of the new relationship, an atmosphere of secrets, innuendo, and fear develops which undermines security and trust.

Mr. and Mrs. Dale described their separate and careful efforts to juggle these complex issues of timing and distance. In the process they delicately monitored, modulated, and coordinated Evert's contact with their new partners.

When first seen, Mrs. Dale was experimenting with partners, and not yet ready for any commitments. She was careful to protect Evert from these transient relationships but, at the same time, did not keep him "in the dark".

Mo: I don't keep it secret that mommy is not a nun-type person, but I also don't need to flaunt in front of him that mommy likes Although she is protecting Evert, the boundary is not rigid, and he is not "in the dark".

a variety of people. It doesn't
serve any purpose to even tell
him.

Father, too, is considerate and watches carefully to
see that Evert is not unduly stressed by his new partner.

I: Does Evert know these women?

Fa: Evert only knows of the one,
Michelle. He met her by
mistake.

I: What did you say?

Fa: (laughs heartily) I just
introduced him. I said,
"Evert, this is Michelle, a
friend of mine." He said,
"Hey." You know, he didn't
spend no whole lot of time
talking with her. He spent
most of his time talking to
me, 'cause he had a trophy
that he had won in the chess
tournament, and he was tickled
about that.

I: How do you think he felt about
meeting Michelle?

Fa: (laughing) I don't really know.
One time after that I picked him up and took him home. I started trying to feel him out. That's when he told me that he didn't think I should sit home and do nothing, that I should get out and socialize. Throwing big words at me. I said, "Oh my goodness." I said, "Well, what do you think of Michelle?" He says, "Isn't she kind of small?" (father laughs heartily). So we both laughed, because she is small. But it made me feel kind of good, and I didn't get the impression then that he had anything to say about it.

Father checks and Evert cues him that the boundary Father has established might be too rigid.

Evert's "door" behavior in the following segment vividly demonstrates boundary creation, denying mother and the "other male" private space in the first instance, and granting it to mother and Ed in the second. Two reciprocal processes appear to operate: Evert is more "comfortable" with his mother's relationship with Ed, and so he permits a boundary; and mother lets Evert know that, with Ed, she requires a boundary.

Mo: Evert trusted Ed, but there's another male who's like Evert's godfather who used to be over to the house. If it was Evert's bedtime, Evert would go to bed, but keep his door open. With Ed, he would shut the door. He seemed to feel comfortable. Also, Evert knew that Ed and I physically had some attraction, because Ed would hug me, or I would sit on the couch, or lay on Ed's lap watching TV, or something like that. So he knew that existed.

I: Did he seem to react to that?

Mo: No. Kids will only react to what you think they should be afraid of, what you think they shouldn't like.

If I were to come up and hug you in front of Evert, Evert would accept the fact that I know what I'm doing, and why I'm doing it.

It doesn't take anything - I still

have enough within me to give a hug to him, too. So, at the same time, I may hug Ed or embrace him, I'm also touching him, maybe

Mother is sensitive to the triangular issue that, if she is with Ed, she cannot be with her son. She

not today, but touching Evert,
too, so he always knows that
a part of me belongs to him.

is careful to let Evert
know that she will not
abandon him and that
a part of her "belongs"
to him.

Mrs. Dale's relationship with this friend, Ed, did not last. He decided to attempt a reconciliation with his wife, from whom he had been separated. But when last seen, Mrs. Dale was in an exclusive relationship with a man named Jim, whom she said she planned to marry. Below, notice how carefully she calibrates the distance and boundaries between Jim and Evert, and how Jim and Evert's relationship has slowly evolved.

Mo: I wouldn't let Jim stay over if
Evert was there.

I: Why not?

Mo: Part of it is I don't want to
share (laughs). The relation-
ship is a bit over a year, and
I've been working trying to
get to know him and him me.
I did not want Jim to be in-
volved with Evert, I just
wanted to find out what this
person was like. Evert's
whole thing is that he doesn't
want me to get married until
he finishes high school. And

Mother's not "sharing"
is not a withholding
phenomenon, but rather
a reflection of her
belief in a step-wise
process where she first
will get to know Jim, and
then later Evert will.

This comes close to
pathology and would be,
if mother's life were
controlled by Evert or

I said, "Why? That means it's okay to shack with someone." and he said, "No, you can't be shacking either." So he says he doesn't want another man raising him and telling him what to do. But after he's finished high school and on his own, I'll need somebody to be with me. And I think he trusts Jim that, if he leaves the house, Jim will be there. It'll be all right.

I: Do they know each other?

Mo: A little. You know, a few weeks ago Evert said he wanted a bike and I said, "Well I don't know about bikes, and the only person I know who does is Jim." So we stopped at a phone, and I thought I'd have to phone and talk to him, but Evert said "I can talk to him." It was like the whole conversation (since then) has been about him riding with Jim together. I guess in the past, I never pushed Jim down Evert's throat. Evert used to make fun

if his gradual emancipation from his mother were blocked by this request. However, Evert wants someone to "look after" his mother when he leaves, so that he can go out on his own. His mother is considerate of his request.

Mrs. Dale's guiding principle is not to "push Jim down Evert's throat". She realizes that, if she forces Jim on Evert, or represses him, he'd probably entrench and campaign against her partner. Instead, she gives Evert leeway, even allowing him to "hate" Jim. Evert is allowed time to adjust be-

of Jim. Jim is "darky", and I laughed it off. But recently, I said, "Hey don't call him that, I like him." He said okay.

cause of her ability to "give way", to allow Evert room to reject her partner and not to make, prematurely, a "big deal" of potential problems. When later she does draw the line, he accepts.

I: So, recently, Evert took the initiative to meet Jim?

Mo: Yeah. Because Jim didn't want to be around Evert. He was as scared of Evert as I think Evert was of him. Well, no. Jim is scared of Evert, but I think Evert could handle Jim. He's been divorced a long time, and he knows what it's like dating a lady that has a teenage son. Evert has a father, and Jim didn't want Evert to think he was his father, and I kept them all separate, and it worked out alright.

Mother perceptively realizes that she must defend Jim, too.

I: What do you make of the change (i.e., the fact that Evert is now seeking Jim out)?

Mo: Well, Evert watches how I feel. If I was unhappy, he'd think it was because of Jim; and Evert wouldn't want to be around him. But because Jim is spoken of in a positive way, then he likes him without ever knowing him. Also, he knows that Jim keeps me off him. Like sometimes I say, "Hey why don't you come jogging with me?" and he says "Look, Mom, I can't handle jogging, call Jim up, go play with him." To let me know that Jim is my friend, my peer.

Evert is direct, not insolent. This is a healthy move to deenmesh himself, and avoid an oedipal struggle. Evert can push his mother back in this manner, because she is not needy and requiring his attention.

Navigating Uncharted Waters: Trying to Stay on Course

After a separation, parents are called upon to establish, maintain, and modify, over time, new and basic structures concerning where the youngster will be living; who will be in charge and how; and when and how contact with the noncustodial parent will be made. Mrs. Dale's efforts, over many years, to forge a closer relationship between father and son would be an example of this. But, in addition, new structures and the arrangements and goodwill of the

participants must also be protected from unpredictable "minor" challenges. These minor challenges are the slips, misunderstandings, and moments when conflicts of interest arise among the parties, which inevitably are part and parcel of living. These are the so-called "small things," the tiny infractions, which if not effectively dealt with can accumulate, fester, or escalate. They can ultimately erode the system.

The following example represents such a situation. It was chosen partly because it reflects a typically important moment for families after the separation, when the youngster is dropped off at the beginning of a visit to the noncustodial parent, or collected at the end of the visit. This interface moment, bringing the former spouses into overlap, can be thought of as requiring parental control of a number of dimensions to their relationship. Some of these are the degree of overlap (will they see or speak to each other, enter the other's living space?); the time frame (will the overlap be brief or extended, lasting minutes or hours?); the mood of the interaction (friendly, sad, sexual, provocative, hostile, violent, etc.); the content of the interaction; and the protection of the youngster from stress. In this example, both parents are "caught off guard" in an unpredictable moment, and their flexibility is tested.

Another reason this example was chosen is that it reflects a typical scenario of the maturing adolescent, who no longer is required to check everything with his parents. As compared with latency and prelatency children, where many more

contingencies must be monitored and checked by the parent, the adolescent, unless inappropriately overprotected and infantilized, is given a greater margin of freedom. Increasingly, however, as this margin expands, parental flexibility is put to the test.

I: Did Evert do anything that you wish that he hadn't because it really made things a heck of a lot worse for him, or for you and his father?

Mo: No ... I can't remember exactly what happened, but I found that sometimes Evert and I will communicate for him to do something with his daddy where he's going to have to verbalize (to his father) and it gets backwards; it gets mixed up. For a while there, Evert was going to his daddy every Monday night, and I didn't know it for maybe two or three weeks, or something like that. And this one particular Monday, I had to drop Evert off at his daddy's. When I got

As an independent youngster, Evert does not need to tell everything or check everything with his mother.

there, Evert went in the house and I said to Paul, "Evert hasn't eaten dinner yet," and Paul says to me, "Well how does he know I hadn't already eaten and didn't have something to do?" And I'm standing there wondering what do I do with this. Here's Evert on his way into the kitchen, and my attitude is that if the boy comes in the house, he eats when he feels like it, and you feed him whenever. Paul had kind of caught me off guard, so I said, "Well Paul, I'll just take Evert on home with me and feed him and I'll bring him back." He said, "Well, never mind, he can eat here." I said, "Okay." So I left. When I got home I started thinking about what had happened just then and tried to figure it out. So I said the best way to find out what happened is to call and find out what happened. So I called him on the phone and I said, "Paul,

Mr. Dale probably feels his wife is taking undue advantage, and he is quick to let her know. She registers his signal. In this way, small infractions are prevented from becoming large.

In this moment of potential confrontation, both parents move flexibly to avoid conflict.

Mrs. Dale does not stay with her fantasies or blame Mr. Dale. She trusts she has access to him, and she calls him to "find out what happened".

I'm confused, and I want to explain to you, I had no choice, I couldn't get Evert up this way any sooner because of the time I get off work. I don't understand the hostility I felt when we were standing there talking." I can't remember exactly what he said, but some way we were able to talk it out and realize that it was some mixup between Evert and I. 'Cause I even brought it to Paul's attention that I didn't know Evert comes to his house on Monday nights. I'm thinking and I'm telling people that he doesn't even come there. So he says, "What do you mean you didn't know?" I said, "Evert never mentioned that he came to your house on a Monday night, 'cause I'm thinking he's staying at my mother-in-law's." So he said, "Well, he's been coming the last few weeks, unless he has some homework, and he'll tell me he's not coming." I said, "Well, I didn't know it."

I said, "Paul, you have to also realize Evert communicates just to you when it has to do with you. I do not know about it, so in order for us not to have any confusion, then I have to make sure that I tell you what I want you to know, and you do the same, so that Evert doesn't get mixed up in it." So it didn't get into a real big thing, and he seemed to have understood that, and he said, "Yeah, you're right." And he started asking me, "What do you mean he doesn't tell you?" And I said, "Why would he tell me he's coming to your house. He finds it a natural thing to go to his daddy's. He doesn't think he has to run to me every-time he goes to his daddy, and I don't know he's going there, so it got very confusing." And he said, "Okay, we have to make sure we pay more attention to that." I said, "Okay, good."

A proliferation of conflict is avoided as the Dales are successful with each other.

The Spousal Relationship

Systematic research on the relationship between former spouses is "very limited" (Ahrons & Perlmutter, 1982, p. 34). Clinical evidence indicates that some separated couples remain trapped together on an endless treadmill of lingering passions, inertia, guilt, fear, and dependency which blocks their movement forward. Others are kept bitterly together in an endlessly seesawing, sometimes vicious, battle either over the children or the "loot" (which may merge into one for the combatants). In extreme situations, these battles take on a life of their own, seeming to consume the combatants, despite themselves. Still other couples quickly forget each other, ricocheting or fleeing blindly into new relationships which reproduce the old. And, of course, there are many couples who discover more successful ways to end a relationship or transform it.

A number of recent studies are beginning to contribute empirical data to this field. Thus Ahrons (1981) and Goldsmith (1980) found that, approximately two and a half years after the separation, the majority of couples in their respective samples described their relationships with their former spouses as conflictual. Still, despite the conflict, they continued to interact reasonably satisfactorily, not only around child-rearing issues, but also around nonparental issues such as the extended family, mutual friends, and work. Talking about new love relationships was uncommon. As Ahrons and

Goldsmith both note, however, sample criteria probably excluded the more conflictual and destructive divorces. In addition, the cross sectional nature of these studies does not allow an understanding of the evolution of these relationships postseparation.

One such evolutionary route might entail temporarily withdrawing aspects of the spousal tie while maintaining the parental tie. This involves the healthy utilization of initial avoidance and distancing from the other to allow for personal growth and grounding outside of the spousal relationship. This might be preparation for a subsequent return to a new and very different relationship with each other.

For Mr. and Mrs. Dale, the separation for both was traumatic. They had dated through their adolescence and had been married for 14 years. Mrs. Dale initiated the split amidst a complex affective mix of relief, guilt, sadness, and fear. Mr. Dale felt deeply betrayed and angry. During the first years after the separation, the couple developed a capacity to distance from each other, atomizing their relationship so it seems. In the earlier interviews, they described their process of atomization of the relationship in various ways. "I feel better," he said, "the less I hear from her." Mrs. Dale developed her own buffer defense. "I'm neutral, I don't have any feelings ... there is no way in the future we can have any type of relationship except 'hello'." This early retreat was a natural effort to protect themselves from further hurt. Says Mr. Dale, "I couldn't allow myself to

get too close. I've been hurt one time by her, and I wouldn't allow myself to get that open." This distancing, too, was an effort to avoid debilitating conflict and to assemble personal defenses by taking advantage of opportunities to begin construction of their separate lives.

As a sequel to disengagement, and concurrently sustaining and propelling it, both became involved with new partners. Both also began to forge new interests and goals: Mr. Dale, in his spare time as a sports coach; Mrs. Dale, preparing for a new career. Amidst this process, Mr. Dale was finding it easier to talk with his ex-wife. "I don't let her get under me like I used to. I don't let myself get involved too often in anything she does or says." Repairing and less vulnerable, they now had "nice little chats" in which he didn't get tense.

Even at this time, anachronistic patterns still endured and needed to be peeled loose and shed. For example, Mrs. Dale continued to kiss Mr. Dale whenever they met. "I always used to walk in and kiss him hello. Over the months, I've managed to say I don't have to kiss this man, I don't want to kiss him hello. That has stopped, and I think I kept doing it 'cause I felt it was nice for Evert to see. But the fact is that Paul and I are separated, and we're not in that kind of relationship, so why should I kiss him hello."

In the next excerpt, from the final interview, Mr. Dale describes aspects of this experience of distancing in order to deal more effectively with his ex-wife and himself. His self awareness and sense of responsibility extricate him

from a potentially engulfing reciprocal struggle with his ex. This particular excerpt is chosen because its content addresses the postseparation division of their assets, an omnipresent and often difficult issue for separating couples.

Fa: See, we had a few properties and I had to go at it to get certain things done. After a point, I got fed up. I said, "To hell with it, I need to cool out." I was irritating myself. I had to slow up and sit back and take a look at what was happening and what I was doing to myself. So, in order to do that, I couldn't keep pushing the divorce, 'cause I was going at it with anger. And things weren't coming off the way I wanted them to or expected them to. They were getting me more and more bent out of shape. So I said, "To hell with it for now." And in doing so, we have been able to communicate like humans. I have been able to see more clearly, and I am sure she

At the point in the conflict where he feels he is being "bent out of shape", as he later says, Mr. Dale frees himself by retreating to "cool out". At this point in the process, one might speculate reciprocity: As he "cools it", so does she. Imagine, however, if Mrs. Dale had, despite his cooling efforts, "heated it up"? He realizes that desire and expectation can be a trap and that "for now" he must retreat from desire. The phrase "for now" reveals the temporary postponing, rather than permanent nature, of this retreat in order

has. And just this year, I thought about getting it started again. Get the wheels turning. And I was going to talk to her about our differences.

that they can later return and meet "like humans". A retreat at this time promotes the likelihood that they will be able to work out their differences later.

I: Money differences?

Fa: No, property. The house really. And she picked up on the vibes so to speak, and she hit me first. And we came to an agreement on settlement.

When he is ready, so is she. Is this ability to wait, to some extent, for the other's readiness one of the hallmarks of postseparation maturity?

I: The two of you, with or without lawyers?

Fa: No. The two of us. We went to our lawyers with it after we'd worked it out. So now we can get the divorce we both want and tie up the loose ends.

Still later, the couple established new patterns of friendship with each other. The following excerpt attests to that. Although the evolution of their tie after the separation has been described here as a generally straightforward shift to distance, and then later to a new level of relating, this is

probably a simplification. Of more likelihood is a phenomenon of back-and-forth zigzagging, of aspects of distance and affiliation.

In the following I-3 segment, Mrs. Dale describes a moment when she, in extraordinary need, reached out to Mr. Dale. Through this event, they forged new channels of friendship and generosity in their relationship. What has transpired is that Mrs. Dale's serious boyfriend of about a year has decided, after much deliberation, to attempt a reconciliation with his wife, from whom he had been separated. This meant that Mrs. Dale's relationship with Ed was now over.

Until this point, both Mr. and Mrs. Dale had held their own personal needs aside in their contacts with each other. Now, Mrs. Dale dares to ask for something for herself. She asks cautiously. The "front", as it were, is their son, their usual and legitimate point of contact. In this excerpt, Mrs. Dale at first does not openly assert her needs, thus reducing the risk that she might be humiliated if Mr. Dale scorns her request or misreads it, or that he might be humiliated if he could not come through for her. Also, his giving -- like her asking -- is discreet. It avoids great generosity, helping without exposing her need.

Mo:	So, New Year's Day when Ed did tell me, (that the relationship was over) I, um, called Paul up and asked, cause I was going to	Mrs. Dale's delay in speak- ing ("um") reveals her anxiety that her request could be misconstrued. At
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take Evert to the movies, and I didn't want Evert's day to be messed up because of what I was going through. And I had told him that I was going through some changes, and he could tell that I was crying and that I needed him to do me a favor. I said, "Could you do me a favor and pick Evert up and let him spend the day with you until I get my head together?" He said, "You all right?" I said, "No, I'm going through some changes, and it's kind of upsetting," so he said, "okay". I think he called me -- well Evert dialed the phone that night, but Paul was in the background saying, "See if she's okay." I even talked to him, like the next day. I think that's when it came out more, 'cause I don't know what I said, but it was something to let him know that I was dealing with an emotional thing, dealing with a person.

face value this transaction masquerades as an issue concerning Evert's "day". But, in effect, it of course concerns Mrs. Dale's need. "He could tell" without being told. Their transaction is subtle -- "on the side", as it were. Mr. Dale maintains a muted quality in his response. But he is recognizing that she is under great stress, and calls that night to check on her, although Evert dials the phone. Evert is here utilized positively to express Mr. Dale's concern. Mrs. Dale then shifts their transaction more directly into the open, and Mr. Dale is supportive of her and encouraging.

Ed's name was mentioned. When Paul explained to me, "Well, Cindy, you know you're not dealing with computers when you put your feelings out, sometimes those things happen," he said, "but we don't have anything else to deal with except people. But it's going to get better - you deal with it, and there'll be better days," and that kind of thing.

I: So he was very supportive?

Mo: Let me tell you, he was so supportive it was shocking. I had to get up and look in the mirror 'cause I didn't think I was talking to the same person. It was such a big difference in his whole attitude. And I had to say to him, "You know it's really something to be sitting here on the phone telling you about changes I'm going through with another person that was in my life." And he says, "Well, it happens to all of us, you know, we just deal with it."

In a sense, Mrs. Dale is not talking to the "same person" she had been married to. She had left Mr. Dale originally because she felt essentially that she received little from him. On the evening that she had left, she asked him one favor -- that he make her a cup of tea, something he had never previously done. Now here, in asking for support, she provides him with a reparative opportu-

And that Monday morning he came past my job, which was something like 8 o'clock in the morning, and he handed an envelope in the door and said, "This is something for you." And when he handed me that I got real filled up, so he left, and I dealt with the tears, and there was a card. He had written a little poem in it about having a better day and something about nothing should be more important than the next day. Then at the bottom he wrote, "There's always light at the end of the tunnel." And that kind of helped me deal with what was going on with Ed and I, and it was surprising, and I called him that night to thank him. He said it was no problem.

When last seen, Mr. and Mrs. Dale remained on good terms, although they saw each other only occasionally and almost always in relation to Evert. By then, both were in stable relationships of their own and looking ahead to greater commitments with these partners. Mr. Dale had met Mrs. Dale's

nity: to come through when previously he had not. And in responding to her, he provides her also with an opportunity: to receive his efforts where previously she might have been unreceptive. Both risk disappointment, but are not disappointed. Both risk being misinterpreted: Mrs. Dale possibly as wanting him back, and Mr. Dale as expecting some favor in return for support. But they do not misread each other's signals.

new partner, liked him and, in fact, played on a basketball team with him. The two men never discussed Mrs. Dale. She, in turn, had met his new partner. When picking up Evert at his place or calling on the phone, the women would talk together. Said Mrs. Dale, "I like her and have respect for her because she's raising a young teenage boy also."

Summary

This family's description of their efforts to meet the demands of their divorced situation reveals a set of ascendent capacities, behaviors, and values which ultimately guides their efforts. Threading through their tale is a deep respect for interpersonal boundaries, as they carefully control their own projections and resist and refuse to accept the projections of the other. This skill becomes all the more remarkable and crucial, given the context of divorce as a time of high stress and major upheaval. It is a time when personal and interpersonal boundaries are more quickly ruptured and when the youngster, as a last vestige of connection between the spouses, is easily triangulated. Inevitably, under great duress, the parents did periodically spill across boundaries, but they were then always quick to recoup and recover.

And during this difficult period, both parents possessed the facility to allow and encourage Evert's gradually emerging independence and autonomy, avoiding the temptation of either leaning excessively on and exploiting their son

emotionally at the service of their own needs, or renouncing their parental-executive responsibility and, in effect, abandoning him. Thus, while they generally encouraged his autonomy and respected his space, there were moments when they also crossed over his boundaries and intruded to guide and contain him, when appropriate. Theirs is no laissez-faire parenting policy. The family is organized in a clear hierarchical manner, with the parents very much in charge. But they possess the confidence and flexibility to allow, within the limits of the hierarchy, moments of parity and boundary reversal. This further cements the trust on which the effective hierarchy is grounded.

In their parental leadership positions a fundamental responsibility involves each parent accepting for himself, demarcating, and diagnosing the terrain where each is insufficient, as well as competent. Having recognized personal limits, each parent then establishes compensatory opportunities or utilizes community experts when necessary and relevant.

Possibly the most complex and delicate task was that which the parents had with each other. Despite personal animosities, deep hurt, real issues of disagreement, and moments of conflict of interest, they were, for the most part, successful with each other. At times, this entailed the courage to surface conflict, in order to avoid and preempt its debilitating festering development. This entailed, too, the wisdom to not surface conflict, but to wait, to be passive, to postpone until a more suitable moment. Such careful restraint

and avoidance actually constitute an active mode, a coiled spring of alert watchfulness that must not be confused with neglect.

At other times, their efforts to deal with the conflictual issue were subtle and carefully indirect, avoiding embarrassments and allowing the saving of face. But there were moments, too, when one parent needed to actively challenge or go up against the other, escalating the issue of contention, for the sake of their son. And if the issue warranted it, they would stay with their struggle and persist until some resolution had been achieved. But when the issue seemingly could not be resolved, each possessed the awareness and self restraint to retreat from indulgence and cool-off, postponing the matter before they were consumed by a battle that could have destroyed their working alliance.

Through all this, the couple atomized and finalized their relationship and established their deepest loyalties elsewhere, with new partners, while still caring for and feeling loyalty to each other.

In so rich an interpersonal field, no one key motive prevails. Throughout this period their awareness, integrity, and courage were continual potent forces shaping the process. Ultimately, however, the parents' task is to see that their son's "disturbance", as Mr. Dale says, "is kept to a minimum".

I: What do you think I should still
 ask you? What don't I know about

that's important, that would tell me something about how come Evert's done so well, how come you and his mother have done so well ..., the family's done so well through the split?

Fa: (a long silence, as father thinks deeply) Well. We've done away with the resentment and bitterness and started growing up, started to take a serious look at what happened between us, a serious look at ourselves. I know I did, at myself. And, er, we had to get rid of things. And now, pulling together, too, because of Evert. Don't want to disturb him, maybe, in later years. He had disturbance enough. I can remember him leaving ... (Father saddens suddenly. His eyes fill with tears. He sighs, shakes his head, and takes a deep breath).

I: This throws up all sorts of feelings, thinking back to that.

Fa: Yup. Yup. But we did it.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter sums up the findings of this investigation and attempts to look ahead. These findings should be seen relative to the real limitations of the study, which are described.

Finally, specific suggestions and a general orientation for future research are described.

The model of postseparation family and adolescent adjustment that has been described in this thesis is derived from a basic theoretical assumption: that the family with children endures, albeit radically changed, after the separation. It does not necessarily shatter catastrophically, ceasing to be a family. Further, postseparation adolescent adjustment can be predicted and understood in terms of a complex and highly interactive process with this surrounding, reorganizing family context.

The empirical and clinical data offered in this thesis provisionally confirm this view of both noncatastrophe and the link between the individual and the structure of the family system. Any tentativeness derives from real limitations of this study, which will be described.

Limitations

Four limitations of the current study should be noted:

1. The sample was relatively small, even when using the full sample of 45. This has two sets of implications. On the one hand, generalizations to other adolescents and their families need to be cautious, until these findings have been replicated with other samples. On the other hand, this relatively small sample size might result in a statistical distortion, decreasing the likelihood of statistically significant findings. Thus, when trends were found in this study, it could be speculated that some of these trends might

have taken on significance had the sample been larger. In addition, a larger sample would have permitted greater freedom in the utilization of more complex multivariable analyses.

2. The measures in the quantitative study were all obtained from only a single point of view: each adolescent's level of adjustment was obtained from the mother; and the assessment of family functioning was obtained from the adolescent. There is potential here for skew and distortion. For example, an overanxious mother might rate an otherwise well-functioning adolescent as functioning poorly. In the absence of meta- or "outside" corroboration of these percepts, we must temper our interpretations of the findings. In future studies, multimeasure assessments of each dimension should be utilized in order to expand the generalizability of the findings.

3. The focus of the quantitative study was almost exclusively on the structure of the custodial home. The noncustodial father's shaping of this structure, and the reciprocal shaping of the father's involvement by the structure, were hardly touched. To take the simplest example, it is common to find an enmeshed mother-child relationship coexisting with a father who is peripheral. This study will not shed light on how the structure of the custodial home is impacted by the noncustodial father and vice versa. The case studies do explore this issue, however, but more rigorous quantitative research is still awaited.

4. The cross-sectional design of both the quantitative and qualitative sections represents a limitation. It is as if the postseparation family has no history. But, obviously, the postseparation family is an organization that is in contemporary time because of its elaboration and development across time. Clearly, it is a system-with-a-history. Multiple factors operating prior to the separation influence the postseparation adjustment of these families and adolescents. For example, the quality of the marriage prior to the separation and the nature and quality of the child's relationships and alliances with each parent are all factors to be considered.

To elaborate one of these examples in more detail, consider the following situation. In two-parent families with multichildren, it is commonplace for specific favored relationships or alliances to exist cross-generationally between child 'A' and one parent, and child 'B' and the other parent. In a conflictual preseparation household, as battle lines become drawn, these cross-generational alliances can evolve into full-blown coalitions, with one parent and child together on one side, and the other parent and child together on the other side. If, after the separation, a child is then left behind in the 'enemy camp', that child could be at high risk. Being identified with the absent parent, but without his or her support, the child might be subject to the retaliatory psychological, or even physical, wrath of the custodial parent.

This cross-sectional study, therefore, is unable to explain in any way how the postseparation system came to be the

way it is now. While this is certainly a limitation, the cross-sectional study does have value, both because the contemporary family is a product of the past, and because the current family structure is what impinges on the adolescent and is 'available' to the therapist for intervention in the clinical situation. One case study (Chapter Six) does briefly explore the historical origins of the family's contemporary dysfunctional structure but, clearly, further research findings in this realm would assist our understanding of postseparation adjustment.

In one other respect, the cross-sectional design presents a limitation. All data for the quantitative study was gathered from families who had separated within the last 18 months. In consequence, all generalizations from the quantitative study must be qualified in terms of this control, such that only the most tentative assertions can be made about adolescents whose parents have separated more than 18 months previously. However, research has shown that the period of greatest stress for parents and children is during this early 1 to 2 year period after the separation (Hetherington, et al., 1978, 1979). It is, therefore, conceivable that these adolescents and their families will become less distressed as time goes by.

Given the limitations of this study, it is, nevertheless, the overall contention that much of postseparation family and adolescent adjustment can be productively considered to be the outcome of two forces: the

history of development that brings the family and adolescent to the contemporary moment (and which was not assessed in this investigation), and the contingencies (of which postseparation family structure is one) that organize the contemporary moment for the family and adolescent. The quantitative and qualitative data provided in this thesis is consistent with this model though clearly, as described in the limitations, insufficient for its full validation.

Future Research

Suggestions for future research have been offered at numerous points along the way. In the immediately preceding section on Limitations, four suggestions were made: replication with a larger sample; the utilization of multimeasure assessments of each dimension; the broadening of the focus of the study beyond the subsystem of the custodial home to include the reciprocal influence of the noncustodial home; and a research design that would allow for the study of the impact of preseparation variables, as well as postseparation variables, over an extended time frame after the separation.

In addition, two particular findings of the quantitative study raise numerous questions and require further study:

1. A significant, and surprising, finding of the quantitative study is that the more adolescents perceive that

they are exposed to or have access to their mother's distressed affect and problems, the better the perceived amount and quality of their involvement in social relationships. Numerous possible interpretations of this finding were offered.

Numerous questions were also raised, not the least of which are: what might be the cumulative effect over time of a distressed mother on an adolescent? Might this later impair the adolescent? These questions are of considerable theoretical and clinical importance. Further research will need to explore this.

2. A series of analyses that went beyond the major focus of the thesis found that increased contact, and quality of contact, with the noncustodial father was associated with increased positive postseparation custodial family functioning and positive adolescent functioning. These findings merely open some doors on parameters for future research: does the healthier family deliver a healthier adolescent to the father which optimizes the likelihood that the father-adolescent relationship will be positive? Or will a better relationship with the father result in a more satisfied adolescent returning to the mother, making her task easier? Or is this an interactive, reciprocal process? Or might other parameters, such as personality features, explain these phenomena; might both parents simply be psychologically healthier in themselves? Future research concerning the relative hegemony of idiosyncratic personality-bound variables or more systemic

characteristics of the family will need to explore this further.

One final suggestion for future research must be emphasized. A major contribution of this thesis is the idea that the stress of divorce need not imply, or be associated with, family or adolescent deviance, maladjustment, or dysfunction during the first 18 months after the separation. In fact, it seems that divorce as an unscheduled transition is probably within the realm of normative adaptation for many families and adolescents who reorganize in relation to the variables examined in this thesis, as well as to other hitherto unstudied dimensions.

The current prediction is that approximately half of all marriages contracted in the U.S.A. will end in divorce (Weed, 1980). Perhaps there are advantages, at this stage of our knowledge, to be looking for the adaptive mechanisms of divorcing families, rather than focusing exclusively on concepts of risk, dysfunction, and disaster. These latter tend to emphasize the terminal, rather than transitional and evolving, nature of the divorce phenomenon. Perhaps what is truly remarkable is that divorcing families are not more disturbed given the stigmatization, the uncharted nature of this complex change with little normative frame, and the diminished financial resources. Future research should be less preoccupied with the risks of divorce and more fascinated by the complex processes of internal reorganization in the family unit. In other words, future research should dwell on the

creative problem solving and coping capacities of these families. The case study of some tasks and operations of a 'good-enough' separation, presented in Chapter Seven, is a modest offering in this regard. The adaptive measures that different families invent, after the separation, for dealing with day to day challenges is, indeed, ground for future study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

FAMILY BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Family Code:

Mother:

RELIGION -	Catholic	1
	Protestant	2
	Jewish	3
	Other	4
	None	5
RACE-	White	1
	Black	2
EDUCATION-	less than 7th grade	1
	junior high school (9th grade)	2
	partial high school (10th or 11th grade)	3
	high school graduate	4
	partial college	5
	university graduation	6
	graduate degree	7

OCCUPATION-

Father:

RELIGION -	Catholic	1
	Protestant	2
	Jewish	3
	Other	4
	None	5
RACE-	White	1
	Black	2
EDUCATION-	less than 7th grade	1
	junior high school (9th grade)	2
	partial high school (10th or 11th grade)	3
	high school graduate	4
	partial college	5
	university graduation	6
	graduate degree	7
OCCUPATION-		

APPENDIX 2

GENERATIONAL HIERARCHY QUESTIONNAIRE (G.H.Q.)

(Items and Coding)

PREAMBLE TO ADOLESCENT INTERVIEW

Thank you for agreeing to answer these questions. What we are doing is trying to learn about what it is like for adolescents when their parents separate and, of course, you are an expert on this topic. A lot of what I will ask you are things that are private so what you tell me today will definitely stay private, and confidential. Obviously, we won't then be talking to your parents about what you have told me today. If you don't want to answer any of the questions, please tell me, and we'll just move on to the next. Once again, thank you.

1. I'd like to know some things about your family. Let's start with your mother. In a word or two, how do you get along with her?

good	3
just okay	2
we're not getting along at all	1

2. Have a look at this card. How often do you and she:

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Once a Month or less</u>	<u>Once a Week or less</u>	<u>A Few Times a Week</u>	<u>Daily</u>
a. Fight physically	5	4	3	2	1
b. Talk over her problems	1	2	3	4	5
c. Discuss Father	1	2	3	4	5

3. Does she cry in your presence?

Often	5
Sometimes	4
A little	3
Very rarely	2
Not at all	1

4. Does she ask your opinion about her friends?

A lot	5
Sometimes	4
A little	3
Very rarely	2
Not at all	1

5. Does mother let you see when she is upset?

A lot	5
Sometimes	4
A little	3
Very rarely	2
Not at all	1

6. (Only if Q-2c is answered "once a month or less" or more than that.) When you talk about your father with your mother, does your mother talk generally critically or angrily about him, or generally more positively?

Critically	1
Positively	3
Varies	2

7. (Only if Q-6 is asked.) When you talk about father with mother, does your mother ask you about your time at Dad's?

A lot	5
Sometimes	4
A little	3
Very rarely	2
Never	1

8. Do you see, or recognize, when she's upset?

A lot	5
Sometimes	4
A little	3
Very rarely	2
Not at all	1

9. Most houses have some sort of rules. Let me ask you about some rules, and you tell me whether these rules are important in your house, or only somewhat important, or not important at all.

	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Important</u>
a. Curfew hours	1	2	3
b. Telling your mother where you are	1	2	3
c. Telling your mother who you are with	1	2	3
d. Doing your chores	1	2	3
e. Asking your mother for money, or taking it	1	2	3
f. Going into your mother's bedroom	1	2	3
g. Borrowing your mother's clothes	1	2	3
h. Talking back to your mother	1	2	3
i. Sex	1	2	3
j. Dope	1	2	3
k. Bring friends to house when parents are not there	1	2	3

10. Generally, how has the enforcement of rules changed since the separation? Have they become:

More strict	3
The same	2
Less strict	1

11. Do you think it's easier to get away with things, (to get around your parents) now than before the separation?

Easier 1

Same 2

Harder 3

12. Now, let's talk about your father. Look at this card. How often do you talk to your father?

Every day 9

Most days 8

1 or 2 times
a week 7

Weekends 6

Every other
weekend 5

1 or 2 times
a month 4

Less than once
a month 3

Almost never 2

Never 1

13. How often do you visit your father?

Every day	9
Most days	8
1 or 2 times a week	7
Weekends	6
Every other weekend	5
1 or 2 times a month	4
Less than once a month	3
Almost never	2
Never	1

14. In a word or two, how do you get along with him?

Good	3
Just okay	2
We're not getting along at all	1

15. Does it sometimes happen that a parent takes up for you if you and your other parent are in an argument? So, for example, if you and your mother were in an argument, would your father take up for you, or the other way around?

Yes	1
No	2

16. Do you sometimes take up for one of your parents when they're in an argument with each other?

Yes	1
No	2

17. Does it sometimes happen that you feel you get caught; when you feel you have divided loyalties between your mother and father?

Yes 1

No 2

18. Look at this ladder. The '10' at the top of this ladder represents the very best life, as you have described it (in the previous question). The '0' at the bottom represents the worst possible life, as you described it. Where on the ladder do you personally stand at the present time?

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

0

APPENDIX 3

PHILADELPHIA CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC

PATIENT: _____
DATE: _____

I (we) authorize the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic to use any audiovisual recordings made at said Clinic of myself (us) and my (our) family, for the purposes of:

1. Evaluation by the therapist
2. Supervision by the therapist's supervisor
3. Research
4. Teaching to professionals only with the approval of the Clinic Director

The videotapes may be used, suitably disguised to the extent practical, in material prepared for publication, and may be copyrighted.

Upon written notice, I (we) may have any or all audiovisual recordings erased, and/or restrict their use to one or more of the above stated purposes.

I (we) understand that all audiovisual recordings are available for viewing by me (us).

FATHER

MOTHER

THIS RELEASE MUST BE SIGNED BY ALL FAMILY
MEMBERS 18 YEARS OLD OR OVER