

1-1-1994

Parental divorce in late adolescence : discontinuity, repetition and the family ghost.


Joan M. Copperman
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1

Recommended Citation

Copperman, Joan M., "Parental divorce in late adolescence : discontinuity, repetition and the family ghost." (1994). *Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014*. 3250.
https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/3250

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.



312066 0298 0367 8

**FIVE COLLEGE
DEPOSITORY**

PARENTAL DIVORCE IN LATE ADOLESCENCE:
DISCONTINUITY, REPETITION
AND THE FAMILY GHOST

A Dissertation Presented

by

JOAN M COPPERMAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 1994

Psychology

© Copyright by Joan Maxine Copperman 1994

All Rights Reserved

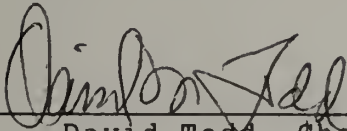
PARENTAL DIVORCE IN LATE ADOLESCENCE:
DISCONTINUITY, REPETITION
AND THE FAMILY GHOST

A Dissertation Presented

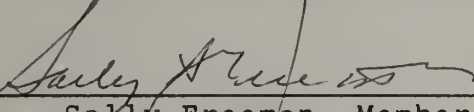
by

JOAN M COPPERMAN

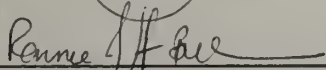
Approved as to style and content by:



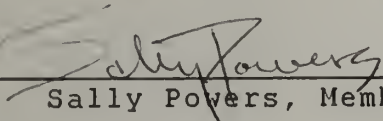
David Todd, Chairperson



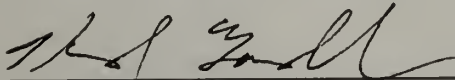
Sally Freeman, Member



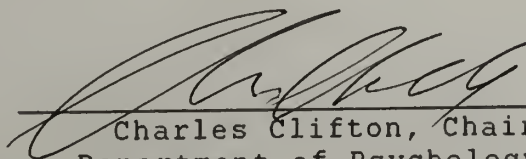
Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, Member



Sally Powers, Member



Howard Gadlin, Consulting Member



Charles Clifton, Chair
Department of Psychology

To my parents

and

to my sister

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank the twenty-one participants of this study for inviting me into their lives. I hope I have honored their openness.

I also want to thank the members of my committee. Sally Powers and Ronnie Janoff-Bulman were supportive and lively contributors as well as wonderful role models in the psychology department. I regret that it is only through this study that I have worked with Sally Freeman. The ideas from discussions with her shine through in the chapter on mourning. Of more importance, perhaps, is the spirit she inspired.

I have serious doubts whether I would have completed this study without the involvement of both individuals who served as chair of my committee. Howard Gadlin had to teach me how to take advantage of his generosity as a chair. Weekly discussions with him over a period of several months provided a space to tear apart and synthesize ideas and impressions. He was part of the process of discovery and provided a precious and creative collaboration. I marvel at the combination of openness, support and direction with which David Todd took over as chair after Howard left the university. This shouldn't surprise me; it is consistent with the combination of playfulness and solidity David offered throughout the

years of graduate school. It is especially in these last several months of writing that I grew ready to finish under his guidance and friendship. Not wanting that to end would be a good reason not to finish.

The writing of this dissertation has been an intensely personal process, a journey back in time to rediscover what was too painful to be known long ago. I hope that if the words here resonate for others who have experienced parental divorce in late adolescence, that the opportunity for growth outweighs the pain. If the members of my family recognize their experience in those of these participants, I hope this is true for them as well. I want to thank my sister and each of my parents for their unique contributions to this process.

There are many other friends and loved ones who have been of support, encouragement and humor along the way. I am grateful to each of you and look forward to sharing other challenges and joys. I trust that the two individuals who have been most involved during this period know how crucial they have been. Thank you, Jenny Nash and Neal Aponte. It is to Neal that I owe insight, both intellectual and emotional, about dynamics frozen in time and a depth of gratitude that only he can know. It's time to climb other mountains and celebrate happier vistas with each of you. How about the silly school?

Finally, thank you, Ira.

ABSTRACT

PARENTAL DIVORCE IN LATE ADOLESCENCE:
DISCONTINUITY, REPETITION AND THE FAMILY GHOST

FEBRUARY 1994

JOAN M COPPERMAN, B.A., SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

M.S., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

PH.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor David Todd

Interviews were conducted with twenty-one adults who were between the ages of 18 and 25 when their parents divorced. In depth interviews, which included discussion about past family life, took place an average of seven and up to eighteen years after the divorce occurred. The psychoanalytic concept of adolescence as a second individuation was used to conceptualize how the sense of self that offspring have established prior to the divorce is an important mediator of their experience.

Most offspring appeared to experience parents ending their relationship as ending the family and declaring it a failure. That divorce was often interpreted as an act of parental will was seen to compromise offsprings' ability to mourn the loss of their families. Most

offspring conveyed an unarticulated discontinuity between the past and the present which was conceptualized as the "family ghost."

Renegotiating relationships with parents was the only universal experience of all participants. Changes in relationships with fathers usually involved distance and closeness; changing relationships with mothers included renegotiating dynamics of triangulation and boundaries, and for daughters, sharing with mothers as now single women.

It was observed that complications in parental relationships after the divorce compounded the internal work of individuation. At the same time, unresolved narcissistic or dependency needs complicated renegotiating current parental relationships. Divorce was seen to potentially complicate recovery for offspring from problematic families. These offspring still seemed occupied with dyadic relationships with parents and with an uncertain sense of self. In contrast, offspring from more harmonious backgrounds appeared to have achieved greater emotional independence but still missed the lost family.

Finally, the impact of divorce on the renegotiation of oedipal issues and the consolidation of a triadic level of relatedness is discussed. It is suggested that

there is a gap between object relations and systemic theory in terms of how the family is internally represented.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview.....	1
Review of Literature on Parental Divorce in Late Adolescence.....	1
What's Missing-What's Needed.....	15
Adolescence-The Second Individuation.....	19
What's Next.....	37
II. METHODS.....	40
Introduction to the Methods of this Qualitative Inquiry.....	40
Participants.....	50
Construction of Interview.....	56
Process of Interviews.....	59
Analysis and Presentation of Data.....	66
III. ORIENTATION TO THE DATA.....	78
IV. DEVELOPMENT.....	85
Overview.....	85
Introduction-An Unspoken Presence Reveals Two Clusters.....	85
Three Continua.....	89
Family Environment.....	90
Differences in Telling and Affective Involvement.....	93
Underlying Concerns.....	95
How the Loss of a Family as a Self Object, and as a Holding Environment, Weakens a Sense of Self.....	106
Differences in how Parents were Related to... Triadic Level of Relatedness.....	112
Conclusions.....	127
A Gap in our Literature.....	137

V. THE INVISIBLE NEED TO MOURN.....	140
Introduction.....	140
Illusions.....	140
Denial and Idealization.....	142
Perfect Families.....	143
Family Mythology-Too Much to Lose.....	145
Sally-Was it him or us that was not as I thought?.....	147
Larry-The Veneer of Togetherness amongst a Community.....	152
This Age.....	165
Mourning: Object Loss-Family Loss.....	170
Peter-An Externalization of what's already there.....	173
Matt-The Invisible Loss of Family.....	179
A Lack of Mourning-The Family Ghosts.....	187
Another Difference between Divorce and Death.....	190
VI. RELATIONSHIPS.....	192
Renegotiating Relationships.....	192
Changing Relationships.....	193
Issues in Relationships.....	196
Triangulation-Leslie.....	197
Boundaries.....	204
Mothers' Growth.....	221
More about Fathers.....	225
Traditionalism.....	230
Thoughts about Relations with Parents as Individuals.....	234
The Relationship to Parents' Relationship....	238
Parents' Relationship as a Model for One's Own.....	241
Endings and Beginnings.....	246
Difficulties-Tenuousness and Lack of Trust.....	248
Idealism.....	258
Conclusions.....	261

VII. CONCLUSION.....264

Where We've Been-Where We're Going.....268

Disruptions in Continuity and other Final
Thoughts.....274

APPENDICES

A. POSTED NOTICES.....284

B. CONTACT LETTER.....285

C. INTERVIEW.....286

D. INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....295

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....296

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Overview

Parental divorce has been the subject of much investigation. The great majority of this inquiry has been with offspring who are still living at home; parental divorce after offspring have left home has only become a focus within the last ten years. This study investigates the impact of parental divorce during late adolescence/young adulthood, between the ages of 18 and 25. This chapter will first review the available studies which have looked at parental divorce in this age group and then describe the strengths and limitations of these studies. It then argues that to fully understand the phenomenon of parental divorce in late adolescence there must be some focus on the offspring's inner world. It is suggested that the psychoanalytic concept of individuation provides a basis for understanding the neglected aspects of how parental divorce in late adolescence has been studied thus far. The processes of individuation which are relevant to understanding divorce in late adolescence are then examined.

Review of Literature on Parental Divorce in
Late Adolescence

Cooney, Smyer, Hagestad and Klock (1986) identify their study as the first reported on this population.

They suggest several reasons why offspring who have left home receive so little attention. First is that custody and support issues are no longer relevant; divorce records do not even include information about offspring over 18. Though age has been shown to be a critical factor in childrens' reactions to divorce, older offspring have been assumed to be immune because they are seen as more independent (Cooney et al.). Older offsprings' increased ability to understand changing family relations is considered to mitigate the emotional impact of the divorce.

Cooney et al. (1986) interviewed college subjects aged 18 to 23 whose parents had divorced within the last three years, and identified five major areas of concern. They found significant emotional vulnerability for both daughters and sons which subsided later in the divorce process. Distress was generally higher for daughters. The divorce was seen as exacerbating the stress inherent in the departure from home and transition to college.

The second area concerned changes in the relationships with parents. Over half the sample reported positive changes in their relationships with both parents, though more so with mothers. These changes often resulted in feelings of closer friendship and included increased communication, greater understanding and mutual respect, and the relaxation of parent-child

roles. Such changes are typical of this age so may reflect other factors in addition to the divorce, but the divorce was identified as the precipitant in those relationships experiencing negative changes. When relationships deteriorated it was more often with fathers than with mothers, especially for daughters. If sons reported difficulties in relationships either parent was equally likely to be involved; with daughters, fathers were twice as likely to be the parent with whom the relationship had deteriorated. Cooney et al. (1986) point out that even though legal factors such as custody are no longer relevant, relationships with offspring of this age showed the same pattern as with earlier offspring: relationships with fathers are more vulnerable than relationships with mothers and mother-daughter relationships are most resilient.

The third theme concerned conflicting loyalties: offspring reported experiencing both parents as demanding increased time and attention. Offspring felt they had to "budget" time in order to balance how much they gave to each parent and worried about handling future demands. These issues were especially highlighted around holidays.

Both sons and daughters reported feeling angry when they first learned of the divorce. Daughters were more likely than sons to be angry and discriminated more often than sons between their parents: they were more likely to be angry with fathers. It is suggested that daughters'

higher levels of anger might reflect greater involvement than sons in their parents' relationship. Cooney et al. (1986) theorize that Gilligan's (1982) conceptualization that women are more concerned with relatedness suggests that daughters might find divorce more emotionally volatile and Jordan's (1984) framework that women are more empathic suggests that daughters might find more difficulty in post divorce adjustment.

Finally, offspring reported being worried about parents' futures. These concerns intersected with fears about whether offspring would be expected to play increased support and caretaking roles. Cooney et al. (1986) conclude that family stability may continue to play an important role in young adults' adjustment and that divorce during this age deserves further investigation by both researchers and clinicians.

Building on the above study, Cooney (1988) explores how the often unexpected event of parental divorce affects normal transitions into young adulthood. Possible complicating factors include less financial resources, constricted life options, less emotional support from parents alongside parents' increased need and dependence, and intensified family obligations which interfere with normal social involvements. Cooney points out the potential for these to interfere with normative role changes and developmental achievements of this age and thus to have long term consequences.

Cooney (1988) noted prevalent feelings of loss of control and isolation reported by subjects. Suggested reasons for the isolation included the fact that divorce at this age is unusual, that offspring are more dispersed after leaving home and that peer groups are less cohesive than in high school. The unexpected nature of the divorce contributed to the feelings of loss of control; more than half the offspring had less than a year's warning of the impending breakup. Parents were not expected to now divorce having lived so long together; to divorce after so long was seen as inappropriate by some offspring.

Cooney (1988) suggests that the transitional nature of young adulthood complicates the impact of divorce during this period. Though many shifts in relationships occur at this age, (such as the assumption of greater material and emotional responsibility and increased reciprocity between parents and offspring), parents remain the "primary givers within intergenerational exchanges" (Cooney, p. 806). Boundaries and role expectations are renegotiated yet dependencies and expectations often remain implicit unless they are jeopardized by external events as in divorce. The assumption of independence and of new roles is jeopardized by family upheaval, increased emotional vulnerability and economic difficulties. Reported

feelings of loss of control and unpredictability were seen as likely to exacerbate the difficulties of this highly transitional period.

Cain (1989, 1990) points out that the dearth of attention to parental divorce in this population is even more striking since divorce statistics show one major clustering during the time which would involve young adult offspring: a couples' middle years. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that of the marriages ending in 1981, over 19% were marriages of 15 years or longer (Cooney et al., 1986). Like others, Cain suggests that both researchers and parents share an assumption that older offspring who have left home are less vulnerable to the effects of divorce due to greater cognitive, ego and emotional development.

The reactions of the college students in Cain's (1989) study, aged 18 to 26 whose parents had divorced in the last three years, were characterized by a sense of "shock and disbelief." Even those who had experienced prolonged parental conflict were unprepared for the separation. An "unexpected" finding was that half the offspring had thought their family life and parents' marriage were "exemplary." Cain suggests these offspring still needed to deny the level of marital conflict despite their advanced emotional and cognitive development. Others demonstrated defending "against a

latent awareness of a troubled marriage by compensatorily idealizing their parents, their marriage and the quality of family life" (Cain, 1989, p. 137).

Themes of a "paradise lost" echoed in the responses of these offspring (Cain, 1989, 1990). Many symbolic losses were reported: offspring felt "bereft of the family of childhood, the one in the photo album, the one whose members shared the same history, the same dinner table...and address" (Cain, 1989, p. 137). The loss of the family home felt disruptive when parents moved, often to places which could not accommodate offspring. This was especially troubling when it involved a remarriage.

Offspring reported an increased pressure to be independent (Cain, 1989, 1990). Since for many this was the first crisis they had faced, the divorce represented a loss of innocence, of trust and of faith. Many reported feelings of cynicism and of increased fear and vulnerability. Over half felt the divorce represented an "exile into maturity" and described being "catapulted into an adulthood for which they felt woefully unprepared" (Cain, 1989, p. 138).

Rage was also a very common experience in these offspring. One quarter of this sample reported that the rage continued unabated for two years. Many reported "unforgiving fury" at their parents for depriving offspring of the family home, an impotent rage at what

was experienced as a fait accompli, and resentment that offspring were affected by a decision stemming from a process from which they had felt excluded. Moral judgements of parents were severe; "most striking...was the way in which harsh moral opprobrium became the conduit for aggressive expression" (Cain, 1989, p. 138).

Offspring also described relinquishing their own values as they watched parents behave in dramatic contrast to previously upheld moral standards (Cain 1989, 1990). Offspring reported feeling that parents had become unfamiliar and a lack of trust stemming from not knowing which view of parents was accurate. Most upsetting were parents' moral reversals in social conduct and sexuality. Offsprings' responses included the extremes of hedonistic behavior or of withdrawal into asceticism. A subgroup adopted a "protective nihilism" characterized by the "reasoning that illusions that never form are illusions that never shatter" (Cain, 1989, p. 139).

In contrast to Cooney et al. (1986), the students in Cain's study did not experience loyalty conflicts as much as feelings of clear blame for one parent while siding with the other (1989, 1990). Unlike younger children, these offspring reported they did not feel they were to blame for the divorce (Cain, 1989, 1990). For several offspring, feelings of responsibility centered instead on the failure to keep parents together. Many others

reported realizing they had been responsible for keeping their parents together in that the divorce had been postponed until their departure. Consequently, feelings of responsibility were for "divorce postponed" rather than for the divorce itself.

Similar to students in other studies, many offspring experienced numerous role reversals with parents. These included becoming the main emotional support for a parent which sometimes involved having to rearrange offspring's own life in order to be available to the parent who was considered to be spurned; becoming advisors or confidantes, and substituting for the missing parent in activities such as helping mothers buy cars and helping fathers with wardrobes.

"Perhaps the most uniform finding...was the strikingly altered attitudes toward romantic love and marriage...following their parents' divorce" (Cain, 1989, p. 143). Many offspring reported increased cynicism and feelings of disillusionment. Because of the length of the marriage and its apparent durability, offspring struggled with the belief that if this marriage could dissolve, anything could. Many reported disruptions in current relationships due to "an almost ubiquitous abandonment anxiety" (Cain, 1989, p. 144).

The divorce was found to be least disruptive when the decision to separate was mutual, when the rancor between parents was short lived, when offspring's

relationship with each parent was honored, and when requests to maintain neutrality were respected (Cain, 1990). This characterized only a few.

Kaufman (1988) echoes others in suggesting that the dearth of research about parental divorce in this age group rests upon the assumption that offspring who have left home have achieved independence and therefore are minimally affected. She also points out that statistics are only available on minors but long term marriages are terminating with increasing frequency which suggests that larger numbers of late adolescent offspring are facing parental divorce.

Kaufman (1988) studied gender differences in changing relationships with parents of middle to upper middle class college students whose parents had divorced within the last three years. This study is the only one which takes into account variance in pre-divorce conditions, such as the nature of pre-divorce relationships, and how these conditions affected how the divorce was experienced. Kaufman considered her most dramatic finding to be that if the separation occurred within the offspring's first six months at college the student was significantly more likely to be either the first or last born. While Kaufman felt this finding demonstrated how family dynamics change as children age, it also seems to demonstrate how family and individual

dynamics intersect and how divorce can be different for each offspring within the same family.

Both sons and daughters found parents' increased sharing of thoughts and feelings to be a mixed experience (Kaufman, 1988). On one hand, it was seen as confirming the young adult's emerging maturity and was indicative of increased reciprocity between parent and offspring. But the sharing at times became excessive and was an unwelcome burden. For both sons and daughters, feelings of increased closeness with parents related to seeing parents as more complex people and gaining knowledge of parents' vulnerabilities. Sons and daughters both expressed more anger towards fathers than toward mothers. As in Cooney et al. (1986), daughters expressed more anger towards both parents than did sons.

Offspring of both genders displayed similar patterns in relationships with mothers. About half of each gender felt their relationships with mothers improved while a quarter felt the relationship stayed the same and a quarter felt the relationship deteriorated. The improvement in relationships with mothers was attributed to two main changes: less tension at home after a father moved out and mothers' increasing independence.

A very different pattern with fathers emerged. Two thirds of daughters indicated that relationships with fathers had deteriorated; this finding is reminiscent of Cooney et al. (1986). In contrast, two thirds of the

sons found their relationships with fathers to have improved. Offspring reported three reasons for the deterioration with fathers. One was a decrease in contact with fathers and father's manipulative use of money as a means of control. The second was anger at fathers reaching out for contact after the divorce when the pre-divorce relationship had been poor. While fathers' initiatives were positive for some offspring, rage and a further deterioration of the relationship often were the result when the pre-divorce relationship had been problematic. The anger and deterioration in relationships was more likely for daughters than for sons. Fathers personality changes were the third cause of deteriorating relationships. Watching fathers change dress and life styles as single men was of concern for offspring of both genders but especially problematic for daughters.

Offspring demonstrated two broad categories of concern for parents (Kaufman, 1988). One was in parents' home and occupational functioning, the other in social and emotional functioning. The concern in the former area was much more common when marriages had been strongly traditional and organized along gender lines. Both genders expressed significant concern about the social and emotional functioning of both parents. In general, fathers started dating earlier and sons' concerns for fathers diminished considerably when fathers

became involved in ongoing relationships. In contrast, daughters often viewed fathers new involvements as indicative of their "instability or crisis of identity." In general, daughters were more concerned about parents than were sons, and daughters' concern about fathers co-existed with high levels of anger towards them.

Daughters also felt more responsibility towards both parents and offspring of both genders felt more responsibility towards mothers than towards fathers (Kaufman, 1988). Responsibility was expressed in concrete ways as well as in providing emotional and psychological support. Both sons and daughters reported increased loyalty towards mothers and decreased loyalty towards fathers. Offspring worried about each parent despite changed loyalties and even when the relationship did not entail overt feelings of responsibility.

Kaufman (1988) reports that though she had expected gender of the offspring to be the critical factor in determining relationships with parents, she found instead that the gender of the parent was the distinguishing factor. Mothers were seen to reach out for help, intimacy, and sharing much more than fathers, and sometimes were seen as more trouble and less respectful of boundaries. Despite such differences in parents' behavior after the divorce, Kaufman posited that pre-divorce relationships accounted for post divorce relationship differences. She understood offsprings'

increased responsibility, concern and loyalty for mothers to stem from mothers' greater emotional availability and mutuality before the divorce more than behavior differences in parents after the divorce.

Though not the results of a research study, Elson (1964) provides a comparison of adolescents seeking counseling in a student mental health service who were experiencing parental divorce or separation with those who sought services from within an intact marriage. The view from this clinical context offers an interesting comparison of students whose families were experiencing difficulties with those who were not.

Significant to the viewpoint from which this study is conducted, both groups were seen as dealing with the mourning process of giving up infantile ties to parents. Elson (1964) reported that both groups experienced depression related to the loss, both actual and fantasized, which is considered part of individuation and separation in late adolescence. However, the group not experiencing family difficulties demonstrated a larger component of grief; whereas rage and attendant guilt were more prominent with the group with family problems and was understood as related to the "abrupt interruption of their dependency on parents" (Elson, p. 707). Elson points out the difficulty for these students that separation is being taken out of their hands. She noted

the need to help students deal with their rage at abandonment and the guilt which rage gives rise to, and the need to help students differentiate their own needs and separation tasks from their parents.

For students experiencing family problems, grief felt for the deserted parent or towards the lost parent was intensified by the impression that relationships were already too tenuous to withstand any expressions of anger. Anger was thus often turned against the self, resulting in apathy towards school, and identifications with negative qualities in parents were seen to contribute to disruptions in relationships.

What's Missing-What's Needed

While there have been few studies of parental divorce in late adolescence, the above summary demonstrates that the existing studies do provide some depth of understanding in significant areas. The semi-structured interview format of each study allowed offspring to elaborate their experience in several domains, most notably in how the process of divorce intersects with already changing relationships with parents. These studies suggest that parental divorce during this period can have long term developmental consequences and challenge the prevailing myth that divorce after offspring leave home has minimal impact.

These studies all share some common weaknesses, however. They all focus on college students within three

years of their parents' divorce and thus provide only a narrow glimpse into a complex phenomenon. More importantly, they fail to take into account pre-divorce differences in family environments and differences in the levels of emotional maturity attained before the divorce. Essentially, absent in the above studies is any sense of how the experience of parental divorce resonates against and is colored by the inner world of the offspring.

Fintushel and Hillard (1991), in an extensive investigation into the experience of parental divorce for offspring between the ages of 18 and 46, begin to remedy this gap. They suggest that the self that is first developed within the network of relationships, rules and myths which constitute family life is carried within, though the offspring is now independent. Offspring experience divorce from this self as well as from an adult self. The sense of self developed in the family which is now being dissolved is shattered no matter how independent the adult offspring has become. Complementing this is the fact that divorce also resonates against the sense of family carried within. While the ages of the offspring in this study extend beyond the period of late adolescence, Fintushel and Hillard expand the framework to include the inner world of the offspring.

Still missing, however, is any focus on how pre-divorce differences in family life and psychological differences between offspring influence how parental divorce is experienced. This study attempts to take into account how the pre-divorce family was experienced and the specific ways the internal family then colors offsprings' reactions to parental divorce. How divorce is experienced depends in part on what was lived before, what an ongoing family or the lack of it means, identifications with that family, what needs were met or not met, and what memories remain. Pre-divorce family life receives more attention in this study as one vehicle for understanding how offspring experience their parents' divorce.

This study also attempts to take into account how the psychological development which has occurred within that family is the foundation from which divorce is experienced. Offspring enter young adulthood with varying levels of emotional, interpersonal and instrumental competence and with varying levels of self confidence and maturity. These differences grow out of different experiences within a family; some families prepare their offspring better than others. This study attempts to explore the effect of parental divorce in the context of the psychological strengths and weaknesses

within each individual and how these factors contribute to that individual's experience of their parents' divorce.

The theoretical framework used to inform that analysis is a psychoanalytic one and derives from the view of adolescence as a period of second individuation (Blos, 1979). This discussion will present the following features of adolescent individuation relevant to parental divorce in late adolescence: the further integration of bad and good object representations which makes possible whole object relating; the reworking of infantile object relationships which results in separating from the influence of primitive internal objects; the restructuring and strengthening of the ego in order to relinquish the identification with the internalized parental ego; and the inter-connected processes of de-idealizing parents, internalizing sources of self-esteem and relinquishing omnipotence. Discussion about the role of the peer group will be limited to how the above processes are aided through identifications with peers. A short discussion of regression and projection will provide some understanding of the mechanisms by which individuation occurs. Individuation avoidance and the relation between individuation and identity formation will also be discussed.

Adolescence-The Second Individuation

Individuation is a lifelong developmental process (Joffe & Sandler, 1965; Josselyn, 1980; Mcdevitt, 1975; Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985) which results in increasingly complex and differentiated internal structure. While individuation is lifelong, it is considered to be most intense during the first three years of life and then again in adolescence (Blos, 1979; Josselyn). Common to both periods is "a heightened vulnerability of the personality organization" (Blos, p. 142) and specific forms of psychopathology result from deviant development during either period (Blos).

Mahler, Pine and Bergman (1975) have described the first individuation as the evolution of intrapsychic autonomy and structure. Infancy individuation results in the differentiation of self from object representations. The need to distinguish self from non-self stems from the centrality to development of internalization: the process by which "aspects of external reality become aspects of, and under the control of, the self" (Josselyn, 1980, p. 190). In infancy, aspects of reality consist of the parental objects who serve dependent, libidinal and narcissistic needs. How parents are internalized and serve as the building blocks in the structuralization of the psyche constitutes the bulk of psychodynamic developmental theory and will not be summarized here. What is relevant for this discussion is the understanding

that "individuation involve(s) the crystallization of a unique self from the amalgam of shared ego experience" (Josselyn, p. 190). The achievement of emotional and libidinal object constancy is a crucial marker for the end of the first individuation (Mahler et al.).

Distinguished from cognitive object permanency, emotional object constancy consists of the integration of bad and good self and object representations and is crucial in the formation of boundaries and whole object experiencing (Kernberg, 1976). The subjective experience of the second individuation is a more conscious sense of self experiences which have their foundations in early childhood: "a sharpened sense of one's distinctness from others, a heightening of boundaries, and a feeling of selfhood and will" (Josselyn, p. 191).

Adolescence is a return to the tasks of individuation and autonomy first begun in infancy and early childhood. While the outcome of the first individuation is structuralization, adolescent individuation serves to continue the ongoing differentiation of self and object representations. More significant in adolescence than differentiation of self representations from object representations is the further cohesion and complexity of increasingly articulated and differentiated self representations (Schafer, 1973). Some define adolescence as the time when the task of individuation is renewed and is most

dominant and as ending when this developmental process becomes a less central organizing principle (Josselyn, 1980; Blos, 1979). Two factors distinguishing the tasks of adolescent individuation are the biologically driven necessity of integrating into the personality new sexual urges, how to manage them, and incorporating sexual identity and behavior into the self, and the gaining of a sufficient degree of independence from parental figures to enter adulthood. The latter demand is the more relevant one in this study. The cognitive and conceptual advances which occur in adolescence are seen as facilitating further emotional individuation (Blos; Dashef, 1984; Josselyn).

Blos (1962) has described adolescence as a period encompassing different stages each with its own tasks and character but posits that individuation as a process of "psychic restructuring" winds throughout the entire course of adolescence despite the specificity of separate phases (Blos, 1979). While the first individuation involves the formation of distinct self and object representations, Blos (1979) envisions that the period of the second individuation serves the further differentiation of those aspects of the self still enmeshed with early parental introjects. He highlights two aspects of increasing structuralization occurring during adolescence which further the individuation of infancy. The most important is in relation to internal

objects. He defines adolescent individuation as "the reflection of those structural changes that accompany the emotional disengagement from internalized infantile objects" (Blos, 1979, p. 143). Without such disengagement the choice of extrafamilial love and hate objects is "either precluded, hindered, or remains restricted to simple replication and substitution" (Blos, 1979, p. 144). The second aspect is the strengthening of emotional object constancy in that internal representations only acquire stability and firm boundaries at the end of adolescence.

Separating from infantile objects is made necessary by how the first individuation is resolved. During the first individuation, the resolution of infantile omnipotence is achieved by projecting omnipotence onto the external parents and subsequent internalization of these omnipotent objects. Identifications form in both the ego and superego with these omnipotent and idealized objects. Being like and meeting the expectations of these internalized parental objects becomes a primary source of self-esteem. These internal objects, however, are extreme and severe due to being internalized through the young child's limited cognitive and primitive emotional capacities. Adolescent individuation is a time of revisiting those more primitive constellations through processes of regression (Blos, 1979) and projection (Josselyn, 1980; Schafer, 1973) in order to rework those

internal objects and thus relinquish infantile ties. Earlier identifications are resifted and differentiated as the totalistic identification with archaic parental sources of approval and prohibition are reworked with a more realistic content (Blos; Josselyn). The loss felt through selective repudiation of identifications with parents is compensated for by the importance of being like one's peers (Blos, Josselyn). Shared qualities with a valued object or idol also provides a source for new identifications (Blos).

Reworking infantile object relationships results in a more mature and restructured ego and is the outcome of successful individuation (Blos, 1979; Josselyn, 1980). Adolescence is the time of separating from the internal parental ego which has served narcissistic, omnipotent, prescriptive and proscribing functions and until adolescence, "has been selectively available to the child as a legitimate ego extension" (Blos, p. 144). Ego maturation and the disengagement from the infantile object are interdependent and recursive processes. Separation is also occurring between the ego and the archaic superego as the maturing ego begins to wrest control away from the superego which first formed in identification with the introjected omnipotent parent.

One of the many losses involved in individuation is the loss of self-esteem formally supplied by identification with the omnipotent internal parent. The

de-idealizing of previously experienced omnipotent and narcissistically enhancing parental objects makes possible the internal regulation of self-esteem and is a crucial process in individuation (Dashef, 1984; Josselyn, 1980), especially in late adolescence. The omnipotent parental introjects of infancy must be de-idealized and disidentified with as part of re-structuralizing the ego. The loss of narcissistic omnipotence must be tolerated and mourned in order to be replaced by a more reality and efficacy based self esteem. Successful separation results in the active pursuit and exploration of one's own "skills, talents, and capacities for affectual experience" (Dashef, p. 246) and new conceptualizations of oneself, independent of earlier identifications and idealizations of parents (Dashef).

Blos (1979) emphasizes the role of regression in the process of transforming earlier identifications and internal relationships and suggests that it is only during adolescence where regression is a necessity of development. It is at adolescence that "regression operates as a defense mechanism alongside regression in the service of development" (Blos, p. 153). It is through regression that infantile object relationships can be revisited, thereby making possible "corrections and differentiations" that can neutralize those old influences. The adolescent ego, though growing and vulnerable, has more maturity, integration, and cognitive

capacity than the ego of childhood and therefore can rework old solutions. The maturing ego provides a basis for coming up with new solutions under the necessary condition of regression:

Only through regression at adolescence can the residues of infantile trauma, conflict, and fixation be modified by bringing to bear on them the ego's extended resources that draw, at this age, support from the developmental momentum of growth and maturation (Blos, p. 153)...Only through the reanimation of the infantile emotional involvements and of the concomitant ego positions (fantasies, coping patterns, defensive organization) can the disengagement from internal objects be achieved. (Blos, p. 169)

Self and object representations first formed under the influence of primitive love and hate, identifications, compromises, proscptions and prescriptions are all reworked through regression. It is both an ego and a drive regression (Blos, 1979); the ego is infused with archaic experiences in order to rework and separate from them. Returning to old ego states lays the basis for the corrections and differentiations of earlier object relationships. Revisiting childhood solutions with a more mature ego which is able to adopt new compromises results in autonomous ego functioning which is independent of earlier totalistic identifications and is the achievement of individuation. Blos suggests that regressed ego states are apparent in the adoption of idols (a process which Josselyn suggests also serves identifications with a peer group and

provides new role models). Regression is also evident in the totalistic identifications with the moral and aesthetic abstractions which inform adolescent values and idealism and which paradoxically serve as protection against a total regressive merger with internal objects (Blos).

Josselyn (1980) and Schafer (1973) emphasize the role of projection as well as regression in the process of relinquishing infantile ties. More conflictual, anxiety, and guilt-producing aspects are externalized until the maturing ego can modify and integrate them. It is the current-day reality parents who often are the containers for these projections (Josselyn; Schafer). Conflicts experienced in relation to the internalized infantile parents are projected outward onto the external parents of adolescence. Projection allows for ego consolidation to occur in areas of less anxiety thereby strengthening the ego for later modification of more conflictual aspects (Josselyn).

The increasing differentiation and separation from infantile objects is accompanied by growing independence and separation from external parents as well. This process is complicated by the tendency to project onto the "reality parents" the unconscious influence of the early infantile objects (Josselyn, 1980; Schafer, 1973). Josselyn emphasizes that while individuation occurs in

relation to the external parents, it "takes place with respect to internalized objects-the internalizations that served to promote autonomy through childhood now hinder progressive development in adolescence" (Josselyn, p. 190). Individuation occurs both in relation to the external reality parents but primarily must occur in relation to the internalized parents of childhood: "Individuation is a primarily intrapsychic process that is nevertheless affected by and expressed in reality" (Josselyn, p. 193).

The internal regulation of self esteem is the most important outcome of "good enough" individuation (Blos, 1979; Dashef, 1984; Josselyn, 1980) and results when the sources of love and approval, previously located in the parental objects become located in the self (Josselyn). The ego becomes the main source of a realistic self-esteem (Blos, Josselyn) as the super-ego loses its power and rigidity. The narcissistic gratification previously felt through the identification with the omnipotent parent now is supplied by the ego. Omnipotentiality (Pumpian-Mindlin, 1965) must be relinquished and mourned as increasing instrumentality along with a realistic self appraisal and acceptance result (Josselyn).

The ego's work in relation to the internal world of adolescence is, then, to become the guardian of self-esteem. To do this...it must make peace with the introjects of childhood,

rework narcissistic investment, and test the self in reality. (Josselyn, p. 201)...The transition out of narcissism, (the narcissistic gratification of identification with the omnipotent parent,) is accompanied by a commitment to objective reality, where the self is experienced as an initiator of activity, capable of setting and reaching goals. (Josselyn, p. 199)

Feelings of loss, disappointment in the discovery of parents' lack of omnipotence and perfection, and a resulting sense of being alone (and empty) accompanying these processes (Dashef, 1984; Josselyn). Late adolescence is a time of particular vulnerability due to the extent that separation processes are active, along with their accompanying grief and need for self-differentiation (Dashef).

The course of individuation is profoundly influenced by the degree of already existing ego strength (Blos, 1979; Josselyn, 1980; Schafer, 1973). The threat posed by enmeshment through regression or the impossibility of renouncing infantile ties can overwhelm the still maturing ego. Josselyn suggests that the stronger the ego, the less threatening is the regression and that "as a sense of self becomes more certain and stable the individual is prepared to review and amend other aspects of self left behind (Josselyn, p. 192). Only a relatively intact ego can tolerate the ego regression necessary in adolescence for growth (Blos). Apparent is a somewhat cyclical process where an adolescent with

inadequate ego strength is least able to undertake the regressive process most needed in the service of development, thus stalemating further progressive ego growth.

The adolescent is seen as vulnerable to the development of both temporary and permanent psychotic illnesses because the parental ego can no longer be used to "strengthen, structure, organize, and buffer" a seriously defective ego from early childhood (Blos, 1979). Since regression can reveal basic ego defects, it is in adolescence when psychotic diseases often emerge for the first time (Blos). "Late adolescence and early adulthood can become a period of self-absorbed regression into identity diffusion, as well as suicidal depression, schizophrenic and manic-depressive psychoses, anorexia nervosa, and various types of dangerous acting out" (Dashef, 1984, p. 240). Josselyn (1980) suggests that "in healthier adolescents, what cannot be resolved is structuralized as character defense; in those who are less healthy, psychosis may result" (Josselyn, p. 205). The notion that unresolved individuation issues are structuralized as character defense is consistent with the view that character structures the part of the psyche which manages the distinction between self and other and the integration of bad and good object and self representations.

Short of psychosis, one way that individuation is derailed is by substituting concrete action, such as geographical, moral, or life style distance for the internal work of individuation (Blos, 1979). The transformation of psychic structures is not achieved; rather the disengagement from infantile objects has been replaced by a polarization of them. Such complete cutting off affords the adolescent the feeling of having triumphed over the past (Blos). Much of observable behavior in adolescents includes such polarizations and are part of the normal fluctuations as the adolescent ego attempts to sever "childhood and family continuities (to) escape from an overwhelming regressive pull" (Blos, p. 147). Problems result when this adaptation is permanent and amounts to what Blos calls individuation avoidance. Maintaining this defensive stance against regression, thereby making progressive movement impossible, often results in "striking inefficacy, emotional shallowness, procrastination, and expectant waiting" (Blos, p. 147). The avoidance of regression potentially becomes a permanent character formation; if taken as the solution to individuation rather than as part of the process, the flouting of new behaviors and identifications leads to a derailment of individuation.

Josselyn identifies two additional types of maladaptive adjustment when adolescents are unable to replace the identification with the infantile omnipotent

parent and the accompanying narcissistic enhancement with realistic sources of self-esteem. One is a retreat into passivity or grandiosity when the self is experienced as unable to live up to internalized omnipotent parental demands. The second is in adolescents who foreclose on restructuralization and proceed through adolescence with a barely modified childhood psychic organization of rigid and constricted notions of being good. She echoes Blos's (1954) notion of prolonged adolescence as "characterized by an inability to close the adolescent process" (Josselyn, p. 199). These young adults cannot replace the narcissistic aggrandizement from the "omnipotentiality" of youth (Pumpian-Mindlin, 1965) with commitments involving the finality of making choices.

Inhibited separation in late adolescence can also result in identity diffusion (Dashef, 1984). In his clinically based discussion of individuation, Dashef takes into account difficulties in individuation which result from still identifying with troubled parents. He posits the importance of late adolescents disidentifying from nonfunctional or faulty identifications: identifications with "loved but hurtful or disappointing parents," or identifications with parental weaknesses which do not promote growth and interfere with adaptation. Resistant and persisting idealizations can

result from defensively overvaluing troubled parents. Continued idealizations and faulty identifications are seen as maintaining old, unworked-through childhood ties to ambivalently experienced parents and result in arrested development. The "inhibition of self-exploration of skills and talents, including relational skills, as well as the inhibition of the formation of new...identifications" typify arrested development" (Dashef, p. 242).

The peer group is seen as crucially important in the process of disengaging from both internal and external parental figures. Giving up identifications with omnipotent objects is facilitated by new transient identifications with cults and other omnipotently perceived leaders (Blos, 1979; Josselyn, 1980) and in less regressive ways through identification with a peer group (Josselyn). The intensity of this identification is gradually relinquished as the older adolescent feels able to stand more independently (Josselyn). The peer group serves a crucial role in providing new objects for identification and serving as support, balm and compensation for the loneliness and emptiness which can accompany the disengagement from internal objects. The urge for group participation also serves the defensive function of "warding off the experience of inner emptiness and in preventing the adolescent from

withdrawing from others in the face of the internal conflict" (Josselyn, p. 198) and of preventing merger through regression with infantile objects (Blos). The adaptive function of this increased interest in the social world is to "provide ego-sharing experiences and new identifications" (Blos, p. 60).

Individuation lays the bases for identity formation and autonomy (Josselyn, 1980). Aspects of the self which have become individuated and autonomous must be incorporated into a sense of identity. Identity is formed from "ego elements that gain autonomy from external and superego control and that contribute to reality-oriented self-esteem" (Josselyn, p. 201). Schafer (1973) suggests that self and identity are "superordinated representational terms" for the elements that have become separated or individuated. He suggests that the "sense of self-sameness that Erikson emphasizes in connection with identity formation is...a certain kind of representation, an idea one has about one's being, a way of organizing and giving more meaning to one's ideas and feelings, a conception of continuity based on recognition or familiarity" (Schafer, p. 52).

Identity formation also involves the element of commitment through the "selective repudiation of possible selves" and the relinquishing of omnipotentiality: "Identity is exclusive; it is manifested in commitment

and in the giving up of potentialities: "I will do (be) this and not that or that" (Josselyn 1980, p. 202). Individuation is becoming a self; a sense of identity is having attained a "relatively stable and integrated self," knowing who that self is, presenting as that self, and hoping/forcing others to know oneself as that self. Individuation lays the foundation for identity formation but identity formation makes possible further individuation. Individuation, autonomy and identity formation are independent yet recursive processes; advances in each leading to advances in the others (Josselyn).

While identity formation is often considered the task of late adolescence, others consider the late adolescent as still potentially involved in the task of individuation. Dashef (1984) especially considers late adolescents to be still actively involved in separating. Josselyn (1980) asserts that a phase approach to the developmental tasks of adolescence must be understood as conveying the order of the primacy of a task for each period rather than defining the age group for certain tasks. Accordingly, a seventeen year old may have already achieved a significant level of differentiation and be working on identity formation and a 22 year old may only be beginning to individuate.

Individuation is a unifying concept across different psychoanalytic traditions. For the purposes of this study, the structural changes achieved in varying degrees through a more or less successful individuation process are able to be conceptualized as the following: from an object relational viewpoint as differentiation of self from infantile object representations and increasing differentiation and integration of self representations; from a self psychology perspective as a cohesive and vital self system with independence and flexibility in the choice of and reliance upon self objects; and from an ego psychology perspective, an intact and autonomous ego with a modified, no longer primitive and archaic superego, and a stable ego ideal. A notable common conclusion across all traditions is the assertion that at the end of adolescence the maintenance of self esteem becomes more internal and less dependent on the environment. A positive and stable sense of self could be considered to be the subjective experience correlating with the underlying structures.

Individuation in this usage is considered a quality within the individual. Grotevant (1986) points out that individuation is a construct used on dyadic and familial levels as well as on the intrapsychic. As a quality of relationships, individuation is considered to reflect the simultaneity of individuality within a context of

connectedness; being separate yet joined in relationship (Grotevant). Object Relations theory has been criticized for stressing autonomy and separateness rather than mutual connectedness as a goal of development. Though individuation is being used in this study as an intrapsychic and not as an interpersonal concept, Object Relations theory is understood as envisioning separate, differentiated selves able to form mutual, interactive relationships. Individuation takes place within relationships and "involves the subtle but crucial phenomenological shifts by which persons come to see themselves as distinct within their relational context" (Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985, p. 620).

Adolescent individuation involves separating internally from earlier parental introjects while renegotiating ongoing relationships with parents in the external world. The concept of rapprochement emphasizes that individuation occurs in the context of ongoing relatedness (Josselyn, 1980). The outcome of positive development is a differentiated and complex self in an ongoing web of relatedness. Individuation is the lifelong "process by which a person becomes increasingly differentiated from a past or present relational context" (Karpel, 1976). The inner construction of self as separate occurs dialectically and simultaneously within the connection with others, as Benjamin (1988) so artistically captures.

Individuation from infantile objects takes place within the relational context of the family. Periods of increasing separation alternate with the use of the parents as a secure base to check back on, similar to the "refueling" of the early "practising" period described by Mahler et al. (1975). Even in late adolescence, the family operates as a base for offspring in college; the emotional metaphor of "refueling" finds concrete expression in the traditional gorging on home-cooked food. And finally, even beyond adolescence, as "there is almost always a part of the 'self' which is connected psychologically to the parental family, individuation is best viewed as a subjective process referring to the relative degree of psychological distance an individual experiences from his or her parental family" (Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985, p. 621).

What's Next

The concept of individuation enlarges the field from which to understand the impact of parental divorce in late adolescence. Though primarily an intrapsychic process, individuation is nonetheless "affected by and expressed in reality." Divorce changes reality on at least two levels: relationships with parents and with the corporate family.

The family serves as "container" for the paradoxical affects and grief inherent in individuation. The concept

of individuation suggests that the maturing ego becomes the holder for the self, a function previously fulfilled by parents, but this process involves loss. Dashef (1984) suggests that the normal de-idealization and disidentification processes in individuation are made harder by divorce in that "without families to help empathically contain distress, it becomes harder for growing individuals to contain opposing affects, thoughts and action tendencies within the self" (Dashef, p. 240). What are the implications that the family is ending while offspring are potentially still involved in internally separating from omnipotent objects and still on the road to finding ego internalized sources of self-esteem? How is the loss inherent in individuation affected by the external losses which occur when parents divorce? What light do the processes of individuation shed upon the feelings expressed by the students in Cain's (1989) study of "a paradise loss," an "exile into maturity," or of "being catapulted into an adulthood for which they felt woefully unprepared?" And what happens to the self which is still connected to the parental family?

Offsprings' preoccupations with new demands and changing relationships when parents divorce (Cain, 1989; Cooney et al., 1986; Kaufman, 1988) suggest additional questions about the impact of divorce when thought about in the context of the emotional demands of

individuation. How do offsprings' increased concerns for troubled parents and changed, often disappointing perceptions of parents affect the de-idealizing and disidentifying processes of individuation? How do the changes in the offspring-parent relationship affect the processes of separating from infantile objects and moving towards experiencing external parents as whole objects? And what is the effect of such increased emotional demands in the real world when the work in individuation is primarily intrapsychic?

The family holds in place the parents as individuals from whom the adolescent is individuating; divorce destroys this structure. Josselyn suggests that "the middle adolescent works to become an individual (but) remains a satellite of his parents. The late adolescent, now a satellite, must strive to find his own orbit" (Josselyn, p. 208). In Josselyn's metaphor, divorce explodes the home planet of this new satellite. Depending on the gravitational pull, which would include the need to further individuate and work through regressive reactions to still unresolved dependency or narcissistic issues, the late adolescent of divorcing parents faces outer space with no home base. This study investigates the outcome of that experience.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

Introduction to the Methods of this Qualitative Inquiry

The nature of the questions I entertained about the impact of parental divorce in late adolescence led to the decision to conduct a qualitative investigation. I wanted a method of inquiry which would preserve the richness and complexity of participants' experiences. I was interested in internal processes, meaning, and the ambiguity of relationships and believed that an in-depth, intensive, interview would more likely invite the emergence of participants' inner worlds than would a highly structured inquiry. I also wanted a forum which would allow participants to reflect on what they were learning as part of the process of participating in the study.

My interest was not in "facts" or "causes" but to understand this event from the viewpoint of my participants. I wanted to develop a comprehensive understanding rather than imposing categorical, operationalizable, or measurable limitations. I wanted to immerse myself in participants' experiences without the imposition of any theory on them; I wanted their meanings, their points of view and all their ramifications rather than the knowledge which would have

been yielded by investigating a pre-conceived and possibly narrow set of issues. Essentially, I wanted to view this event as each one of them did: from within their frame of reference and in the context of their own lives; making it necessary to open myself up to their reality in a wholistic and non-structured way.

What I expected to find also determined my methods. I assumed that I was not going to find independent, context free, and absolute properties. How one processes such a far reaching event as the transformation of one's family can not be expected to be represented by an aggregate of isolated variables. The processing and meaning of this event is multi-determined and multi-layered; relationships, intrapsychic forces, and external achievements would all contribute to the experience. I expected variables to be embedded and interrelated, not yielding to statistical assumptions of linearity, normality and independence of measurement.

Finally, another assumption underlying my choice of methods was the belief that we study what deeply interests us and that we are all more alike than different. Similarities cause empathic resonances within a researcher who is not a detached observer. Research encounters can generate profound contact which is greatly enhanced when the researcher is able to utilize clinical skills. Clinical skills can aid us in helping participants go deeper at a pace which allows an opening

rather than a shutting down and enhances our awareness of timing and sequencing in the interview (Rubin, 1981). Paying attention to the process of the interview yields associative links and information about what is being avoided or not yet able to be articulated (Rubin). I wanted to be involved with participants in a way that would allow me to use my clinical training and make inferences about the latent and therefore less conscious parts of their experience.

I believe that my participation as interviewer in this study was enhanced and informed by my role as clinician (Rubin, 1981). Awareness of the discordance between the manifest content and emotional climate of the interview and attention to defensive style, especially as related to loss, provided crucial tools for understanding these interviews. As Rubin points out, "part of developing conceptual analysis and finding order/theory from within the data is understanding what lies behind those words and bringing the latent meaning out" (Rubin, p. 102). A crucial contributant to this is accepting and validating the relevance of our own inner experience as researchers. A researcher's use of subjectivity enhances empathic responses and enables us to look for and help the other articulate the unspoken message (Rubin). Training with how to use one's countertransference in the service of understanding the other offers access to a

source of otherwise unavailable and hidden data and protects against overly identifying with perceived similarities (Rubin). We can use our own reactions as researchers to help understand and interpret what is and isn't said. Such a stance is a radical departure from a belief in and effort towards objectivity and makes necessary some discussion about whether this type of research fails to be "scientific" if it is not "objective."

Patton (1990) suggests that the terms "objectivity" and "subjectivity" have become "ideological ammunition" in debates about research methodology and scientific paradigms. He is one of many who have argued that quantification does not ensure objectivity any more than subjectivity dominates qualitative inquiry. Of more importance, the criterion of objectivity is becoming increasingly questioned: "The ideals of absolute objectivity and value-free science are impossible to attain in practice and of questionable desirability in the first place because they ignore the intrinsically social nature and human purposes of research" (Patton, p. 55).

Objectivity is also being questioned in the physical sciences. Keller (1978) argues that science's rigid adherence to notions of objectivity is an indication of how science has been genderized and parallels the masculine stereotype of autonomy and separateness. She

claims that along with science, truth also has become genderized in "an objectivist epistemology, in which truth is measured by its distance from the subjective" (Keller, p. 198). Keller uses Winnicott's (1971) notion of the transitional object-that which belongs to the space between two people and exists in the realm of experience between the internal psychic space and external social space-to illuminate how modern physics has shown the notion of objectivity to be outdated:

(E)ven physics reveals 'transitional phenomena'-phenomena, that is, about which it cannot be determined whether they belong to the observer or the observed. (Keller, p. 196)

Patton (1990) suggests that the issue should not be about objectivity; rather the focus should be on the researcher's "trustworthiness" and "credibility," a crucial part of which is the awareness and communication of underlying assumptions and perspectives. He argues that the search for absolute TRUTH, a concept which only has meaning in a world view which assumes a singular and objective reality, must be replaced by a willingness to tolerate the ambiguity of "multiple perspectives." A more meaningful goal than objectivity or subjectivity is that of "neutrality with regard to the phenomenon under study." Neutrality implies a willingness to let emerge any and all information and therefore is more likely to generate research which does not unknowingly perpetuate investigators' biases.

In this research I also endeavor to maintain what Patton (1990) calls "empathic neutrality." In research as well as in therapy, neutrality means that all parts of a person's experience and of self are equally welcome; and ongoing effort is made to maintain an equal distance and connection with each part. Neutrality does not imply an empty vessel however. A hermeneutic investigation institutionalizes the researcher as an agent of knowing (Patton) as it refutes any claim to objectivity. As the researcher, I am an integral part of the inquiry and when part of my data is my subjective account (countertransference) I make this clear. I have made no attempt to emulate Piotrkowski's (1978) description of the type of research which claims control and absolute truth:

What emerges is not research as process, but reconstructed research in which the knower is eliminated-thereby giving the findings an air of total objectivity-with imperfections and difficulties smoothed over. (Piotrkowski, p. 287)

Questions of causality must also be addressed in this type of research. Since this is a study about the impact of parental divorce the question might be asked "how can causation be suggested in the absence of a control group?" Perhaps someone might argue that because I wanted to look at impact I should have used a control group of offspring from intact marriages and looked at differences between the groups. But my research question

was not "how do people whose parents divorced differ from people whose parents stayed married?;" the question was about the meaning and impact of this event within the lives of the individuals who experienced it. I wanted to capture the significance of this event for each offspring and come to conclusions based on my interpretation of their experiences.

The interview was the occasion on which participants were asked to look at their lives from the angle of how their parents' divorce had affected them. I was asking them to share the story of their lives as generated from the organizing point of their parents' divorce. This was an act of creating a narrative, a narrative whose title would be "What is the role that my parents' divorce has played in my adult life, and how do I understand pre-divorce life given that my parents eventually divorced?" The creation of narrative involves generating meaning about past events; tenets used in the study of narrative and the creation of meaning are therefore relevant to how causality can be understood in this study.

In a discussion on narrative and psychology, Polkinghorne (1988) argues that "the meaning of an event can be radically dependent on what happens later" (Polkinghorne, p. 120). What happens after an event plays a crucial role in determining the meaning which will be attributed to that event: "It may be true that an

event was meaningless and inconsequential when it occurred, and it may also be true that it later became all-important" (Polkinghorne, p.120). These observations suggest that:

the order of understanding has been inverted: the past is now understood as meaningful because of the present, and the concept of cause appears as a rhetorical imposition. The narrative operates to find causes for present conditions, or for experienced pain or guilt. (Polkinghorne, p. 120)

The mutable relation between events and the psychological, often unconscious, reconstruction of those events is well known in the practice of psychotherapy. As Rausch (1986) points out, phenomena such as the often mutually exclusive interpretations by couples of conflictual facts, the experience of misunderstandings being escalated into major points of conflict, and how the understanding of a client's past changes over the course of therapy deconstruct what on a superficial level is considered factual:

Facts-their description, their salience, and their organization-change with context. Changes in affective relations, for example, will change the description, the importance and the interpretation of facts. Therapeutic change will similarly alter facts. Memory is strongly contextually determined. (Rausch, p. 82)

The use of narrative or case studies to investigate the significance of a past event is liable to similar constraints as the narratives developed in the course of

psychotherapy. The "truth" one searches for is not of predictability but of intelligibility and reasonable explanation.

Narrative explanation does not focus on how one event is predicted or deduced from another, but on how change from 'beginning' to 'end' takes place. Life-span events are parts of an ongoing process which culminates in the 'effect' to be explained. (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 117)

Polkinghorne (1988) prioritizes the meaning given to an event over the occurrence of the actual event. As psychoanalysis discovered and continues to elaborate, many constructions and narratives germinate from events which occur in fantasy only. The often observed experience that individuals perceive even simple events so differently suggests that people interpret events based in part upon their own unique psychology. This is not an argument for a solipsistic view where no mutual experience of reality can override ultimate subjectivity. Just as not any narrative reconstruction in therapy will suffice, research conclusions are determined valid by whether they are plausible, are internally consistent, (Piotrkowski 1978) and generate increased understanding (Patton, 1990). In this study about the effects of parental divorce, I am looking at causation within the frame of how people construct narratives and attribute meaning to events of the past.

Participants constructed their narratives about the impact of their parents' divorce during the process of

psychotherapy. The "truth" one searches for is not of predictability but of intelligibility and reasonable explanation.

Narrative explanation does not focus on how one event is predicted or deduced from another, but on how change from 'beginning' to 'end' takes place. Life-span events are parts of an ongoing process which culminates in the 'effect' to be explained. (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 117)

Polkinghorne (1988) prioritizes the meaning given to an event over the occurrence of the actual event. As psychoanalysis discovered and continues to elaborate, many constructions and narratives germinate from events which occur in fantasy only. The often observed experience that individuals perceive even simple events so differently suggests that people interpret events based in part upon their own unique psychology. This is not an argument for a solipsistic view where no mutual experience of reality can override ultimate subjectivity. Just as not any narrative reconstruction in therapy will suffice, research conclusions are determined valid by whether they are plausible, are internally consistent, (Piotrkowski 1978) and generate increased understanding (Patton, 1990). In this study about the effects of parental divorce, I am looking at causation within the frame of how people construct narratives and attribute meaning to events of the past.

Participants constructed their narratives about the impact of their parents' divorce during the process of

the interviews. Probably for most, this was the most cohesive story about the divorce they had taken the time to develop. They have had to make intelligible to themselves, as well as to me, their divorce narratives. Varying degrees of pain, internal consistency, integration, and emotional congruency characterized these narratives about the impact of parental divorce.

There are other assumptions underlying this study which only peripherally contribute to a choice of methods but which need to be made explicit as my hermeneutic "fore-structure" (Packard & Addison, 1989). One assumption is that family dysfunction leads more often than not to varying levels of pathology and later problems. Another assumption is that personality, while modifiable by experience, develops early in life primarily through satisfying and frustrating experiences with significant others and intolerable and unacceptable emotional states are defended against. A third assumption relates to how I view my conclusions. I assume that memory and retrospection is a cumulative process fed from many sources including personality structure, enduring relational patterns and defensive style. Consequently, I believe much more in a narrative than historical truth (Spence, 1982) and assume that recall is not veridical but is colored by the emotional world.

Participants

One of the first decisions I faced was whether to interview offspring whose parents' divorce was recent or in the past. Previous studies have looked at adult offspring currently in the throes of the first stage of divorce. Based on these studies, committee advise, and common sense I surmised that offspring who were experiencing a current divorce would present a more affect-laden, crisis view of this event. While older offspring whose parents' divorce was in the past might be more sealed over, I felt they might also be more self-reflective and able to articulate the impact of the divorce. I also was interested in longer-term effects than the population currently experiencing divorce would demonstrate. As described below, I began to recruit participants before I was ready to interview in order to allay my concerns that finding an older population would be difficult. These fears proved unnecessary.

Twenty-one adults ranging in age from 21 to 35 participated in this study. An average of 7 years and a range of 1 to 18 years had elapsed since their parents' divorce. Participants' ages and length of time since the divorce are shown in the charts below. At the time of the interview all but two participants lived in an area of Southern New England populated with small towns with a number of surrounding colleges and universities. The two exceptions lived in Boston, Ma. and had heard about the

study from friends or relatives from the area where the study took place. All but three participants had been born and grown up in the Eastern United States. Of these three, one was from the South and two were from the Midwest. All participants came from a traditionally defined nuclear family with a parent of each gender. All but one were Caucasian. Participants' families of origin represented a broad range of socio-economic statuses from working class to upper middle class. Two participants identified themselves as gay: one man had come out before his parents' divorce and felt the two experiences were unconnected; one woman felt the divorce created a set of circumstances within which it became more possible to define herself as lesbian.

Participants were recruited through notices posted around town (See Appendix A) and letters placed in graduate student mailboxes in the area's major university (See Appendix B). Participants were asked to leave their name and number with an answering service and were contacted by myself within a few days of their call. In our first contact they were told that I was gathering the following information: name, gender, age, and amount of time since their parents' divorce. At this time I also screened potential participants for the presence of substance abuse or overt incest in families of origin (two potential participants were eliminated on the basis of the latter), and briefly explained and answered the

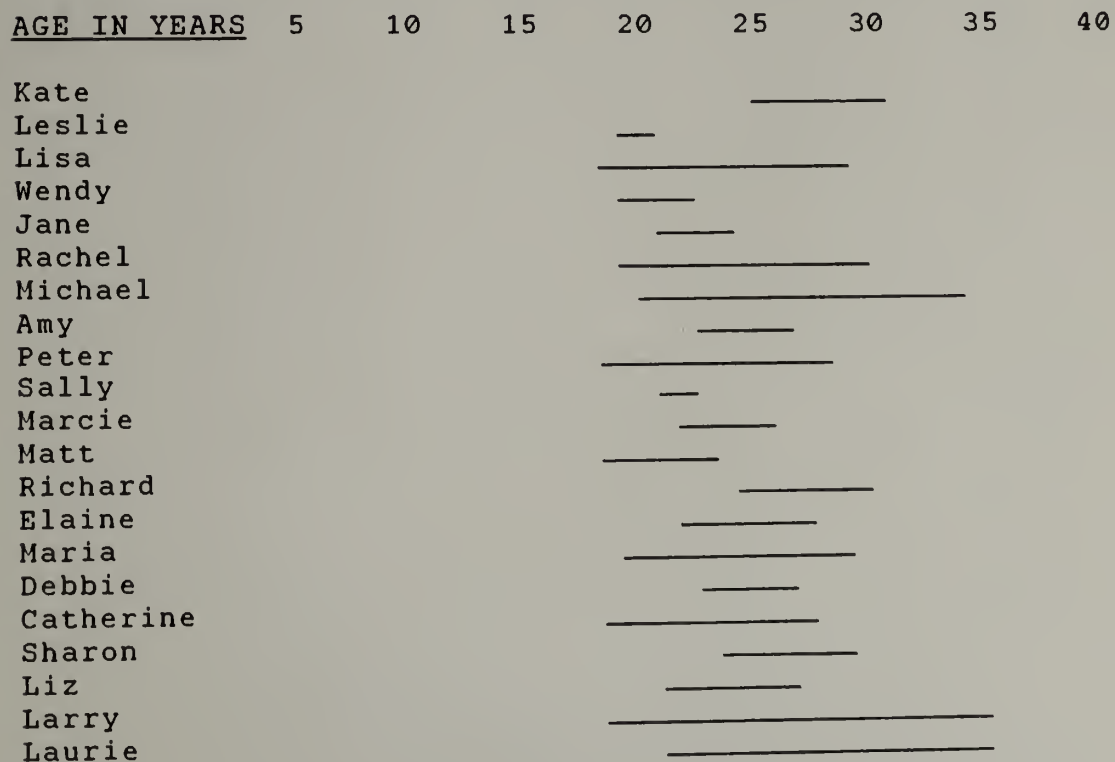
few questions asked about the study. Potential participants were informed that I would not be starting the interviews immediately and would contact them within two months.

Approximately 24 women and 14 men responded and were contacted by phone in the order their calls were received. Interviews were arranged based on both schedule convenience and on the attempt to have a wide range of ages represented. I had originally planned to interview between twenty and twenty-five people with a gender ratio of two females to each male. As gender did not seem to be significant as the interviews proceeded I invited respondents to participate based more on age, schedule, and the amount of enthusiasm or interest conveyed over the phone than on gender.

The original intention to interview between twenty and twenty-five people was based on practice in the qualitative research culture in which I was embedded. A common practice is to stop interviewing when it feels that no new information is being gained and the field has been "saturated" (Piotrkowski, 1978). I can not say that after twenty-one interviews no new information was being gained in that each person's story was unique; new themes and commonalities would undoubtedly have emerged if I had kept going. However, after the last interview I had a strong unarticulated sense that for the primary purpose of this investigation, which at that time was to study

the impact on development, enough information had been gathered. What could not be articulated at that point emerged as I analyzed the data. I think a preliminary understanding was inchoate during the interviews at least in part because of the contrast between the final two participants and had the interviews occurred in a different order I might have interviewed more people.

Two charts follow. The first chart conveys graphically the information which is presented in the second chart: the pseudonym for each participant, age at the time of the divorce and at the time of the interview, and the number of years since the divorce. Participants are presented in the order they were interviewed.



Age at divorce/Age at interview/Years since divorce

Kate	25	31	6
Leslie	19	22	3
Lisa	18	29	11
Wendy	19	23	4
Jane	21	24	3
Rachel	19	29	10
Michael	20	34	14
Amy	23	26	3
Peter	18	28	10
Sally	21	22	1
Marcie	21	25	4
Matt	18	23	5
Richard	25	30	5
Elaine	22	26	4
Maria	19	28	9
Debbie	22	25	3
Catherine	18	27	9
Sharon	24	30	6
Liz	21	27	6
Larry	18	35	18
Laurie	22	35	13

The sampling bias in this study must be made explicit as part of the effort to not decontextualize the results of this investigation. Boundaries must be drawn around the population which this sample, though not representative, is typical of, and with which comparisons and similarities could be drawn. The participants in this study were predominantly middle class and largely from families with some educational or professional background. All but one were Caucasian and all were from sections of society where the traditional nuclear family is the norm, in contrast to groups where the norm is more characterized by matriarchy and the absence of working men.

Recruitment procedures make it likely that this sample is additionally biased. Recruiting heavily from

amongst the ranks of graduate students makes more likely a sample with some educational achievement and therefore class mobility. The nature of the study itself would rule out individuals with no interest in self-reflection or with profound limitations on their ability to articulate their experience. Further bias would stem from an early decision to put letters in the boxes of students in humanities and social sciences more so than in the boxes of students in the natural sciences. This decision was made partly for geographical reasons: the buildings which held the former were significantly more accessible. Had the opposite been true I probably would have made the effort to also address the humanities out of the assumption that this group of students would more likely be interested in participating in a meaningful way. The fact that one of the most articulate participants was in computer sciences questions this assumption. The self selection of my participants further biases the sample. Many of these participants were the "bridges" and "mediators" in their families-they occupied important positions. Many said that their reason for volunteering was "to have the voices of older offspring heard"-they had something to say. On the other hand, one man volunteered who seemed to regularly volunteer for studies as an antidote to his isolation-the topic under study was not very important to him. Why

others who met the criteria did not volunteer would shed light on what is learned from those who did. Perhaps for these individuals the subject was too painful, or alternatively, irrelevant to them at this stage in their life. When relevant to the matter under consideration participants' reasons for volunteering are given as a way to contextualize conclusions. I would argue that the biases of self selection, reflection and articulation serve the study; they do not represent weaknesses. I was not looking for universal knowledge; I was looking for information. That these individuals might be more into exploring their inner life only serves the purpose of generating meaning and understanding.

Construction of Interview

The construction of the interview was challenging and problematic. It was apparent that to cover all the possible topics would entail an interview schedule lasting far too long to expect either myself or participants to withstand. Yet it seemed that such a broad base was necessary to ensure tapping into any number of diverse life experiences and meanings about the divorce. Even matters so small as whether or not families ate meals together and had meaningful rituals seemed important information if I was to conclude how the loss of family was experienced. I soon realized that I was attempting to learn about participants' childhoods, the divorce, and their current life in order for me to

draw conclusions and connections through obtaining vast amounts of information. I decided that I needed to rely more on the possibility of co-creating understanding with each participant as part of the process of the interview, not only by drawing conclusions by myself from the information that I had gathered earlier. Rather than collecting data, I realized that the process of the interview was an act of figuring out with each participant what they knew or understood. Accordingly, though the interview had three sections as elaborated below, the divorce was taken as the point in time around which the interview constantly rotated; moving backwards and forwards in time and looking at change with an eye towards what participants thought would be different if the divorce had not occurred. The final interview schedule (see Appendix 3) was semi-structured and allowed for a great deal of elaboration and probing on topics which seemed salient.

Three areas were identified as the backbone of the interview and necessary to cover with each participant. Since the research on younger offspring of divorce suggests that family environment, especially the degree of parental conflict, is more important than marital status in offspring adjustment, the level and types of conflict present in families before the divorce was identified as important information. A second area was

the effort to explore the identifications which offspring had established with each parent as able to illuminate issues of separation and the resolution of ambivalence. The third area was investigating the change in participants' views of their childhood, family, and parents' marriage as a function of the divorce.

The interview contained three sections. The first centered on family life before the divorce. Especially important were efforts to illuminate the following: how the family was organized before the divorce as related to how it dealt with the divorce, issues of parentification and boundary maintenance, dynamics within the sibship, and alliances. I wanted to try to know the unconscious vision of the past nuclear family which animated each participant's telling. A dialectic existed between finding out about each participant's family and who they were in the family. Part of this was the effort to separate family myths from how each person experienced their family. The second section covered the period of the divorce. While the actual events were of interest, more important were the relational dynamics surrounding these events; most importantly, the role which the participant had played. The third section concentrated on the participant's current life and included attention to each parent's adjustment after the divorce and relations with each parent, the participant's view of

themselves, and their sense of how the divorce affected them. Each section began with an open-ended question to invite whatever a participant felt was salient before the imposition of questions which might point the way and ended with the same question as we looked at what had been discovered as a function of talking.

Process of Interviews

The interviews took place between July 1990 and March 1991. With one exception, the interviews lasted between two and four hours. Participants were given the choice of being interviewed in their homes or in the Psychological Services Center at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Seven participants, including the two in Boston, chose to be interviewed in their homes. The interviews were tape recorded and though participants wore small microphones around their necks they claimed to forget about the tape recording in a matter of minutes.

The interviews were intense and were a learning process for both myself and my participants. That we both learned something we hadn't anticipated speaks to how this style of research can be described as a cross between a structured, standardized research interview and a clinical hour (Rubin, 1981). Many participants learned things about themselves and their parents' divorce they hadn't already known; I learned something about myself as

a clinician. The flexibility of the interview and my following participants' emotional leads is what enabled us each to learn new things.

This was not true of everyone, of course, and was most true with those people who entered into an interactional field with me where we could each live with an unknowingness which allowed new understandings to emerge. Each interview was a co-construction of understanding and meaning as participants led me to what was important to them and were in turn stimulated to think about things based upon the questions. The interviews were often an intense interactional experience. This type of interview is an encounter between two personalities and how they connect or alternatively, repel each other. This issue relates to what might be a concern about this study in the flexibility of the interview schedule which allowed different emphases depending on what emerged as important. Piotrkowski (1978) points out that

Careful standardization of questions does not address the nature of the variability of interpersonal transactions, which cannot be standardized and in whose contexts the interview data are generated. When the goal is depth of understanding, the focus shifts to the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Rapport is the sine qua non of research that aims at knowing people 'face to face.' (Piotrkowski, p. 296)

Despite variation however, in almost every interview there was a section which felt like it contained the gem

of the interview-a crucial ten minutes which felt like the edge of understanding; an exquisite tension which I can only understand as the convergence of defense, what was already known, and what was just coming into awareness. This edge was walked through with some participants, revealing to them new understandings. Research functioned as an intervention (Piotrkowski, 1978) with these participants. The edge was retreated from with others, probably leaving some feeling anxious, deadened, or more entrenched. Perhaps with some this was also an intervention of sorts, showing them that something was not as they thought. My ability to make use of this edge also varied. With those who walked through it, something new was understood together. With those who retreated, I sometimes was able to construct an interpretation after the interview. The retreat from this edge was indicative for some of a general blocking out of me or of any affectively charged discovery as a function of the interview. I would imagine that had I known these individuals over the course of a therapy relationship, that the content of what was just emerging or what constituted the edge of the interview would change over time, just as in long term treatment, increasingly deeper layers of defense and conflict/trauma are exposed and worked through.

What I learned about myself as a clinician was also a function of the intensity of the interviews and of what

was able to be learned or not. After most interviews I was tired, drained and paradoxically, filled up with the emotions and details of the interviewed participant's life. Within each interview I had flowed with the emotional currents of the interview much as one does when hearing about a friend's life. Yet I also was there in my capacity as a clinician, listening for deeper meanings, seeing how ready one was to soften a defense, being aware of my own inner experience in the service of understanding the other. Perhaps because these encounters were less intense than a therapy relationship, perhaps because I felt less constrained as a researcher than I did as a clinician at that point in my development, I was able to observe something in the interviews that I had up to that point missed in my experience as a clinician. Sporadic moments occurred when a particularly striking contrast was evident between my stance of maintaining an empathic neutrality and when I was being used as an object by a participant. The following is the clearest example.

In the last hour of a 2 1/2 hour interview with a participant who had been energetic, articulate and open, and towards whom I had felt positive and warm feelings, I found myself becoming increasingly irritable. I knew I was concerned about the time and that my blood sugar was plummeting which often makes me irritable; but at the

same time this participant was reminding me of a college student I had worked with in a group for women with eating disorders. This severely bulimic college student had a great deal of difficulty taking in any of the support available from other group members and would periodically explode with a torrent of words which were difficult to relate to the preceding material and which engulfed all of us. The association was perhaps over determined and was related to my growling stomach, but I was reminded of this college student's manic defense against needing and taking in. It felt to me that similar processes were operating as this participant seemed unaware of her pain while she bombarded me with her highly energized discourse about not understanding her father from whom she felt more distant after the divorce. I came away from this experience with an increased awareness of when the ability to maintain an empathic neutrality is interfered with by the defenses and projections of the other, patient or research participant, and thus became more aware of how often such usage of me was occurring in the clinical encounter without my having as yet identified it.

The use of the other as an object is seminal in transference. In research, as in the clinical encounter, transference and countertransference need to be seen as roads to rather than as hindrances to the gathering and understanding of the data (Rubin, 1981). The

researcher's/ clinician's countertransference is one clue to the other's underlying emotional state. It is the affective environment and the countertransference that can discern the veridity and truth of self report in both research and therapy. By truth I speak not of the other's honesty, but of the congruence between their spoken words and their deeper states. Rubin offers a succinct and telling example of the discovery of "truth" through the use of her countertransference.

A second and less ambiguous example is relevant here. The first half hour with another female participant was excruciatingly slow and boring despite the appearance of openness and self revealingness which her report of her family life would suggest. I was wondering how long the interview would take and felt fairly unengaged. Both the climate and my own state changed dramatically when this participant either felt safe enough or had reached a level of pain she could no longer endure and burst out crying. She then went on to talk about the emotional impact of everything we had just been talking about and how she had always had to deny her feelings in her family. I woke up, the shame in her face was transformed into a more receptive openness, and I was fully engaged for the rest of the interview.

Permission to use the countertransference depends on the valuing and recognition of the role that the researcher's subjectivity plays. As Rubin (1981) points

out, our subjectivity does not entrap us, it is the belief that we can be free of it and be objective that does. It is also this belief that places us most at danger for having our denied subjectivity operate in ways invisible to us. The denial of subjectivity also robs us of our freedom and ability to use what we know from our own experience.

Contributing to my subjectivity (as well as to my motivation to undertake this study) is my own experience of my parents' divorce when I was 22. The deep rivers of whatever is still unresolved inside myself are what makes me most at risk for either projecting my feelings onto participants or alternatively, not seeing in them what I can not yet know in myself. That clinicians do harm to their clients from this same place and that as researchers, we often have to deny our deepest attachments to the work that we do in order to play the "scientific" facade of objectivity stems from the splitting within psychology (Raush, 1986) and prevents a more meaningful contribution.

The dialectic between myself as researcher informed by clinical skills and as an adult offspring of divorce operated from the moment contact began with participants. One of the decisions I was then in the process of making was whether I would volunteer with participants that one of the reasons I was doing this

study was from my personal experience. I was drawn to the kind of research such as feminist and field action where the participant is a full collaborator; translating this power balance into this study would involve sharing my personal motivation with participants. I decided that the philosophical motivation did not sufficiently outweigh the reason which stemmed from my own anxiety of being the mental health professional and researcher; I decided to share my own status as an adult offspring of divorce only when asked. It turned out that this decision yielded interesting information in terms of who asked, at what point in the interview they asked, and what the effect was on the sequence and affective climate.

Analysis and Presentation of Data

My understanding of the interviews proceeded on two levels: getting to know each participant as an individual through developing a view which maintained their internal consistency and integrity, and becoming familiar with the similarities and dissimilarities between participants. The presentation of the data travels between these same two levels.

At the end of each interview I took some time to write notes about what I could remember from the interview. I jotted down salient themes but more importantly, noted my impressions about the emotional currents that had run during our time together, what uses

of me a participant had made, and disjunctures between what was said and what a participant seemed to be defending against or remaining unaware of. Several levels of analysis occurred simultaneously after all the interviews were completed. Each interview was loosely transcribed and read many times as I familiarized myself with each participant and with the topics which appeared across interviews. As part of understanding the uniqueness and gestalt of individual participants, discussions with my committee chair allowed a space where contradictions, inconsistencies, and poignancies of a person's story could be explored. The notes taken after each interview helped revive the affective climate and interactional nuances of the interview for these discussions. I also outlined each transcript so that a summary of each topic covered in the interview was easily accessible to allow for comparison between interviews. This allowed the emergence of how offsprings' experiences were similar and different. Some topics, such as how the divorce changed a participant's view of family life were common to almost all interviews, while other topics, such as the significance that the family home played, appeared with fewer or only one person. Also noted were the absence of what I might expect more reference to such as the severance of ties to a community. At this stage I collected in a separate place what each person said about

each topic. This allowed me to immerse myself into and reflect upon each theme independent of particular individuals. At this stage I also began to make comparisons between individuals as one person's experience reminded me of another's as I repeatedly examined each interview.

What the above description does not capture is the subjective process of immersion in the data. As the data analysis proceeded I increasingly felt that I carried around inside the lives of the 21 participants in this study. Each individual felt very real to me as I lived with their pain, their contradictions, and their resolutions and growth. More importantly, what was cooking inside me were the themes and categories which had been identified in the data. I began to see the connections between formerly independent ideas and associations. It was as if a critical mass of ideas had to be attained which then allowed a synthesis to occur that took understanding to a new conceptual level.

An example might help. Many people described seeing sides of their parents in the divorce which they found disappointing. Reactions to this differed and offspring were unsettled to very varying degrees. The first run through the interviews served to collect each offspring's stories. As I accumulated memories of participants' experiences what became striking were the differences between how some were able to integrate new images of

parents into a new understanding whereas others were stymied by these disappointments. This level of descriptive observation is conveyed in the chapter on relationships. But as another theme was emerging these differences interacted with and illuminated the second theme as well. The second theme as discussed in the chapter on development was about how some offspring seemed ready to accept their parents as whole objects rather than still needing to idealize parents or relate to them out of dependency or narcissistic needs. The offspring who seemed ready to accept parents in their own right were more able to integrate their disappointments in parents. This in turn helped to illuminate the differences between offspring who had achieved greater emotional independence at the time of the divorce from those who were still more embedded within their families. A synthesis had occurred which was made possible by the accumulation of memories of offsprings' similarities and differences on multiple levels.

What I have described above is similar to Charmaz's (1983) summary of how coding the data in a grounded theory investigation is a process of creating categories, themes, and an analytical understanding of the assumptions and connections between them. Piotrkowski (1978) similarly describes how through comparison, themes and working hypotheses begin to "group themselves into clusters of increasingly economical descriptive and

analytic categories" (Piotrkowski, p. 314). Neither of them describe the subjective process by which the investigator becomes immersed in the process.

Piotrkowski identifies that a dialectical tension exists "between the process of accommodation, whereby the conceptual schemas are created and modified by the data, and assimilation, whereby the data are fitted into the emerging conceptual framework" (Piotrkowski, p. 314). What is accommodating is the conceptual understanding within the investigator as one lives inhabited by the lives and themes of one's participants.

This is a heuristic and hermeneutic process (Packard & Addison, 1989; Patton, 1990). What I bring to the stewing soup are my assumptions, understandings and conflicts which inform this investigation. As in many investigations, serendipity played its part and an example of this will further illuminate the process of data analysis. While reading the transcript of Elaine, whose story is strongly characterized by the difference between relating to her parents as individuals rather than as a unit, I received a phone call from a cousin inviting me to his wedding. As we talked, one of the many topics covered was that both my parents would attend and that this would be the first time in 14 years that I would be in the same room with them together. When I got off the phone my friend who had overheard the

conversation from the next room asked when I had begun calling my parents by their first name. Never having thought about it I realized that this change had occurred after their divorce in an effort to minimize in the contact with each parent their associations to the other- I thought that when speaking to one parent calling the other parent by their name rather than by Mom or Dad would lessen the tension. Whether this is true or not is irrelevant but it certainly reeked of an effort to minimize the defunct parental unit. This insight, combined with my own affective information as I processed the idea of seeing my parents together, interacted with the words of Elaine whose parents maintain a "silence so loud it screams at (her)" to flush out the theme which had been congealing about issues involved in relating to parents as a unit versus as individuals.

The simultaneous analysis of the data on both the individual and thematic levels led to what is probably an almost universal conflict in qualitative research: whether to present case studies or a format focussing on general issues. Ballou (1978) discusses the methodological implications of each version of analyzing and presenting data. One advantage of the case format presentation is that it grounds conclusions in their context (Ballou; Patton, 1990).

My conflict was both methodological and subjective. I was struck with the integrity and for most

participants, the emotional intensity of each individual's story. I wanted to present a series of case studies in the effort to preserve and honor my contact with each person. However, this approach would fail to develop a theoretical or conceptual framework developed out of comparisons--each participant's truth is only part of the larger picture. Their stories have thus been combined for the purposes of drawing general lessons. The urge to preserve each individual's story has also been sacrificed to the necessity of maintaining confidentiality. Limited case studies are used in the presentation to elaborate and illustrate issues. Each study should be understood not as a statement of what is true for everyone but what could be true for many. Within the discussion of a theme I have tried to give relevant information about the circumstances of a participant's life in order to contextualize the theme. This produces some redundancy but is necessary to allow the reader to have enough data to judge the validity of the conclusions.

Piotrkowski (1978) suggests that the validity of qualitative research is determined by whether the interpretations are internally consistent and by whether they "maintain the integrity of the data" (Piotrkowski, p. 27). Substantial amounts of data need to be available to the reader in order to make these judgements. The most obvious form of data are the words of each

participant. But the reactions of the interviewer and the emotional climate of the interview are data as well and are presented when they informed the conclusions. (Rubin, 1981) offers a convincing argument for the role of this more subjective data.

I also had to resolve the question of how much to share the process of discovery in the presentation of the data. Presenting only conclusions with no elucidation about how one came to these conclusions hides the mystery of discovery which is one of the richest, if tortuous, aspects of this type of research. Since the reader is not expected to accompany the researcher on every step, the compromise reached was to include the process of discovery when conclusions are illuminated by their discovery.

As I analyzed the data, I became aware that I had listened in the interviews with an ear towards the "bad." I was not able to identify the impact of this on what I pursued, but it was not until this point that I grew to appreciate that it was not only out of defense that participants did not convey a sense of loss. There were times when participants seem to struggle with loss which they either could not articulate or which they tried not to recognize. Listening with an ear towards affect and defense helped identify these moments. There were other times, however, when what was said matched a

participant's emotional presentation and this congruency made me recognize my bias towards assuming there was loss.

I think that the difference in my perception from a participant's reflects something in addition to whether defenses operated to keep something out of awareness. Repeatedly, I found that participants spoke in terms of problems they saw as a result of the divorce; whereas even when there were no overt problems, I found myself thinking of whether there was emotional resolution.

I had other biases stemming from my own experience of parental divorce; what Patton (1990) would call a partial truth. Exposure to different experiences and assumptions made me confront my own experience as clearly not a universal truth. At times I was disappointed that others did not confirm my experience; at other times I was able to see below the words when something not articulated resonated with my own experience. There were times when the data analysis tapped into my own unresolved losses and other times when I knew I would not be able to take further my thinking or writing on a theme until I faced my own feelings a little more. We are affected by our research as are our participants (Piotrkowski, 1978).

Out of the interaction with the data and my own process I discovered a technique which I highly recommend to other researchers. One morning I woke up and knew now

was the time to revisit certain events from long ago which had flowed from my parents' divorce. I thought it would be helpful to first administer to myself the interview schedule I had given to participants. Using the two chair method from Gestalt therapy, I played both myself as a researcher and myself as a participant. Out of this I learned two things which I think would generalize to other studies. First, I learned my own answers to the interview questions; answers which had been known preconsciously but not articulated. This technique would help to identify researchers' biases.

The second thing I learned relates to issues of generalizability. As with my participants, my self interview had a crucial ten minutes which captured the "ghost" of my family (see chapter IV) and were quite painful and revealing, and after which I ended the interview because I felt that I would learn virtually nothing new by continuing. These ten minutes centered around the identifications I had established with each parent subsequent to (as well as before) the divorce and which now made continued resolution impossible without further examination. I wondered whether this unconscious press contributed to my initial interest in gathering information about what kinds of identifications participants had established with each parent. What was strikingly clear however, was that these ten minutes were intimately related to where I was in my professional

development and the completion of my degree. I drew the following conclusions from this. Like any multi-layered emotional reality, the content of ten crucial minutes in an interview changes in terms of what a participant is either ready to face or what holds them back from further growth. Consequently, the conclusions drawn about the effects on a participant of their parents divorce are temporally bound; while these truths are true for some but not all individuals, they are also not true for all time. How we construct meaning is filtered through our emotional and defensive realities which can change through experience.

These self revelations might cause one to question how reliable my interpretation of the data is. This is one reason why it is important to present both enough contextual information as well as verbatim data for the reader to come to their own conclusions about the interpretations I offer. But part of what I know about a person is my experience of them in the interview, their use of me as an object, my sense of their emotional fluency and defenses, and this information is only available to the reader as filtered through me.

Like a clinical encounter, each research relationship is unique and is based upon the two participants. Each therapy treatment is a treatment between the patient and that particular therapist, who in turn adheres to a particular theory of treatment based

upon their own personality structure. But in a good therapy treatment, however incomplete and however colored by the two participants, the narrative that is developed is true enough to have meaning and to enable change. I believe the same is true for my interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER III

ORIENTATION TO THE DATA

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the participants in this study. I wish I could have written a series of case studies which would convey the unique emotions and coherence of each individual's life and the diversity of their experiences. But case studies would have tremendously compromised participants' confidentiality. Consequently, I endeavor instead to give the reader an overall feel for the material from which I have drawn my conclusions. My impressions about the impact of divorce emerged through developing an understanding of how the complexity of each individual's life combined with the general issues of the group as a whole.

Along with variations described in the methods section of participants' age and length of time since the divorce, there were tremendous variations in pre-divorce family life, in the events surrounding the divorce, and in how participants evaluated the impact of the divorce. The range of circumstances and consequences surrounding the divorce was also extreme. For instance, two individuals suffered the death of immediate family members through a series of circumstances they related directly to the divorce. At the opposite end were three individuals whose parents were already living apart and

where the disruption to ongoing life was minimal. A few participants felt that all family relationships had diminished as a result of the divorce; others felt that most family relationships had benefited.

Participants' evaluation of the impact of the divorce was equally diverse. One participant claimed that "the divorce was positive and nothing but positive came from it." Feelings of loss were apparent with most participants, however. Participants conveyed losses on many levels; examples included losing a family, losing a more positive image of parents as individuals or of the marriage, a loss of innocence, of optimism about relationships, of hope. In contrast, one participant felt that the biggest benefit of the divorce was "gaining hope that things could be better." The most commonly expressed feelings of loss were of "shelter," "security," a "back up place," "home," the "myth of the family that worked" and the "myth of the family that would always be there." Loss also emerged when participants talked about how the divorce changed their perception of family life and of the past.

Participants' responses to the question "What was the best/worst thing to come from the divorce" illustrates the range of outcomes offspring attributed to this event. The following were some of the "worst" outcomes of the divorce: the difficulty of being drawn in by a mother talking about a father; a mother's ongoing

poverty and father's affluence; a "tenacious mistrust of relationships;" the current isolation of all family members; not having a family, especially at holidays; "a fractured family;" "having the rug pulled out at a pivotal time;" the concern or disappointment in watching a parent fail to adapt; the feeling of "second guessing one's perceptions and values;" and the death of a family member. The following were given as the best things: improvement in relationships; "no longer having to live in a war zone;" the feeling that offspring could do things differently; the freedom to explore one's own path; improved relationships with fathers; a chance to reevaluate one's own values in light of changed perceptions; less pressure to mediate family relationships; a parent's increased well being; the need to "get on with my own life;" less tension within family relationships; hope; and for several participants, the freedom to look at family problems and a validation for the pain they had felt in their families.

Finally, why participants volunteered also conveyed a wide range of concerns. About half of the participants gave some variation along the theme of volunteering so that "the voices of older offspring are heard," because "it does matter when you're older," because "others minimize the impact," because "it hurts just as much." Several people were aware of how little is written about divorce at this age and wanted to support efforts to

increase public awareness, to combat, in the words of one woman, "the perception that at this age it's no big deal." A few communicated that the wish to feel "understood" or "validated" was also part of volunteering. At least two conveyed that efforts to resolve the divorce still actively occupied them. In contrast were two who volunteered because they felt they represented departures from the common experience captured in Cain's New York Times article (1990). They felt their experience had not been traumatic and the divorce was positive. On a similar note, two others wanted to communicate that divorce "is not always negative" and offspring can "take hope and not feel victimized." Finally, one woman's message was that "parents shouldn't wait to divorce when there is a lot of conflict because growing up in conflict wrecks havoc." She was one of three who felt the divorce should have happened earlier. A second communicated that "parents should face reality and get the pain into the open. They're not saving kids from pain because they (the kids) are already in pain."

Family demographics provide another angle from which to overview this group of offspring. Thirteen came from families with two offspring; eight from families of three or four offspring, one of these from a family where the third offspring was adopted and was identified as the trouble maker in the family. The departure from home of

eight offspring appeared relevant to the timing of the divorce if significant timing is defined as within the first year of college. This group increases to ten if significant timing broadens to include two youngest offspring, one in her second year of college, the other who was informed of the separation on her graduation day! An apparent lack of significant timing is interesting to note for three of the other offspring in that they each described themselves as playing a caretaker role in the family and later entered the mental health field.

Perhaps not surprisingly, significant family roles emerged for each of the eight offspring whose departure from home seemed timely. Two of these had described themselves as especially close with or in a caretaking role with one parent; two had used the words "glue" or "mediator" to describe their roles; three had described themselves as "triangulated," one by using the word and the other two in their unambiguous descriptions; one had defined herself as a "caretaker." The self described "caretaker" and the one who was "triangulated" had both entered the mental health field.

More general observations about family dynamics are as difficult to draw as are unifying characteristics about the overall group of participants. Families ranged from those which seem to have worked well to those where family problems had been significant and included

boundary problems; dynamics of triangulation; constant criticism or lack of acceptance; a lack of safety either in the form of a chaotic environment or incestuous dynamics; a lack of a dynamic and contained marital unit; and in one family, as learned after the divorce, physical violence from husband to wife. Along a continuum from working well to dysfunctional families, six families fall roughly in the middle, with the other families evenly spaced to both extremes. There were two families I had difficulty fitting into this continuum: one was described as four completely unconnected individuals; the second was difficult to know in that the participant described himself as not fitting into his family and being unaffected by the divorce. My study was only one of many for which this participant regularly volunteered, thus suggesting to me that his participation resulted from other motivations than any particular interest in this topic.

Through the answers to questions of what participants had lost or what the divorce had made "impossible," there emerged a sense that the most common (but not universal) impact from the divorce was the feeling of losing a family. This took two forms, the first in what was now considered family; the second through losing a positive sense of the family of the past. The impact of this loss varied as will be shown in the body of the dissertation. I believe the salience of

losing the family is demonstrated by the fact that this loss emerged in the data but had not been conceptualized beforehand. A difficulty bringing the past into the future was one ramification of this loss.

The unique tapestry of each individual life combines the above sentiments in any number of ways. By working with the general issues across individuals and how these intersected with the consistencies and inconsistencies within each participant, three topics developed which organize the discussion chapters. The first is how parental divorce during young adulthood can affect development; second is issues related to the loss and mourning of the family; and the last chapter looks at relationships with parents and the impact on offsprings' intimate lives. Each chapter begins with a brief statement to introduce the frame of reference developed out of analyzing the interviews. Details of participants' lives have been changed in order to protect their confidentiality, including when identifying characteristics appear as part of direct quotations. Other than these changes, verbatim quotes have been edited only to facilitate their reading.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT

Overview

This chapter will illustrate how offsprings' adjustment to parental divorce may be related to pre-divorce psychological development. Specifically, it will be argued that the degree of psychological independence already achieved mediates late adolescents' adaptation to the loss of their family. Offspring in this study who already had a developing sense of autonomy and efficacy seemed able to continue with individuation and identity formation processes of late adolescence after their parents' divorce. But the divorce created for others external and internal conditions that made it difficult to proceed with age-appropriate developmental tasks. It will also be argued that these latter offspring were from families where their sense of selfhood had already been compromised by family problems. Consequently, parental divorce exacerbated difficulties for some offspring.

Introduction-An Unspoken Presence Reveals Two Clusters

As I entered the lives of the participants in this study I was unprepared for the enormous range of family experience and by the variety of interpretations attributed to the aftermath of parental divorce. The uniqueness of each participant's experience at first concealed any generalities about the impact of divorce on

young adult's development. What was clear was that the implications of this event depended upon a huge range of factors, including but not limited to: pre-divorce family life and relationships; how central a role the family had played before the divorce; how the marital relationship was viewed before the divorce; the bitterness or amicability of the divorce; parental adjustment following the divorce; and other events that followed as a result of the divorce.

However, despite dramatic differences and the uniqueness of each person's experience, I began to get a sense that many people were struggling with one issue which took many forms. I would like to speak of this issue in metaphorical terms first. In doing this I'm asking the reader to accept some conclusions before exposure to any data. Hopefully, the interview material will substantiate these very general conclusions. Speaking metaphorically before presenting any data parallels how a shadowy impression developed during the course of conducting the interviews led to a focussed examination of the data. Thus, through this format I attempt to share the process of discovery.

During the interviews an unspoken presence, something often not tangible or able to be approached directly, seemed to occupy the space between myself and a participant, defining why we were there together. At the time, I think I experienced this as the cutting edge

of the interview, often the most enlivened (or alternatively deadened) habitat, a presence recognized by some but with most, waiting to be discovered. I now believe this (usually) unspoken presence represented the ghost of the family that no longer existed and the dissolution of which we had come together to understand.

The family ghost lived and participated in the emotional climate and in the articulated and latent content of the interviews. The ghosts led me to appreciate the commonalities amongst participants and then revealed two contrasting clusters of offspring: two clusters with different concerns, different fears, and differing ways of relating to themselves and others-in short, a different presentation of self. For clarity of presentation I shall call the first cluster the "caught" offspring and the second the "separated" offspring. As these names imply, the offspring of the second cluster appeared to have achieved greater psychological independence than those of the first cluster who still seemed enmeshed within their families.

This unspoken presence often dominated the feeling tone of the interview. Participants' affect and defenses as well as my countertransference aided me in differentiating between these two clusters. The interviews of the "caught" offspring were characterized by diffuse or global feelings of loss, hurt, and confusion. It was often painful to listen to these

participants. The "separated" offspring, in contrast, were able to articulate differentiated affect which emerged as feelings of loss about the family; the diffuse feelings of loss, confusion and angst characteristic of the other cluster were not present. In order to be completely true to the interview data it should be noted that there was a small subset of individuals in the separated group for whom the lost family was no longer relevant. Absent were both a general sense of loss or confusion as well as feelings of loss about their family. This observation will be explored in the next chapter.

The ghost also took different forms in the expressed concerns of each group. The "caught" offspring focussed noticeably more than the "separated" offspring on dyadic relationships with one or both parents. While also expressing feelings of loss about their family, the "caught" offspring conveyed a psychic life more occupied with ongoing conflictual relationships with parents. This focus overshadowed loss of the family. The salience of conflictual dyadic relationships created the impression of offspring still "caught" in the family ghosts' invisible web. Ongoing issues with parents connoted a concern that past relationships dominated the present. The family past also seemed to hover, frozen in time in that essential family dynamics had been transplanted into the present. In contrast, the ghost

emerged with the "separated" offspring as a cohesive focus for feelings of loss about a family which no longer existed; the ghost lived as a lost object separate from the offspring.

Three Continua

As I became aware of these two groups I first tried to understand these contrasts as indicating something about what had or had not happened as offspring separated from their families. I soon realized, however, that pre-divorce differences existed in the family environment described by these two groups. In general, those who communicated a sense of loss about their family were from families which by description appeared as more functional, while those concerned with ongoing conflicts with parents were from families that had sounded more problematic.

Having had these initial thoughts I then analyzed the differences in offsprings' stories through placing each person along the following three dimensions: 1) presentation in the interview, especially whether they seemed more concerned with dyadic relationships or with the loss of a family; 2) family functioning; and 3) how individuated they appeared to be at the time of the divorce. I based the latter on what participants said about their reactions to the divorce; how they talked about their lives at the time of the divorce; and what their attitudes at the time of the divorce towards

relationships, college or employment seemed to indicate about their sense of themselves and their feelings of efficacy. Though inexact measures, a strong correlation emerged between these continua, suggesting that the offspring from more problematic families had been less individuated at the time of divorce, even when variation in age was considered. It was these "caught" offspring who presented with a more vulnerable sense of self, generalized feelings of loss, anger, pain, confusion, and/or ongoing unresolved issues with parents. The following discussion will illustrate differences between the "separated" and "caught" offspring.

Family Environment

Participants' portrayals of their family environments varied dramatically along a continuum which included families which were described as stable, safe, and fun to those which were clearly problematic. In these latter families, participants described problems ranging from poor boundaries and boundary violations, enmeshments, rigid disengagement, triangulation, critical or rejecting fathers, emotionally incestuous dynamics, chronic and severe parental conflict, and in two families a level of emotional violence that sounded fairly chaotic. In contrast, the "separated" offspring described backgrounds where generational boundaries appeared mostly intact and parents were amicable and supportive.

Kate's family illustrates the family life more often described by the "separated" offspring. Her family emerged in the interview as a prototypical mid-western family in its strong internal cohesiveness and structure. It was a good child oriented environment with some problematic aspects in her relationship with her mother but a good-enough family life. She remembers her response when her parents separated of a "sense of a close knit stable family breaking apart."

Me: What would you say you liked most about growing up in your family?

Kate: Security, I guess. We were a really close family, it just felt really stable, kind of like a safe place...somewhat affectionate family, not truly warm or a lot of touching. In my family the closeness came more from a lot of structure, a lot of expectations that everyone would take part in things.

Sally also described a family life which seemed to have provided a good sense of support, vitality and involvement:

Even with the turmoil, I always felt secure, I always felt that the rug was under my feet. I always felt that I had a safe haven, I know that now...We always had people around, weekends with other families, always a real focus on family...I always had plenty of things, emotional support, even activity wise, we always did family unit type of things.

In contrast, Wendy came from a profoundly different family environment. Wendy's presentation in the interview was characterized by diffuse feelings of loss and confusion. She believes it would have been better if her parents had divorced earlier so she would not have grown

up denying her pain. Wendy's family emerged as one of the more chaotic and emotionally violent environments. Wendy feels that she had no frame of reference for normality and thought her family was perfect because there were rules about communication:

My family had huge screaming fights...They were loud, doors slamming, things in the house broken. But nobody got hit, every once in while someone got pushed against and broke a window but nobody ever got hurt...it was very psychological, you always felt he (older brother) was going to hit you, was frightening...we had a house rule when all that was going on that you couldn't leave the room unless the fight was over. And I was very proud of that. No matter how loud the fight got if you left the room you were in big trouble...So I thought everything was out in the open in my family, we talk about everything, so there can't be any problems. But we weren't really talking about anything, we were just screaming at each other.

Leslie's description of her parents provides an example of a family environment where triangulation and poor boundaries were present. She shows some insight that her subjectivity was compromised by her parents' violations. Older than her younger siblings by many years, Leslie feels that her parent's conflicts were largely funneled through their relationship with her. She describes her father as a difficult, domineering and stubborn man. She describes her mother as irrational, volatile, and insecure. She felt caught in the middle:

My mother is very insecure and tried to pull me to her side and get me involved. My father would be very upset at that, but he's not an easy person either. I felt trapped in the

middle....I don't even think I thought about what I wanted. I was just trapped in this web, that's what I had to do. I don't even think I thought about me-"I'm a person, what do I want?" I just had to be part of it and play the role. I didn't realize I could have my opinion or my wishes...It came less from my father because he's less emotional. But in his own way he involved me too...It got to the point where whenever he was having a problem with her he would start acting cold to me also.

Differences in Telling and Affective Involvement

Though both "separated" and "caught" offspring reported similar events in the aftermath of the divorce, they demonstrated profound differences in how these events were experienced and communicated to me. Both clusters expressed feelings that shelter and security had been taken away, that there was a loss of innocence, that parents were now relying on offspring for emotional help. However, the affective involvement in the telling differentiated these two groups. Sally and Kate demonstrate the distance, abstraction and containment more typical of the "separated" offspring.

Sally: It was a very pivotal point in my life. Just graduated college, was moving home for the traditional nine months at home before you go off to graduate school, and are on your own. And I felt like the rug had been pulled out from under my feet. This stable nurturing home had always been there, was a safe haven, was not there. And nothing's going to bring it back. And I felt like, the only way to describe it was that the rug had been pulled out, my security blanket had been taken away. I definitely had a fortunate life, I had a very loving family, a very nurturing family, and help along the way to grow, and at this point because I was getting into a new situation,

entering into a new phase of life...I didn't feel as though I had that security...I felt like "oh my God, am I going to have a home?" I've known this home all my life...I still have a hard time driving by our old house.

Kate: Even being an adult there was a sense of home being in a certain place, and my parents being home. Even though in reality I hadn't lived there for years and didn't want to live there and knew that if I lived there for two weeks I'd go crazy, I guess there was just still a sense of that being home, and a back-up in a certain sense and sort of a source of love and affection and a place to lean on. Then it just cracked apart and was gone and...the people I used to lean on...were leaning on me.

In contrast, Lisa conveys the threat to self and the immediacy of the family still felt years later which was characteristic of the "caught" offspring:

I had gone off and there was nothing to come back to. Nothing. My mother was in trouble, my father was in trouble. I felt like there was no going back ever. I was a complete adult and a complete baby when I was 18 years old, like I could never go home...I felt like I had to be big and make my way in the world and fare well because I couldn't go home, and I felt like I just wasn't big enough, good enough, smart enough yet to do it, and I still needed them there, still needed to go home and then to go back out. But I couldn't because there was no place to go to.

Leslie's pain was palpable as she remembered the period following her parents' separation. She recalls that she dove into her studies and found strength that way even though she cried for a year:

I just felt like I was totally losing control. I had just left home and was finally beginning to feel OK here, and just all of a sudden I felt the earth is slipping from underneath me. I felt there was nothing I could do, because, I couldn't really support myself here yet. I

felt like I had no control over what's going on in my life...Just crying a lot, I think there was a whole year where I couldn't not cry all the time. It's also during a time that you really find yourself and you see that you're an independent person, you're not just part of your family. I found a lot of strength from that too...I was very enthusiastic about my studies, I just really buried myself in that. I guess there can be a lot worse things you can fall into! My social life wasn't up to par but I think it was a positive outlet.

Many of the "caught" offspring communicated no sense of self which transcended the ongoing conflictual and affective involvement with the aftermath of their parents' divorce. An uncertain sense of self was woven throughout the stories of the "caught" offspring.

Underlying Concerns

In addition to differences in their affective presentation, underlying concerns differentiated between the "separated" and "caught" offspring and were the most significant distinguishing element between these two groups. Evident within these contrasting concerns are developmental implications of divorce in late adolescence.

The "separated" offsprings' concerns centered around the loss of a family and manifested most clearly as losing the thing of which one had been a member and felt a part of. This feeling was conveyed most dramatically by Larry:

It's home, it's where you're rooted...It's a part of a system of things, there's something about-I don't have a home. You know? Ever

since they were divorced, I can never go home, I can never member again into that. I can never re-member into that.

Matt also communicated a loss on this level. I asked him what was the worst thing about the divorce?

Not having my own family. That's the worst thing. People say "what's your family like?" and I think, "well, my mother is remarried and I have two step-brothers, and my dad lives in () and he has a girlfriend" so it's like I think of family and I think of two separate parents...I'm lucky I had a family, I'm thankful I had a family growing up, a good family as a child. But you think of family and you think of your own family, you don't think of other people in it, although it's very common now. To look back on only your own family, I think is a neat feeling to have your own that's not shared with anybody else.

Other participants described losing "a source of love and affection," a "home base", and "a sense of home and parents being home."

A second theme of the "separated" offspring was the loss of the entity in which one had been a child and the feeling of being a kid with a parent. For instance, Kate feels that she has lost a certain child-defined way of being in the world:

I just don't feel that experience of being nurtured by a parent, that feeling of being a kid and having Mom or Dad be a caretaker....Just coming so intensely, all at once and in a rush, kind of like a fall from invulnerability to major vulnerability...Suddenly I was the strong one, and that felt like a loss...It seemed like a very abrupt transition into adulthood. It was much harder to be a kid, particularly in my family. In my husband's family, all the children are in their 30's and they're still kids, so I get a little taste of it over there. It's a real contrast.

Kate feels the divorce extinguished the "feeling of being a kid" prematurely. Had the divorce not happened her family would be more in the "fabric" of her life. It would exist as a "calmer and more supportive background" in place of the current "conflictual messy" awareness of her family. Kate's feelings are even more striking given that she is happily married and envisions building her own family.

Kate's feeling that she had lost the place where she was a child was consistent with her memory of how she felt when her parents separated. She had some appreciation of a possible separation because she had encouraged her parents to see a counselor during the problematic five years preceding their separation. She was surprised to be so upset when they finally separated and remembers their phone call:

I felt really devastated. Even though I knew all this stuff was happening between them. Like on an adult intellectual level I thought it was probably a good idea but then there was a kid part that was just crushed that they were separating, the family was kind of splitting apart. I really kind of felt sort of lost, like "where's my family now?" So there was a real juxtaposition between the grown up part saying "Oh this is probably a good idea" and really being surprised by the kid part that was really crushed and upset...I remember feeling really frightened, just feeling really sad and scared about what was going to happen next, and also surprised at having those feelings.

Kate's portrayal of two parts of herself, a kid and an adult part, was echoed by a few others. Some felt this contrast resulted from parental divorce at the phase

of life likened to infantile rapprochement and indicated the need for "refueling." It was not my impression that Kate's "kid part" needed to grow up and separate; rather, part of her was responding to this event from the self that had been a child in this family and always would be. Parental divorce pulls for a regressive reaction in that it is in part a child self which experiences the demise of the parental relationship.

But reacting from a "kid" place at the time of the divorce must be distinguished from still harboring regressive yearnings for childhood and lost internal states of the past. Regressive yearnings were not apparent with the "separated" offspring. Their feelings of loss about their families and about childhood embodied sentimental and reminiscent states more than regressive yearnings. Even if they felt more alone, these offsprings' sense of themselves were intact and who they were in the world not a dominant concern. In contrast, it was just this concern that was painfully apparent with the "caught" offspring. This group implicitly seemed to be asking in many ways: "who am I?" Regressive yearnings, conflicts with parents and unresolved anger and bitterness about the loss of their families all pointed to the "caught" offsprings' underlying concern of "who am I?"

The regressive yearnings of the "caught" offspring took many forms. For Wendy, in a context characterized

by her feelings that she had no firm ground to stand on, the symbol of her family home being sold underscored unmet needs from her past:

The house I grew up in is someone else's now, it's been remodelled, it's on the market to be sold to a very rich New York family...

Lisa described her reaction at the time of the divorce with an intensity and drama which suggested that these feelings still linger, if only less consciously:

My mother moved, I never went back. The pictures are gone, my poetry is gone, like everything is gone that was of importance...I felt like I had to be big and make my way in the world and fare well because I couldn't go home...Like I just wanted to go home again, wanted it to be like it always was, to have my same place at the table, to have my same room with my same bed and my same stereo, and it wasn't, but I kept wanting it to be like that, the same as it was when I was in high school.

Elaine feels that the fact that her estranged father possesses the family's Christmas ornaments signifies how the divorce has robbed her of her history. She poignantly reaches for it.

I think the hardest thing is Christmas tree ornaments! The Christmas tree ornaments have ended up in my Dad's possession and we feel really strongly that they don't belong there. It was actually my Mother's intent that my sister and I get them...Because they represent a family history, and they had been collected mainly by my mother, and I just somehow feel like the hardest thing is dividing up the ornaments, just what that symbolizes...I don't intend for him to keep them. Right now it's difficult that he has them, but I feel like if I can divide them up with my sister, that's also a way for me to claim at least part of the history. It will be in separate places but I'll still feel like its mine.

Leslie's parents' divorce makes her history inaccessible also. Triangulating her in their marriage, each parent involved Leslie in their bitter and ugly divorce. Leslie feels her exposure to the bitterness exacerbated the impact of their divorce. The ugliness of the divorce has forced her to question memories of good family times and makes her childhood feel irretrievable. Saying at times she felt her childhood was lost and at other times that it was irrelevant, it was clear that being in touch with that part of her life stimulated regressive yearnings that were too dangerous to feel at this time. She yearns for what is lost to her and its path is blocked by the ugliness by which she was hurt.

It's just so sad, just this longing to go back to that and it can never be like that. It's better not to think about it...I'm just not sheltered anymore. I was sheltered, I was allowed to be just a kid, now everything's exposed to me all the time. I don't have this nice safe shelter to come to when I come home...If earlier I wouldn't have been told everything. I think it's easier on my brothers; they have to deal with it all the time day to day but still it's easier on them...because I was the first one, they're really still seen as kids and I wasn't really allowed to be.

Me: Do you think the divorce has changed how you feel about your childhood?

Leslie: It just really leaves a bitter taste about everything. To be honest with myself I remember my childhood as happy, but right now I just feel so negative about my whole family situation that I don't like to remember that.

Leslie was one of several of the "caught" offspring whose bitterness or anger dominated feelings of loss about their families. Another was Michael who seemed to

hold onto the image of what his family could have been as a reproachful protest against feelings of loss. I asked if he thought his parents had done the right thing by divorcing:

Based on the situation the way it was, probably yes, even though I wish they hadn't. I even dream still that they haven't divorced. I still actually dream about them in the situation where they were still married...feel saddened, bitter, like why didn't they just work out their problems for Christ's sake. What was so insurmountable that they couldn't have dealt with it. Was it really better to cause this kind of jumble....I have this bitter feeling that if they had stayed together we would all be this one big happy family

Wendy feels angry that she had to suffer so much within the lie that her family worked:

It would have been a whole lot better if they had gotten divorced ten or fifteen years sooner because when they finally did I realized that most of my life had been spent denying things or thinking that things were great when they really weren't. I had to spend three years getting my shit back together. I went through this really intense channeling of bad emotional energy...just stuff that wasn't necessary. So I'm pretty angry, I feel like I was lied to my whole childhood about what was going on in the house. Because everyone was lying to themselves. And the energy came out in weird ways.

Regressive yearnings, bitterness and anger undermine a sense of self and the ability to move forward. The "caught" offsprings' underlying concern with a sense of self echoed throughout the interviews. For Leslie, beyond the bitter devastation of her family the impact of her parents divorce lingers in her lack of security and sense of identity in the world. As well as feeling

socially behind because she spent a year so upset, she feels that having her home taken away before she was ready left her with less confidence than she would like. I asked how her parents' divorce affected how she felt about becoming an adult:

I feel like other people my age have been more able to break away from their families and to establish their own things; and I'm still more attached, and I still have to answer to my mother a little bit. It's hard just to pick up and move somewhere. I couldn't because I have to think about how she would feel and then I can't do that to her. And other people are acting more as their own agents now.

Leslie recognizes that her relation with her mother would have caused problems without the divorce:

Me: It feels to you that people who are able to do that have a more secure home base?

Leslie: Yeh. I think they were taught that too. Their parents tried to intervene less and less, just be there less and less so they could be independent slowly, so they could adjust to the fact that they have to be adults now. With me it was always such dependence.

But Leslie feels strongly that the divorce made it worse, not only for herself but also in the demands her mother makes upon her.

Me: Do you think that your parents' divorce has made you more concerned or less concerned with the struggle to find your own identity and to not get pulled back into the family?

Leslie: Oh definately more...Everything about me, everything from the divorce is always part of me.

Wendy echoed Leslie's feelings that her family had not prepared her for independence and that the timing of the divorce underscored this. She feels that the amount

of pain she suffers is inevitable. She recognizes that when her parents divorced she felt bereft of any home. She says the divorce made it impossible to believe that her family was "nurturing or something to depend on," but claims these feelings were the inevitable consequences of her troubled family life:

My parents' divorce threw me out in the world before I was old enough to be there but I wouldn't have been ready anyway because they didn't prepare me. They didn't prepare me for different kinds of people, they didn't teach me to depend on myself...I feel like nobody really understands where I came from. My friends know that my parents got divorced three years ago, but it's not such a big deal because I'm an adult and I'm on my own. (Crying) And I really don't know, I don't know much. I've always chosen to be around people who had very difficult lives so that mine doesn't seem so bad...

Wendy feels that she surrounded herself with troubled people in comparison to whom her life would appear more "stable" and her turmoil less obvious. She feels that her need to feel a part of things was so great that she did not discriminate about whom to hang out with. Her image of her perfect family shattered with the divorce, giving way to a torment of confusing feelings.

I needed somewhere to channel all the emotions that were coming out. And I needed some sense of home. I always made myself feel like I had a home but after the divorce I realized I never did and I never will. It was more important to hang out with people and feel like I was a part of them than it was to discriminate about the people I was hanging out with.

Wendy created a new family out of people heavily involved in illegal activities in order to avoid loyalty conflicts

with her parents after the divorce. At a time when she was trying to gain a separate sense of herself she lost a sense of family and was unable to hold onto anything solid. Feeling that what we were talking about wasn't getting at what she wanted to communicate because the feelings were so intense, she explained, "I'm constantly controlling the amount of pain I carry around because it makes relationships unbearable." With tears in her eyes as she talked about the instability of relationships and the impossibility of trusting others she said, "I'm trying to teach myself that change is the only constant." Wendy's family ghost lingers in her fragmentation and pain. I asked how things might be different now if her parents hadn't divorced:

If they were together I'd feel more like the rest of the world because I'd have two parents that I can't stand and I'd hate going home and I'd think I know what their problem is. I'd get more of a view on what their relationship is like because I'd be able to go home and watch it once in a while. I might be a little more confident because if they were still together I'd go away. I'd realize it was fucked up and that I can be myself...I'd feel like there was ground under my feet because there'd be a tangible history still existing in the world of where I came from. I could go home. There'd be a house with two people still living there that brought me up. Now neither of them live anywhere near where I grew up, they're in completely different situations...It makes it easier to forget, it makes it easier to deny. I don't know...Because I don't know anyone who saw it except for me, so it could just be all me.

Now that Wendy's tangible history is gone she has difficulty trusting her sense of what she lived through.

It seems to have created a problem for her that what she is trying to separate from has been destroyed and is no longer there for her to know or understand.

Like other participants from families which had severe problems, Wendy feels that her parents' divorce broke the denial. The divorce represented parental admission for Wendy that things were not working and validated an alternative view of a troubled past. This interpretation of the divorce supported her claim to the intense pain she was feeling in college. She says she is in better shape now than she ever has been though her angst is still very evident:

But it's not pain compared to what it was before. The further back I go the more pain I was in...being in so much agony of not ever being acknowledged as a person and having this violent psychological stuff going on around me...The greatest thing about the divorce was that it validated my feelings. I could say "Oh, there's a reason that I feel like this, I'm not going crazy"...The divorce gave me a reason why it was happening, why I was living in this complete mess of emotions, and not being able to see where I was. I don't know how much I could have worked out if my parents hadn't gotten divorced because I always worked on the fact that, "well, the family's ok, I'm just screwed up." I just wonder how much of that would have been lifted if they were still together, because when they got a divorce it was like "We're not lying to you anymore. It's not working." And if they didn't get divorced it would be me that had to say "that's not working"..I got a lot of information from my family from their saying "it's not working" that I couldn't have gotten.

Wendy feels the divorce made it possible to begin to straighten out her life. She feels she might have

continued to believe that the "family was ok" but she was "screwed up" if her parents had not divorced. She now has to repair the damage that occurred through the denial of her emotional reality, find her own truths, and consolidate her sense of herself.

How the Loss of a Family as a Self Object, and as a Holding Environment, Weakens a Sense of Self

It seemed to me that part of Wendy's dislocation resulted from losing the foundation of her family, inadequate though it was, before she was ready. This also appeared to be true for Michael, another of the "caught" offspring. Michael's underlying concern with an uncertain sense of self takes the form of the question "who am I if my idealized family exists no longer." Michael illustrated most overtly one dynamic which I believe relates to many of the "caught" offspring- losing the family while still separating makes resolution of existing problems more difficult and affects a sense of self.

Michael, 34 at the time of our interview, was 19 when his parents divorced. Michael describes three of his siblings as "lost souls" and attributes their and his own previous difficulties to their father's critical and abusive treatment. Michael says that "coming out" was a more formative experience than was his parents' divorce. He feels his relationship with his father and consequent problems in self esteem were also more important than the

divorce. It took many years for Michael to get where he was at the time of the interview-starting his own business and beginning a relationship where he felt a sense of his own worth. Part of the self destructiveness of his twenties seemed related to finding his identity as a gay man. Michael recounted how a friend's death from a drug overdose contributed to his decision to improve his life and take what felt like a huge risk of pursuing an education.

Michael asserted throughout the interview that the divorce was a nonconflictual "fact of life." The divorce showed him that "parents make mistakes and do stupid things" but he claimed to have long ago let go of his hope or belief in perfect parents. Michael's bitterness and how he talked about his parents and family left me with a different impression. His devaluing appraisal of his parents lacked any understanding of their perspective or difficulties. He seemed to yearn for the idealistic view of his family which was lost through his parents' divorce. I asked Michael how his life might have been different if they had not divorced.

I suppose being the idealistic person I always have this dream or whatever, that somehow I'd have these two nice parents who are getting along, and who would have been fairly well off financially at this point. I think it would have been nice for us being the kids, we would have had a lot more unity, we would have been able to do a lot more things together as we got to be adults. I think maybe things would have worked out better. But on the other hand,

maybe they wouldn't have. Just because they stayed together wouldn't mean their personalities would have changed. But being idealistic, I think wouldn't it have been nice if my parents had stayed together, they would have been well off enough to do certain things for their kids that they can't do now...other parents are more generous with their kids...We could enjoy going out for dinner together, or going somewhere on the weekend as a family. It's just kind of a dream that I have. But it's a dream, it's not reality because it will never happen.

Michael seems unable to experience himself and his siblings as adults and able to choose their own relationships; instead they are dependent on their parents for any unity. He recognizes his image of more family unity and bountifulness as idyllic, but one he still holds as meaningful.

References to his own inner life were strikingly absent in Michael's speculation about how life might have been different had his parents not divorced. It seemed that nothing of his family had been internalized. Michael's family ghost contained his lost idyllic family but those idealistic possibilities remain frozen inside him. I was struck with how his family still existed in its old form as he spoke of the aftermath of the divorce:

It has caused a rift in the family...There's this sort of feeling that there's no more unity there. Family unity. I have friends whose parents are still one unit. So the family is more cohesive...There's no focus in the family. The family is sort of dispersed in a way. You notice it more around holidays I suppose than any other time...My father's in California. My Mother's become the matriarch I suppose. Because she's the one everyone

borrow money from, she's the one who listens to everyone's problems, and she's the one who's pulling a lot of the load as far as trying to keep some kind of family unity going.

The family unit has become his mother and the offspring; his father is included as missing from the picture. Michael's internal image of his family has not changed in accord with the external reality.

At the time of his parents' divorce it seems that Michael remained overly identified with his family as an external source of self esteem and self definition; he had not stabilized internal sources of self esteem. Perhaps along with other factors, the conflictual, critical relationship with his father had compromised his sense of self. Membership in his family thus still served self-object functions of bolstering Michael's self-esteem. The divorce ripped this away leaving him even less sustained:

I always had this idea of being somebody...my mother's family had connections, wealth, DAR stuff,...we're not swamp Yankees, I have a background, I have a pedigree of some kind...impressive looking family house, coat of arms. Then all of a sudden you have a divorce and there is no family anymore. So it doesn't really mean anything anymore. And it doesn't really mean anything anyway...well it did in a way. I suppose I was searching for an identity at that time. I suppose I had an idealized vision, that I wasn't a nobody, that I was a somebody, that I did matter, that I did count. That was something that I would hold onto to reassure myself. Once the family gets broken up that sort of reassurance is finished in a way. It's not finished entirely, but the family dignity, or something. Especially in the sense that my brothers and sister aren't

doing much with their lives. I just feel like the family is sort of going down the tubes almost. Like we're not living up to our potential...To me it connects to the divorce. Because once the family unity is cut up...it's sort of an embarrassment almost.

The divorce enacted a fall from grace for Michael's family. His father shamed the family and ran off with a distant cousin he barely knew, and his mother must now work with "riffraff" as she supports herself.

Perhaps had his parents not divorced his family might have served as a foundation which would have allowed Michael to repair himself. Michael emerged from his family thinking he was dumb and with a poor self-image. Impairments in self-esteem made him still dependent on his family for external sources; the internalization of self esteem which accompanies individuation had not occurred. But then his family disappeared and the injuries to his self were compounded by the loss from the divorce. The additional loss of his pedigree and of an idealized family meant there was too much loss in the real world to allow him to mourn what had already been lost in his childhood. I believe that Michael was not sufficiently differentiated from his family to allow him to continue separating after the divorce and the self restitutive tasks he faced upon leaving his family were made more difficult by the divorce.

I suggest there was also too much loss internally for Michael to accommodate and adapt to the loss in the

external world. The divorce made an idealized view of his family impossible but I believe he still wants that back, partly as a result of not yet working through the damaged sense of self that resulted in his family. His family unity is lost but the family still exists as an entity that has been fractured and devalued. There is no new internalized representation. His new image is a tarnished old one.

In general, I believe Michael's dynamic applies to many of the "caught" offspring. The loss experienced because of divorce could make it impossible to deal with earlier developmental losses. Part of the self reparation made necessary by earlier developmental losses is mourning that family life wasn't good-enough. Idealization is one form of denying family problems and makes such mourning impossible. Denial is also apparent with Wendy who felt her chaotic family was perfect because there were rules about communication. Unresolved losses and defensive idealizations weaken a sense of self. Working through earlier losses makes a defensive idealization of family life no longer necessary.

Michael's difficulties locating a good-enough self after his parent's divorce resulted in part from the loss of his family as a self-object and as an external source of esteem and self definition. But this loss resonated against earlier losses in that the divorce exacerbated

Michael's feelings of rejection by his father. His father's desertion of his mother resonates in his relationship with him:

Was the issue something selfish or was it something real. Was one of them being selfish about what he wanted and didn't give a you know what about anybody else in the family? Was one of them somehow casting us aside because he or she didn't want to deal with something? That I think would be very sad. And I suppose that deep down inside I suspect that that may have been the case. I think in some ways my father didn't want to deal with it. Too much trouble, too many kids.

Michael's ongoing struggle in the relationship with his father was typical of the "caught" offspring. These offspring still struggled with dependency needs or with the injuries to self they had suffered in their families. They were still very much concerned with their internalized relationships with their parents as well as with their sense of self in relation to their external parents. How the "caught" offspring related to their parents also seemed to reflect their underlying concerns with an uncertain sense of self.

Differences in how Parents were Related to

Notable differences in how parents were experienced and related to highlight the "caught" offspring's concern with issues of self. In general, though the "separated" offspring also struggled with changes in the relationships with parents as will be explored in chapter VI, they seemed more ready to see their parents as people in their own right, not just as parents. They had begun

to or were ready to establish relationships not dominated by dependency or narcissistic needs. They demonstrated more ability to rework their relationships with parents as whole objects, not as idealized, devalued or part objects. Kate was typical of the "separated" offspring in her ability to experience changes in her perception of her parents without it affecting her sense of herself:

Two sides to it. The more disappointing side, I saw them both as pretty lonely, particularly in the last years of their marriage. They had isolated themselves more from people because it was hard to socialize. So I just saw more of their loneliness and isolation and neediness, more of their vulnerability. It made them more whole people in that they were no longer just my parents who were always there, that kind of thing.

In contrast, the "caught" offspring still seemed to be actively working on old injuries and anger in their past relationships. In reworking their relationships with parents they were intensely involved in redefining and reworking their sense of themselves in these relationships. The central question of "who am I" was salient in these explorations of past and present relationships.

The dynamic of relating to parents as devalued objects rather than whole objects was demonstrated most overtly by Michael. He spoke of his parents in consistently condescending and superficial ways and with no apparent appreciation of the difficulties they faced. He deemed his father foolish in his life choices and spoke

of his mother's enabling behavior with his younger drug abusing sister with intolerance and disdain. Michael was clearly still very angry and hurt by his father's critical and rejecting treatment throughout his childhood. He also felt very critical about his father's role in the divorce and worried that his father's negative feelings towards his offspring had contributed to his decision to leave. It seemed that the divorce had added one more layer to what he needed to work out with his father. Working through his earlier relationship with his father is made that much more difficult because of his concern that his father had cast him and his siblings off. I asked Michael how the absence of one parent while visiting the other parent might be different if the change had occurred through death rather than by divorce:

Death is a different situation. If he had died I wouldn't have misgivings about him being with another woman for example. Not that he can't be with another woman, but doing it the way it happened...If he had died you experience the loss but your opinion about that person sort of remains, you don't have these other things to add-the trauma of the divorce, the things that happened, like marrying another woman with not much notice, subsequent events whatever they may be aren't there. So you kind of remember somebody with a better light...Even though if he had died I would still have come to recognize him as a human being anyway, which I have, instead of being just Dad. I would hope I would have at least done that, and recognize that he's not a perfect person, omniscient, omnipotent and all that.

Michael's hope that he would eventually have come to recognize his father as a not perfect Dad suggests that

he has come to see his parents more ambivalently as is considered characteristic of young adulthood. Indeed, throughout the interview Michael asserted that he had relinquished his view of his parents as perfect. I was left with the impression however that, as with his family, Michael had failed to replace the lost image of them as perfect with something more mature; he had not achieved a more well rounded view of his parents. I was left with the impression that his parents were two dimensional to him, and that indeed, he felt two dimensional in relation to his parents. It seemed that he would still be content to have an idealistic omnipotent view of them.

Wendy's struggle for self definition and emotional validation takes place in relation to the brother of her internal world. In the external world he has cut off all contact with their family. Her efforts to rework what sounds like a much more important relationship than the relationship with either of her parents drives her current relationships. She feels that in all her relationships she searches for her brother. At age 23, she has slept with more men than she can count and has been with no one longer than a month:

Most of the craziness I bring to my friendships sometimes is because of my brother...My older brother is probably the biggest part of my life. Because he's the person I talk to the least. If I could find some kind of communication with him, or a way to acknowledge

the love between us, I'd be pretty different. I wouldn't be searching so hard for things in other people...If parents had divorced earlier there wouldn't have been a family for my brother to control, it would have been a sign of their control.

For Leslie, the interview took place at a time when changes in her relationship with her mother subsequent to the divorce was a particular concern. Graduating college she worried what it would be like to move back closer to her mother; and especially how it would be to leave the home she had created in school. Much of the interview with Leslie conveyed her efforts to disentangle herself from the enmeshment with her mother and the triangulation with each parent after the divorce. She was very insightful and articulate about the impact of these dynamics and struggled valiantly for her emotional emancipation and individuation.

In many ways this place means much more to me than it does to other people...I know that I can create something for myself somewhere else, I just get scared if I'm closer to my mother she's not going to allow it. In a way here it was easy because I was far away, there was a distance so she couldn't really control me. If I'm closer than I'm going to have to be strong, and say "No I'm not coming because I don't want to," not "Because I can't, I'm two hours away and have school. I just don't want to."

Elaine was one of two people whose renegotiation of the relationships with each parent was the most salient theme in the interview. Elaine's pain was evident as were her efforts to develop independence from her family. In Elaine's ongoing focus on the relationships

with each parent, especially her father and the impact of this on her sense of self, Elaine was typical of those in the second cluster with more sense of self than Wendy but still involved in struggling to establish her independence from her family.

Elaine's ongoing struggle to redefine relationships was prominent in the interview. She described having an overly close and dependent relationship with her mother as a young child. In hindsight, she realizes she had a relationship with her distant father only through her mother. She feels that her father was critical and unavailable to her and was only interested in his work:

I hardly saw him or at least it seems that way to me. But I think there was a real presence in his absence, that I was trying to be really good. I didn't like him, I didn't think he loved me at all. So I wanted to be good and make him proud of me.

Her father's perception that he was blameless in the marriage bothers Elaine. She sees him as unable to resolve his past and as even more entrenched now. After seeing her parents together for the first time in 2 1/2 years she realized how unwilling he was to look at himself. His self righteousness has repercussions in their relationship also:

With this responsibility issue, I've been thinking about my own relationship with my Dad and his absence in my life, and the fact that I only got attention or rewards for achievements. Thinking about how that has affected me, and sort of trying to grieve this Dad that I never had. I realized that

responsibility is again really key for me, that somehow I want him to acknowledge the pain that he's caused me, that he's partially responsible for that, rather than just saying "That's the way things were." That's maybe why it's such a big deal that he accept responsibility in the divorce, that somehow I think there's something parallel going on there.

Elaine is still very angry at her father for their earlier relationship and actively questions how much of a relationship to have with him now. She feels she was never good enough for her father and internally she still feels him standing in judgement. Realizing he knew her only through her mother she wonders how much she wants him to know her now. She feels angry that her father is making an effort now rather than when she needed him more and is confused about what she wants:

Now I have to establish my own relationship with him and I feel at times really confused about what I want. Whether I want anything, or how to go about it....When I go to visit it's very clear that Dad wants time having a good, deep conversation and getting caught up and it makes me feel really uncomfortable. There are times that I want to yell at him, "Why are you doing this now?" On one hand it's good that he's doing it but I kind of resent the fact that he didn't do it a lot earlier. I'm very aware now that I have to figure out what I'm willing to share with him, whereas before, I don't think I had as much power over it, because I maybe told him stuff but he got other information from my mother. Now I'm really his only source of information.

Elaine is being forced to take more responsibility and be more self-defining in the relationship with her father. Old anger at his criticalness complicates their new relationship. Developmentally, the task of reworking the

internalized relationship with her father is made more difficult by the form their real relationship has taken:

It's clear to me that my Dad wants to be close and that he values his relationship with me so that he doesn't want to lose me too, but there's a part of me that I still feel angry: "Isn't it a little bit late now?" I needed that more during my formative years than I do now. I guess there are times when I feel really angry about that.

Her desire that he acknowledge his contribution to her difficulties signals her need for him to help her repair herself. Unmet healthy narcissistic needs keep her tied and unable to resolve past injuries from her father.

Elaine, Leslie, Michael and Wendy continue to work on resolving their internal relationships with their parents (or for Wendy her brother) of the past as much as they are concerned with the external relationships. As will be seen in chapter VI, divorce wrought changes in the relationships with parents for all offspring. Changing family structure, new priorities for parents, new life-styles, increased stress-many changed conditions reverberated throughout dyadic relationships with parents and required a renegotiation within these relationships. But what is crucial in this discussion is that for the "caught" offspring, what is being renegotiated in these relations is as much the internalized relationship with parents as it is the external relationship. It is the ongoing concern with these relationships that suggest

that the "caught" offspring still struggle for their emotional autonomy.

Triadic Level of Relatedness

How Elaine struggled with renegotiating dyadic relationships with each parent sheds light on an often overlooked aspect of parental divorce. In addition to an offspring's relationship to each parent and to the corporate family, there is a third level of relatedness—the self in relation to the parents' relationship. Offspring have varying relationships to their parents' marriage. The relationship can represent security and containment. In contrast, it can represent something offspring feel responsible for or victimized by. The relationship can be seen as irrelevant; one participant, Liz, said she had never been conscious of experiencing her parents as a unit. It can be seen as stalwart and as something whose existence is never questioned either by virtue of its stability or because of the need to deny its problems. For both Elaine and Laurie, renegotiating the relationship with the parental unit was a big part of processing the divorce.

Though Elaine's mother caused a fair amount of pain in how she ended and left her marriage, Elaine has only admiration for her. She feels that her mother is courageous and alive; she left the relationship to pursue her own growth and self definition. In contrast, Elaine views her father as dead and unchanging. She feels that

his remarriage barely a year after a separation which he found devastating and "immoral" was his escape from looking at his own part in the marital failure. She illustrates these perceptions with descriptions of how each parent appears in photos over the years: her father always appears rigid; her mother starts as rigid but comes to life after the divorce:

What was striking with my Mother was this incredible difference from this blank stern face with glaring eyes to this woman with this huge smile on her face and this very intimate look in her eyes. And these pictures of my Dad, he hadn't changed. Maybe there are a few more wrinkles, but it's the same person. My sister and I kind of go in and out, there's not as clear a progression.

Elaine feels that she has been hurt by her father's rigidity and holds her father's deadness inside. She aspires to be more like her mother:

I've picked up on his carefulness, cautiousness, be it in speech or in deciding what I want to do with my life...I spoke of this emptiness that I experience with my Dad. I feel like I've been carrying his emptiness for him and I don't want that. I feel like my Dad has given me this model of a very safe careful life and I feel that has prevented me from fully embracing life...It makes me want to take on more of my mother, to take on her courage and ability to take a huge risk...She wasn't alive in the marriage, and I guess I feel like I want to be alive. I think maybe the divorce has kind of brought that about because the difference between the two parents in that way is that much clearer...He's not ready to communicate with our Mother at all. In order for him to talk to her it would mean that he would have to give up being right. He feels very strongly that my Mother is responsible for this-she's guilty and he's innocent. He won't be able to talk to her until

he gives that up. It would mean accepting his own responsibility and I just don't think he can do that. It made me feel incredibly sad for my Dad.

Another thing that Elaine finds particularly problematic is the distance and silence between her parents. She says because the divorce occurred after she had already left home there was no chance to learn a new way of being in a family. It's now difficult to know where to reconstitute family. This is exacerbated by loyalty conflicts as well as by each parent's difficulty or refusal to talk about the past:

On one hand I side with my Mother, I understand my mother. But I feel sorry for my Dad. I guess I feel sorry for him in general. There were times when I felt like I needed to talk about my Dad and I would talk to my Mother and then I realized I can't do that because I felt like my Mother would only reinforce any negative things I had to say about my Dad. And that wasn't being fair to him. At this point I really don't discuss either of them with either of them. My parents don't talk to each other, and for me, their silence is so loud, I feel like it screams at me at times...It makes me feel like I have to keep them very separate-"this is my Mother and this is my Father," and there's two hours of driving in between. So I feel like that puts me in a bind.

So much of a bind that Elaine had delayed graduation to postpone the occasion when her parents would be together. Their silence imposes itself on her and she feels angry that her mother would still want Elaine to talk about her father as if nothing had happened:

My Mother and her lover were upset that whenever the topic of my father comes up I shut down. I don't discuss it with them. They feel

like I'm cutting them out of a whole part of my life. I was just really angry at them for saying that, I felt like "You can't get divorced and then expect everything to be the same"...Sometimes my parents show up in my dreams together, and I always think this is wrong, there's something fundamentally wrong here. I'd like to believe if they talked to each other, then I could talk to each about the other one.

It is not only their silence in the real world that makes it so difficult; it is also the chasm between her parents inside herself. Elaine says that if one of her parents had died it would be different. If her parents were no longer together following a death, she could go home and feel that the other parent was still there; the silence would not be as loud:

Somehow the divorce is a change rather than an end. It's an end of the family as a unit, but it's not the end of those relationships. It allows me the option to work on things still. This idea of my parents being a unit, I had this feeling that I could come home and talk with parents and they'd understand what I was going through on some level. I feel like if a parent had died, I'd still be able to go to the house where they'd lived together, and that person's presence would still be there, whereas that's not the case now. I think it has something to do with death is something that happens, whereas divorce is maybe something you choose. There's more human control there, and I think that then makes it different. If it was a parent who was dead and I went home to visit the other one, I think I might still somehow see them as a unit.

The divorce has made it more difficult for Elaine to hold both parents inside. When her parents were married she had a relationship with her father, if only through her mother. The dissolution of the marriage means that

the structure of their relationship no longer helps to contain her splitting. She is more likely to utilize splitting to deal with her anger at her father and her discrepant experiences of her parents' strengths and weaknesses. How each parent dealt with the ending of their marriage magnifies her anger at her father and makes it more difficult to resolve her relationship with him. Most significantly, the divorce intensifies her desire to eschew the parts of herself that are like him. Consequently, the divorce has affected how she relates to the different parts of herself that each parent reflects. It also keeps her tied to each parent with no resolution, especially to her father. She wants to be more like her mother but what then about her father? If her parents were still together the differences between her parents would not be as pronounced and Elaine would not be trying to rid herself of characteristics which reflect her father. She would be more able to leave them behind as a unit; instead she now struggles to rework her internal relationships in a context which has made more salient the real relationship with each. Neither parent can be held inside as good-enough and able to be left. It appears that divorce has undone something that would have been better left together.

Elaine's experiences raise a question which can only be addressed speculatively but which nonetheless should

be raised: Since renegotiating oedipal issues is commonly considered part of adolescence, what is the effect of divorce on the reworking of oedipal issues and the consolidation of a triadic level of relatedness? Like Elaine, Laurie's struggle to renegotiate the relationship with each parent also dominated the interview. Briefly, Laurie's parents' divorce brought to conscious awareness the family pact which had been concealed by the marriage: Laurie was her mother's protector and her father's fantasy mistress:

I have come to figure out that my relationship with my father was emotionally incestuous...if a father isn't getting his needs met from his wife than he turns to his daughter and that's what happened to me. That was part of our closeness growing up but I never understood that until recently. It was very confusing...(But) even though my mother wasn't there for my father sexually, she was some kind of barrier in my relationship with my father. When they got divorced there wasn't that thing between us anymore, the triangle was broken...So then I wasn't safe in those feelings my father had towards me.

The emotionally incestuous bond with her father and her mother's demands that Laurie be her caretaker became less hidden with the divorce. The need to take care of her mother became an actuality after the divorce and her mother no longer buffered her from her father. I suggested as much to Laurie:

Me: If your parents had stayed married your mother would have kept you safe from your father and your father would have kept the burden of responsibility of keeping your mother fed. So even though the unwritten pact pre-dates the divorce, the divorce Laurie: made it

more difficult to ever move forward with my life. That's something I didn't know before I came in here!

I was struck that Laurie's relationships with each parent was extremely problematic and how they combined inside of her formed an impasse. When her parents divorced the unconscious and unspoken agreements were actualized, in reality or in fantasy. Had her parents stayed married Laurie would have been less trapped by their strings on her, at least in the external world.

Abelin (1971) suggests that it is through the experience of self in relation to two others in a relationship (the parents), that the young child transforms from a dyadic level of relationship to a triadic one as part of negotiating what traditionally is considered oedipal issues. Ogden (1986) suggests that whole object relatedness made possible by the resolution of splitting is the condition for the emergence of oedipal issues. If divorce makes it impossible to experience parents as a unit, what is the impact on an offspring's consolidation of a triadic level of relatedness, especially if offspring are unable to resolve their ambivalence towards each parent in the aftermath of divorce. Intensified anger and parents' changes can disrupt the process of internalization if the parental unit has not yet been adequately internalized. If a strong parental unit is the condition for the resolution of oedipal conflicts, is support for

maintaining a triadic level of relatedness undermined by divorce? And if parents cannot be brought together in one's head, is it then more difficult to separate from them?

Conclusions

Parental divorce is a profound alteration in family life ushering in new relational realities and sometimes making covert old ones visible. Transitions and other crises are moments when previous developmental difficulties emerge, both complicating these times but also making possible further resolution of ongoing conflicts. Divorce, like other crises, can be seen as an occasion which allows for increased developmental progress as well as for regression or fixation. Whether one can use a crisis for continued growth depends on a whole host of factors but how any crisis is handled depends on existent competencies. The experience of parental divorce is mediated by what strengths have already been established, what life experience has already been accomplished, what sense of self is left after the family dissolves.

The previous discussion illustrates individuals weathering the crisis of their parents' divorce and depicts two groups of offspring with differing concerns and emotional presentation. Ongoing issues with parents and with their own sense of self sound throughout the narratives of the "caught" offspring. The ongoing

exploration and pain of these offspring contrasts with the emotional containment and relatively nonconflictual themes characteristic of the "separated" offspring.

How are we to understand the significance of the observation that these two groups also differed in how they described the emotional environment of their pre-divorce families, as well as in how independent of their families they had appeared to be when their parents divorced? I posit that not only can one draw such connections between pre and post-divorce adjustment but one can argue that the difficulties of the "caught" offspring were compounded by their parents' divorce. Parental divorce in late adolescence is seen in this study as an occasion which allows for the emergence of unresolved issues in individuation-separation, but then makes these issues more difficult to resolve.

It is the adolescents from more problematic families who seem most affected by divorce which forces offspring to separate from something that is already falling apart. They are all reworking (or remaining stuck in) their as yet, incomplete senses of self in an ongoing process of separation-individuation. While individuation and the creation of self is ongoing throughout the life cycle, these offspring were still fairly undifferentiated at the time of their parents' divorce due to the boundary violations and intensely conflictual relationships they had grown up with. For these offspring a sense of self

had remained intricately bound up within the context of family conflicts. A chaotic environment had left Wendy with a fragmented and deeply pained feeling of self; narcissistic injuries infiltrate Elaine's and Michael's feelings about themselves; and for Leslie, Laurie, Lisa and others, triangulation and boundary disturbances dominated the family environment. The consequent self-reparation tasks facing each offspring differ but they all struggle with a fragile sense of self.

The situation of these offspring compares to college students whose developmental lags complicate their adjustment to leaving home. Slavin (1985) has described a group of students who arrive in late adolescence unable to meet new emotional demands due to "developmental detours" taken in early adolescence. These students suffered a loss of self esteem and diminishment in a sense of identity when they were no longer embedded in their pre-college sustaining network of relationships: Slavin recognized a pattern in students who suffered a "developmental crisis precipitated by the loss of defining roles and relationships that dominated earlier adolescence" (Slavin, p. 221). I have suggested that one developmental detour which could be conceptualized with the participants in this study is the defensive and externally sustained idealized solutions often adopted in dysfunctional families; including a prolonged participation in parents' fantasized omnipotence, a

defensive posture dramatically smashed by divorce. Slavin's conceptualization of his students' ego strength could be applied to offspring from dysfunctional families: a "failure to sufficiently consolidate self structures, ego functions, and object relations at a level that would enable these individuals to tolerate or make developmental use of separation from their family" (Slavin, p. 219). Offspring from dysfunctional families arrive at the crisis of parental divorce with lags or deficits in self structures, ego strength and the integration of self and object representations which leave them more vulnerable than other offspring.

As did the students identified by Slavin, offspring from problematic families would still have to struggle to resolve conflicts and injuries to the self even if their parents had not divorced. They still might be caught in unresolved anger, betrayal, hurt, and disillusionment. But the emotional context for offspring's separation changes when divorce occurs. The struggle for individuation and self definition must now proceed under sometimes radically changed conditions from when the family was intact. Continued growth in the context of what has been lived and known thus far is no longer possible. Most importantly divorce complicates the conditions under which ongoing development takes place in three ways.

First, the loss of the family has to be grieved, adding to the feelings of loss inherent in individuation. Such loss is little recognized and even denied under the adage that now someone has two homes, one with each parent. This was not the experience of these participants. To resolve the loss of family also means coming to terms with what one has or has not gotten from one's parents. The demise of the family can add to previous losses making mourning impossible. To mourn the family requires that a degree of separation and resolution already have been achieved. Finally, as will be explored in the next chapter, the changes in understanding of family life wrought by divorce also dramatically affects resolving the loss of family.

Second, changes in dyadic parental relationships also complicate the emotional context of offsprings' post-divorce continued individuation. Dyadic relationships are intensified after divorce by being torn asunder from a family relational network, a context which has often camouflaged conflicts or weaknesses in these relationships. Each relationship now stands independent of previous family configurations. Increased conflict in external relationships complicates reworking the internal ones. Renegotiating the relationship in the external world can come to dominate reworking the internalized relationships. But individuation must occur primarily in relation to the internalized infantile objects, not the

external reality parents. Sometimes just the fact of divorce intensified the internal conflict for these offspring. The internal relationship also complicates renegotiating the real relationship, adding another layer to post divorce adjustment as we saw most clearly with Elaine and Michael in their relationships with their fathers. I was struck in the interviews how often relationships were more conflictual internally than in reality; old business stood in the way of new relationships.

Divorce also complicates offsprings' self reparation. Offspring from problematic families usually experience anger even if only unconsciously at inadequate or destructive parenting. That parents might do something for themselves which disrupts the offspring's life and makes self reparation more complicated could intensify the rage at previous parental failures.

Speculatively on an intrapsychic level, perhaps parental divorce makes the internalization of what is being separated from more difficult. Conceivably, divorce could make it impossible to experience the parental unit as a safe container for the aggression which accompanies separation. The parental unit as already destroyed through divorce becomes poignantly unable to withstand any more destruction, thus inhibiting the anger which makes separation possible.

In the "caught" cluster the ongoing concern with dyadic relationships indicates that something is still unresolved and represents a developmental lag. Object and self representations have not been as fully differentiated and consolidated as would typify a more advanced individuation process. Parents were not yet whole objects and experienced as separate; rather, dependency and narcissistic needs still dominated these relationships. Reparative issues with parents were too salient in offspring from problematic families for them to relate to their parents as people in their own right as were the people from the "separated" cluster.

These observations suggest that one must have the beginning of a sense of self in order to separate. Josselyn (1980) suggests that pre-existing ego strength determines the extent of the regressive and progressive aspects of adolescent development which in turn make individuation possible. From a clinical perspective, Schafer (1973) bluntly states that adolescents must already be individuated in order to individuate. It appears that for those offspring with good-enough parental relationships enough of a sense of self had developed that the offspring was able to continue separating after the divorce. This was also true of Leslie but Leslie was unique in the "caught" cluster. She seemed able to utilize her strengths to rework

individuation issues in the context of her divorcing parents and thus use the divorce in the service of her own growth.

Divorce compounds difficulties for the offspring from troubled families in a third way. Divorce eradicates the family as a home base which can be used for "refueling." The need for holding exists throughout life, but the family is relinquished when other means of holding are established. It is the family context which holds in place the parents as the individuals from whom one individuates. Even if only symbolically, the family exists as a semblance of holding to support offspring's efforts to repair themselves. The noisy family ghosts of the "caught" offspring suggest that their families linger inside in fixated efforts to provide a holding environment. Whether to preserve something, to protect themselves or another from grief or anger, or to re-invoke a sense of family in order to continue to work something through or alternatively remain stuck, these offspring still live within the confines of their internal families.

The importance of symbolic holding is illustrated by the experiences of four participants. Sara and Amy came from families with a mild to moderate level of problems. Each of their parents' divorce was fairly amicable and now both sets of parents have ongoing friendly contact, including for Amy, the celebration of birthdays. Each

set of parents' ongoing positive contact has allowed the continuation of a transformed family within which Amy and Sara can proceed with individuation and separation. It is interesting to note that the interviews with Amy and Sara were more bland than the others and the family ghosts were quiet. The experiences of two other participants also highlight how the together family functions as a symbol within which self restitution tasks can occur. Sharon was from a family which she described as significantly dysfunctional and was newly married at the time of the divorce. She clearly recalls that the feeling of being "full and loved" by her new husband helped her cope with her parents' divorce and remembers how revelling in "learning" who she was as a wife replaced a lost sense of being her parents' daughter. The fourth participant is Liz, whose family difficulty compares to Wendy but whose experience was moderated in comparison to Wendy by having already established herself out of her parents' home by age 18. It appears that the home provided by marriage gave both these women a sense of a base separate from the family they were losing.

At the time of their parents' divorce, offspring in the "separated" cluster were less in need of the symbolic holding of their families. It seemed that their family experience had been "good-enough." The main dynamics in family relationships were no longer of individuation or

of self reparation. These offspring had more capacity to relate to their parents as whole objects not only as good-bad or need gratifying. They had more ability to experience parents for who they were rather than through the lens of dependency, narcissistic or reparative conflicts. The not split parents could be internalized and relinquished as in mourning. These offspring had gotten enough from their families in the form of themselves that they could manage the loss of their family; they were individuated enough to continue that process. More independent, they could lose their family much in the way that individuals adapt to the loss of an object, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The question then arises what is lost for those offspring who have separated? The belief that once offspring have left home divorce no longer matters motivates many parents to postpone divorce until children are grown. I would posit that the loss incurred to offspring who have separated interferes less with development but is a loss nonetheless. As we saw with Kate, Matt and Larry, that loss is of the self in relation to a unit, as a member of something, a part of a whole; something that has, and potentially could continue to serve various protective, inclusive, nurturing and containing functions, if only symbolically. Lost is the potential for ongoing connectedness. Like all losses, this loss is either mourned or defended against. For

instance, Larry recalled frequent "trashings" of his college dorm room after his parents' separation- symbolically destroying such containing and protective functions in an attempt to master his loss along with expressing his rage. Separating from the familial unit involves internalizing a system of objects/others and its functions similar to separating in a dyadic relationship in order to move on to fulfill these needs elsewhere.

A Gap in our Literature

The issue of how the loss of family is experienced internally points to a huge gap in our literature. A theoretical chasm exists where object relations theory and the family systems literature should meet but fail to. In the psychoanalytic literature, individuation and separation is conceptualized in terms of individual dyadic relationships. Achieving psychological independence from one's family seems to automatically follow the successful renegotiation of parental relationships. Not conceptualized is what independence from the corporate family or from the parents as a unit looks like in the inner object world. In the interviews I had heard that along with internalized representations of dyadic relationships, also internalized are representations of families, of parents in relationship to one another, and as parents as a unit in relationship to oneself. Separation is not only about individuating in the context of dyadic relationships; separation also

occurs via a self in relation to the corporate family, and via a self in relation to the parental unit. The systems literature is equally frustrating from the opposite direction. While it is typical to posit the necessity of individuating from the family, the individual's internal process with this is unaddressed. Closest is Karpel's (1976) assertion that individuation is "the process by which a person becomes increasingly differentiated from a past or present relational context" (p.66). Still unaddressed is the individual's internal dynamics.

Finally, it is in this context that the question raised about whether an intact parental unit facilitates separation is most relevant. Our theory also fails to help us understand how the intact family is experienced internally. As a self in relation to a group of objects, the self in a family is a triadic level of relatedness. Like the relational context which is considered to usher in Oedipal strivings (Ogden, 1986), the family environment consists of a self in relation to objects in relationship with each other, thus fostering awareness of the relationship that exists between independent others. Leaving or losing the family is then a loss of a triadic level of relationship. Following from this is the speculation that individuation from the family is first a process of individuating in the context of dyadic relationships, followed by separating from the parental

unit, which then allows the internal leavetaking of the family. Such a framework illuminates the finding that the offspring who presented with a focussed sense of loss about their family had been more separated at the time of the divorce. Individuation within dyadic relationships had allowed for a sense of autonomy within which the loss of the containing, inclusive, and nurturing functions of the family is felt.

The conclusion that parental divorce in late adolescence compounds individuation tasks for offspring from problematic families is consistent with what little research has focussed on the interaction between family transactions, conflictual parental relationships, and offsprings' identity problems. This research suggests that family environment is a crucial contributant to identity development. The construct of identity is more accessible to observation than the internal substrata of individuation, but identity formation and individuation can be understood as recursive and inter-related processes (Josselyn, 1980). While most research has treated the family environment as a constant, the results of this study strongly support Sabatelli and Mazor's (1985) criticism that investigations into adolescent development must take into account differences in parent-child relationships and family environments.

CHAPTER V
THE INVISIBLE NEED TO MOURN

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the developmental ramifications of losing one's family when parents divorce. That divorce involved feelings of losing one's family was not an issue which had been conceptualized beforehand; it emerged in the interviews and analysis of data. Loss implies mourning; part of processing parental divorce then means mourning the loss of family. This chapter is about issues involved in mourning the family. I will argue that one feature complicating mourning is that divorce is often seen as an act of parental will which then has the effect of transforming offsprings' positive memories into illusions. Attention will also be paid to how mourning the loss of family intersects with the developmental task of identity formation. How to conceptualize what mourning the family would look like follows that discussion. The chapter begins with a brief overview suggesting that most offspring seemed to have not mourned the loss of their families. How divorce causes a break with the past echoed throughout the interviews.

Illusions

Parental divorce can cause a profound rupture between the future and the past. Divorce initiates

looking backwards in time to understand what has occurred. In this process what has been lived thus far becomes vulnerable to dramatic revision. The intact marriage and family provide a context in which to process and understand experience. Divorce alters the contextual lens through which events and relationships have been interpreted. All experience is vulnerable to reinterpretation: the marital relationship, the family environment, family myths, and individuals.

It is those impressions about which it is possible to discern contradictory truths which are most likely to be revised. I observed in the interviews that offspring often felt that the divorce revealed previous beliefs as illusions. A fear of having lived an illusory reality was strongest in those participants who felt that the divorce erased what had been positive in the past. For instance, Jane wondered whether the playful rituals such as the last ice cream cone excursion of summer had been forced. Elaine felt that the divorce made her question how close her family really was and whether there was as much communication and good times as she remembered. Leslie feels that the bitterness of the divorce negated anything positive which had existed between her parents or as a family. Matt, whose story concludes this chapter, also struggles with whether the divorce made the good times unreachable. He says the divorce proved the

good times illusory but contradicts himself by saying they belonged to a time now ended and seemingly discontinuous with the present. Perhaps as with Leslie, remaining in touch with the good times is too painful; they serve as reminders that something has been lost.

Denial And Idealization

At this point it is necessary to distinguish between rewriting happy memories and realizing in hindsight that denial or idealization have transformed a painful reality into its opposite. In contrast to those who felt that a deceptive pleasant reality had been lived, many participants felt the divorce broke the denial utilized to deal with problematic family environments. These participants felt that chronic denial of reality had been extremely destructive for them. A few felt they would have benefited from an earlier divorce. Parents were seen as finally admitting to problems by divorcing, even if only implicitly. The divorce made offsprings' own denial no longer necessary; for some, this was the largest gain of the divorce. In a similar vein, Elaine and Rachel who came from families with difficulties but without the chaos or boundary violations of the most problematic families, felt the divorce initiated an exploration of family dynamics that would have eventually occurred later. The divorce gave them permission to question previous assumptions. For others such as we saw with Wendy in the previous chapter, the divorce made it

impossible to continue the defensive idealization which had transformed problems into their opposites. In contrast, unable to adapt to a new understanding consistent with the divorce, Michael's experience demonstrated an alternative pattern. The image of his family as ideal was shored up by divorce.

Perfect Families

One specific perception of family life destroyed by divorce was of being the "perfect family." Reminiscent of Cain's (1989) findings, it was astounding how many people said they had always thought their families were perfect. Two different types of families were described this way. The first were two families that had obtained middle class accomplishments and whose children's covert problems were incorporated into not-too-damaging family alliances. Perfection was found in the achievement of what was considered desirable.

The second type were the families which after the divorce offspring came to realize were troubling and traumatic and by description sounded variously problematic. The perception of perfection seems able to be explained in such families as defensive; denying or idealizing in order to not know what is too painful to be known. Most offspring of these families had yet to work through the problems the divorce had revealed. Sharon was unique in appearing to have achieved significant

resolution about what it had meant to relinquish the view that her family was perfect. She has been able to manage how "disillusioning" it was and also evidences that she has mourned this loss:

I think that now that I've picked it apart and analyzed it...I have lost some of the goodness of it. Because there was a lot of goodness or I wouldn't have valued it that much...There had to be a lot more good than it sounds listening to me now because when I went away to college I was so impressed with my family compared to everyone else's...So my idea that my family was perfect was shot to hell because it wasn't perfect, it couldn't have been perfect or else we'd all still be together...The divorce effected what I thought it was like to grow up in my family. That's why I didn't like it because I had this ideal picture. And then I looked back over things and wondered why I thought certain things were ok or normal...I did a postmortem and saw things differently. Which was very disheartening and disillusioning for me. But in some ways was very good because I think I had too rosy a picture of what my family was like and I would have had too high of an expectation about what my new nuclear family was going to be like. This hunky-dory happy-go-lucky thing that it couldn't possibly have been. Because my perception of my family of origin was so out of whack with reality.

Me: What did the divorce make possible?

Sharon: It made it possible for me to see that there is no such thing as a perfect family. It made it possible for me to go on with my own life and not have to choose.

Even Sharon however, though realizing the benefit of a more ambivalent view of her family articulates the common conclusion that the divorce revealed her family as imperfect. That divorce meant families were no longer perfect suggests these offspring believe the damaging conception that something is wrong with families if parents divorce. This notion keeps alive the

misunderstanding that there can be such a thing as a perfect family. The myth that divorce meant family failure was apparent with several participants even from families which were not seen as perfect. For instance, Jane feels she "lost (her) illusion of a nice family" in the divorce and that she "lived a lie." Larry, whose story soon follows says:

What I lament more than anything is the loss of the sense of my family as really a good family. Not just a good family but the innocence of a child of a family that you think "you know, that's my family and it was just good." You may have a lot of faults and you may pick at this or that, but you still think it's at least adequate as an example of it. The minute it's not a family anymore, then suddenly it's not that, it's a failed something.

These offspring seem unable to hold onto the feeling that their families encompassed both positive and negative moments. Sharon was one of very few participants who had concluded that just as the difficulties no longer needed to be denied, neither do the lost positives. She has been able to tolerate the sadness of recognizing that when it worked it was good even though the divorce showed it was not always so. The inability to mourn what they have lost prevents others from a similar resolution.

Family Mythology-Too Much to Lose

When parents divorce offspring may try to revise the past in order to render consistent what is remembered with what now exists. Memories of a family which at

times worked and felt happy contradict the reality that a family no longer lives. Offspring must integrate two competing realities because as Fintushel and Hillard (1991) point out, it is often because a family has worked in some ways that divorce occurs later in life.

Offspring are left with questions of whether recollected happy times ever existed. They face a usually unconscious choice: to live with enduring questions or to mourn that there were good times and positive dynamics that now feel invalidated.

The ability to reconcile a new vision of the past depends on what elements of experience the lost belief served to organize or how meaningful it was. We have heard from some participants that they lost what they consider illusions of good times or of a working family. In contrast, two participants whose stories follow did not adopt this solution of considering their past beliefs as illusions. Whether Sally and Larry's perceptions of the past are illusory matters less than what a "loss of illusion" would mean to each of them. It seems their perceptions were true enough and integrating their opposites would be too painful. They strive to preserve these perceptions as a way to sustain certain feelings about themselves and their families, as well as to contain the losses of the divorce. Something about their families is kept alive in each of them and the past is not as lost.

Sally-Was it him or us that was not as I thought?

This is the second time Sally's parents have divorced and the overwhelming difficulty of the second divorce compared with the first is what motivated Sally to volunteer for this study. Married very young, her parents had first separated in Sally's early adolescence because they both felt they needed to grow. Friendly throughout their first divorce her parents started dating again when she was sixteen and remarried when she was 18. Sally believes part of why they remarried was that in reaction to a family tragedy her father moved back in with her mother and they remarried 6 months later.

This tragedy was just one of many losses her family faced during her adolescent years, losses including her own bout with cancer, economic disaster, and family deaths. Her attitude towards this series of tragedies is that she is sadder and wiser but has learned to "value experience" because of how her family coped at these times. She remembers that her family always talked about painful things and shared with each other in their many losses. This had helped her family not only survive but grow from these tragedies; there was always a family joke that these things "built character." Interwoven into descriptions of family life was the oft repeated but poorly defined construct that her parents had raised her and her brother to be "human beings," the implication being having good values and "character."

This view of her family as communicative was seriously threatened by her father's behavior in the divorce. Upon confrontation he denied but later admitted to having an affair and finally initiated the separation. It was not the fact of the affair that bothered Sally-he had lived with another woman in the first separation-it was that he had lied about it. Also disturbing was her new perception that her father was much more materialistic and status conscious than she had previously thought. Her new view of her father, especially his deceitfulness, completely contradicted everything she thought her father and family represented.

Observing her father's dishonesty threw Sally into a period of questioning whether her family had been as honest and communicative as she had thought. She has come out the other side of this darkness and has reclaimed her original family values. She feels that one of the best things to come out of the divorce was this period of questioning and her ability to differentiate how she wanted to be:

The best thing is that I've had a chance to reevaluate things and look to what I value most...the ability to discern between two different ways of thought or abilities of becoming, just being able to look at things a little differently, and rationalize or discern between one and another.

Sally is left with very conflicting feelings about whether her family was one way or another. At one point

she said, "I feel as though during my youth I was under an illusion of what my family was and perhaps now I see a clearer picture." Yet at another point she maintains that these values did typify her family but that her father messed up:

He boldly lied, and that was just the complete opposite of everything I had ever thought a human was to do. That's what makes us human, and makes us unique-that ability to stand up and face those hard things. We have a joke in our family because we've been through so many crazy catastrophes, we always say, "Oh well, it just builds character"...Talking about hardships built character, regardless of whether you like that information or not...It was his doctrine of teaching us...So for me, it made me step back and reevaluate some things. I think I came out with the same evaluation-yeh, I was raised very nicely, and I was given real good standards to live by, so he messed up.

It appears that her father has fallen from grace but the original family values remain intact. Sally believes her father would say she was being "accurate and blunt" in her accusations of his failure to uphold their family standards.

Sally struggles with whether her view of the past is an illusion. Her solution to the confusion is to decide that somehow her father is the problem. She feels that her father has failed her miserably and has told him that she no longer welcomes him in her life. At the time of the interview which took place only a year after the second separation, she remained confused about whether or

not she needed him in her life and recognized that she did not want to remain as angry with him as she still felt.

Sally's feeling that the second divorce was devastating stemmed both from her feeling that the "rug was pulled out from her" at a very pivotal transitional moment in her life, but more intensely, because she feels that she lost her father as part of the second divorce. Sally's reason for volunteering and her parting words spoke to the differences in the two divorces.

You idealize your parents at a young age and as a young adult you're evaluating them through your own standards of life and what you would like to acquire of someone. So at the older age you're evaluating them and they just don't live up to your standards, just don't cut it. And at the younger age they're infallible, they're ominous.

What Sally needed from her father is captured by the following exchange between us. I summarized her above words as "the pain of seeing a parent not be what you yourself might want to be." She said that she liked my way of saying it better than how she was originally going to state it which was "realizing that a parent is not what you want them to be." She seems confused about whom she is applying standards of behavior: herself or her father, and how unlike him it is necessary to be.

Sally is struggling not only with disappointment in her father but with her sense of who she is given her changed perception of him. Her idealized image of a good

father has been violently destroyed but the now betrayed image of an honest father/family is a crucial part of her identity. It is curious given her facility with words that she was unable to articulate what being a human being meant and her strict adherence to this definition of morality. Her repetitiveness of this pillar of behavior suggests the salience of the question of who she is, given that what she has learned is different than what she thought about her father.

Sally feels that through the divorce she gained the ability to discern two competing perspectives and to think through which values she wants to uphold. She has conclusively decided that she will uphold the value of being a human being, of being honest and communicative, even though to achieve this it seems necessary to jettison her relationship with her father. Her father is no longer a welcomed person in her life. He has become a hopelessly devalued father, not to be identified with or yearned for. She holds up a shattered ideal as a reproach to her father and struggles to reassert this ideal in her own identity. Though she perceives herself as successfully leaving behind her father, it seems instead that she lives in defiance and perpetuation of a lost ideal, with little internal freedom from a very devalued father.

Perhaps this is the best solution possible. How her father handled the divorce completely threatens the

family myth that rendered traumatic times tolerable. Tragedies were managed by dealing with them together; her father has betrayed that view. There is too much loss if that myth cannot stay intact. To change her view of her family would threaten to undermine how the family had survived its tragedies. It appears that her solution has been to decide that her family was honest and communicative but that her father was not. Otherwise the structure through which they dealt with tragedy falls to pieces.

Larry-The Veneer of Togetherness amongst a Community

Seventeen years after his parents' divorce Larry speaks of the effect on him with compelling energy and animation. Thirty-five, happily married with three daughters and a successful career, his parents' divorce at age eighteen emerges as an event the impact of which he has explored extensively. From Larry we hear about aspects of parental divorce not mentioned by others but aspects which are important to observe. The severance of ties to the community and what it means to be this age when parents divorce contribute to how the divorce threatens his view of the past and affect how he manages the loss of his family.

The younger of two offspring, Larry was the "bridge" between his parents and the "mediator" of the family. Larry recalls thinking as an adolescent that his family

was ideal. His home was always open to his friends who loved his parents and he had a "wonderful" life. After telling me about his many achievements in high school he concluded:

From my standpoint, it was a fantastic childhood...it couldn't have been better. In fact, I think it was too good almost in a lot of ways. Because I was convinced that everything was just wonderful and I was convinced I could do anything I set my mind to.

Looking back through the lens of the divorce, Larry concludes:

I had a wonderful life in spite of my family...when things got difficult, I just studied, buried my life in a book or sports. I had all these things I described earlier, I was successful in anything that I did.

Unable now to convey what made his family ideal, he describes a "schizophrenic" feeling-"it was a great family but we never did anything together." Memories of how thrilling it was to look up and see his parents in the stands at high school basketball games stand out as the only ones of his parents together.

Yet the stability and endurance of his family was never questioned. The perceptions of his friends and the community at large supported his own that his family was great. Larry was aware of problems but assumed his parents marriage "was an enduring unquestioned bond, a stable of (his) life." More than anyone else I spoke with Larry conveyed the complete rupture with his past

that his parents' divorce created. For him, it was not just a dissolution of a relationship:

It's not just a relational dynamic, it's symbolic of life. It's home, it's where you're rooted, it's linked to their friends, your friends are linked to that, all of that is a part of that. It's a part of a system of things...there's something about-I don't have a home. You know? Every since they were divorced, I can never go home, I can never member again into that. I can never re-member into that. I don't have occasions for reminiscing. I don't have occasions for establishing continuity. I don't have a link to vast areas of my past.

The break with the past ushered in by his parents' divorce was magnified with the death of his mother six months later. He attributes her death directly to the divorce in that the "complementary" relationship between his parents had left his mother so dependent upon his "domineering and controlling father" that she was unable to move on. In his view her "distracted and depressed state of mind" subsequent to the divorce contributed to her fatal car accident. The world became "a less friendly place" once he lost his mother and he knows that his feelings about his mother's death are not separate from his parents' divorce.

But Larry recalls that his mother's death as well as his sister's loss of health were more able to be resolved than his parents' divorce. That these incidents were not willed or wanted by someone made them easier to deal with:

The other things are kind of finite; they happen and then they're over. I'm not going to bring my Mom back by feeling bad. It's over. I'm not going to make my sister healthy again. It just happens and you have to deal with it. They're natural kind of facts, natural physical phenomenon, whereas parents being divorced is a different order of things. It's an act of will, it's something you can influence, something you can potentially affect. It might change, so...and then after you realize their wills are out of your control, you're just not going to get them together, then you have to deal with that!

In addition to being unable to influence his parents, Larry felt that his whole world view was thrown into question due to his age when the divorce occurred:

I think that's something that people whose parents haven't divorced can't understand. It goes to the core of life. I think people are fundamentally related, that's the most powerful force in human life, what's between people. And the fundamental point of that is the relationship with...your parents, that's the basis. When that breaks then it's all up for grabs because everything else is built on that or modeled on that or a result of it...and then if it's not there, and if it's broken up, then you start questioning every fucking thing that you do because you feel "that's what my Dad did, or she's like my Mom," and then it all gets extremely complicated because you can't trust it. It's something that's thrown up in your face that has to become scrutable that you don't typically scrutinize.

More so than other subjects Larry experiences his parents' divorce resonating through spaces infinitely larger than a relationship between two people. It was also about his relationship with the community in which his family was embedded. He speculates in hindsight that his family's tie to the community was made more important because of the lack of internal intensity between

individuals. Nonetheless, when he contemplates his parents' divorce it encompasses what up to then had been his universe:

I didn't lose the connectedness amongst those four individuals, it was a home that was connected to a town; it was kind of a social space...the relationship between each of my parents and my friends, the relationship between my parents individually and their parents, the relationship between them and my neighbors, the friends that would come down to the dock. It's all of that, its family and home. It's not so much these four people were sitting together holding hands and doing something, it's all the rest of it...It's a dramatic sense, hard to articulate-how fundamental it is as a place of being. It is family, but the family is more than relationships, it's more corporate dynamics, and its symbolic of a community and a network, a mini-society. I don't feel it as anything less than that and because I feel it that way when people bastardize it as "my Mom and Dad's relationship didn't work out so they had to split up" I just think "You can't be serious, does that really say it? does that exhaust it for you?" What an impoverished sense of it! Maybe it's just me, the part of me that was born into a small mid western town of a few hundred people where everyone knew everyone. It was just a fundamentally we thing...for whatever reason, I have some need for or experience with that kind of connectedness, community. Maybe it's the way I think...it's an attitude I try to nurture because I think we really need it.

These ties were dramatically illustrated in the outpouring of community support upon his mother's death. He now searches for and nurtures that level of connection.

It is partly the tie he sees between the dissolution of his family and the loss of his community that informs Larry's views about his parents' divorce. But more so,

he sees its impact as a result of being the age he was. Leaving home, he felt that he lost what he would have based his future on because his sense of the past changed:

You start reconstructing your childhood as a result of your parents being divorced. You realize that your past is always changing. All these little events that were one thing when your parents were married suddenly become something else when they're divorced. I found that I looked back and I start seeing certain activities or certain things that they were doing as symbolic in other ways now, (but) they weren't interpreted that way by me when I was a child in the home of a married couple. And I wouldn't interpret it that way if they were still married.

Me: Do you think the tendency to reconstruct the past is heightened because of the age you were?

Larry: I think so because I feel that I had this whole sense of a patterned way of living that was my family. And we were a family. I was born into this and I lived it for eighteen years, and you know, it was all that I knew. It was the stable center of my entire life... my social center. Probably around 14, 15, 16 or so, the patterns have endured long enough that you know what it is. You have to have that experience in order to-when it changes you reflect and reframe that which occurred. And you have a different story to tell. Now you're not talking about your parents and the family of which you're a part, now you're talking about a family (which)...no longer is, and that calls for some kind of sense making...It becomes a different tale. I think because of that punctuation point and events afterwards, it reframes that which came before.

Larry's mother's death complicates enormously any resolution to his parents' divorce and intensifies the break with his past. Nonetheless, though he still misses her it is the death of his family that is ongoing:

What I lament more than anything is the loss of the sense of my family as really a good family. Not just a good family but the innocence of a child of a family that you think "you know, that's my family and it was just good." You may have a lot of faults and you may pick at this or that, but you still think it's at least adequate as an example of it. The minute it's not a family anymore, then suddenly it's not that, it's a failed something...This whole pre-divorce life for me was just wonderfully coalescent. When I look back it was kind of intact, ordered. I had my place in it and it was a good place. This whole sense of coherence and care. Dad and Mom, all just together, quick to laugh...this kind of wonderful linking up with maybe the American dream. I don't know if that's the right way to put it or not, because in a sense our family wasn't the dream and I knew parts of it that weren't, but it was a part of something. I look back at that period in my life and I look back at myself as being just marvelously successful, extremely happy, connected, free to be spontaneous. And now after the divorce, kind of vulnerable, the vulnerabilities are ever present, the possibility of disruption is accentuated in ways, risks are ever present, disconnected, discontinuous. Those are a part of me now in a way that they weren't then...Part of it's growing up. But I think there's a different quality to it because of the divorce.

In many ways I found meaningful all of what Larry believed. Engaging and articulate, his summary of what he most wanted me to remember touched on issues either not realized or experienced by other participants or not elicited by my questions.

Just the whole idea of being a child of a divorced family at the age I was has a profound effect. The effect isn't just losing parents and a link to two people, but losing a community; and the consequences it has on reflecting on your past and the whole element of second guessing that's going to be ever present for the rest of your life and the way

that reframes your future decisions...because you have a pattern of life behind you that is presumed and intact. That's the basis from which you act and make decisions. It's thrown into question because it's of a world that is now no longer good or intact or functional. Which raises questions about it and your placement in it. You're just now setting out to create your own, but you trust less the basis on which you do your creating because it's all just been thrown into question. That puts a tremendous burden on your impulses. I didn't trust my impulses as much.

I want to honor both Larry's experience and the meaning he has given to this event. I also strongly believe that what he so eloquently described are very important levels of the effects of parental divorce at this age: the loss of community which one has access to through one's family; and the lack of continuity when divorce occurs at the age when people leave their old world to start their new.

Yet I feel compelled to question part of Larry's interpretation of his experience. I think that the intensity which still characterizes his account seventeen years later (albeit an intensity typical of him), as well as the legacy of second guessing, indicate that something lingers in too conflictual a way from his parents' divorce. He consciously holds and reconciles contradictory viewpoints but unconsciously maintains illusions that keep alive things that have already died.

The divorce has caused Larry to rethink his past. He realizes his family was no longer tightly held together once they left the "cow town" he lived in until

age 12. In his creating for himself a lost sense of community in their new town he became the "bridge" that held his parents together. But even though living independent lives, his family was a cohesive unit before the divorce-"a unity of separates." This appearance of togetherness sufficed until the divorce.

It took out the unity and just left the separates! In retrospect it solidified this sense of separates: Now I have my mom and my dad and that's basically the way the family was done from the time I was in 6 or 7 grade until I graduated high school. That's the way it was done anyway (but) it didn't matter to me a bit and I think if they hadn't been divorced I wouldn't have cared!

Larry presents contradictory impressions about whether pre-divorce life and the model of his family live on inside him or whether they have been obliterated by the divorce. He wonders whether his parents' appearance at his basketball games was a "public charade" and feels that the image of his ideal pre-divorce life "just kind of pales in significance to your parents splitting up who I had been told by all my friends and thought myself were just a fine, wonderful, loving mother and father. I have a hard time saying couple (now)." He believes he did not know they were not a unit at the time although he now knows better and feels that "their veneer of togetherness was enough."

Larry remains confused about whether his perception of the past is correct. He is not sure whether his lack of memories of "the corporate family" is an accurate

recall or whether the divorce has wiped those memories out: Was there unity or was there just a "veneer of togetherness?"

I have a hard time getting perspective. I frankly don't remember us together. I want to believe that we were so I then am led to say that I don't know if I remember it clearly, you know? I want to believe it because that's the way it should be. There's this ideal sense of the family where you do things together. Without that I feel like maybe we weren't. I don't think we were except when I was younger- we were every bit of that. I have a real strong sense of these two childhoods punctuated with our move. Before it was that and afterwards it was the other....The divorce invites a reframing of parts of your past...the family entity. There's a shroud, this veil that hides or else unveils that those moments weren't there. But you lived them as if they were, or you felt before that they were there. Here's another element of the second guessing because you don't know if you really did have those family dinners-maybe a lot of them, or whether you're just reconstructing the family past now in a way that highlights the disparity and problems within it so that you then tell the story of this family that later became divorced.

He struggles with which narrative to believe. He finds a synthesis in believing that the divorce highlighted relational difficulties which were apparent before the divorce but perceived as less damaging:

I think what the divorce highlights isn't so much the unity of separates as it accentuates the intensity of conflicts...and my role as mediator...the message that this is not quibbling and this is not natural familial disagreement-this is life threatening, relationally threatening acts. The valence of the message is the same but it penetrates more levels. It never occurred to me that this could precipitate the end of the marriage, or the end of the family. You operate on the

basis that that will always be there. It's an unquestionable. I think the healthy family makes it that. In that sense the family was healthy.

Larry believes it was good never to be questioned but is left with having to reconcile the consequent rupture in his belief system. He is also clear that he would not need to rethink these things if not for the divorce and this need creates the feeling of second guessing.

The whole sense of continuity. Everything isn't always either functional or dysfunctional. You know that you learned a lot of good things with your family...and you know a lot of who you are is that, you just know it, you know it when you're with your kids and with your wife. And when you have a hard time recalling the moments when that was lived and passed on, then there's a sense of discontinuity, (a sense) that you've created selectively...There's two competing story lines, and it makes it difficult to create a sense of coherence about what your past is, and a sense of continuity in your life.

Larry is left with two incompatible story lines. One is of a family that worked and where the separateness was subsumed in the unity. The other is of a family where the unity was a veneer, but good enough.

I feel the way that Larry has reconciled these two stories is an amazing blend of adaptive and defensive solutions. It is adaptive in that he is able to move on and construct his life. Along these lines, I was struck that in his professional life he studies narratives, metaphorically building what he himself lost-a cohesive narrative. Defensively, he has lost too much. Believing

one story line, not only has he lost his mother but the memories of his "ideal family" are also lost. Defensively, despite everything he has said to the contrary about rewriting, it seems to me that Larry keeps alive his pre-divorce image of his family so not all is lost. He manages to do this through a level of understanding made possible through his professional skills and knowledge. He told me how his post-divorce view of his family as a "unity of separates" was of a "practical consciousness" while his view of his family as more cohesive was of a "discursive consciousness":

Because of the stuff I study I find it useful to distinguish "discursive consciousness" from "practical consciousness." "Discursive consciousness" is what you can put into words and make intelligible for people, you can say it, and it becomes kind of a common saying because of that. But you also are aware of a lot of things that you don't discourse and you don't have as a resource to share, but they're nonetheless a part of your life. Somehow these things were a part of that "practical consciousness" in that I lived them everyday but I also was taught to disattend to them and not talk about them, and even not feel them in a sensate way...When you're a kid in that family, that's life. Whatever the example, like your mother not being there for supper when you come home. Whatever it is, you're just taught a way to make sense of it through what you say about it and what is said about it. And a lot of what I heard being said about my family was through my friends, through people in our church, through neighbors. And everybody loved my parents, so the resources I had for making sense of it were largely that...There's a sense in which the story I would tell prior to the divorce was largely a story told to me by the community of which I was a part and the community that maybe saw our family as one. I know now that maybe my Dad or

my Mom had different things to say about it, but they weren't familial sayings and I wasn't hearing them. Literally, I was absolutely shocked when the thought occurred to me that my parents wouldn't be together because it was so at odds with all the things I had been told and said about my family. It was absolutely incoherent to think that they wouldn't be together...From my point of view I had a coherent discourse, but as all discourses it highlights some features and hides others...I think this is part of the reason I value extrafamilial relationships so much, they're sources of perspective, of information, of discourse.

Larry is able to hold onto the treasured perspective of how his family worked for him by understanding his competing story lines as different levels of discourse.

If I were going to be told a discourse I would want theirs because ultimately even now its a very productive one. Even though it's a divorced family and there's that discourse to put our relations into, I also have this eternal glow. I even have a picture of my Mom and Dad on their wedding day on my dresser. I don't know why. I look at it sometimes and wonder why. I think it evokes an era in my life when they were together, they were happy together and there was such a thing. Whereas, if I didn't have that, if you had only truth sayings that orient to problems, then that's what you have as your way of making sense. And life is full of problems but that's not the only story to tell of it. There are other stories that talk about continuity, tradition, cooperativeness...Different sayings produce different senses...each have their enabling features and their constraints.

Unlike offspring who felt their parents divorce "broke the denial," the "discourses" in Larry's family were not contradictory or mutually exclusive, they just stressed different views. His commitment to community involvement stems both from his history and according to him, in

reaction to the zeitgeist of dyadic relationships as all important. Yet it also is reparative and an undoing, for it is in the eyes of the community that his view of his family was held. It seems he has unconsciously held onto a version of his family that he insists was lost through the divorce, that of his family as unified, the view that was planted and nurtured in him by his lost community.

This works for Larry. He is left with an "enduring distrust of stable things" and a lack of rootedness, but he does not act these out in his life; he has a family and a career. Indeed, it occurred to me that perhaps he was aware of this internal distress more than other subjects exactly because of what he has established that they haven't-a family and a home. However, it seems at least in part he has not mourned the losses; instead he has enshrined them ideologically and intellectually. Again, his life works. I question however whether the adaptive part of such a solution inevitably manifests more strongly than the defensive.

This Age

These stories illustrate that memories of good times and fantasies of perfection are not the only frameworks that can be destroyed by divorce. Divorce can also dismantle specific beliefs about a family as well as its rules and behavioral regulations. What in hindsight might appear as illusions about a family are at the time experienced within a family's mythology. Divorce

destroys a family's mythic culture, the values and aspirations which define this family as itself, unique and different from other families.

Such loss of myth is especially disruptive at the age when identity formation forges a major portion of development. A sense of self takes shape in part through what beliefs and myths exist about one's family. The portion of identity framed by destroyed myths is potentially shattered as well. Divorce threatens a sense of personal identity, especially when myths most central to a family's identity or which contribute to enlivened functioning are lost. A solution must be found to integrate who one thought one was, what one thought one's family was like, with what now is.

Sally's and Larry's stories illuminate the impact of losing treasured beliefs at an age when the construction of values and identity consume significant psychic energy. The threatened myths related to how the family operated as a unit and what this version of family enabled them each to do. The beliefs must be maintained or the integrity of what was, where life blossomed in these families is lost. In both these families, what was believed had a positive connotation and was a specific value to be identified with. These beliefs were central to the mythology of their families and were a source of pride and identification.

Sally and Larry are unable to relinquish valued interpretations and integrate alternative views of their past. There is too much loss for each of them. What is not able to be surrendered becomes part of their identity: Sally will be honest and communicative; Larry prioritizes community involvement and his professional life is the study of narrative.

Both Sally and Larry unconsciously refuse to lose their families by struggling to keep alive treasured versions of the past. At the time of their parents' divorce they each had sufficiently separated from their families but felt feelings of loss that Larry vividly described. Yet they each mitigate loss and the past is not invalidated because their "illusions" help maintain it. Larry juggles two alternative narratives; Sally questions whether the value of honesty and communication was an illusion but obfuscates the loss with anger at her father.

Sally and Larry's involvement in the interview differentiated them from other participants. They each were engaging and articulate as others had been but a unique energized quality held me captivated and charmed. I realized after the interview that what they wanted to communicate dominated my list of questions, especially with Sally. Unlike most others, neither Sally nor Larry learned anything new from our time together even though they both said it had been helpful to talk. Like many

others they had volunteered to voice the concerns of older offspring. But I wondered whether they unconsciously hoped that I would validate and reinforce their conclusions; or alternatively, whether I might refute or challenge them, forcing them to reexamine how they had managed their losses.

As I reflected on how it had felt to be with each of them I recognized a feeling from clinical work that indicates that I may be experiencing something serving a central organizing role within someone's personality. I suggest that Sally and Larry are each organized in part around maintaining certain experiences of their families. The meaning they give to the divorce and how they build their lives is a seamless web of unexpressed affect and defenses against those feelings. Unable to mourn something, a belief has been transformed into a character trait which serves both adaptive and defensive functions. Unfortunately, the adaptive part is not always the larger piece of this solution; Sally's need to see her father as lacking served the restricting need to believe in her family's honesty.

The tendency to incorporate loss through a structural means is most likely when parents divorce in young adulthood. A family's value system is threatened just as one relies upon it most in the process of constructing a new (or not so new) one. Specific qualities which make a family vital and alive can be

preserved in the face of too much loss by incorporating these traits into one's personality, thereby keeping the family alive within oneself.

Incorporating a threatened loss into one's personality most likely occurs when what is now at risk of being lost helped to assuage negative aspects of family life. The value of honesty and communication helped Sally's family deal with their many losses. The veneer of togetherness of Larry's family was true enough to dominate its opposite of isolation. When a family is able to repair itself from destructive dynamics, the traits which have functioned as reparative become too precious to surrender. When such a defensive purpose has been served it is imperative to continue it, just as on the intrapsychic level, the repetition compulsion serves to maintain repression. Relinquishing reparative traits risks liberating the painful affect they have served to manage. One is compelled to perpetuate the positive dynamic unless one is willing to face the shadow and walk through the newly discovered painful past it has contained. Less conflictual family values are more likely to be either relinquished or identified with more flexibly and therefore adaptively.

But painful aspects of family life need to be acknowledged in order to mourn the loss of family. It is likely that the internal reconciliation central to

mourning of the bad and good object (May, 1988) is relevant to the process of grieving a family. As we saw earlier, most participants were unable to hold and reconcile contradictory truths about their families. Few besides Sharon recognized that the divorce did not change the positive features and shared good times of their families. Most avoided mourning by jettisoning what was good rather than integrating the positive and negative. Mourning might be more difficult for offspring like Sally and Larry who must face the shadow side previously contained within positive dynamics. However, I am left with the impression that very few of these offspring had mourned the loss of their families.

Mourning: Object Loss-Family Loss

Despite a lengthy interview, none of my questions had solicited participants' feelings about whether they had mourned their families. I believe this surprising lacunae stemmed from a profound oversight which these participants have pointed out: parental divorce ends a family. Though relationships continue and a sense of family can be reconstructed, a family as it has been known exists no longer. The adage that divorce means that offspring now have two families is possibly least accurate when offspring no longer use cohabitation to help locate the sense of family. Older offspring lack a structure to help begin reconstructing a family as Sharon pointed out:

Feelings of abandonment, now my family was gone. What do I do, it wasn't like I had to put half my clothes at one house, half at the other. I think sometimes that's helpful for children, the structure. They can accept that and fall into that pattern. There wasn't anything for me to do except be lost.

Participants reported a wide variety of current family constellations. These ranged from groupings which consisted of one parent and some siblings with the other, sometimes remarried parent a distant figure; to a fragmented unit of isolated individuals; to dyadic relationships with parents, some couples maintaining amicable, even familial contact, others bitterly estranged. Most participants communicated that some entity was now considered family though the currents of the divorce clearly influenced relationships within this new family. Though families had been reconstituted in some form the loss of the original family had not been mourned. What would mourning consist of?

The expansion of views on object loss are relevant to considerations about the loss of family. Joffe and Sandler (1965) liken the state of mourning that follows object loss to the lifelong process of individuation. They suggest that what is lost in object loss is the state of the self for which the object is the "vehicle;" in object loss it is the self experience made possible through the relationship with the object that is lost. They call what's lost "an ideal state," not in its perfection but in its association to more infantile

experiences of satiation and security. The pain that follows loss indicates "the discrepancy between the existing state of the representational world and a wished for "ideal state" or more specifically, the "discrepancy between an actual state of self and an ideal state of being" (Joffe & Sandler, p. 426). A successful rather than abortive or derailed mourning process is a process of individuation: "the adaptive abandoning of the pursuit of lost (ideal) states and their replacement by new ideals which are both ego and reality syntonic" (Joffe & Sandler, p. 421).

These thoughts can be extended to the situation where it is not an object which is lost but a system of objects; that of one's family or that of the parental unit in relation to oneself. Lost is the experience of self as part of a corporate whole or of self in connection to two individuals who form a unit with a certain relationship to that self. As it is especially in these early contexts where basic experiences of safety and security were established or their absence defended against, this loss resonates against an "ideal" self state.

Also relevant is Joffe and Sandler's suggestion that the relationship between the internal and external world in mourning and separation is one of comparison. Adaptation to changes in the external world involves a corresponding change in one's inner world.

The two stories which follow illustrate these thoughts. Peter was the only participant whose experience of the family ghost as an irrelevant object did not seem defensive in that his affect was consistent with his words. As we shall see, Peter's internal changes that had occurred in response to the events preceding his parents' divorce helped lay the basis for resolving the loss of his family. In contrast, what Matt carries forward inside himself from the past, both a sense of his family but also his sense of himself in relation to his family, is contradicted in the external world.

Peter-An Externalization of what's already there

Peter was 18 and in his freshman year at college when his parents informed him of their intention to separate. He recalls that his original reaction was "it's about time." He had seen for a long time that his parents' marriage was troubled, unsatisfying for both of them and "not very loving." He felt his parents were incompatible and had entirely different ways of dealing with the world. He attributes not feeling threatened by their separation to two things: his certainty and confidence that each of his parents loved him and his younger sister very much, and to the perspective made possible for him by his father's reassurance that behind closed doors, many marriages evidenced more troubles than

were apparent to outsiders-he had long ago relinquished the image of a perfect marriage. His parents were already established in separate dwellings at the time of the separation because his father had followed a job with the intention of being joined later by Peter's mother. This added to Peter's sense that there was already an emotional and physical separation and that the only ties needing to be severed were financial and legal.

Peter's family life seemed fairly untraumatic and even "close-knit" despite his parents' unhappy marriage. In Peter's teenage years his father made new attempts to relate to his children after having been largely unavailable earlier. Peter describes himself as even tempered and usually able to stay "objective" in the fights between his parents and thus was seen as the family "facilitator." This identity was mitigated during his parents' protracted and bitter divorce settlement.

Peter's main sense of loss after the divorce focussed on no longer being able to envision a unified family celebrating significant events in life. His college graduation had been a disaster. He anticipates that when he becomes a parent he will face having to coordinate each of his parents much as couples coordinate their two families-"the in-law problem exacerbated, now I have four families to worry about." But this loss is not part of everyday life. More a part of his ongoing world

is that his relationship with each parent is closer than he would have imagined without the divorce in that their marital tension would have limited the time he would have spent with them. He also feels closer to each from having been of support to them during the divorce and from discovering sides of his parents that he might not have known.

Peter feels the difficulty of divorcing parents was significantly mitigated by being away from home. He was "looking forward to his life as separate from his family" and was facing his own challenges in college:

I think I really started changing my value system tremendously my freshman year at college. I had always been one of the smartest kids around, all that sort of stuff. And suddenly everybody I knew was smarter than me in something. You either had to go through depths of depression, or you had to change your idea of where self importance or self esteem comes from. So I finally decided I'm not the smartest person in the world but I'm not too stupid either. I think my freshman year was tough-you were asking before how I first felt during the divorce- well I was preoccupied with my own little problems. Not to the exclusion of my parents' divorce but that was certainly competing for my attention.

Peter also attributes being away from home with protecting him from his mother's attempts to manipulate him as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Peter was one of three participants whose feeling that they had not really lost much in the divorce concurred with mine. There were many similarities between Peter's, Catherine's and Debbie's experiences.

They each grew up in families where they felt valued by their parents and felt a sense of worth. Like Peter, Catherine had gone to a top notch college and faced the challenge of no longer being as intellectually superior as in high school. Both experienced their parents' separation against the background of an environment where they were able to use their strengths to succeed and perhaps distract themselves in; they had a sense of their future as their past was being threatened. They each had good relationships with both parents that were not hurt by the divorce. Both families appeared to be among the most functional; neither Peter nor Catherine had been triangulated in their families and generational boundaries remained mostly intact.

Another commonality between Catherine and Peter was that both sets of parents were living apart ostensibly for work related reasons for at least a year before the separation. Debbie's parents had lived apart for six months of the year for many years. The move for Peter's parents fit in with his sense of their marital difficulties:

(I had) seen a bad marriage almost from the time I was conscious that this was a marriage. I never really saw my parents lovey-dovey, it was never warm. There were a few times when roses were exchanged but that was usually after a fight, so I don't know if staying together would be anything but a cosmetic for clearly a bad marriage.

Peter's parents' divorce does not change his sense of the past. Told by his father long ago that most marriages had problems and seeing those of his parents, Peter had always experienced himself in relation to a problematic marriage but not one that he was victimized by as some other participants were. His parents' physical separation was consistent with the past and paved the way for him to experience a sense of self in relation to each separate parent still within the context of their marriage. It was not a huge transition to experience within each of the dyadic relationships the nurturance that used to come from his family. He still maintained his experience of being their son and what he faced in the outside world was consonant with what he held inside:

I never felt that I ought to have lived the ideal life. I suppose it would have been nicer if I had had a loving family, parents who loved one another, but I don't consider it a great loss or a great shame. My parents are both happier and better off now so I don't feel like I've really lost a great deal. I don't feel like it's been a tremendous burden. None of my sense of self or self esteem is bound up with being a member of that family. I'm perfectly willing to be Dad's son and Mom's son and not a member of a family...I was ready for the break up because I could see that the arguments weren't getting anyplace and they weren't happy together. But in terms of my being ready to not have a family, I'm not sure I would have said that. Except that perhaps I had been use for many years to relate to my parents one-on-one...So perhaps in that sense I was ready...Perhaps at that point I saw them as having separate lives at least in a practical sense. And also being at college I was

starting to look forward to having a life of my own. In that sense I saw the future as me being separate from them, and the fact that they were separate from each other was ok. It didn't impact the way I lived my life.

Peter's description is what I believe many late divorcing couples hope their children will feel: already out of the house, looking forward to a life of their own, able to establish independent relationships with each parent, grown offspring should be ready to relinquish a home base. But Peter was uncommon in the group I interviewed. A sense of self separate from his family and the feeling that the bonds were in each of the relationships with separate parents were the conditions in which his parents' divorce became mostly "the in-law problem exacerbated." In fact, Peter had originally volunteered for the study because he felt his experience was unlike those reported in articles he had read about "adult children" of divorce. However, through talking we came to realize how different his experience might have been had he been unable to set boundaries with his mother as will be explored in the next chapter:

It's been interesting...One of the things that I was thinking about when I first saw your add and also having read the New York Times article and various accounts of the profound effects...realizing I had seen both. That I had done all right; my sister had not done as well. I guess I felt like my story and those who did just fine should be told, even if it ends up being a negative data point for your hypothesis. So I guess that was part of my reason for volunteering-to eliminate the sample bias! But it has been interesting-what I've

come to realize is that it wasn't easy for me and I didn't come out from it unscathed just because I was a great person or because I was lucky, it was a combination of a lot of factors and support networks. So I guess...(I'm) finding out that I'm probably not as much of an outlier as I thought I was. As we've realized, the pivotal role this declaration of independence with my mother played, had it not been for that I might well have been one of your data points that fit!

Just as a sense of self changes with experience, self representations change as the self responds to changes in the external environment. Peter's self changed in relation to his parents' marriage as it ended just as mourning for a dying loved one starts before their actual death. Consequently, what he carries inside matches what he experiences in the real world. In contrast, most participants, like Matt, were left with a disjuncture between their inner and outer worlds. A change in how the past was viewed had often contributed to this disjuncture.

Matt-The Invisible Loss of Family

Matt was fairly independent of his parents when they divorced. He describes his family as very small in that there were just four of them with little extended family or ties to a community. The lack of community was because his parents had married in part to prove that their love could "conquer their opposite religious backgrounds." Matt feels nothing remains of his family after the divorce since there were no ties to the community.

The family disintegrates. You don't talk about your father with your mother's side and with Dad's side you don't talk about your mother. It's like it never happened almost. So it seems kind of weird, like the family never happened. Everyone does their own thing now, going their own separate way. My Mom got remarried last year, my Dad has a girlfriend, so I have step brothers, so what I knew growing up isn't there anymore...It was a small family, just the four of us...Basically when we were younger...we didn't have any religious thing so there wasn't any social outlet or anything...there were people around a lot but for the most part it was just our family. And we got along fine. Had a lot of fun, a lot of joking, very laid back, casual, it was nice. It was small, that's the image I get...We didn't have an alliance with something bigger than the family, the family was it...With a family that small when divorce comes through, it changes everything all around. It split my two parents and that was it.

There were these two people; a divorce swept through; now there is nothing left.

Matt feels he lost his family through his parents' divorce but it does not matter. He says if his parents were still married he might have a family but it would not be a big part of his life. He claims the loss of his family is not significant since he was already out of the house and his friends were a more important resource to him than his family during his earlier years. He feels that even if his family existed he would be distant from them; that the only thing that would be different is that he would have a family:

I don't feel like I'm a part of my family anymore. I mean I am, I always will be, but I'm not there on a day to day basis so I'm not really involved with them. So I don't feel

like I play a part in their lives, a major part anymore.

Me: From what you've told me you don't feel like there's a family to play a major role with.

Matt: Yeh, that's true. There is a family but it's not my family. The family as I knew it is gone. It's gone, so. I have my mother and my father so I have like two families, or half a family...The family wasn't such a big thing to begin with, and now that I'm out of it, I'm out of it. If they were still together I'd still be distant from the family.

Me: How do you think you would feel now about your family if your parents hadn't divorced?

Matt: I don't know how I'd feel about my family. I don't think it would change all that much. I would have a family, at least I would have a family that I could think of in my mind with the same feeling that I've always had. It's tough to say, I guess I'd feel the same way that I always did before. They're my family but they're not my life kind of thing.

Matt feels that his parents did the right thing by divorcing because everyone is better off now. In fact, it is partly because of his mother's remarriage and having step-siblings that he and his sister are finally getting along after years of antagonism between them when younger. Unlike their step-siblings with whom they do not have a common past, because of sharing a past together he sees them as bonding more in recent years in the context of their now blended family. He also feels that he has better relationships with each of his parents individually than he would have had if they had not divorced. He helped and supported his mother considerably in the period following the separation and each of his parents have made significant efforts to strengthen their relationships with him. Another

positive effect of the divorce is an increased sense of independence because he no longer has to report to his parents as a unit, an independence initially made necessary by not having a home to return to during the initial antagonism. Matt says the only negative consequence of his parents' divorce is his cynicism about relationships.

I'm much more cynical after the divorce and after everything. As far as my personal relationships, I don't look for relationships at all. I'm very cynical about the whole process, very apprehensive about getting involved with anybody seriously...Or doing it when you're young. I really want to do a lot of things before I think about marriage or anything. But other than that I'm just really cynical. When you see your parents divorce, those are the only symbols in my life of family, and they split up, it kind of makes you wonder. It's like a waste of time almost.

In the easily missed line that he would feel about his family as he always did can be seen the impact on Matt of his parents' divorce. The impact of the divorce is that Matt has lost the image of his family of the past as a good thing. While he feels that if his parents were still married they would be having fun together he now feels that his parents' relationship was a failure because of the divorce.

Matt says his parents disagree because they feel their relationship produced "two beautiful children." I believe one reason Matt feels as he does is because he is left with no understanding of why their relationship

ended. His father's explanation that he was no longer in love with Matt's mother though he still loved her does not help Matt understand why they would end a relationship that could continue to bring them pleasure:

I think if they were still married and having the kids gone, they would probably have a lot of fun. They had good times together, similar interests, would travel a lot. So I can see them traveling a lot.

Matt is left cynical about relationships and unable to resolve what he has lost because he does not understand why it happened. He is also left with a changed view of their relationship:

I felt it was a failure. So in my mind I kind of downplayed whatever good times they had. It was all for nothing. Or a lie in some way, the big lie.

What Matt sees as a lie is not only the good time of his parents' relationship but the good times of his family as well. I asked if the divorce had affected his picture of what it had been like to grow up in his family.

Yeh. I think it changed it just because of the negative aspect of their divorce. Growing up in my family was a fun thing, I enjoyed it. But now that they divorced I look back on it as a waste of time almost, or some kind of illusion, not what it was really like. I don't think it changes the way I look back on it. I still have love for all of them, and I enjoy the years that I had.

The divorce transforms Matt's belief that his parents loved each other and had a good time together into a lie. When I asked "Did your parents do the right thing?"

he said, "Yeh, maybe they shouldn't have married in the first place because it didn't work. They don't think it was a waste but I do because it didn't work."

The ending of the marriage creates the feeling that it was an illusion to believe it was happy and good. Lost is a continuing feeling that what he knew and liked as a child is internally available to him. The lack of continuity in Matt's statement that he enjoyed the years that he had is striking. The time when his family existed and was good is separate in time from now. Nothing in the form of his family continues-like it never happened. And now it feels like an illusion to look back and remember the good times.

Matt's ability to hold onto the good times is compromised because he has not recognized the loss of his family and given himself permission to mourn. The good times are rewritten, perhaps to minimize the loss; but more likely, the belief that there is no loss in the dissolution of his family minimizes the loss of these times as well.

Matt dismisses any loss and claims there was nothing of the divorce that was painful or traumatic. It seemed to me that he could not identify what was hard for him. Being out of the house, being independent, and because everyone is doing better, he cannot imagine or perhaps acknowledge that he has lost something. But a hint of the opposite comes through in his words and in the sense

of him that I had in the interview. I was left with a sad and maternal feeling after we spoke and felt that Matt was trying to manage his vulnerable feelings about the divorce more than he realized. His question to me in the beginning of the interview of whether my parents had divorced suggested that, in addition to being the friendly fellow he was, he was asking would I understand his experience? The fact that he was the only person to ask this question, and his prolonging the conversation at the end with great curiosity about what I was finding, suggested that he wanted to immerse himself into a context where his family could live again in the discourse between us. And at the end of the interview Matt gently mused about how strange it would be to see his parents together again.

It felt to me that Matt's cynicism stems from his inability to recognize his pain. He feels there should not be anything difficult about the divorce; he was involved in his own life, he did not get pulled in, everyone is doing better, it was not a horrible separation. Perhaps as a college age male, his self image and reported plans as independent necessitates such distance. But his cynicism remains as the monument to his unresolved loss. It perhaps serves as defense against any feelings of wanting to repair a relationship which seemed to work and whose ending he does not

understand. He tries to close off the part of himself that might want to see his parents together again.

Perhaps to feel the loss would not fit his expressed self image as a easy going partier. But his feeling that the divorce makes the good times an illusion was very poignant. Especially since it sounds like it was a fairly good marriage and family life contained pleasurable times, to believe his parents should not have married is a weighty loss. Since it was his parents' relationship that created the family perhaps his inability to recognize the loss of his family increases his cynicism about relationships. It is too much to mourn that if his parents had not divorced they still might have fun together and his family still exist in an enjoyable form. His cynicism guards against loss and against hope. Perhaps it could be managed if they had divorced for a reason he could understand. But he is left not understanding why and there is no way to make sense of the loss.

Matt's current experience of his family contradicts what he holds inside. He holds inside a good feeling about his past family; but the divorce has made him question and no longer believe that memory. There is now a disjuncture between the family of the past as remembered and the family that has been revised in hindsight to match current reality. His feeling that what was lived must be an illusion robs him of his past.

A Lack of Mourning-The Family Ghosts

Matt's and Peter's stories capture differences palpable in the interviews in offsprings' feelings of loss and shed light on issues involved in mourning the family. I first thought variations in what participants verbally and affectively communicated about loss related to how the divorce was viewed. I came to realize however, that whether participants seemed to feel loss (or in my experience were defending against it), depended upon two other factors: whether there was loss about how the past was viewed, and whether what offspring held inside matched what was reflected back to them from the outside. Loss seemed correlated with whether participants' experiences of the emotional and relational dynamics of the past family contrasted or matched what had been reconstituted as family in the external world. Of the stories told in this chapter, it is only Peter whose current family matches what he has brought forward from the past in that his internal family transformed in conjunction with changes in the external world. For Sally, Larry and Matt, the past family lies across a chasm created by changed perceptions and a lack of mourning. The external world has forced new "understandings" which clash with past emotional realities. Changes in how the past is viewed contribute to the discordance between what is held inside and what

is reflected back from the outside. Unless lost perceptions are mourned they also linger and contradict current reality.

In the metaphor of the previous chapter, with those participants who either were in touch with loss or seemed to feel a loss they could not articulate or be aware of, the family ghost carried inside was discontinuous with current reality. These lingering ghosts suggest that lost families have not been mourned. The disjuncture between current reality and what offspring hold inside suggests that, in Joffe and Sandler's (1965) terms, there is an ongoing pursuit of lost states and a failure to replace them with "new ideals which are both ego and reality syntonic" (Joffe & Sandler, p. 421). If mourning is understood as an alteration in the internal object and of the self in relation to that object (Joffe & Sandler; May, 1988), the family ghosts represent the survival of the object which has endured without modification.

I suggest that offspring's ability to mourn is profoundly compromised by the fact that mourning is made necessary because of a decision made by parents. The ongoing non-existence of the family which offspring face in the external world, a reality which often contradicts their internal reality, garners a different meaning because it is a consequence of parents' intentions. Sadly, it appears that offspring often interpret parents' ending their relationship as a decision to end the

family, thus declaring it a failure. The popular notion that something is wrong with families if parents divorce contributes to this tendency. Offspring's ability to hold onto their own memories and thus mourn them is undermined. Instead, positive memories are transmuted into illusions and mourning is avoided by jettisoning what was good in the past.

Even the two participants who had lost family members after the divorce through a series of events attributed directly to the divorce, said death had been easier to deal with than divorce. Death is (usually) a natural process; divorce is a human creation, and by virtue of that, the ending of a family is imbued with a particular significance. Though articulated clearly only by a few offspring, I believe it is partly through experiencing divorce as willed by parents that the pressure is created to rewrite history and consider as illusory what was valued in the past. The fear of having lived an illusory reality is painful but jettisoning what was positive is less painful than mourning it.

Offsprings' experience of parental divorce is colored by which impressions about family life are rewritten and the significance of that change. How offspring revise their understanding depends on what is lost or made possible by the revision, and how able they are to adapt in progressive rather than regressive ways.

While for some these changes were perceived as gains, for most these changes appeared as painful losses.

Another Difference between Divorce and Death

Feelings of loss result not only because something has not been completely mourned however. I think these offsprings' sense of loss is also about ongoing relationships, and how changes in these relationships resonate with the disjuncture between the internal and external worlds. It is in this point where the impact of divorce can be so insidious, can be, to use Lisa's words, "like a cancer creeping through my life." The finality of death is missing and ongoing potential for reparation interferes with closure on the divorce.

A family dies but ongoing relationships with individual parents continue. These relationships must sometimes undergo significant revision because parents become different people by virtue of their decision to separate. Parents and offspring are connected by a specific relational configuration before divorce: on a primitive level the only definition of a parent is operational. Divorce is a decision to undo this, even at times reversing the role. Divorce undoes this basic relational paradigm.

Exacerbating this fundamental shift, parents emerge from the divorce in increasingly complex ways. They have become people who date, have sex, and have problems.

Divorce also reveals new information about parents: offspring are often given information by the other parent, often inappropriately, which can damage relationships. Wallerstein (1989) suggests that divorce speeds up the time in which offspring normally begin to differentiate each parent from the marital unit and relate to them as people, not only as parents. Divorce can demand from offspring a more mature relationship than they are ready to give. Unlike when a parent dies offspring still have to deal with parents after divorce, parents who often are perceived with new attributes or motives that intensify offspring's conflicts. These issues will be explored in the next chapter.

But some conclusions need to be highlighted before moving to that. Offspring need to have their loss of family validated; need help in distinguishing between the ending of the relationship between their parents and the ending of their family; and need to honor, hopefully with parents' acknowledgment, the positive of the past.

CHAPTER VI
RELATIONSHIPS

Renegotiating Relationships

In the beginning of the study one of my strongest interests was in exploring the identifications with each parent which participants had established. I thought identifications would illuminate many dynamics, including issues of loyalty, unconscious gestures of reparation for the act of separation, and identity development. I was surprised however, at how little of interest was gathered in response to my questions about identifications: "In what ways are you like each parent?"; "Who were/are you more like?"; "What was good/bad about being like each parent?" Answers were largely superficial and routine, except for a few people who talked about being like a parent in parallel with how identified with traits had affected the marriage. Looking at the role these traits played in the marital relationship seemed to capture an important process which every offspring struggled with: the contrast between knowing a parent within the marriage and knowing parents as individuals. Offspring are confronted in divorce with relating to parents as individuals, parents who previously, no matter how maritally estranged, were experienced as part of a unit. Growing up in dramatically different families, having achieved varying degrees of emotional independence, and

with an enormous range of events surrounding the divorce, only one thing was universal in offsprings' experience of their parents' divorce: divorce required the renegotiation of relationships with individual parents as people no longer part of the marital unit.

Divorce also requires renegotiating an alteration of the self which is connected to the parents' relationship. Offspring must reconcile the internalized parental unit with the external defunct bond. What is lost is the experience of self as a product of these two people especially when conflict makes it difficult to imagine parents together.

This chapter will explore the renegotiation of relationships with individual parents, the changing relationship to the parental unit, and how both these processes reverberate through the emotional foundation from which offspring create intimacy.

Changing Relationships

Many participants spoke of how their parents became more real to them as individuals in the aftermath of the divorce. Offspring were aware of seeing new sides to their parents through watching them adapt to changed lives and from intensified involvement born of the divorce. This is how Peter expressed it:

There are sides of her (his mother) that I never would have seen had the divorce not occurred. I'd never see her date, and see just how angst ridden she would get-good god, I

thought I was nervous before a date! So there is a greater amount of discovery that I made about my parents as a result of this journey that they took. And those would all have been hidden. I suspect that they would have been like a lot of families, just sort of drift apart, agree to not fight anymore and just live under the same roof. I suspect I might not have been as close to either of them given that they both somewhat turned more to their kids during this time of stress than they might have before without the divorce. I guess in that respect it's even good, but I won't go quite so far as to say it was entirely good in that respect. Because a lot of it is discovery of all the wounds.

Peter was one of several people who felt he had closer relations with one or both parents than would have occurred without the divorce. The increased closeness stems not only from his support but also from discovering sides of his parents that he might not have ordinarily seen. He admitted this involves loss because he has seen both good and disappointing sides.

Peter's awareness that he and his mother are facing similar areas of growth is implicit in his comparison of their nervousness about dating. Debbie attributed the simultaneity of hers and her parents' challenges to being older when the divorce occurred.

I felt confused about how I should feel about the divorce...It really prompted me to do the most incredible spiritual growth I will ever do in my life, to go through the hardest things I've ever gone through in my life...I think I'm a very different person because my parents divorced because of the outcome of that. I had to find my security for myself because I didn't have the security from my parents anymore. I saw their insecurities, I saw their scariness, I saw them as human beings, struggling with the

same things that I'm struggling with as a human being. And realizing those struggles I can deal with as an individual myself. ...And it happened at a perfect time that I'm developing a spiritual growth at the same time my parents are going through a transition, I watch their transitions and their responses to it, and see my similarities. So while they were processing I was able to look in on their processing and really discover a lot...I think it made me grow up faster and realize things and have a lot of realizations about parents and how they're not perfect and how they don't know everything and they're confused and they're scared too. Good and bad things about both of them.

Several others commented how parents emerged as whole people or how the divorce increased an awareness of parents, especially mothers, as individuals in the context of their own lives. One form this took was for daughters watching mothers deal with similar issues as single women.

Exposure to settlement conflicts and discrepant stories was the most complicating dynamic in post divorce relationships. A few participants integrated these conflictual states into increasingly complex understandings of parents; others chose to compartmentalize settlement disputes from the overall relationships. More independent offspring seemed better able to compartmentalize and prevent the impressions of a parent engaged in ongoing conflict from infiltrating the relationship. Offspring who were still separating from parents seemed most affected by these disappointments. The nature of the conflict and extent of the bitterness

also affected how able offspring were to protect their relationships from ongoing parental battles.

A minority of participants reported a deterioration in relationships because of tension or anger subsequent to the divorce or decreased contact amongst family members. Many participants, however, felt that closer relations with one or both parents was a benefit derived from the divorce. Many good pre-divorce relationships deepened and some distant or difficult relations improved. Contact especially increased with fathers who reached out for the first time following the divorce. More involvement or a decrease in tension in all relationships, better understanding of a parent, and a sense of having been supportive were cited as reasons for increased closeness. In contrast to those who felt that better relationships with parents was a benefit of the divorce, Larry vehemently protested that this could begin to compensate for the loss of being part of a family.

The relationship with each was never a question. That's only important if you don't have the other, and it pales in significance to the other-parents as a unit.

Issues in Relationships

Though negotiating new relationships was a universal experience, varying circumstances surrounding the divorce created unique patterns reflective of family dynamics. No common variables such as conflict, alliances, or pre-divorce dynamics seemed to account for what happened

after the divorce. What did emerge were different patterns with mothers than with fathers which the following case studies will illustrate. With fathers, participants felt either closer or more distant with few other relational dynamics discussed. With mothers, three different issues emerged about how parental divorce intersected with the ongoing process of becoming adults in relation to one's mother: renegotiating issues of triangulation; learning to set boundaries; and for female participants, watching and sharing with mothers in a new way made possible by the divorce as single women. While few overt connections can be drawn from the interviews, we would expect the issues revealed in these stories, especially boundary violations leading to secret sharing, transgressions about parental sexuality, and subsequent changes in how parents are viewed, to potentially influence offsprings' experiences in intimacy.

Triangulation-Leslie

Leslie was one of four daughters who were overtly triangulated in their parents' marriage. Her ability to articulate her struggle to free herself from her family enmeshment made the interview with her very compelling. The extreme demands made upon Leslie fell upon many offspring but with less intensity.

Leslie built a home for herself at college when her parents' relationship ended. Now, on the eve of graduation Leslie feared slipping back and losing the

sense of herself that was so hard won in the subsequent three years. She believes that her friends from intact families have a security that she lacks. She feels that the bitterness of the divorce has made her childhood and positive experiences in her family irrelevant. Leslie's affect was a combination of bewilderment about why her parents' had triangulated her so much in the marriage and especially in the divorce; and guilt, reparation, anger and sadness about her mother.

Each parent tried to win her favor in the divorce but Leslie judges it as largely her mother's responsibility that she was so pulled in. Her mother communicated that it was Leslie's responsibility to help her mother rebuild her life. Before the divorce Leslie had heard her mother's complaints about Leslie's father and about the marriage:

I think that it bothered me also but I can't separate what bothered me and what bothered my mother and I always heard about it, it was just a part of me.

After the separation each parent escalated their efforts to influence Leslie. This finally resulted in a two year estrangement with her father out of which they are only now emerging. She continued to hear more from her mother than she would have liked. I asked her if there were any incidences that captured the feeling of this time:

The whole thing with their settlement was very problematic and it got very nasty...There was this one night where my mother came to me in

the middle of the night and woke me up and was showing me this letter that he wrote about her... she found it and came in to show it to me and it was just so awful, I can't explain it. It was like a nightmare. She woke me up in the middle of the night to show me that. I didn't understand what she wanted and why she was doing that to me...I just can't imagine why a mother would do that...You can't do that to your 19 year old daughter, why would she need me to know that kind of thing.

Leslie's process of separating from her mother interfaces with dealing with her parents' divorce. Her view of the divorce is influenced by knowing her mother feels it was disastrous and by seeing her mother's ongoing troubles. She would feel less pressure if her mother started a new life, made some friends, and in general, not demand that Leslie bear her burdens.

I think if she were able to establish an independent and healthy life for herself. If she could feel better about herself, than it would just fall into place because she wouldn't need us as much as she does...But right now she just needs me a lot more than I need her, and my life right now is opening up and I'm drawing away from her and that's natural but at the same time, at the point when she's suppose to be feeling more comfortable, she's just so dependent and unhappy. And I can't help her, I don't want to.

Me: What do you think your mother would be like if she were still married to your father?

Leslie: I think she'd be bitter but she's bitter now too. Somehow I think it should have ended earlier than it did, and maybe then there would be a possibility that she would still be able to have a fulfilling life but somehow it just went too far. Something in her, it was too late. It died, she had no hope anymore.

Me: Do you think that if your mother were to become more independent and feel better about her life that it might help you feel better about their marriage?

Leslie: Yeh, it would certainly help.

Me: Because then everything's not lost?

Leslie: She's always saying "my life has just been a waste." She doesn't realize the effect that has on me. I wish that she could see, could say, maybe it's not true. I don't know, but I wish that she could say, "Well, this is how it ended and it's terribly unfortunate but I don't regret it."

In company with Leslie, Laurie also believes her mother feels her life was wasted by a long destructive marriage. Both daughters believe their mothers might have been able to rebuild lives after earlier divorces but are now left without hope. The pressure for Leslie to repair her mother, fed by the historical demand that Leslie sacrifice her autonomy and ally with her, is intensified by the divorce which translates past sacrifices into an ending filled with failure and bitterness. If her parents' divorce reveals their marriage as a tragic mistake, Leslie can make reparations by doing with her life what her mother was not able to do: not marry and pursue other goals. Leslie appeared cognizant that she can struggle to create options for herself:

Her typical response is that she's done everything in her life for us. Her whole life she's given up everything just for us, us kids are the most important thing for her and we don't appreciate what she does for us. And of course there's nothing you can answer to that, what can you answer? I know there's many things that she hasn't done, or has done because of us, that have made her unhappy. So what can I say to that? Am I expected to repair in some way? I don't think that's very fair. She brought me into the world, I don't think it can be an equal relationship, kids

always take more than they can ever give back. She can't understand that, she sees me as her friend, and I'm not.

Leslie judges her mother's inability to appreciate her impact on Leslie as emblematic of her mother's hyper-emotionality. It is largely because of the events of the divorce that Leslie has begun to question their past relationship and her mother's limitations. What might have occurred anyway is in part due to increased pressure during the separation and from developing a new view of her mother after the divorce. I asked Leslie whether she thinks the separation affected her relationship with her mother:

I think it strained it a lot. I used to see her as the absolute good, and what she said was just the truth. I just question her so much now, and I criticize her so much, sometimes too much. I've begun to feel angry now that I see how it was. I was just blinded...I just see that she determined certain things that went on between my father and me. That we didn't necessarily have to have such a bad relationship...She tried to influence me, she made me see the world in her way. I just had to step into her mind and see what she saw because that's what she wanted...It's really hard to say whether it's the separation or me. I think it has more to do with me being more far away. But of course now I have to think about those things, if they were still together, there's still some illusion that maybe it's allright.

Leslie was one of many who felt that the divorce initiated a questioning of dynamics which might have been taken for granted. These explorations revealed illusions and parents' weaknesses. Like Kate, Leslie has come to

see her mother less favorably than she might have if there had been no divorce because her mother's weaknesses have become more visible. Like Marcie, Leslie believes her mother's unhappiness can no longer be blamed only on a bad marriage; there are intrinsic problems within her as an individual. When parents remain a unit, it is not as necessary to like the individuals as when the relationship becomes one between an offspring and a sole parent:

Me: What do you think your relationship with your mother would be like if they hadn't divorced?

Leslie: I guess I would still be sympathizing with her a lot more because she would still be in that role of victim...It was just so obvious that she was in the victim role. Really, anyone looking in would have to feel that way I think.

Me: The separation helped you see she wasn't only a victim?

Leslie: Yeh, definitely. Because if the divorce were to solve everything then now everything would be fine and she would be happy and her life would be going on and she wouldn't need to be dependent on us in that sick kind of way. But it's not, so I can even begin to see what my father dealt with all this time. I have a little more insight into that.

No longer victimized, Leslie's mother's weaknesses are exposed.

It appears that Leslie's parents' divorce has helped her begin to separate from her mother. Previously enmeshed, she has had to differentiate her own voice from that of her mother's. Sometimes still confused about whose voice she hears, and worrying that she is

vulnerable to "losing (her) identity," she nonetheless has gained a more independent and ambivalent position vis-a-vis her mother:

It's only recently that I can look at her from a more critical standpoint because she was the one who took care of me, she really was the one who raised me...Just only recently I've begun to feel that I can criticize her without the guilt...I suppose my loyalties will always lie more with my mother than with my father, but I can really begin to see that it was a three dimensional thing, I can see why my father had a very hard time to live with her and maybe that brought out those things in his character.

Despite the loss of a more idealized image of her mother which she is still in the process of mourning, Leslie is better served by a more complex well rounded relationship. Her mother's apparent unwillingness to accept appropriate boundaries adds to the loss because Leslie needs to push her away at times. She spoke of how she feels when her mother is inappropriate with her:

It makes me feel awful. And I know that I can't change her and she'll never understand what she's done so its something between us. It makes a distance between us because now I can't let her in that close. Now she knows that there are certain things she says to me and I leave, I just get up and leave because I don't want that anymore.

Daughters and mothers must be able to experience the other as separate even if intimately connected. It is apparent that Leslie is heading in that direction, though perhaps she must compromise an eventually richer relationship given her mother's limitations:

It makes me sad and it's frustrating to know that we're never going to be so close. Although I think now it's an honest relationship and before it wasn't. I think it was inevitable. Now I can feel good about myself because I'm not really being so used by her anymore.

Leslie was one of three women with whom extreme triangulation had been one of the primary dynamics in their family. Her struggle to differentiate herself and establish some distance with her mother contrasts with Lisa's experience. Triangulated into an emotionally incestuous relationship with her father, after the divorce Lisa moved to a position of profound closeness and intense identification with her mother. Laurie is beginning to feel less responsible for her mother after playing a similar role in her parents' relationship. Younger than Lisa or Laurie, Leslie fears compromising her identity if she moves closer to her mother. The pull of Leslie's reparative urges towards her mother and a potential for re-enmeshment could mitigate against separation and these are issues with which Laurie also struggles. Nonetheless, Leslie's striving for autonomy and selfhood was profound and moving.

Boundaries

The theme of learning to establish boundaries echoed through the stories of many participants. Boundary setting occurred in two ways for offspring from families where dynamics of triangulation had been less extreme. The first was in explicit behavior; conversations or

interactions had been curtailed or contained. Along with Leslie, Debbie, whose story follows, was the person who most spoke of these issues. Peter, whose story follows Debbie's, was also very aware that learning to set boundaries was important for him in his parents' divorce. He was one of three out of five men who were very involved with their mothers after the divorce.

The second way that participants talked about establishing boundaries was in daughters learning to differentiate their internal experience from their mother's. For instance, five years after her parents' divorce, Sharon had only recently realized that some of her anger towards her father is on behalf of her mother:

I think a lot I'm angry at him on behalf of my mother...only realized in last few weeks how much of my anger is on behalf of my mother. And that I felt like I would be betraying my mother if I tried to have a decent workable, meaningful relationship with my father. Because I still think that he's doing things to her that are not right...(But) I have to identify what I'm angry at him for myself and about myself and work on that with him.

For Marcie, the divorce makes more intense her guilt and reparative urges towards a mother who is still not happy although her long wished for divorce finally occurred. Marcie struggles painfully with her mother's desire to live her life "vicariously through me." Rachel and Amy described how getting to know their mother's and watching them struggle after the divorce helped them realize their mothers had placed their own feelings of insecurity onto

them. This helped them differentiate their experience from their mothers. This is how Amy expressed the effect on her of realizing her mother's insecurities:

I was kind of surprised. I've never thought of my Mom as insecure. She's always been a competent person about the way she was as a parent and a mother. She's always been very strong. It kind of surprised me. But it's also helped me in a way to realize that a lot of things she said are things that are probably her own issues and not things that have to do with me...Mostly in ways that she reacts to me in relationships with men. I think it's all really her own issues that she has in her relationships with men that she kind of carries that over in what she'd say to me.

Debbie-The Divorce Set Boundaries. Of all participants, Debbie was the most articulate about how the divorce had affected her sense of boundaries. Though not triangulated in her parents' marriage as Leslie was, changes in the relationship with her mother and an increased ability to establish limits has been the main impact of her parents' divorce. It is limits of all kinds that Debbie feels she has gained from her parents' divorce, including the limit her parents set around their relationship by choosing to end it.

Debbie's optimistic and appreciative attitude that her parents had divorced was unique. She celebrated their growth whereas others appreciated that parents had escaped bad marriages:

I'd really want people to know there is life after divorce, there are good things about divorce. Divorce has such a negative connotation. The fact of the matter is that

divorce would not occur if it was a totally horrible thing...People wouldn't get divorced if it was a horrible thing, people get divorced to make a positive change in their lives. I think the most important thing from my experience that I'd want people to know is that you can turn it into such a learning process.

Apparent to both Debbie and myself were family circumstances which made feelings of loss less likely. These circumstances are reminiscent of Peter's family and suggest that like Peter, Debbie had adapted to an internal sense of her parents as unconnected with the other: she had lived away from her family at boarding school since age 16; she saw her parents as already emotionally separated-they had had separate bedrooms for years and her mother had spent four months of the year in North Carolina since Debbie's middle adolescence; her experience of her parents was already of them as separate individuals-when she was in boarding school and in college each parent visited her independently; she had a good relationship with each parent and had always experienced her father as very involved in her upbringing; and finally, she felt very separate from their relationship and thought they did also.

Different from others who could see growth but still felt the divorce had been negative, Debbie feels that "the divorce was positive and nothing but positive has come from it." Everyone in her family is better off and she is a much more secure person than she would have been otherwise because her reaction to the divorce motivated

her to enter therapy. Twenty-two when her parents divorced, Debbie entered therapy because of her confusion about this event. Unlike many people who characterized their confusion in terms of loyalty conflicts-"what should I do, how should I behave;" or at a more immediate level-"how can this feel so difficult, after all I'm a grown-up," Debbie's confusion was that after an initial reaction, she felt unaffected by the divorce.

She attributes her subsequent growth and increased confidence to therapy. She remembers feeling secure and loved growing up and even recalls feeling lucky compared to others. Another side emerged after the divorce:

When I think of my childhood I think of a lot of warmth around me. But there's an underlying insecurity, I think it was evident from the age of 11, I think that's when I started to realize that my parents marriage wasn't all that it seemed. On top of things everything was great, but as I got older I could tell that they weren't really happy. I got more and more insecure because it was almost like being lied to, a falsehood being put on you about what's really going on. Everything seems to be wonderful but it's not as trouble free as it seems.

Unlike many who felt the divorce changed their perceptions of their family, Debbie retained her sense that her family had given her a lot. It was the disjuncture between the actuality of distance in her parents' marriage and her perception of security that had been problematic. She considers that the last gift her parents gave her together was to make their lived relationship consistent with its definition.

Debbie's main difficulty following the divorce was the "role reversal" caused by each parent turning to her for support. She thinks this made her become an adult faster than she might have but sees herself as able to adapt because she had the "skills." But how her mother behaved during this process changed their relationship.

It was mostly my mother would talk to me like a friend, as someone who wasn't involved at all, and I was involved. I don't know what was going on for her that she would think that way, but she wasn't able to separate the fact that we've always been close and always communicated very well, but this was not something she could communicate everything to me about, because I did have a very personal interest and I didn't want to know all this crap about my father. She wasn't able to separate those things...It got to the point where she was saying so much about so many things from way back in their marriage...I didn't need to hear it...Eventually I told her "I don't want to hear this, it's not beneficial to me, you have to talk to someone else." I tried to get her to go to a therapist but she never did. I think it damaged our relationship a little bit because it taught me that there is a barrier in my relationship with her. Everyone had always said "you have a great relationship with your mother, you can talk to your mother about everything, that's wonderful!" But it always isn't so wonderful because there is a line there, and there will always be a wall there... no matter how close you are...Therapy helped a lot. I always felt I had a responsibility to take care of her. The truth was that she was going to do whatever she had to do to take care of herself in that situation.

Debbie's mother's behavior was not a marked departure from the past but Debbie's increasing maturity and the magnitude of the issues escalated her mother's demands on her. While many parents turned to their almost-adult children for help in this period, help that

offspring felt varying capabilities to offer, it was those parents that seemed to not recognize the autonomy of their children that were most egregious in their offenses. Both Debbie and Leslie judged their mothers as unable to respect or respond to demands to maintain some boundaries. I asked Debbie how it felt to find such a barrier with her mother:

Oh, it felt wonderful because it was-"there is a barrier, there is a limit!" I grew up with very bad limits, my parents were very bad at setting limits...In my adult life limits are still a great discovery for me. And that's what was so wonderful about "yes, there is a limit to my relationship with my mother"...The good by-product is really knowing when to end the conversation with my mother before it gets to really take care of myself in a conversation with her. That's really great because there was no boundaries with her as far as conversations go. And I learned for my own survival sake that I had to.

Debbie feels that relationships outside the family have also benefited in that she frequently had been told in the past that she was too forthcoming.

Debbie is saddened by finding the limit with her mother but like Leslie, it seems her discovery only serves her growing independence. Her mother's word had previously been "god." Through discovering her mother's limitations and selfishness in response to her attempts to set limits, Debbie is developing a more well rounded, if ambivalent view of her mother. She has also had to learn to rely on herself more:

My relationship with my mother is better because, this is weird to say, I don't like my

mother as much as I used to. And that makes it better...what my mother said was it. I realized I saw vulnerability in my mom, I saw insecurity in my mother, I saw a lot of things I hadn't seen before. Really human things about my mother which make it much better to listen to her and take it with a grain of salt. To deal with it more on the level of where it's coming from. So I feel our relationship is better because I have realized and seen those things in her and I know how to set limits, know how to deal with her...But I like her less. I see her more as self centered in a negative sense...I had to realize she wasn't my most reliable source. I had always done what she said. I had to learn to make my choices in a different way.

These are lessons every daughter learns to some degree or other, but these lessons made more pressing by the divorce have helped Debbie separate.

Both Debbie and Leslie found "a line" with their mothers that could not be crossed no matter how close they were. Neither specified what that line was but it seems they found that line in discussions about their fathers. As inappropriate confidants they found their limit when demands required that they forsake their role as daughters of their fathers. In general, damaging information about the other parent, especially as related to sexuality, seemed most destructive of trust in the disclosing parent or in the relationship with the discussed parent.

Debbie feels that the relationship with her father is more typified by mutual respect. Leslie's renewal of the relationship with her father also promises that

possibility. But I was left with the feeling that the divorce had a negative impact on Debbie's relationship with her father of which she was unaware and which could affect the complex feelings she brings to her own relationships.

I know more about my father now than I ever did before and I know more negative stuff. Not just because it came from my mother because it did, but because I was able to see my father more as an individual outside of the marriage and have a relationship with him outside of my mother being around. That has affected me because I found more things about my father that I didn't like since they got divorced.

Debbie's insistence that she had been able to distinguish her impressions of her father from what her mother told her did not concur with my impression. It seemed that Debbie had been forced by her mother's violations to deal with sexual aspects of her father that would contaminate their relationship. This was Debbie's reaction to inappropriately being told of a sexual incident between her parents which she felt embarrassed to repeat:

Just something my mother said to me once that was really awful. It's definitely what I resent the most about her, just saying inappropriate things. I think it's the thing that really makes me feel that everything is a lot more bizarre than I think it is. This is really difficult to say---And I can't buy that, I can't believe that, and I can't believe she told me that. I mean I can't think of anything more inappropriate for a mother to tell her daughter. And that devastates me. It really does. It devastates me to think of it and mostly that my mother even said that to me...I don't want to know, I don't want to think about it, I don't want to acknowledge it.

Hearing about a parent from another parent, while it can be gratifying, is also threatening. As the boundaries around the parents' relationship are breaking, so are boundaries around the offspring which would be better left intact. Especially when exposed to information with a sexual content, offspring have to contend with increased anxiety that results from being made to directly confront their parents as sexual beings, a mode of relating that has hitherto usually been more contained.

Hearing things from one parent can make more confusing how to deal with the other parent even when information is not of a sexual content. Again, Debbie seemed unaware that the difficulties that resulted from the broken boundaries with her mother affected her relationship with her father:

It got to the point where she was saying so much about so many things from way back in their marriage, I mean she had to tell me that my father had been having affairs for years, I didn't need to know that, I didn't need to hear it...And then having to communicate with my father and hearing all this crap about him. How do I deal with this? I didn't tell him anything she was saying to me, but I think I consciously spent a little less time with my dad then I normally would have...I didn't hate him, just confusion, and it brought up a lot of insecurities about, "Well, this is what I thought happened and this is what mom's saying happened, well what did happen?" and why did he do that and all that kind of stuff.

As young adults, older offspring are more likely to be seen by parents and by themselves as able to handle

discrepant and negative information. Unlike some participants, Debbie refrained from trying to reconcile competing stories. She did not ask her father about things better left unknown, but was then left with a strain in their relationship, a strain made more insidious by the nature of the subject.

Nonetheless, Debbie's sense is that her parents' divorce has helped her in relationships because she now understands and trusts men more. She views her father as more willing to try to make his life work because contrary to what she would have expected, he was the initiator of the divorce. He has learned to communicate more effectively through coping with being single and then remarrying. Watching her father's efforts mitigated the negative view of men she inherited from her mother. Several other daughters expressed similar sentiments about watching their fathers reach out more following the divorce:

I suppose I understand and feel better about men because my father showed a real strength in taking care of himself because I'd never seen him take care of himself before like that. Had never taken care of himself emotionally and that was a huge step! I think it gave me more faith in men and more strength in men, and the ability to change. I always think that women are good at processing stuff, and seeing my father really deal with emotions, to see the other side of him was really great and enlightening.

Leslie was more conscious than other participants that a changed view of her father affected her

relationships with men. The divorce damaged her faith in men and the hope of equality in relationships. Her parents' destructive marriage and her mother's inability to rebuild her life produced in Leslie negative feelings about marriage. Learning during the divorce that for years her father had engaged in affairs added to Leslie's negativity:

I told him once that he made me lose faith in marriage and he took that very strongly. I was surprised, he's usually very rational. He took that very hard...The way that he was acting with my mother was very dominant and male, and I had a hard time relating to men afterwards for awhile. I still do...I just don't trust them very much. I always think they're motivated only by sex...I don't think that they're capable of giving me emotional support like my female friends are...A very big part (of losing faith) was that he wasn't faithful to my mother. For some reason that really hurt me a lot because I knew that she would never do the same, and just the thought of him being-I can't imagine that it was very deep...I was just dumbfounded, maybe it was just stupid of me but I really had never expected that that was part of their problems.

And at the end of the interview:

I don't know if I might have called you to be in the study if it were a man. That's something I'd like to change.

Leslie learned from her parents' marriage and her mother's bitterness that "women give so much more and sacrifice so much more in their lives and men are just thinking about themselves." From her father she has learned that "men are only motivated by sex." Difficult even to talk about for Leslie was confusion about her own

sexual feelings. She seemed concerned that if she enjoys sex without being in love then she also was just motivated by sex.

On the heels of divorce offspring see parents in new ways, from their own observations and from learning about one parent from the other, often angry parent. While some parents improved in the eyes of their adult children, many parents emerged as weaker, less admirable, or as more conflictual figures. Offspring feel betrayed by the parent who has broken boundaries as well as by the problematic behavior of the other parent. Changes in these relationships can affect offspring's subsequent openness, fears or angers about intimate involvements that stir up these unresolved issues.

Sons and Mothers and Boundaries. Setting boundaries as part of renegotiating relations with parents was problematic for sons also. The experiences and reactions of three out of five male participants contrasted dramatically with the young men described by Cooney et al. (1986) as distant and less involved than daughters. Offspring elaborated problems much more with mothers than with fathers, but it would be a false conclusion to draw that it is only mothers who inappropriately share information or place emotional and caretaking demands. But due to the inequalities in their marriages, mothers emerged more often than fathers with greater financial and sometimes emotional needs.

Peter. Peter's principal reason for volunteering stemmed from his feeling that only negative experiences about parental divorce were portrayed in Cain's (1990) New York Times article. He considered himself to be an "outlier in the data" and wanted to articulate another more positive view. It was interesting that we discovered that he would have been less of an outlier had he not learned to establish boundaries with his mother.

As we saw earlier, Peter feels that being at college and confronting personal challenges significantly mitigated the impact of his parents' divorce. Peter feels his sister would not have substituted as their mother's primary support and he would have been forced to choose sides had he been closer to home. His intention to stay separate at college would have been compromised. Describing his mother as "a screamer" and one who divides the world into enemies and allies, he feels had the divorce not occurred he would still be her main emotional support:

I would still be a primary emotional support. I don't think she ever really used my Dad as an emotional support because he wasn't there for her. She didn't trust him in that respect. I think even before the divorce I was in some sense an emotional prop for her, even when I was quite young...I would still have very much an emotional caretaker role support role, just on different issues.

A chronic demand for Peter's support intensified as Peter's mother realized the unfairness of her divorce settlement. According to Peter, she was a 50 year old

woman from a traditional past being treated with the divorce laws of a younger generation. Peter's desire to maintain distance from his parents' battles conflicted with his "sense of self importance" and self image as a facilitator. He was consistently dismayed to find no juncture between his parents' two views. He grew able to "compartmentalize" his loss of trust to the area of the settlement. His mother's distortions of reality were not unfamiliar, but he felt:

It made me feel confused, made me dislike the fact that I couldn't trust my parents, that somebody had to be lying or distorting things for me. And I've known my mother all my life and have reason to think it was probably her- she has a somewhat creative view of things sometimes. But even though I knew who it probably was it didn't help that much. It still was a problem that my parents were lying or distorting.

His mother's efforts to manipulate him in the service of her settlement was more compelling and disturbing than Peter's desire to mediate their disputes. She pressured him to intervene in overt attempts to use her children to obtain a fairer settlement:

It was much more involved in how the divorce was going to be settled: "Oh, your father is taking everything, I have no recourse, and how can you treat that man kindly who's ruining my life"...So trying to get me to put the emotional thumbscrews on him like saying to him, "I'm not going to visit you for Christmas because you're being mean to Mom" kind of stuff...At one point she actually said point blank, "You kids are the only levers I have."

One of the legacies of Peter's parents' divorce is in setting him free from a potentially destructive relationship with his mother. Peter had always served his mother in her poor relationship with his father. From a very early age he remembers having the goal of wanting to be a good husband because he knew his mother was unhappy in marriage and he wanted to make her happy. He was privy to complaints about his father's performance in bed and diatribes about men's shortcomings. These transgressions accompanied Peter as he encountered difficulties becoming an adult sexual man, difficulties stemming from a late growth pattern which left him arriving at college as a "nurdy, scientist type looking wet behind the ears." He had entered therapy when facing enormous anxiety in his first sexual relationship. He believes he was lucky to already be in therapy when his mother began placing such demands. Through therapy and feedback from friends he finally learned to set limits with her and say she was using him inappropriately. His worse fear had been:

Probably that she would lump me in with all the other men: "You men never understand." Any time I disagreed with her interpretation-"you just don't understand!" To a certain extent, "yes, you're right, Mom, I don't understand but that doesn't mean you can tell me you're miserable and that I can go make Dad do something. That doesn't follow." But I can only say that now. My real fear was that I would once again get lumped in with all those men...I didn't like that view of myself, I didn't want her thinking that of me, and I had

no idea of the long term consequences in my relationship with my mother. I had the feeling that she loved me enough that she wouldn't cut me off entirely, but it would have to change somehow...So the stakes were moderately high. I never thought about that but that's probably what I was afraid of.

This fear had a basis in their history:

We would often have conversations where Mom would say "all men are terrible, they suck"..that sort of stuff, and I would have to say, "Mom, you're speaking to one!" She'd say, "well of course you wouldn't do that." So I'm getting the message that all men are terrible-this was not helpful. Eventually I started learning to say, "Hey, not me" verbally rather than just trying to resolve it in my mind which is what I had done when younger-I used to say, "well, I just won't be that way, I'll show Mom wrong or show her that men can be good." But she's still putting that same sort of pressure, saying "You're different, you would never make a woman feel bad" where in fact I have hurt people's feelings at times.

Peter's desire to please his mother seems to have contributed to his capacity for relatedness. Responsible and connected, he wanted to play a supportive but not manipulated role. He was able to stay connected yet separate and ended up being more related as a result of how he learned to cope with his mother's demands. It seems that in learning to set boundaries with his mother Peter has turned a potential liability into a virtue. We realized his experience of the divorce could have been very different had he not achieved this.

Had I not been able to finally stand up to my parents, specifically my mother, and say "This is not appropriate, keep me out of it" I think it actually could have been a disaster. I could have ended up like my sister. I would

have eventually had to be either for or against my mother, probably for her because I simply would not have been able to resist her in other respects. I would have ended up choosing sides, that would have thrown a big monkey wrench into the relationship with my father. It was not easy for him and he had a lot of tough decisions to make, and it could well have taken years to eventually get back the close relationship I had with him, if ever. That really would have been very very difficult. My sister is still suffering and I really see that that is the path I probably would have taken had I not been able to stand up to her. So yeh, a big change.

Mothers' Growth

Many of the offspring in this study came from families which were structured along traditional gender lines with fathers as the primary wage earner. How mothers established themselves as independent women in the aftermath of the divorce after their main role had been raising the family affected how offspring evaluated the divorce. The negative consequences of how mothers fared as a result of the traditional structure in their families is discussed later in this chapter; many participants, however, saw mothers branch out into new areas of education and employment. These offspring recognized the benefits of their mothers' increasing sense of competency and for some, exposure to "the real world" after living previously sheltered lives. One woman, Rachel, even felt that had the divorce not occurred, she might be angry that her mother had never

challenged herself more. I asked Rachel what she thought her relationship with her mother would be like if there had not been a divorce:

I think I'd be kind of angry with her in some ways. For not doing anything with herself.

A few daughters expressed a profound appreciation that mothers undertook personal and emotional growth which most women their age avoided, growth which often paralleled their daughters'. How these daughters viewed their mothers seemed to be informed by their own struggles and deepened their appreciation. Rachel had seen her mother change quite a bit:

Just watching her go through changes and kind of find herself and go out and get what she needs and wants has been a real positive thing for me. I really admire that in her. She doesn't seem like this solid firm Mom that I would love to have...but I really do admire her and admire what she's gone through. I mean she could have kept him. It's been hard for her, for all of us. Here my Mom was 50 years old and really having to do a lot of things that I'm doing through my 20's in her 50's, and the world has changed on her in a way that it hasn't as much for me.

Rachel was aware that before the divorce her mother had catered to the family and defined herself solely as mother/wife. Rachel was one of two daughters who lived through mothers becoming "swinging singles," engendering anger and resentment in both daughters. Both daughters came to feel proud of their mothers' new career accomplishments:

During the separation my Mom became this little adolescent, going to all these single parties and dating a million men. And drinking, she just seemed like this adolescent, and I became the parent...during college I would come home, like for Christmas, and there'd be a can of soup and a note saying, "Hi (Rachel), I'm at a party, I'll see you tomorrow morning, here's some soup!"...I can see how she needed to go to another extreme to be able to separate herself from the whole thing...all of a sudden we were coming home from college and she was saying "I'm not doing anything for you guys. To the point where I'm not even coming home! That was hard because she just withdrew all support. She's kind of come back in a lot of ways to wanting to be a Mom.

Sally also saw her mother grow tremendously after the divorce. She feels both she and her mother were under the illusion that more equality existed in her parents' marriage. She believes her mother's potential was constricted because she had to administer to her husband's emotional needs:

I think my Mom is experiencing more of life. I think she's really expanding towards her full potential or getting closer than she would have with my father. Because my father needs that nurturing aspect. This is another reason why I feel an illusion, I always thought my parents were nurturing one another. Obviously they were nurturing, but it was more my father needing my mother...I always thought it was a constant equal thing but it wasn't...I think now my mother can go on and experience these things.

As already seen, Sally remains very angry at her father. Perhaps her closeness with her mother is in part a compensation for her lost family and the distance she feels with her father. But she feels the divorce has made it possible to experience a certain kind of

relationship with her mother that would not have occurred otherwise: that of women exploring new chapters in their lives and sharing in the discovery. Sally was one of three women who enormously valued how the divorce sent their mothers exploring, (with one, the desire to explore had initiated the divorce), making possible a new level of relatedness between mother and daughter. These daughters credit the divorce with making possible the relationship that can exist between those lucky mother-daughter pairs who recognize each other as fellow travelers. This was how Sally expressed it:

It's just incredible for me to see. My mother and I are very good friends...very much intellectual friends. It's unique. I can't express it any other way. It's so wonderful. My mother has never lived alone in her whole life. And neither have I. And we're both experiencing this together and it's really wonderful...She's really starting all over again, it's really incredible...We're both really starting a new phase in our lives together and we both really like each other...(If no divorce) I don't think we would get this unique experience to open new chapters together, I know it wouldn't be possible. But think we would have gone on same path.

Echoes of Sally's and Rachel's appreciation of their mothers were also heard in offsprings' views of fathers' growth following the divorce. Growth was seen most often as a result of fathers learning how to relate to offspring and peers after the emotional outlet and sustenance of their marriage was no longer available. A couple people felt their fathers became better husbands

and communicators in subsequent relationships and a few felt they had become better fathers. Debbie was one of several daughters who watched their fathers learn to reach out in relationships:

Because of how much my father has changed since he got divorced. He's much happier. He was never very sociable...his interactions with other adults was nothing. He's very socially insecure. Now he isn't, and maybe because he blasted himself out into the world alone he had to learn to be social. He's got a lot more friends, more relationships with male friends...emotional investment in each other, not just drinking buddies...I think that's wonderful...Much more outgoing, more fun to be around, because he's happier...He had to learn how to have relationships with people and how to have a relationship with me, not through my mother, without her influence. He had to learn how to have an individual relationship with me. And I think that was really good for him.

More about Fathers

The unidimensional changes which occurred in father-offspring relationships were in striking contrast with the relational nuances and depth of involvement within which offspring renegotiated post-divorce relationships with mothers. Themes of boundary setting, issues of reparation, and with some exception, feelings of responsibility were mostly absent with fathers. Alternatively, absent with mothers, but present with two fathers were complications in the post divorce relationship because of offsprings' anger about never having felt accepted or approved of. Other than this dynamic, changes in the relationships with fathers was most often expressed by both sons and daughters in terms

of distance and closeness; much less evident were the complexity of relational dynamics that operated as offspring renegotiated relations with their mothers. These findings could be considered consistent with Youniss's (1980) presentation that younger adolescents still living at home describe relations with mothers as complex and multi-layered, while relations with fathers are described more uni-dimensionally along a closeness-distance continuum and in terms of authority.

These findings are also reminiscent of Kaufman (1988) who "found that the gender of the parent was the more crucial determinant in illuminating the nature of the relationship between the generations" (Kaufman, p.13) than was the gender of the offspring. Sensitivity in this study to the impact of offspring gender on relations with parents was only impressionistic, nonetheless, differences were not apparent between men and women in their experiences with each parent. Represented amongst both sons and daughters were those who felt closer with their fathers following the divorce as well as those who felt the divorce made relationships more problematic. Of the two men who felt closer with their fathers following the divorce, they also felt more involved with their mothers; both Peter and Matt had played active support roles with each parent.

Most striking was that, consistent with previous research (Cooney et al., 1986; Kaufman, 1988) and

relevant to offsprings' own intimate lives, it was the father-daughter relationship which most increased in distance following the divorce. Also striking was how much more often it was fathers who left the marriage even when the desire to separate was mutual. Surprisingly, anger and betrayal at fathers for leaving did not account for a great deal of the increased distance. Dynamics in the pre-divorce relationship or anger at how fathers handled the separation contributed more to the distance. Even with the six fathers who left for other women, both sons and daughters objected to how fathers left rather than to the fact that there was another woman, at least in conscious self report.

One reason for increased distance with fathers was several daughters' realization and anger that pre-divorce relationships had existed largely through their mothers. The family system or fathers knowing daughters via wives had masked the absence of more direct communication with fathers. Rachel speaks of this as she considered what her relationship with her father would be like if her parents had not divorced:

I think I would have less interaction with him although I don't have a whole lot of interaction with him even now. But I would notice it less if there hadn't been a divorce because when they were together...there was a relationship through Mom. Now we don't have that little buffer and so I notice more that there's a distance.

While one daughter saw her father accept a diminished relationship, others saw their fathers begin to reach out after the divorce. Fathers were perceived as realizing that relations with their daughters would be minimal unless new efforts were made. Daughters' reactions were mixed. A few daughters as previously discussed, appreciated these efforts and credited their fathers with learning to relate and communicate better. This new relatedness caused a few daughters to reflect on how fathers had previously been limited by their wives. Others felt angry and resentful that these efforts had not come earlier. On the whole, it seemed that daughters were more easily able to welcome their fathers' efforts at establishing independent relationships when the pre-divorce relationship or family environment had been less damaging. When the pre-divorce relationship had been more problematic resulting in more complicated self reparation for offspring, daughters were more ambivalent about fathers' overtures, often feeling angry and less able to forgive previous failures.

This was true for Elaine and changed perceptions of the past added to her difficulties. I asked if there was anything she could not get back to:

One of my childhood memories of my Dad was that he used to sometimes tell us stories at night, but I later learned that those stories had actually been my mother's idea. She had told him that he needed to spend more time with the

kids, and I feel like that knowledge takes away from the enjoyment of the stories. I'm much more critical of those stories now.

Elaine lost yet another sense of herself in relation to a loving father. Her sense of the unavailable critical father with whom she remains so angry is reinforced. The divorce intensified her conflicted and angry feelings for her present father but also damaged their past relationship. Perceptions of parents and of previous interactions change because the past is reinterpreted within the new context ushered in by the divorce. Changed perceptions could also be expected to affect intimate relationships in terms of anger and unresolved dependency or self esteem needs.

A history of emotionally incestuous dynamics with fathers contributed to distance following the divorce for two women. Laurie and Lisa were more able to explore these dynamics after the divorce because their fathers' behavior during the divorce had broadcast their roles in their families. Formerly antagonistic relationships with their mothers became characterized by sympathy and loyalty which in turn fed the antagonism toward their fathers. I wondered whether the divorce made impossible the anger at a lack of protection by mothers which is often experienced by daughters who have played such a role.

Daughters' criticisms of fathers' behavior during and following the divorce was a third reason for

increased distance. One specific criticism was the disappointment for two daughters that fathers had stagnated after the divorce. Finally, two other daughters felt their increased identification with their mothers antagonized fathers; similarly, another perceived that her father considered her awareness of her mother's economic disadvantages to indicate an advocacy on behalf of her mother.

Traditionalism

An awareness of how traditional gender roles and economic inequalities differentially affected parents was evident in how several participants renegotiated their relationships following the divorce. An economic inequality was often emblematic of a larger gender inequality that was judged as having a severe cost for many mothers. For instance, Larry saw the domination and inequality of his parents' relationship as undermining his mother's competency to such a degree that the instability of her emotional world following the divorce contributed to her death. Lisa's mother's ongoing poverty and father's opulent lifestyle, especially considering that her mother capitulated to the business school and corporate wife role, continue to rub salt into the unhealed wound of her parents' divorce. Similarly, Peter felt that having traditional expectations made more difficult his mother's adjustment after the divorce:

So much of Mom's security and identity came from the marriage, especially financial security...I very much got the impression that what (women) did was that you got married and someone would take care of you, that's the phrase I remember, "someone would love you and take care of you for the rest of your life." That's what it meant to her and so the break up of the marriage was really devastating. And that's why she wants so much to get married again.

Most painful were the feelings of Leslie and Laurie who saw their mothers destroyed after dependent and conflictual relationships lasted too long to allow their mothers to recover. The divorce raised questions for Laurie of alternatives for her mother that would have gone unasked if there had been no divorce:

It was only after the divorce that I started seeing her as a woman versus as my mother...I saw her as somebody who was really alive when she went to work but stayed home raising kids. I think my mother was borderline depressed the whole time I was growing up but never knew it. I don't think she was meant to be in the home. But she never had any alternatives...a person with a lot of unrealized potential.

Me: Do you think you would see her that way if they'd stayed together?

Laurie: No, because the questions wouldn't have come up, the question of alternatives. She just would have stayed in her role as wife and mother...Since they got divorced, the impact of that has become more clear to me. I really have come to view their relationship as a mutually destructive one...If they had stayed together they just would have been by parents and that's the way they were. But because they got divorced, you're really faced with the fact that there was something majorly wrong with their relationship.

Both Laurie and Leslie believe that watching the marriages and divorce profoundly affected how they each felt about intimate relationships. They each expressed

feeling disillusioned about relationships as a result of their parents' marriage and how its destructiveness was exacerbated by the divorce. They each have been influenced by their mother's belief that their lives have been wasted because of their marital failures. Leslie cannot imagine the idea of a good marriage and feels that inevitably someone gets "screwed" in relationships.

Laurie's concerns about relationships were also heightened by her parents' divorce. She finds it "unbelievable that two people could love but destroy each other." Though her father has gone on to remarry, her mother is now cynical and berates Laurie with taunts about why she would ever want to marry. The reason Laurie volunteered was to communicate that growing up in conflict wrecks havoc on children and parents should not wait to divorce if a marriage is bad:

My father once said to me that he only stayed married to my mother because of us kids. And I wanted to say "Well thanks a lot. You really didn't do us any favors." Because of the relationship that they had. He certainly didn't do my mother any favors leaving her when it was really too late for her to make a life for herself...If he felt like he didn't want to be in a relationship with my mother 20 years before he left her but stayed, that really pisses me off. Because in those ensuing years, they slowly but surely destroyed each other in a lot of ways. They did nothing for us kids. Being an adult when my parents got divorced I do believe that staying together for the kids is not helpful. Maybe if you can have an amicable relationship, possibly. Because kids are too smart, they know what's going on. Before when you asked the impact of the divorce- I haven't been able to be in a rewarding

relationship. That's the impact their relationship has had on me. If it had been earlier, maybe my mother would have gone on with her life...and I wouldn't see marriage to be the destructive thing that I must see it as.

In contrast, several offspring saw their mothers as positively effected by the impact of the divorce on their roles as women in more traditional marriages. A mother's pursuit of a degree or new career generated pride and recognition of growth. Only one offspring mentioned that her mother had retaken her maiden name as a symbolic act of reclaiming an independent life that had been sacrificed to her domineering husband. Whether because of the influence of feminism or of economic demands that require two working parents, this generation is the last to grow up in homes where family structure reinforces gender roles as markedly as in many of these participants' lives.

Sexual Orientation. In hindsight, I was surprised how little the question of sexual orientation was raised as daughters evaluated the impact on mothers of adopting traditional roles. Coming to age as feminism has become more culturally embedded, being at an age when sexual orientation is often explored as a positive alternative within a feminist world view, watching mothers adjust in a society which devalues older women at a time when alternative choices have become increasingly tolerated--these cultural features would underscore mothers' more restricted options. It also seems that parental divorce

during the period of exploring intimate relationships would bring these questions into focus since parents are the most immediate standard bearer of heterosexuality. Sexual orientation was raised by only two daughters. Lisa felt the divorce and the death of her homophobic brother liberated her to pursue "the gay side of (her)self." Elaine felt that one of the main motivations in her mother's leaving the marriage was to explore who she was, including issues of sexual orientation. Elaine also was exploring questions about sexual orientation.

I think it's about finding herself, being true to herself. My impression is that she grew up in 50's, went to college, got married, actually dropped out of college to get marry...Somehow I think my mother didn't know a lot about who she was. I think she was aware that she wasn't happy in this relationship with Dad, and she'd had women friends she knew that she'd loved...she knew that those relationships were real important. So I think that part of it is realizing that women meet her needs more than Dad was ever able to in a way. I mean I think, sometimes when I talk to her, I still hear a lot of anger coming out, I guess I think that makes sense, or is only natural. I mean I have my own questions.

Thoughts about Relations with Parents as Individuals

Lying beneath the issues presented in these stories are themes and emotional dynamics which can be speculated as influencing offsprings' renegotiation of relationships with parents.

During middle to late adolescence parents begin to emerge as unique people as offspring begin to differentiate parents from the parental unit. Divorce

amplifies a developing sense of parents as individuals. One on one interactions with divorced parents occur outside the familiarity of what must now be distanced from. A new relationship severed from the family context is demanded. New rules and yet-to-be- determined ways of relating govern this relationship as parent and offspring meet on uncharted grounds. Often this happens across space and time given the geographical distance offspring have traveled.

Divorce eradicates the relational web which has subsumed individual parental relationships and into which they can blend if problematic. Individual relationships become both figure and ground. Unlike in earlier divorce, offspring who have left home face new relationships independent of a context which lends a structural familiarity. Neutral areas not infiltrated by divorce dynamics often seem impossible to find. Unless significant energy is invested relationships can flounder and atrophy, especially when previous conflicts complicate new beginnings. Such investment contradicts the developmental trajectory of increasing independence. The need to build new relationships contradicts the need to separate.

Divorce also eradicates how marriage can camouflage parents' strengths and weaknesses. It becomes more important to actually like the individual with whom one is now creating a new relationship. As one participant

said, it is different to write "I love you" to a single parent than to parents together.

Offspring of later divorce also have more choice in how to relate with now single parents. Earlier we saw Elaine question how much she wanted to share with her father as she struggled to define this new relationship. In anger and disappointment in her father, Sally redefines their relationship on her own terms:

I don't call my father "Dad," I call him by his name now. And I made that choice. To me, anyone can be a father, very few people are Dads, and I don't feel he's either anymore, I'm still that angry.

Sharon expressed awareness that she has a choice in how she encourages others to see her:

I don't have my parents as a unit to relate to anymore...that was a large piece of my identity, so in some ways it sort of forced me into finding what my own identity was. From this area (her small town) people identify you by your family, where you came from. (Now) I can choose to say I'm (father)'s daughter or (mother)'s daughter. Just the choosing of that says a lot of what I want to say, there's some choice there.

Older offspring have more choice, but choice resonates against feelings of loss, anger and the need to maintain a sense of a parent as parent. But choice also liberates a relationship to develop a more genuine character, less determined by and embedded in larger family dynamics. The relationship potentially becomes governed more by the two personalities than by the status of parent and offspring.

The question of choice also resonates against the experience of a parent who has now become only part of who they previously were. Lost are qualities made possible by being in connection with their spouse.

What is lost to the parent is also lost to the offspring. Offspring lose the part of each parent they have experienced through the other parent. On a primitive level, like the concepts of the anima and animus-the representation of the other gender contained within-the offspring loses the mother within the father and the father within the mother. On a more conscious level, the offspring loses a sense of each parent as one gender in connection with the opposite gender. How parents evaluate the marriage and how they approach future intimate relationships influences offsprings' sense of the damaging or transformational impact of the divorce. Most poignantly, lost is the person that was known by the child who the grown offspring used to be.

Offsprings' reparative urges are mobilized as parents struggle with losing the part of identity that derives from their marriage. Injuries delivered by the other parent also call forth reparative gestures. Parents' overestimation of their offsprings' ability to act as the grown people they appear to be intensifies unspoken pleas for reparation. Fintushel and Hillard (1991) suggest that offspring's adjustment to divorce is

influenced by their sense of parental damage and adjustment. Children never relinquish the desire to make their parents whole.

The Relationship to Parents' Relationship

Though divorce is an ending, the marital relationship continues to exist in memory and in its influence. In addition to transforming dyadic relations with parents, offspring also faced changes in their connection to their parents' relationship. Several participants expressed awareness that they had a relationship with their parents' relationship. For instance, Amy felt that her parents were being so petty and childish following their separation that she was forced to become "an adult too quickly in relation to their relationship." Debbie was most conscious of seeing herself as independent of her parents' relationship. She described herself as feeling very separate from their relationship and could not understand why her father wanted her to analyze it. Debbie's clear distinction between her parents as the two individuals who parented her and her parents as involved in a relationship with each other, captures her sense of self in relation to their relationship:

I didn't feel a part of it. It's too separate from me. I'm their child and that's my connection to them, my connection to them is not their marriage. So my comments or my feelings about their marriage are really irrelevant because its their marriage...My

being their child has nothing to do with their being married...They're the two people who parented me, but their relationship, the dynamics of their relationship, all that, it's not for me to comment or judge.

Two other participants, Catherine and Matt, conveyed a very different connection to their parents' relationship. Each of them described themselves as 50-50 like each of their parents. It seemed that the marital relationship continued to exist after the divorce in the form of these offsprings' identification with each parent. When they were married, Catherine was the self-described glue in her parents' relationship. She can now see what was irritating about each of her parents to the other; she is now both the irritant and the irritated. Matt's parents' relationship continues inside himself in many ways. Also like each of his parents, he is them in relation to one another. Their relation also continues in the form of he and his sister because they are the reasons his parents do not consider their marriage to be a failure, and according to him, they are the reasons his parents should maintain amicable contact. His parents' relationship also continues in that he has not mourned the loss of what appeared as a happy relationship.

It is not only the loss of the other person that is mourned or celebrated when relationships end. Also experienced is the loss of everything that the relationship has come to represent and embody. Like all relationships the marital relationship weaves its gestalt

in each family member's mind. The loss involved in the ending of this relationship is more invisible than the loss of family.

The divorce seemed to represent a loss of innocence for many participants. Many believed they had been forced to look more closely at their families and at their parents' relationship than they had wanted to. Laurie voiced a poignant feeling sensed with many though not often articulated:

Since they got divorced the impact of that has become more clear to me. I really have come to view their relationship as a mutually destructive one. If they had stayed together they just would have been my parents and that's the way they were. But because they got divorced, you're really faced with the fact that there was something majorly wrong with their relationship. I really started looking at it.

It was as if offspring would have preferred to be able to take for granted and therefore leave behind in a less examined but still intact form the structures of their childhood.

In general, offspring were more aware of relationships with individual parents than of a relatedness to their parents' relationship. The most commonly articulated connection to the parental relationship was as observer: many participants spoke of how the divorce engendered a sense that the model of relationship provided by their parents' marriage was inadequate.

Parents' Relationship as a Model for One's Own:

Offspring leave their family of origin with an internalized model of their parents' relationship: a representation of two others in relation to each other. Parental divorce highlights the tenuousness of the connection between these others.

The internalized model of the parental relationship serves as a background relational schema against which one's own relationships are compared. The model is a negative point of reference for some; offspring were conscious of not wanting to replicate what they have seen in their parents' relationship. The demise of the marriage reveals as faulty the young adult's beginning template for relationship. There is no internalized model of a good-enough relationship to serve as example.

Most participants were single and none of my questions aimed at soliciting comparisons between offsprings' intimate relationships and their perceptions of their parents' marriage. Larry, one of only two participants married for a length of time and with children, conveyed his belief that whether one wants to or not, we learn how to be in relationship from watching the pivotal relationship we grow up with. Larry worried that he saw himself acting like his father in ways which Larry evaluated as very harmful to his mother:

It becomes a greater source of fear or difficulty because now I know it was a part of

something that was problematic and dissolved. I know everybody has some sense that they end up doing things that their parents did, but now there's always the additional thought: "Is this the final straw" or "Are you recreating this kind of unity of separates that you call your family?"

Others worried that they did not know how to "do it right" or were ignorant of the mystery of successful relationships because they grew up watching something which later failed. For instance, Liz felt that she has no model for resolving conflict in relationships. She never saw anger take a positive form. She sees herself now as having a "propensity to panic" at any sign of anger in herself or others. Similarly, Rachel feels that she learned no model for negotiating. She now questions what she previously thought was a good relationship.

I had pictured it was a good relationship and with the divorce that was another thing that kind of crumbled...I think I really did think we fit into the kind of Brady Bunch scene...just the way things are supposed to me. Since then I've really thought about what is a good relationship, and really see that the communication wasn't there...I guess it's been good for me to look at it because it makes me realize that it wasn't everything. I guess it's a loss in some ways because I think it looked so easy just to play these little roles...But it's been positive in that I realize how more fulfilling relationships can be when you actually participate in them...I've had to learn how to communicate.

Rachel's rewriting involves both a loss and gain but her sense of not knowing how to do it "right" makes her ashamed:

A stigma, that somehow I had come from this family where there was this failure in the parents' relationship, and that somehow that rubbed off on me...the stigma of having been from a divorced family.

In contrast, Debbie felt exhilarated about what she had learned about relationships as a consequence of her parents' divorce. One of the main effects of their divorce has been a positive impact on her ability to be in intimate relationships.

Debbie feels she grew up feeling secure and loved but that she also sensed the tenuousness of her parents' relationship. The discrepancy created by her intuition that everything was not as it appeared confused her. Debbie felt very separate from their relationship when they divorced and thought they were also:

My parents' marriage, although I'm a product of that marriage, has nothing to do with me. I mean it has everything to do with me, but commenting about it or being a part of their marriage has nothing to do with me, it's none of my business. I felt like they needed my comments about their marriage or about the ending of their marriage. And I really didn't feel a part of their marriage. I don't know how they even felt a part of their marriage themselves...I mean that was the hard thing, I felt really separated from my mom and dad as a couple. That was one of the reasons I entered therapy because I wasn't upset about it. I felt like "I'm not identifying with their marriage and it seems like they're asking me to"...I think I always knew my parents' marriage was out of convenience. The way both of them reacted I felt like "Why are you reacting this way? Is this a big surprise to you guys that you're getting divorced? Haven't you not had a marriage for a long time?"...So I felt like there wasn't a marriage to discuss.

Debbie feels that her parents placed a boundary around their unhappiness and more importantly, a boundary around their relationship when they ended their marriage. By divorcing they made the lives they were living consistent with how they defined those lives. While they were married there was no evidence of the entity called their marriage. The divorce made their marriage real by ending it:

A lot of it goes back to limits and boundaries and stuff. It made me realize that there are limits and boundaries to a relationship and taking care of yourself within a relationship, and it's important to be separate and yet together and how that can work. Because there wasn't any structure to their marriage for so long, so I learned that there can be some structure, there can be some separation yet togetherness...I mean they were separate anyway. So the fact that the marriage ended made a structure to the fact that they were separate.

The divorce validated the structure of the lives they were already living and made the external reality consistent with the emotional reality. Because the divorce validated their separateness and lifted the illusion of togetherness, it helped Debbie recognize that both belong in relationships. In her parents' relationship there had been no distinction drawn between being separate and together. This acknowledgment helps her know what she wants to strive for:

I think I've learned much more how communication is important...I know my ability to negotiate time together and apart in my current relationship comes from my

understanding of my parents' marriage and that they could have come together more.

The divorce validated their separateness. But in ending their marriage Debbie's parents came together in an important way. Debbie saw her parents join together in order to separate.

So many things in my life have been open ended, not having limitations and all that. My parents finally upheld to me a limitation, a boundary. That's the final thing they could have done for me together. They finally pulled it together and set the boundary and said "This is it, so it's not open ended anymore." Which is what their relationship was...I thank them for doing that, thank them for setting that limit. That was the last thing they could do for me together as a couple, and it was a really good thing to do, to set that limit.

Their separateness had become its opposite and through this has been transformed. It is not uncommon that the awareness of the paradoxical nature of relationships, the feeling of being both joined and separate, is evoked when relationships end. One instance of this is how confusing it can be that the closeness experienced when a mutual decision to end a relationship feels of more connection than has existed in the relationship before.

Endings and Beginnings

Endings lead to new beginnings. Debbie felt that her parents' divorce also helped her recognize that relationships can be left. Debbie was one of several people who expressed that their parents' divorce made the

idea of beginning a relationship less frightening because now they knew that relationships could be ended:

I knew my parents didn't have a good relationship and they were able to end it. They were finally able to deal with it and that made some closure and more security around a relationship. I saw their relationship, its development, and I saw it end, and I see life going on for both of them. And I think that makes it more secure and safe...that relationships can end and it's alright and you get through it. And there's life after a relationship and mourning. I see both of them as happier individuals now, even though after 25 years of marriage a divorce would be extremely devastating. It can be, but it wasn't...So there's good stuff about ending. Endings seem like such a scary thing, there's not many endings or goodbyes in a life that are good. That's what so good about that. They both have better lives now and they're happy.

Debbie was the most optimistic about what endings could mean because both her parents had gone on to build happier lives. But even offspring who saw parents flounder absorbed what they felt was the positive lesson that relationships could be left. Learning it was possible to leave a relationship was the most commonly expressed positive effect on offsprings' own views of relationships. Three women believed their parents demonstrated strength and affirmed a willingness to strive for happier lives by leaving unhappy marriages. Parents' subsequent experiences varied and some grew happier but offspring still retained the lesson that leaving was possible. Several other participants conveyed that their parents' divorce strengthened their resolve to participate in only healthy relationships.

For instance, Kate felt that her parents' divorce gave her "more sense of (her)self as an independent person in a relationship who will stay as long as it's good but not if its miserable."

Like Debbie, Liz felt the impact of her parents' divorce was positive in many ways and in particular, on her experience of relationships. She considered her biggest gain to be the hope that things could be better for her than it had been for her parents. Though judging them as not able to change and significantly improve their own lives, from information gained during the divorce she is better equipped to not live out the legacy of the chaotic and violent home she grew up in:

I think it would have taken me a longer time to be able to make changes in my own life. In my own perception of how I feel about myself. I'm not sure but I think if it sort of hadn't been a crisis point it would have taken me a lot longer to come to terms with the alcohol issues. And I probably never would have found out about the family violence and would have always thought it was me.

Liz was able to learn more about herself than would have been possible if the intolerable tension in her parents' marriage had caused her to sever those relationships.

Difficulties-Tenuousness and Lack of Trust

Participants also experienced the ending of their parents' relationship as confusing vis-a-vis expectations in their own relationships. The lesson that relationships can be left was less empowering for other offspring. Many participants felt their parents' divorce

instilled the belief in them that relationships inevitably end. For example, along with gaining a more independent sense of herself, Kate chose to leave "till death do us part" out of her marriage ceremony. Her parents' divorce had rendered sociological changes in marital longevity more immediate:

My view of relationships is different from theirs. I just don't have the expectation that I'll be married the rest of my life...Before the divorce, I was pretty much convinced that commitment would just sort of carry through and that they'd be together into old age and probably that would happen for me too...It's hard to separate that from societal changes where divorce is more common. My parents divorce certainly brought that home.

Kate's cynicism highlighted an issue which single participants also struggled with. The stability of Kate's life and marriage made her protective resignation even more striking.

Lisa's and Wendy's perception that relationships cannot be relied upon intensified the pain derived from their families. Lisa has had to "coach (her)self to believe that not all relationships end" and has "an enduring mistrust" of relationships. She feels the divorce made into a lie her parents' promises that they would always be a family and revealed relationships as fragile:

It dawned on me for the first time in my life, and I'd had relatives who'd died, but it dawned on me for the first time in my life that people are really alone. And the reality is that you can form relationships but people can always go

away. They can always leave you, you can leave them, and it never really occurred to me until my parents got divorced that you can do that.

Lisa grapples with a common insight but considers the divorce to be the damaging occasion for this hurtful lesson. At an age when idealism, even if naive, supports the optimism that can underlie commitment, this realization undermines a willingness to hope.

Hope was painfully absent for Wendy. She identifies the legacy of her parents' divorce in her attempts to work out in current relationships her conflicts with an idealized but abusive older brother. She feels that her pain drives people away, that no one will stick it out with her, and that she gets scared when relationships start to deepen. She considers her chaotic and emotionally volatile family life more at fault than the divorce. Nonetheless, her brother had distanced so much by the time of the divorce that he feels lost to her. To the divorce she attributes her expectation that relationships always end; her parent's relationship was the "biggest" relationship she knew and "the best thing that happened to it was that it ended." Wendy's loss of hope feeds her disillusionment about marriage: "Nothing works, so might as well not try, parents were together 25 years and it didn't work, nothing does." She yearningly admitted with tears in her eyes that she's trying to teach herself that "the only constant in life is change."

Many participants expressed similar sentiments that relationships do not last. Three women described themselves as less trusting in relationships after the divorce. For instance, Rachel, whose father left her mother for another woman, harbors fears that her boyfriend has affairs. She realized in hindsight that her parent's divorce eroded her trust and heightened her cynicism:

I'm pretty cynical I think. I don't trust because I think it's just going to end or I think they're going to have an affair, or something's going to be going on. The perception thing...that something's going to be there that I miss...When my parents got divorced I thought, "this is no big deal, it happened when I was out of the home! It happened when I was older, it doesn't effect me!"... Sometimes I wonder if people whose parents divorce later in life aren't effected more than if earlier. Maybe if it had happened earlier my perception would have been more confirmed, or my instincts, or my feelings would have been more confirmed.

Three other women reported that they no longer trusted their perceptions of relational stability. Jane had no idea as a child that her parents' marriage was troubled and believes she should have seen the divorce coming. She fears overlooking similar clues in her own relationships. Elaine wants to have explicit validation even during harmonious periods. Assumed to be content, her mother surprised everyone by leaving the marriage:

I guess it's a matter of whose reality are we talking about. Just because things might be functioning well for me, they might not be functioning well for the other person, because

I think that was my Mother's experience. She wasn't happy but yet, on the surface you didn't really know that.

Two out of five male participants also expressed deep cynicism subsequent to their parents' divorce but absent from sons' accounts were doubts in their own perceptions. Larry, now 35 and married with three children, recalls the seven years following his parents' divorce as ones of cynicism and depression. Larry, more than any one else, articulated what it meant to doubt his model for relationships when he first left home:

And the fundamental point of that is the relationship with...your parents, that's the basis. When that breaks then it's all up for grabs because everything else is built on that or modeled on that or a result of it. At least in your early adult years it's the model you have for being together, the model you have for a woman, the model you have for a man, it's probably the most influential modeling of roles, its the model you therefore have for relating, for relationships, you kind of plug into that when you leave the home. And then if it's not there, and if it's broken up, then you start questioning every fucking thing that you do because you feel "that's what my Dad did," or "she's like my Mom," and then it all gets extremely complicated because you can't trust it.

He attributes his ability to grow beyond his cynicism to his wife's patience. His hilarity was infectious when he told me that he firmly believes he married his wife with a "no children pact."

Matt reminded me of a younger version of Larry. Like Larry, Matt felt more connected with his friends than with his family which worked as a home base and from

whom he felt fairly independent. Matt was the only participant who felt that his parents could still have a good relationship. His father's explanation that although he still loved her he was no longer in love with Matt's mother left Matt confused about expectations in lasting relationships.

Matt reports that the main impact of his parents' divorce is his cynicism. He is not looking for a serious relationship and thinks his friends are making a mistake by marrying. He believes his friends from divorced families share his cynicism and fear. Matt's cynicism seems to protect him from knowing that something was lost in the divorce. He risks no further loss if he refuses to have hope.

I'm much more cynical after the divorce and after everything. As far as my personal relationships go, I don't look for relationships at all. I'm very cynical about the whole process, very apprehensive about getting involved with anybody seriously...Or doing it when you're young. I really want to do a lot of things before I think about marriage or anything. But other than that, I'm just really cynical, when you see your parents divorce, for me, those are the only symbols in my life of family, and they split up, it kind of makes you wonder. It's like a waste of time almost...If you come from a house and your parents are married all the way through and you grow up seeing that image, then you think "If they can do it I can do it." All my roommates have been kids from divorced families and they seem to be the same way I am, standing off, kind of scared...I have two friends getting married and they're not from divorced families, they believe in it more, they're not as scared of it as me.

Matt's father's explanation adds to his cynicism. If not being in love after 22 years is reason to end a relationship, Matt wonders if it is ever worth it.

In my mind it was like my parents wasted 22 years in a way. Because they were married and it's over. I would imagine that when you get married, everyone thinks it's forever. Then 20 years down the road it falls apart, it's like "Now what, I've come all this way, now what do I do." So to me it seemed like a waste of time in some ways.

The fact that his parents married against the wills of their families and were going to "prove their love" for each other further complicates Matt's resolution of his parents' divorce. His parents do not see their relationship as a failure because they produced two "beautiful children." But Matt is left feeling like his parents' relationship was "a lie" and they probably should not ever have married.

Jane also evaluates her parents' divorce to have most affected her feelings about relationships. A similar explanation by her father that he and her mother were still good friends but no longer made each other happy "blew (her) perceptions that love lasts forever." As with Matt, it has been conveyed that the deepening and ripening of a long relationship can not replace the loss of earlier and more exciting phases. She wonders "if you love someone, whether you keep on loving them." She also sees changes even in her friendships; she used to be "good at friendships" but now lets them "fizzle" and has

been told by others how much less trusting she has become. A positive impact is that she now understands that relationships need attention and there were problems in her parents' relationship. She does not want to stay in an unhappy relationship like her mother did but is confused about how one knows when to leave or when to stay.

Most offspring conveyed that their parents' divorce changed their attitudes and fears more than their behavior. One participant however seemed to enact these questions in her relationships. It seemed that Maria, like Matt, had channeled the loss of her family into troubles in relationships. Maria feels falling in love for the first time when her parents were divorcing was simultaneously the best and worst events of her life. Already jettisoning her family's cultural and religious identifications and feeling independent, Maria deems that being out of the home significantly modified the impact of her parents' divorce.

Another impression emerges with her memory that when her parents divorced, her "paradigm" changed and the world became an unstable, unpredictable place. Maria believed her parents' marriage had a solid spiritual basis despite being troubled. When they divorced the world changed "forever and ever amen."

Maria reports that she dealt with the divorce intellectually and because of it created values that

turned an unfortunate event into a positive lesson. For instance, her perception that the world became unpredictable stimulated Maria to learn to think on her feet. She considers one of the most positive lessons of the divorce to be her development of what she called "a dynamic view" of relationships. Her parents demonstrated that leaving unhealthy relationships is positive even though they then stagnated. She takes pride in not staying in bad relationships and has a history of four month relationships that have ended after the appearance of "irreconcilable differences."

Yeh, maybe it contributed to my feeling, I don't think of it as an unhealthy feeling, that relationships aren't meant to last forever. I don't feel bad about that, I feel in a lot of ways it's a healthy thing. To decide that people change and move on. It's important to be able to do that in a healthy way. My parents did it but not in a healthy way so they only accomplished half the task. The whole task would have been to separate without the trauma. So, I guess personally I don't feel like I'm afraid of coming and going in relationships. I've ended most relationships as soon as they turn bad because I just don't think that people have to stay in bad relationships...when the attraction is gone. Again, because my relationships have been so short, when I've ended them is that crucial four month mark when you have to move to a different stage. But bad is also when you realize irreconcilable differences. Values, and things that you just can't live with about each other but a lot of people end up passively staying in relationships. And I definitely don't think of relationships as a passive thing. It's a very active thing. So maybe that's one good thing about my parents' divorce is that it happened, when people were suppose to come apart, they did...If it can happen to your parents it can happen anywhere.

I was left with the feeling that Maria does not know when to stay and when to leave. Complicating her experience is her unworked out relationship with a previously idealized but now devalued and distanced father. Maria's estrangement with her father had already started but became entrenched during the divorce. An oft repeated phrase that her relationship with her father is "controversial" seemed to reflect her difficulty integrating very ambivalent feelings about him. She now leaves relationships after the four month period when initial idealizations begin to erode. Relationships have become unstable and unpredictable like the world did when her parents divorced. Like Matt, it seemed that Maria does not recognize that she lost something in her family's dissolution but her loss reappears in the lack of stability of intimate relationships.

A tone in the interviews with Matt and Maria recalled the other in a way and seemed reflective of the impact of their parents' divorce. It was with them that I became aware that offspring sometimes continue their relationship with a remembered though now dissolved parental unit. Matt seemed to hold inside an image of unified parents which was contradicted by his parents' refusal to have contact. He feels they should still be on speaking terms because they hold in common their offspring and he plans to instigate a dialogue between them. It was Maria who pointed to the importance of the

fact that the parental unit dissolves into its component parts of solitary individuals. She spoke of how all the energy that would go to a "parental unit" now goes only to her mother and of how different it is to write "I love you" to an individual rather than to parents together. Perhaps one reason that Matt's and Maria's lack of mourning affects their intimate lives is because their internal relationship to their parents in relationship as a unit is unresolved.

It appears that both Matt's and Maria's parents' divorces still echo in how each of their internal object worlds affect their intimate relationships. I was surprised that more peoples' experiences in intimacy did not reflect the impact of the divorce on how families or parents as a unit were internally represented. I imagine that this information was not available to my form of investigation. Rachel was an exception.

Idealism

Rachel's parents' divorce broke her illusion that hers was the perfect family; perfect in the good grades she and her sister achieved and in other middle class successes. In the wake of the divorce her family has become four scattered and isolated individuals. In debunking a myth of perfection the divorce motivated her to explore in therapy her search for the perfect man. Being vulnerable in relationships frightens her because she feels alone.

I think my relationships have been better and I've had to learn how to communicate and how to just be myself in a relationship and to learn how to be vulnerable. And I'm still learning and it's not easy when I feel like I really have to take care of myself and vulnerability will crack that right open. To learn to depend on somebody.

Her sister's belief that they will marry perfect brothers who live next door to each other also complicates Rachel's efforts at intimacy. She fears the repercussions of leaving behind her older sister for whom she would feel less responsibility if her parents were still married.

It is not only her sister she fears leaving behind; neither of her parents have remarried. She is afraid that marrying would be a statement that she no longer is available to care for family members for whom she feels responsible. It became clear that her family still lives inside of her in an altered form. Now they live as four unconnected individuals, none of them leaving the entity they together create by not forming primary attachments outside the family. For anyone to marry someone less than perfect would further debunk the family myth:

In many ways we're still kind of glued to each other. Maybe in how we cling to these pictures of ideal relationships that we think could exist.

Rachel's idealized view of her parents' marriage continues to exist despite the divorce. The divorce makes it impossible to visit the past in order to work

through the idealism about her family and their marriage. Rachel realized that marrying would further symbolize her family's demise.

It is very hard to think about getting married. Because I feel like in some ways it's like really being a trail blazer, being the only one in my family...People (in my family) have really learned to be very self sufficient. My Mom has been dating someone for three or four years now but she's not going to marry him.

Me: What would you be doing by getting married?

Rachel: In a way betraying them...I would love them all to get married...So there wouldn't be as much pressure to take care of them...To be their partners in a way...I guess I would have loyalties that would pull me away from them...In some ways there's still this family sitting there that doesn't allow outsiders to come in

Commitment and marriage would be further devastation of what was already destroyed in the divorce. Rachel's family is held frozen inside along with her idealism because she has not been able to replace or make available to herself a new sense of family.

Rachel's idealistic view of marriage lingers as a remnant of her unmourned family. Rachel was one of several people who felt it was their parents' relationship, more than the divorce, which made them cynical or idealistic about marriage. My sense concurred with theirs that the problem lay in the marriage more than the divorce but as with Rachel, the divorce left them no arena for reworking their impressions. Marcie had expected for a long time and actually wished her

unconnected parents would divorce so that her unhappy mother could move on with her life. Knowing their relationship was not to be emulated, Marcie left home with a two tiered view of marriage: idealistically she would not settle for anything but "true love" but cynically felt true love rarely happened. Laurie described a similar split image: one of constant fighting and one like a fairy tale which happens "when you (get) it right." These two women, like many others, are left without a realistic image of an ongoing marriage that works. When parents divorce adult offspring can not revisit their parents' relationship in order to develop a more realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses. They hold devalued and idealized images of marriage static.

Conclusions

The juxtaposition of parental divorce and offsprings' explorations of intimate relationships is a particularly poignant legacy of parental divorce in young adulthood. The establishment of intimate sexual relationships is an important developmental task against which resonates all the varied meanings and emotions of the divorce. Most conscious to participants was how their use of their parents' relationship as a model for their own was affected by divorce. Most participants saw the divorce as making less stable this model; but others

saw the divorce as helping to clarify what had been problematic, confirming on a more conscious level what was already known.

I would speculate that how the ending of the marital relationship is mourned, relinquished or held onto can leave unresolved issues which appear in offsprings' intimate lives. Despite divorce, the relationship between parents continues to exist in a transformed version in the minds of each family member. As the two individuals who created their children, parents are joined together in their offspring's mind and continue to be joined after the divorce regardless of the form their actual relationship takes in the real world. As the husband in The Accidental Tourist says when he and his wife finally accept they will divorce and probably never have contact again, they will continue to be in relationship with one another, just the form of that relationship has changed.

Debbie's words support this view. Even Debbie, who experienced her parents as so separate and herself so separate from their relationship, had twinges of yearning for the experience of her parents together again. I asked what she had gained and lost from her parents' divorce:

The only thing I can think that I've lost, occasionally I get the realization, and it's still as strong as it was when they first got divorced, that I'll never see my parents

together again. And that's the biggest loss, just to physically see them together again and have a conversation with them. That's a loss...I think of when I'll get married or my sister will get married, that's the only time they'll be drawn together, or a funeral. I think that's the saddest thing, just to think of them physically in my mind together, standing together, sitting together. It's really hard to think that they won't ever be together in a physical kind of way.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This study provides glimpses into the lives of 21 people whose parents divorced when they were young adults. Ranging in age from 21 to 35 when we spoke and from 18 to 25 at the time of their parents' separation, an average of 7 years and a range of 1 to 18 years had passed since the event on which we focussed our attention. Memories were dredged up, old pains renewed, and contrasts between then and now were explored.

The view here is retrospective. In talking to me about these events, these offspring had to make intelligible to me as well as themselves a life narrative whose framing reference is their parents' divorce. Noticeably different levels of pain, reflection, and integration characterized these stories but common to all was that participants were looking at their lives from the perspective of how they had been affected by their parents' divorce-I heard about life as assimilated through the lens of parental divorce.

Accordingly, changes attributed to the divorce might have come from someplace else. One goal going into the interviews was to try to tease apart how participants viewed this event from how others close to them might. I hoped these distinctions would refine impressions about

which changes could be correctly attributed to the divorce and which could not. Such a line of questioning was abandoned early in the process; the pain and coherence of what was presented to me made irrelevant the goal of teasing apart causal factors. That belongs in the realm of therapy. For what was important was how these people thought this event had affected them. Implied in the presentation of their experience is not my interpretation of causal significance. The determinants of psychic life are so multi-layered and over determined that attributing causal significance to divorce would be specious except in very circumscribed areas. Divorce is just one more layer that contributes to the adult psyche, building upon and intermixing with earlier conflicts and solutions previously established. At the same time I want to emphasize that such considerations are irrelevant in the experience of these participants. That causal significance is attributed by them to certain things is part of the meaning and narrative they have constructed about the divorce. That we all learn that relationships can end, that we are each ultimately alone, that loss is eventually inevitable does not change the fact that it is through the divorce that offspring have come to grapple with these elements of being human. This is part of the impact on these young adults of their parents' divorce. What is already painful becomes even more so from how it

is learned. And the divorce becomes unable to be resolved when it merges with dilemmas which have no resolution.

But I want to argue out of both sides of my mouth; I want to insist that divorce in young adulthood does matter and does have causal significance. Some things would have been different for these participants had their parents not divorced. The feeling that pre-divorce life was an illusion, fear and cynicism about relationships and certain difficulties in relationships with parents after the divorce would not have existed had the divorce not occurred. Especially pivotal is how divorce at this age potentially complicates recovery for those offspring from families where their own development had been compromised by family problems.

These participants would also insist that divorce at this age matters. I sometimes felt that distilling these participants' experiences into the presented topics lost the compellingness which accompanied many of the interviews, the compellingness of people talking with profound sorrow about deeply personal, painful things. What many participants most wanted me to remember was that the divorce had mattered even though they were older. And the most common reason for volunteering was "to let the voices of older children be heard;" was because "even if you're older it hurts just as much;" was because "people only think its younger kids." This

cultural attitude is highlighted by the omission on divorce records of offspring over age eighteen and concretizes the invisibility of adult offspring.

At the same time I was surprised that some participants described the divorce as positive or as not having made that much of a difference. Peter and Liz volunteered because they felt that Barbara Cain's (1990) New York Times article had not captured their experience, for instance Liz's experience of gaining hope. Catherine and Debbie felt the divorce was positive; two others felt that their families were so unconnected that the divorce had hardly mattered.

My belief is that these six out of 21 participants who described the divorce as either not mattering or as positive is an over-representation of this part of the population. Probably also over-represented are offspring who have or plan to enter the mental health profession. My methods account for part of this: one of the places I placed my add was in a social work school. I suggest that more significant than how participants were recruited however is the frequency with which offspring described their role in their family as mediators, caretakers, or as the bridge or glue between their parents. Eleven out of 21 participants clearly played such roles in their families. The divorce occurred in temporal proximity to when 8 of these 11 left home.

Another significant characteristic defines this sample. For the most part these participants' parents divorced before the astronomical increase in divorce rates. Most of them grew up before the time when close to 50% of school age children come from homes which no longer are constituted with two biological parents, before the terms blended and reconstituted families were popularized, and when most families were expected to last. Changes in the cultural assumptive background might not influence the findings in this study-divorce is stressful even though the high rates suggest it could almost be considered a normative experience. Loss, disruption, loss of illusion and relational vulnerability could still be expected to reverberate through adult offsprings' lives even if they had grown up watching others undergo a trauma which they only faced later in life. One could even argue that a family's survival despite others' demise might inoculate offspring against the possibility of their own family facing such a fate. In any case, that most of these participants grew up during a time when divorce was not the norm is part of the context of this study.

Where We've Been-Where We're Going

Though a retrospective study has its disadvantages, I believe it is due to being retrospective that this study manages to advance our understanding of parental

divorce in late adolescence. The findings of previous studies (Cain, 1989, 1990; Cooney et al., 1986; & Kaufman, 1988) are supported here in areas such as increased cynicism, fear of abandonment, a loss of trust in intimate relationships, a loss of innocence and numerous issues in renegotiating relationships with parents. More specific findings such as the difference in relationship patterns with mothers and fathers (Kaufman) and the most significant deterioration occurring in the father-daughter relationship (Cooney et al.; Kaufman) are also supported. I think it likely that the participants in this study would have been indistinguishable from the subjects in previous studies if they also had they been interviewed within three years of their parents' divorce. But because more time had elapsed than in previous studies these participants have been able to shed light on two previously overlooked aspects of parental divorce, aspects which are illuminated by examining participants' experience through the lens of individuation: how pre-divorce psychological development influences adjustment to parental divorce, and how the loss of the family is experienced internally and implications of this for mourning.

I think it probable that the differences which emerged between the "caught" and "separated" offspring in this study would have been subsumed within their

commonalities if they had been interviewed closer to the time of their parents' divorce. The contrast which emerged between a focus on the loss of the family versus on dyadic relationships with parents would have been hidden since closer to the divorce most offspring would probably still be struggling on both levels--renegotiating relationships with parents along with reacting to the loss of "a home base." Similarly, I think a study within three years would be more likely to tap a crisis-laden level of experience and both groups of offspring would have presented with the increased affectivity which at the time of this study was characteristic of only the "caught" offspring. Finally, as mourning is a process which only occurs over time, differences in whether offspring had mourned the loss of their family would have been similarly obscured.

While a retrospective design has allowed these differences to emerge, it is the concept of individuation which sheds light on the significance of these differences. As these differences materialized their significance was obscured until the theoretical lens was refined from general object relations theory to the concept of individuation. It is believed that the "caught" offsprings' ongoing concerns with parents and with an uncertain sense of self indicate that they are still involved in the work of individuation--of separating from the internal parental objects. In contrast, the

focus of the "separated" offspring on the loss of the family-on that of which they had been a part-is seen as indicating that enough sense of self had developed by the time of their parents' divorce that they were able to continue with the internal processes of individuation. From within that more established sense of self they no longer struggled with who they were in the world but still missed their lost family.

The concept of individuation provides insight about the implications of parental divorce in late adolescence. It was observed that complications in the external relationships after the divorce compounded the internal work of separation for the offspring in this study. Complications resulted in the opposite direction as well in that unresolved narcissistic or dependency needs with parents of the past contaminated the field of renegotiating relationships in the present. Consequently, it is believed that the internal work of individuation is impeded by increased demands in external relationships and that external relationships do not necessarily resolve with time when complicated by internal conflict. Offsprings' ability to work through losing their family was also made more difficult by unresolved difficulties of the past and the ending of the family exacerbated these previous losses. These observations suggest the following: 1) that continuing the internal work of individuation is made more difficult

by divorce, 2) that the increased grief of loss from the divorce exacerbates the inherent grief of individuation, and 3) that divorce at this age potentially complicates recovery for offspring from problematic families.

It appears that the ability to mourn the family depends on having already achieved some internal independence from it. Offspring who were still "caught" within their dyadic relationships with parents demonstrated less involvement with mourning; their families of the past still seemed to exist internally in an unmourned state despite changes in the external world. But differences were also apparent with the "separated" offspring about the extent to which they had mourned their families. Resolving the loss of the family seemed to depend on whether the image of the past family could be brought forward into the future. This in turn depended on two things: whether memories of the past family had been damaged by the divorce and whether the image of the past family matched at least on some emotional level what was now re-constituted as family in the present. These two conditions characterized very few people and was most true when parents had already been living apart before the divorce. If mourning is compared to the lifelong process of individuation as more broadly understood as relinquishing old "ideal" states in the pursuit of more reality and ego syntonic ones (Joffe &

Sandler, 1965), these findings suggest that few offspring have mourned the loss of their families.

A future study which is both longitudinal and retrospective could support or alternatively contradict the results of this study. At the time of divorce offspring could be administered a separation-individuation inventory as are beginning to be developed (Hoffman, 1984), and then interviewed years later as occurred in this study. Though not at all practical, this would allow a comparison between differences in individuation closer to parents' divorce as measured by the inventory and presentation years later.

Within a retrospective design, this study could be improved upon by greater conformity within the ages both at the time of the divorce and when interviewed. Though not indicated in this study, it could emerge that offsprings' focus increasingly becomes the loss of family as offspring age and despite earlier difficulties, manage to establish stronger senses of self. A future study might establish stricter and narrower guidelines in the range of ages and years since the divorce. Another guideline would be to take into account how identity establishment seems to increase dramatically between sophomore and senior years in college (Josselyn, 1973). Though in this study variation in individuation did not correlate with age, such considerations might improve future investigations.

The affective involvement about the loss of one's family suggests the focus of another future study. The current study only began to tap the deep issues about the meaning of family and of parents who remain together for all time as symbols of how life is supposed to be. Further study could elaborate this focus and connect it to the significance of how community life, and how family is our first community, is becoming increasingly fragmented.

Feelings of belonging stem from that which we are members of and feel a part of. Families are our first experience of belonging and are a source of stability and security when they work. The ending of the family-as-known and the need to relinquish lost "ideal" self states perhaps contributes to the feelings of a "paradise lost" reported by Cain (1989). The current study demonstrates more than previous studies how offspring experience parents ending their marriage as ending the family and declaring it a failure. There is less awareness than with younger offspring that parental divorce at this age also ends a family because offspring have already left home. I believe the invisibility of this loss underlies offsprings' feelings that the impact on them is minimized.

Disruptions in Continuity and other Final Thoughts

Apart from the themes already presented the diversity of these participants' experiences make it

difficult to generalize about the impact of divorce in late adolescence. I was surprised that there were not more accounts of feelings of betrayal, shame and responsibility. Feelings of responsibility are often reported among younger children of divorce: feelings that "I'm bad and that's why Mommy and Daddy are getting a divorce." This age group expressed a different type of responsibility: some offspring tried to help parents mediate disputes and had to come to grips with their impotence; some continued in their roles as caretaker or father's emotional partner and felt parents would have stayed together if offspring had done their "jobs" better. But offspring were mostly able to step back and recognize their lack of responsibility in the marital failure. Hints of feeling betrayed stemmed from parent's inappropriate usage of offspring as confidants; I most heard feelings of betrayal in the form of "how could they have told me such and such!" Feelings of betrayal were also apparent in the belief that offspring had been lied to their whole lives about the family working or in overt or covert promises of stability and security. Wallerstein (1989) suggests that Oedipal issues and the defenses against them are too intensified during this age to allow emergence of more overt themes of betrayal.

Most surprising to me in its absence was the feeling that parental divorce cut off emotional if not actual access to the community in which offspring had been

raised. Only Larry spoke of these issues but I would speculate that Larry was articulating something that others were not aware of. Many peoples' incorporation into our discussion of their awareness that the family home no longer existed suggests one severed symbolic connection with a community.

Also uniquely articulated by Larry was an awareness of how his parents' divorce created a rupture between his past and the rest of his life. He spoke of how the divorce makes it impossible to remember life in his family with anyone who shared it. Acutely aware of not being part of the new family which his father has gone on to create Larry could not locate a shared past since his father refuses to talk about it. That Larry was the only one to overtly articulate such a lack of continuity is perhaps due to several things, most notably that as one of the oldest participants and only one of two with children, these are feelings he struggles with in his mid thirties when the forward and backward trajectory of his life is visible in a way previously not (Jacques, 1965). Also absent for most others besides Kate and Larry were feelings of regret that parents had divorced. I would suggest this represents an inability to tolerate reparative desire to see parents reunited; defending against such feelings would also mitigate yearnings for continuity. Nonetheless, several others expressed similar inklings of a lack of continuity and I sense this

is a focus worth further study. Like Larry they talked about difficulties of not being able to talk with one parent about the other. In Matt's words about not talking with his mother's side about his father, "it's like it never was." Talking about the past with family members stirs up too much pain, loss, anger or guilt. There is no shared remembering.

A break in continuity is one impact of divorce whose effects are potentially deep and disruptive. Young adults need to experience within themselves the ongoing sameness of being that underlies a sense of identity; the sense that where I have been is still a part of me. For some the divorce makes the past irretrievable. The past becomes irretrievable because the pain through which one must travel to get there is too great when one must travel through the deaths subsequent to the divorce, through the bitterness and conflict that surrounded the divorce, through the ongoing difficulty of any family member, or through the inability to establish a new sense of family. When the past becomes unconnected to current life the experience of the divorce can not be assimilated in a nonconflictual way into an ongoing sense of self. There is no way to look back at the past from one's current vantage point that does not involve transversing the terrain of the divorce. One's childhood was lived by a different self, one who was part of a family that is no

longer, no longer because it was made irrelevant by the people who created it. In becoming so unconnected, the past becomes frozen in time.

Unlike when divorce happens earlier and families have time to re-establish some sense of family before children leave home, older offspring are unable to re-create a new way of being part of a family once they have left. Relationships must be re-established in an unfamiliar context which only highlights the changes of divorce and further disrupts any sense of continuity. When the divorce occurs after offspring have left home there is no new sense of family to return to, if only in one's mind.

A break in continuity was apparent in many peoples' feelings that the foundation upon which they thought they were building their lives was proven shaky by divorce. The foundation of values, beliefs and role models for how to establish oneself in the world of adults is now discredited just as reliance upon it in the formation of identity is most crucial. This is how Larry explained the "second guessing" he feels plagued by which he sees as a legacy of divorce at this age:

Because you have a pattern of life behind you that is presumed and intact. That's the basis from which you act and make decisions. It's thrown into question because it's of a world that is now no longer good or intact or functional. Which raises questions about it and your placement in it. You're just now setting out to create your own, but you trust

less the basis on which you do your creating because it's all just been thrown into question...If you're younger, all that hasn't taken shape or solidified to the degree it has when you're 22. You're just stepping out of one world into an effort to create your own, and if that one falls from behind you, you're suddenly left on your own and not trusting your own impulses, or your own routine ways of thinking and acting.

Bringing the past into the future as the world of the family is left and a new life just beginning to be created was made impossible for Larry and many others. Lost is the feeling that being from this particular family helps me know who I am as I begin to establish my identity independent of them. Elaine described a similar chaotic feeling to Larry's that the divorce threw everything up for questioning:

I wondered if anything is for real, I remember that's what felt so hard, felt like the rug was pulled out. The one stable factor of my parents together somewhere, that had allowed me to go overseas; I knew my parents were there, then suddenly, that wasn't the case anymore. I feel like then where do you start to build again, and I feel like if you're questioning everything, is there any foundation?

And these were Rachel's words:

It's just hard to have that foundation just yanked from you. It's hard to all of a sudden realize that all these things that you were building your life on really aren't there. And it's hard to get in touch with who you are.

If there were words that echoed from one participant to the next it was that the "rug had been pulled out." A lost foundation was also apparent in many peoples' feeling that there was now nothing to fall back on, there

was no one to rely on but oneself. Many people felt their parents' divorce made them more desperate to feel self reliant and like an adult, often with added responsibilities, burdens and with no back up. Echoing the students in Cain's (1989) study, the divorce was seen as bringing on adulthood before offspring were ready; adulthood as a function of parents' divorce rather than as a function of one's developmental progress. While such crises can promote accelerated growth for some, others may defensively seal over unresolved issues and adopt a pseudo-independence which plays itself out in areas such as an inability to be vulnerable or in emotional rigidity or numbness.

Being a young adult when parents divorce causes a juxtaposition of a current self and a child self-the self that was created by these two parents. It is not only the adult self which experiences parental divorce; it is a child self, the self which lived in the family which is now being dissolved. This paradox was expressed by several people; some communicated a regression to an earlier psychic space, others reported they they still felt like children on some level and not yet ready to enter the world of adults.

Fintushel and Hillard (1991) suggest that such a paradox confronts adults of any age when parents divorce. Unlike much of the existing literature on this population, they place emphasis upon the internal world

of their participants and on "the internalized family." But missing in their much needed if popularized account is any inkling of one of the two main findings of this study: the sense of self that offspring have established prior to the divorce is an important mediator of experience. As Wendy said:

(The) divorce threw me out in the world before I was old enough to be there, but I wouldn't have been ready anyway because they didn't prepare me...they didn't teach me to depend on myself.

The experience of the participants in this study support Wallerstein's (1989) challenge to the belief that the stress of divorce subsides after the first two years as well as to her suggestion that divorce has long term consequences. What emerges in these young adults' experience is the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries and protection from the conflict surrounding the divorce, a finding true with younger children also. Also important is whether parents recover and go on to take advantage of opportunities the divorce makes possible.

But divorce hurts at every age and loss reverberates on many levels. As long as mainstream culture defines family life as it does, inculcated upon our psyches will be what family life is supposed to be: children in a nuclear family with two opposite gendered parents providing all kinds of resources. Families are experienced as deficient when they depart from this

narrow image and do not provide alternative resources or meaning. For instance, Marcie described her family as unconnected and had hoped for the divorce for a long time so that her parents could move on. She said that the divorce made the individuals of her family that much more unconnected and her more cynical, yet she told me a dream she'd been having the last year and a half, the reparative nature of which looms large.

It's weird, for like the past 2 years, past year especially, I've had a lot of dreams about being with my family. Where we're all together as a family again, and they're wacky dreams, as dreams usually go, like things are happening that never would have happened, like off the wall. One I can clearly remember is my mother had a lot of money (laughs) and had rented this beautiful house on some island, like a Martha's Vineyard type island, and I was taking a canal to the house that she had rented, and I got there and my mother was dressed all formally, like she had a black gown on, and my brother and father had tuxedos, and they've never worn and probably never will in their lives, and it was a beautifully furnished home and she had rented this home for us all to get together and stuff. When I woke up I felt, I don't know, it just kind of made me laugh sort of, it was, not only because the whole socio-economic status of my family had changed in this dream (laughing), but made me wonder how my family would have been if we had more money or if we were a different class people.

Imprinted upon us is how life is supposed to be- families that stay together. Divorce at any age violates the bond forged between parent and child which resonates on many levels when broken. While those participants from the most problematic families advocated that the divorce should have come earlier and I tend to agree with

them, the timing of the divorce made things harder for them. Parents stay together out of the motivation and belief that once kids leave home "it no longer matters." This was true for some of the participants in this study. But for most it wasn't. Along with the potential for growth, divorce at any age brings rupture and loss. As my uncle tells it, the couple who in their nineties came before the judge to petition for divorce gave as their reason for taking this step so late in life-"We wanted to wait until the children died!"

APPENDIX A
POSTED NOTICES

PARENTAL DIVORCE IN LATE ADOLESCENCE

I am doing a dissertation about the impact of parental divorce in young adulthood. IF YOU ARE NOW BETWEEN 20 AND 35 AND YOUR PARENTS DIVORCED AFTER YOU WERE 18, I would like to interview you. If you would consider being a subject for this research or would like to know more, please send your name and phone number or address to:

Joan Copperman
Tobin Hall
Department of Psychology
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Ma. 01003

APPENDIX B
CONTACT LETTER

Dear Fellow Student,

I am a graduate student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Massachusetts who is investigating the effect on young adults of parental divorce.

If you are between 20 and 35 years of age and your parents divorced (or permanently separated) after you were 18, I would like to interview you for my dissertation. The interview will take approximately two hours and would be at your convenience.

If you meet the above criteria for my study I hope you will consider participating. If you do not meet the criteria but know someone who does, I would very much appreciate you passing this letter on to them.

If you would like to know more about the study or would like to volunteer, please leave your name and phone number or address for me at 585-1250 and I will contact you.

Thanks,

Joan Copperman
University of Massachusetts
Clinical Psychology
Tobin Hall
585-1250

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW

As I said on the phone, I am interested in the experiences of people whose parents separated or divorced when they were young adults. I'm interested in how you experienced these events and what you think the affect on your life has been. First I'll be asking you questions about your family and the separation, then questions about how you think the separation changed things for you. Do you have any questions at this point?

1. O.K., can you tell me who was in your family when you were growing up:

parents names and current ages;
names and ages of siblings.

What was family's financial status; religious identity.

2. Now about you, some of this information I know from the phone but want to ask you again: How old are you?; what is your living situation?; what do you do for a living? How old were you when you left home and what did you do? And when was it that your parents separated/divorced?

I'm going to ask you three questions now that you might not have very much to say about at this point, or you might have a lot to say. In either case, I'll follow up what you tell me with the questions that I have.

3. What was your family like when you were growing up?
How do you think these things effected you?

GET A SENSE OF CONFLICT

Possible probes: Who did people worry the most about?/ the least?;

What would you say you liked most about growing up in your family? How about the least?

4. Other then what you have already said, what do you think

I should know about you and your family to help me understand what your experience was of your parents separation.?

5. Do you think your parents separation/divorce has effected your life?
In what ways?

DIVORCE

1. I'd like now to find out about your parents' separation/divorce. You were ?? years old when your parents separated. How long had they been married at that point?
2. So you were xx when they separated, and xx when you left home. Tell me briefly what life was like for you between the time you left home and your parents' separation. What were you doing, how did you feel about your life and yourself?
3. Can you tell me about the separation/divorce.
 - Did you know your parents were having difficulties?
 - How did you know?
 - What was the process leading up to the separation?
 - Were there critical events that happened?
 - How did they separate?
 - How did you find out they had separated?
 - How did you hear-you told you?
 - Do you remember what you felt or thought when you first heard?
 - Was it a surprise/expected?
 - Did you feel like you played a role in what was going on with your parents? How did you feel about this?
 - Has your view of this changed over time?
 - How involved with your parents were you during this period? Did you want to be more or less involved?
 - How involved were other family members with your parents during this period?
4. What was each parent's explanation of why they were divorcing?
 - Has that changed over time?
 - What was your explanation then?
 - What do you think now?
5. What did you think of each parent and what/why they were doing?
 - How did you feel about each of your parents at this time.
 - What were your concerns about each of your parents.
 - Did you feel any loyalty conflicts?
 - Did you sympathize with one parent more than the other? Has that changed? Why/Why not?

6. In the period following the separation, do you remember how you felt?
How did you handle it?
Who did you talk with? (the most)
Did you feel able to share what was happening in your family with those people who were important in your life? (if not, why not?)
What do you think the impact was on you at this time of these events?
What was most upsetting at this time to you?
If person has described feeling a lot of distress: Did you consider getting professional help? why/why not.
7. How much were you involved with other family members during this period? Whom did you talk with?
Did family members deal with it together?
(Basic question: Did you feel like you were dealing with this as an individual or in contact with other family members?)
Who were people most worried about-was there a sibling that everyone worried about?
Who seemed most upset?
Is there anyone in your family who had severe problems following the separation?
8. What was your involvement with each parent following the divorce.
How did you feel about your involvement-would you have wanted to be more-less involved?
Did your parents involve you in their conflicts?
How did each parent talk with you about the other?
How did your relationship with your mother/father affect your relationship with your father/mother?
9. Other than what you've already told me about, are there any incidences or events that stand out in your mind that capture something about this period or these events in your life?
(ways responded to parents or each one around this event that were particular to this event?)
10. Does either parent still live in family house? When did each move out; under what circumstances. If a parent still lives there, what is it like when you visit there. (If divorce was a long time ago, how has that changed?)
11. What did each parent do after the divorce. How did their lives change? Where are they now; remarried?; how doing?; financial status.

12. What is your involvement with each parents new situation (family, network)

How has this changed over time since the divorce?

How do you feel about this?

13. How do you think your father/mother would describe your mother/father now?

How do you think your mother/father would have described your father/mother while they were married?

CHANGES

OK. I'd like to now focus our discussion on how you feel your parents' separation has effected your life.

1. Earlier, you said such and such about how you feel your parents' separation has effected your life. Do you want to add anything to that now before I ask you more focussed questions?

How do you think that others who knew you before the separation would answer this same question. For instance, what do you think your (mother) would say about how these events have effected you? (pre-divorce friends, relatives, teachers)

If this is a different question, how do you think your life might have been different had your parents not separated and divorced?

2. How did things change after your parents separation?

3. How did things change in your family after your parents' separation?

4. Can you describe your mother?

What do you think she would be like if she were still married to your father? For what reasons?

What was your mother like when you were growing up?

In what ways are you like your mother? In what ways are you different from your mother? What's good/bad about being like/unlike her?

(How do you think your mother feels/thinks about you now? How do you think she would describe you?

Mother's greatest strength/weakness)

5. What is your relationship with your mother like now?
How do you think your parents separation effected your relationship with your mother?
What do you think your relationship with your mother would be like if your parents had not divorced?
What was your childhood relationship with your mother like? How about in adolescence?
Are there ways that you think or feel about your mother that would be different if the divorce has not occurred?

(What is the best/worse thing about your relationship with your mother now?)

6. Can you describe your father?
What do you think he would be like if he were still married to your mother? For what reasons?
What was your father like when you were growing up?
In what ways are you like your father? In what ways are you different from your father? What's good/bad about being like/unlike him?

(How do you think your father feels/thinks about you now? How do you think he would describe you?
Father's greatest strength/weakness)

7. What is your relationship with your father like now?
How do you think your parents separation effected your relationship with your father?
What do you think your relationship with your father would be like if your parents had not divorced?
What was your childhood relationship with your father like? How about in adolescence?
Are there ways that you think or feel about your father that would be different if the divorce had not occurred?

(What is the best/worse thing about your relationship with your father now?)

8. Which parent do you think you're more like? (is this good or bad)
Do you feel differently about this than you used to?
When did that change?
What do you attribute these changes to?

9. How does your relationship with your mother/father effect your relationship with your father/mother?
Do they ask you about the other?
How do they each talk with you about the other?
If they still have active conflicts, do they involve you in them?
What ways does your mother/father talk about your father/mother that makes you feel good/bad.

(To be asked if it seems relevant and if there's enough time:

When you were growing up, how did the relationship with each of your parents effect your relationship with the other parent?

What were the ways that your mother/father talked with you about your father/mother?

Were there other ways that your father/mother talked about your mother/father that made you feel good or made you feel bad, either in public or to you alone.)

10. What do you think your parents' relationship would be like if they were still married?

What was it like when they were married?

Did the divorce change how you viewed your parents' relationship? How?

How others viewed it?

If the divorce had not occurred, do you think you might have a different picture of their past relationship than you do?

Before the divorce, how would you have described their relationship?

(Especially if subject was the last to leave home):
How do you think their relationship changed after you left home.

11. How did your relations with your siblings change after your parents separation?

How were these relations before the separation/ what are they now?

How do you think these relationships would be if your parents had not divorced?

How about the relationships you have with people other than your family?

12. One of the ways that some people think about families is that everyone has a different emotional role to play in that family. For instance, often one person is the trouble maker, another might be the one who keeps everyone happy. If you were to think about your family in this way, how would you describe what your emotional role was when you were young and then in your adolescence before your parents separation?

How did the divorce effect this-how do you see yourself now in relation to your family?

13. What is your current involvement with your family?

How did your parents' separation effect your involvement with your family?

If your parents had not divorced, what do you think your involvement with your family would be now?

These days, if you wanted to celebrate something as a family-for instance Thanksgiving or a special event, who would be present?

How do you think you would feel now about your family if your parents had not divorced?

When your parents were together did you feel differently about your family than you do now?

14. Before your parents divorce, do you remember what you thought about your family?

Do you think the divorce effected your picture of what it was like to grow up in your family?

What does your parents divorce make possible for you to feel/think about your family. What does it make impossible?

15. (ABORTED CHILDHOOD AND NOT TRYING OUT ADULTHOOD IN CONTEXT OF FAMILY)

How do you think your parents' separation effected how you felt and now feel about yourself?

Are there ways that you experienced yourself before the divorce that are now no longer possible?

Is there anything that you can't get back to?

Are there ways that you now experience yourself that are only possible because of your parents divorce?

When you think about yourself as a child, what does that feel like, can you tell me what you imagine or picture?

(childhood memories changed?)

Did the divorce change how you feel/think about your childhood?

Do you think it change how you felt about coming into adulthood or becoming an adult?

15a. How do you think the divorce effected your concerns and what you think about.

How do you think your parents divorce has affected your experiences in romantic relationships?

How do you think their separation effected your views on marriage and relationships.

How do you think their separation effected your views on having children?

16. Are there things that you don't have now or ways of feeling that you had before the divorce or might still have if your parents had stayed together.

Are the things that you would not have now if your parents had not separated-what's in your life that wouldn't be there.

17. What is the best thing to have come out of your parents' divorce?

What is the worst or hardest thing about your parents being divorced?

18. Other than (answers to previous question) have there been experiences in your life when you have felt particularly aware of your parents divorce.

19. As you look back on all that we've talked about today, can you talk about what was lost for you and also what you might have gained?

20. How would you complete these sentences?
When I think about myself as a child---
I wish----
If my parents had not divorced----

21. Do you think your parents did the right thing?

22. Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years?
How do you think you'll feel/think about all this in 5/10 years?

23. Where are you with all this-do you feel you've put it behind you?, still think about alot?

24. What do you with you had known about yourself or your family that might have made what we've talked about different?

What would you advise someone else?

25. If you've been in therapy and feel comfortable answering this, has your parents divorce been talked about and how have you thought about it?

26. What would you most like to be heard as having said today?

27. Was there any particular reason that you volunteered for this study?

What thought; hoped; feared.

Are there things you had forgotten about?

How has it felt to talk about these things.

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

In this study I am interested in exploring the experiences of adults whose parents divorced when they were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.

If you chose to participate in this interview, I will be talking with you about yourself, your family, the period of your parents' separation and your life since then. I am very sensitive to the fact that the material we discuss may be very personal at times. Please remember that you may let me know if a particular topic is too distressing, and that you are free to withdraw your participation from this interview or this study at any point without penalty. I will be happy to answer any questions before we begin and at the end of the interview.

I will be tape-recording our interview for my own use. Please be assured that our discussion will be kept strictly confidential. In writing up the results of this study, I will disguise all identifying information about you and your life.

I hope you find your participation interesting and rewarding.

Signature of Participant

Date

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abelin, E. (1971). The role of the father in the separation-individuation process. In McDevitt, J. B., and Settlege, C. F. (Eds.), Separation-Individuation. (pp. 229-252). New York: International University Press.
- Ballou, J. W. (1978). Method: Object-relational themes through pregnancy. In The psychology of pregnancy. (pp. 15-28). Lexington, Ma.: Lexington Books.
- Benjamin, J. (1988). The Bonds of Love. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Blos, P. (1954). Prolonged Adolescence. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 24, 733-742.
- (1962). On Adolescence: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation. New York: Free Press.
- (1979). The second individuation process of adolescence. In The Adolescent Passage. (pp. 141-170). New York: International Universities Press. (First published in 1967 in Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 22, 162-186).
- Cain, B. (1989). Parental divorce during the college years. Psychiatry, 135-146.
- (1990). The price they pay: older children and divorce. New York Times Magazine, pp. 26-55.
- Charmaz, K. (1983). The Grounded Theory Method: An Explication and Interpretation. In R. Emerson (Ed.), Contemporary Field Research. (pp. 109-126). Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Cooney, T. M. (1988). Young adults and parental divorce: Exploring important issues. Human Relations, 41, 805-822.
- Cooney, T. M., Smyer, M. A., Hagestad, G. O., & Klock, B. S. (1986). Parental divorce in young adulthood: Some preliminary findings. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 56, 470-477.
- Dashef, S. (1984). Aspects of identification and growth during late adolescence and young adulthood. American Journal of Psychotherapy, 38, 239-247.

Edward, J., Ruskin, N., & Turrini, P. (1981). Separation-Individuation: Theory and Application. New York: Gardner Press.

Elson, M. (1964). The reactive impact of adolescent and family upon each other in separation. Journal of the Academy of Child Psychiatry, 3, 697-707.

Erikson, E. (1956). The problem of ego identity. Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 4, 56-121.

---- (1962) Fidelity and Diversity. Daedalus, 91, 5-35.

Fintushel, N. & Hillard, N. (1991). A grief out of season: When your parents divorce in your adult years. Boston, Ma.: Little, Brown and Company.

Franz, C. E. and White, K. M. (1985) Individuation and attachment in personality development: Extending Erikson's theory. Journal of Personality, 53(2), 224-256.

Gilligan, C. (1982). In a Different Voice: Psychological theory and women's development. Cambridge Ma.: Harvard University Press.

Grotevant, H. & Cooper, C. (1986). Individuation in family relationships: A perspective on individual differences in the development of identity and role-taking skill in adolescence. Human Development, 29, 82-100.

Hoffman, J. (1984). Psychological separation of late adolescents from their parents. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 31, 170-178.

Jacques, E. (1965). Death and the mid-life crisis. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 46, 502-514.

Joffe, W. G. & Sandler, J. (1965). Notes on pain, depression and individuation. Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 20, 394-424.

Jordan, J. V. (1984). Empathy and self boundaries. Work in Progress, No. 84-05, Stone Center, Wellesley College.

Josselyn, R. L. (1973). Psychodynamic aspects of identity formation in college women. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 2, 3-51.

- (1980). Ego development in adolescence. In J. Adelson (Ed.), Handbook of Adolescent Psychology. (pp. 188-209). New York: Wiley.
- Karpel, M. (1976). Individuation: From fusion to dialogue. Family Process, 15, 65-82.
- Kaufman, K. (1988). Reworking the relationship: College students and their divorcing parents. Work in Progress. Wellesley, Ma: Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies.
- Keller, E. F. (1978). Gender and science. In Harding, S. and Hintikka, M. B. (Eds.), Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology and Philosophy of Science. (pp. 187-205). Boston: Kluwer.
- Kernberg, O. (1976) Object-relations theory and clinical psychoanalysis. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Klein, M. (1940). Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 21, 125-153.
- Mahler, M., Pine, F., and Bergman, A. (1975). The psychological birth of the human infant. New York: Basic Books.
- May, R. (1988). The psychoanalytic theory and treatment of mourning. In May, R. (Ed.), Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in a College Context. (pp. 113-125). New York: Praeger.
- McDevitt, J. B. (1975) Separation-individuation and object constancy. Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 23, 713-742.
- Ogden, T. (1986). The Matrix of the Mind. New Jersey: Jason Aronson.
- Packer, M. J., & Addison, R. B. (Eds.). (1989). Entering the Circle: Hermeneutic Investigation in Psychology. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Patton, M. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Piotrkowski, C. (1978). Work and the family system. New York: The Free Press.

- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). Narrative knowing and the human sciences. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Pollock, G. (1961). Mourning and adaptation. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 42, 341-361.
- E. Pumpian-Mindlin, (1965). Omnipotentiality, youth, and commitment. Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, 4, 1-18.
- Raush, H. L. (1986). Differentiation and splitting in clinical practice and research. The Clinical Psychologist, 39, 81-83.
- Rubin, L. (1981). Sociological research: The subjective dimension. Symbolic Interaction, 4, 97-112.
- Sabatelli, R. & Mazor, A. (1985). Differentiation, individuation, and identity formation: The integration of family systems and individual developmental perspectives. Adolescence, 20, 619-633.
- Schafer, R. (1973). Concepts of self and identity and the experience of separation-individuation in adolescence. Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 42, 42-59.
- Scharff, J. S. (1989). Foundations of object relations family therapy. New Jersey: Jason Aronson.
- Scharff, D. & Scharff, J. S. (1987). Object relations family therapy. New Jersey: Jason Aronson.
- Slavin, M. (1985). A developmental disorder of late adolescence. International Journal of psychoanalytic psychotherapy, 11, 219-233.
- Spence, D. (1982). Narrative truth and historical truth. New York: Norton.
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1984). Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meanings. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Wallerstein, J. & Blakeslee, S. (1989). Second Chances. New York: Ticknor and Fields.
- Wallerstein, J. S., and Kelly, J. B. (1974) The effects of parental divorce: The adolescent experience. In E. J. Anthony and C. Koupernik, Eds., The Child in His Family: Children at Psychiatric Risk. New York: Wiley.

Winnicott, D. W. (1971). Playing and Reality. New York: Basic Books.

Woolfolk, R. L., Sass, L. A., & Messer, S. B. (Eds.). (1988). Hermeneutic and Psychological Theory. New York: Rutgers University Press.

Youniss, J. (1980). Parents and peers in social development: A Sullivan-Piaget perspective. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

