Generation Boundaries in Divorced and Intact Families

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GENERATION BOUNDARIES IN DIVORCED AND INTACT FAMILIES

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Barry Lee Funkhouser
1989
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Abstract

Boundary-breaching patterns were compared in divorced and intact families to determine if generational integrity is more difficult to maintain in divorced families than in intact families and to determine if generational confusion is associated with poor adolescent adjustment in divorced families as past research has shown it to be in intact families. Boundary-breaching patterns included: (1) cross-generational coalitions; (2) collapsed parent-child roles; (3) intergenerational triangulation; (4) and intergenerational fusion. Subjects were 96 college students (52 from divorced families, 44 from intact families) who completed a Family Background Questionnaire about their present relationships with their natural parents (and step-parents, if applicable) which included the PAFS-Q triangulation and fusion subscales (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984), an adapted form of the Family Hierarchy Test (Madden, & Harbin, 1984), and a parental coalition scale (Eldridge, Coplan, & Rohrbaugh, 1986). Subjects also completed Beck's (1978) Depression Inventory, the Revised UCLA Loneliness scale (Russel, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), and other scales measuring satisfaction with academic achievement and perceived need for professional counseling. As expected, subjects from divorced families reported greater levels of fusion, more collapsed parent-child roles, and weaker parental coalitions than subjects from intact families. Despite the finding of more boundary breaching in families of divorce, there was a weak relationship between boundary breaching and student adjustment in divorced families. In contrast, a strong relationship was found between boundary breaching and student adjustment in intact families. Results suggest that the importance of generational integrity to healthy family functioning may be different in divorced than in intact families.
GENERATION BOUNDARIES IN DIVORCED AND INTACT FAMILIES
Divorce is an unscheduled life transition experienced by one-third to one-half of the married population, and over 50% of these divorces involve families with children (Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984). The transition imposed by a divorce requires a major reorganization of roles and relationships within the family system. How the family reorganizes structurally and redefines members' roles has implications for the future functioning of family members. Structural family theorists such as Michuchin (1974) and Wood and Talmon (1983) suggest that optimal family functioning requires that the divorce transition occur without jeopardizing the integrity of the family's generation boundaries. Generation boundaries refer to the implicit interactional rules that govern relationships between parents and children, or more simply, rules that determine who participates when, and how (Wood, 1985).

The importance of intact generation boundaries is a recurrent theme in family therapy literature. Family therapy theories (Minuchin, 1974; Haley, 1967, 1980; Bowen, 1966, 1978) predict that dysfunctional behavior is more likely to occur in families where generation boundaries separating parents from children are
breached. Boundary-breaching patterns include cross-generational coalitions, collapse or reversal of parent-child roles, the triangulation of a child between his or her parents, and intergenerational fusion (Minuchin, 1974; Haley, 1967, 1980; Bowen, 1966, 1978). Although these patterns have been empirically linked to poor adolescent adjustment in intact families (e.g., Fleming & Anderson, 1986; Madanes, Dukes and Harbin, 1980; and Madden & Harbin, 1983), this finding has not been extended to families of divorce—despite the susceptibility to generational confusion that divorce apparently brings (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to compare boundary breaching in divorced and intact families and to determine if breached generation boundaries are as dysfunctional in divorced families as past research have shown them to be in intact families.

**Families of Divorce**

There is a growing body of empirical evidence—much from longitudinal research—indicating that children from divorced families experience more social, academic, and psychological adjustment problems than children from intact families (e.g., Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Researchers also suggest that divorce
per se is not the determining factor in children's post-divorce adjustment difficulties. Rather, family processes that begin and often continue after the divorce are the best predictors of children's adjustment.

For example, conflictual interactions between divorced parents have been found to be related to children's poor post-divorce adjustment. Johnston, Gonzales, and Campbell (1985, cited in Hodges, 1986) found that children of divorced parents who were involved in highly conflictual custody disputes exhibited numerous behavioral problems. Guidabaldi and Perry (1985) reported that decreased conflict between former spouses was significantly associated with better conduct and classroom behavior in their children. For college students from divorced families, a high level of parental conflict has been linked with high levels of anxiety, depression, and hostility (Farber, Felner, & Primavera, 1985). For the subjects in the Farber et al. study, parental divorce had occurred before age twelve, indicating that parental hostilities may continue long after the divorce occurs.

Remarriage, too, has been implicated as a mediating variable in children's post-divorce
adjustment. Langer and Michael (1963) found that children living in a remarried family were less well adjusted than either children living in a family that had experienced parental death or children living in a divorced family where parents had not remarried. Hodges and Bloom (1984) found that 18 months after divorce, children whose parents had not remarried were better adjusted than children from remarriage homes.

From a family systems perspective (Minuchin, 1974; Wood & Talmon, 1985), remarriage is potentially very stressful to family members because it requires a reorganization of parent-child boundaries in a family that may have only recently adapted to the absence of the departed spouse. As in divorce, the way the remarried family reorganizes itself will determine whether the family adapts to the addition of a step-parent. For example, after remarriage, a step-father may emerge as an effective co-parent, or he may remain in a peripheral position in the family, possibly prevented from assuming an effective co-parenting role by a strong natural mother-child coalition.

The timing of the parental divorce in the child's life has been implicated as an important factor in the child's subsequent adjustment, as well. Nevertheless,
the results of studies in this area are equivocal. Landis (1960) found that subjects who were younger when their parents divorced rated themselves as happier, less upset, and more secure than those who experienced parental divorce when older. On the other hand, Hetherington (1972) found that adolescent females who had experienced parental divorce before age five displayed poorer social adjustment than subjects who experienced parental divorce at a later age.

Most divorce research has focused on young children or young adolescents, neglecting older adolescents (i.e., age 17-21). Other researchers (Rosen, 1979; Slater, Steward, & Lion, 1983) have claimed to examine the effects of divorce on older children but have failed to account for such factors as age at time of divorce or time passed since divorce. As such, many studies purporting to examine the effects of divorce on "older children" have studied children who were not actually "older" at the time divorce occurred (Cooney, Snyder, Hagestad, & Klock, 1986).

Findings from longitudinal research examining the relationship between parental divorce and childrens' adjustment suggest that childrens' initial poor adjustment generally diminishes with the passage of
time. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980, 1984) evaluated the adjustment of 131 children from divorced families immediately after parental separation, and then re-evaluated the families one and a half, five, and ten years later. Immediately after the separation, more than 50 percent of the children were anxious and intensely preoccupied with their parents' separation. By 18 months after the divorce, in all but 15 percent of the children, the initial poor adjustment associated with the divorce had begun to lessen. In the five year follow-up, children's adjustment had continued to improve and by 10 years after the divorce few children showed poor adjustment.

The hypothesis of the present study— one that previously has not been directly examined— is that the relationship between post-divorce family processes such as parental conflict and remarriage on children's adjustment may depend upon the clarity of the divorced family's generation boundaries. According to this generational integrity hypothesis, parental conflict per se is not necessarily detrimental to children's functioning if the children are protected from their parents' conflict by clearly defined generation boundaries. For example, if parents do not
"triangulate" their children in their hostilities, parental conflict may be present without the children showing poor adjustment. Additionally, the improvement shown by children over time may depend upon increasing clarity in the divorced family's generation boundaries. With time, boundaries between parents and children, disrupted by the divorce transition, are re-negotiated and redefined.

**Generation Boundaries**

In the family therapy literature "generational integrity" (and conversely, the breaching of generation boundaries) has been defined in at least four conceptually distinct ways. Breached generation boundaries have been identified with (a) cross-generational coalitions, (b) collapsed or reversed parent-child roles, (c) intergenerational triangulation, and (d) intergenerational fusion. Although the literature consists primarily of clinical observations and descriptions, there have been some empirical studies that are relevant to each of these boundary-breaching patterns. It is important to note that virtually all the research linking breached generation boundaries to child and adolescent adjustment has been done with intact families.
Cross-generational Coalitions. Haley (1967) observed that families with a problem member are characterized by a triadic relationship involving a coalition between one parent and a child at the expense or exclusion of the other parent. For example, a father might enter a coalition with a child against the mother by speaking negatively about her to the child and thereby enlisting the child's support. Cross-generational coalitions disrupt a family's generation boundaries not only by undermining the authority of the outside parent, but also by making the authority of the favoring parent dependent on support from the child.

Haley (1967) distinguished between an coalition, where two people join together against a third, and an alliance, which can be based on common interest and not involve a third person. Haley (1967) also noted that cross-generational coalitions are more pathological when they are covert or denied.

In intact families, a strong parental alliance, in contrast to a cross-generational alliance, has been found to be significantly related to adolescents' higher scores on internal locus of control, better academic success (Teyber, 1983), and positive self-image (Kleiman, 1981). Additionally, Wilson and
Rohrbaugh (1985), Eldridge, Coplan, and Rohrbaugh (1986), and Peterson and Rohrbaugh (1986) suggest that the integrity of the intact family's generation boundaries as evidenced by a strong parental alliance is important to college students' successful academic and social adjustment.

In divorced families, not surprisingly, the parental alliance rarely remains the primary alliance in the family. Yet, past research (e.g., Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1976; Wallerstein, & Kelly, 1980) indicates that it is important to children's adjustment that former spouses develop a co-parenting relationship that permits them to continue their child-rearing obligations and responsibilities after the divorce. The process of co-parental redefinition requires that divorced parents separate their spousal and parental roles, terminating the former while redefining the latter (Ahrons, 1981).

**Intergenerational Triangulation.** Closely related to the triadic, cross-generational coalition is the process of triangulation. Minuchin (1978) describes triangulation as a situation in which two parents involved in overt or covert conflict attempt to enlist their child's support against the other. In this
arrangement, each parent simultaneously requests the child's loyalty. Bowen (1978), too, describes a triangulation process. Unlike Minuchin's (1978), however, who describes triangulation as a relatively static interactional pattern, Bowen (1978) describes triangulation as a fluid, constantly changing process by which two individuals relieve the anxiety of relating one-to-one by involving a third person. In highly triangulated families, the identity of the child becomes submerged in the emotional intensity of the parental relationship, preventing the child's normal personal development.

In a study employing a direct self-report measure of intergenerational triangulation (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984), college students reporting higher levels of triangulation were found to have significantly lower levels of self-esteem and sense of mastery (Fleming & Anderson, 1986). In another study, adolescent females who scored higher on Loevinger's Ego Development Scale were less likely to be "triangled" into their parents marital relationship than adolescent females who scored low on ego development (Bell & Bell, 1982).

**Intergenerational Fusion.** According to Bowen (1978), breached generation boundaries are
characteristic of poorly differentiated families. Differentiation refers to the interpersonal processes that maintain the psychological distances among family members. Poorly differentiated families are identified by an emotional "stuck togetherness" or fusion. The greater the degree of fusion between two family members, the more emotionally reactive each member is to the tension and anxiety of the other. In fused relationships so much effort is invested in seeking love and approval, or attacking each other for not supplying it, that little energy remains for autonomous, goal-directed behavior (Bowen, 1978). In such an atmosphere, children fail to achieve adequate individuation from their family and often fail to complete normal developmental tasks.

In a study employing a self-report measure of intergenerational fusion (Bray et al., 1984), college students reporting high levels of fusion were found to have significantly lower self-esteem and grade point averages, and greater health problems (Fleming & Anderson, 1986).

**Differentiation of Parent-Child Roles.** Generation boundaries may also be breached by collapsed or reversed parent-child roles. According to normative
generational roles, parents nurture their children by
protecting them and by taking responsibility for their
well-being. Parents are also normally in charge of
their children; they make rules, set limits, and
enforce the limits. If parents stop taking care of
their child or if they are no longer in charge of their
child, a collapsed generational hierarchy exists. If a
child begins to take care of his or her parent or gains
executive power in the family, a reversed generational
hierarchy exists (Wood & Talmon, 1983).

Madanes, Dukes, and Harbin (1980), in a study of
the families of heroin addicts, schizophrenics, and
normal adults, found a higher occurrence of
hierarchical collapses/reversals in both the families
of addicts and schizophrenics than in the non-clinical
families. To assess the hierarchical
collapses/reversals in subjects' families, the
researchers used the Family Hierarchy Test, a self-
report measure of collapsed and reversed parent-child
roles within the family. In a related study, Madden
and Harbin (1983) studied the families of assultive
adolescents using the same Family Hierarchy Test.
Again, the presence of breached generation boundaries,
represented by hierarchical collapse and reversal,
differentiated disturbed families from families without a problem member. Damer and Rohrbaugh (1988) compared the families of female college students with self-reported bulimic symptomatology to families of "normal" subjects using the Family Hierarchy Test adapted to allow an assessment of caretaking as well as executive hierarchies. A greater number of collapsed parent-child roles was found in both the executive and caretaking hierarchies in the families of the bulimic group. Similar results have been found in the families of overweight college males and females (Washychyn & Rohrbaugh, 1989).

McCormick (1985) broadened the study of the differentiation of parent-child roles by including both direct and indirect methods of assessing hierarchical confusion. The executive and caretaking hierarchies of 15 clinical and 15 non-clinical mother, father, and index child triads were assessed using projective stories generated by the TAT, the Ferreria-Winter Questionnaire (FWQ), and the Family Hierarchy Test (FHT). TAT stories scored for inappropriate executive hierarchy and cross-generational coalitions; mother's self-reported hierarchical reversal on the caretaking portion of the FHT; and unanimous and chaotic executive
decision-making on the FWQ were all measures that
differentiated the clinical from the non-clinical
families.

**Generation Boundaries in Families of Divorce**

The clinical literature suggests that divorcing families are especially vulnerable to the kinds of generational confusion just described (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Children in divorcing families often become embroiled in the conflictual relationship of their divorcing parents. Some children deal with this often difficult situation by aligning with one parent against the other (cross-generational coalition). Other children, especially those whom maintain frequent contact with each parent, often remain caught in the middle of their parents hostilities (triangulation). In some situations, a divorced spouse, especially one opposed to the divorce, may become so emotional or despondent that his or her ability to parent diminishes. If a child then begins to take care of the parent, the generational hierarchy is reversed. In less extreme instances, a child may not actually assume responsibility for the parent, but may act as a peer to his or her parent (collapsed hierarchy). For example, it is not uncommon for a young child to begin sleeping
in the same bed with the divorced parent or for an older child to become the divorced parent's personal confidant. The energy and time required to fill the emotional and psychological space left by the departed spouse, may leave the child with too little time and energy to accomplish normal developmental tasks.

**Purpose of the Present Study**

Despite the apparent susceptibility of the divorced family to family relationships that jeopardize generation boundaries, there is surprisingly little direct evidence that generation boundaries are more commonly breached in families of divorce compared to other families. Nor is there evidence directly linking breached generation boundaries to child adjustment in families of divorce. Therefore, one purpose of the present research was to compare directly the degree of boundary breaching reported by college students from divorced and intact families. Additionally, the relationship between boundary breaching and the adjustment of children from divorced families was assessed. Four specific research questions were addressed:

(1) Are breached generation boundaries more prevalent in divorced families than in intact families?
Specifically, do students from divorced families report higher levels of intergenerational triangulation and fusion, cross-generational coalitions, and collapsed or reversed parent-child roles than students from intact families?

(2) In divorced families, how does the addition of one, or two step-parents affect the maintenance of generation boundaries in the natural parents-child subsystem?

(3) In families of divorce, does the degree of boundary breaching decrease with time since divorce?

(4) Are breached generation boundaries as dysfunctional in divorced families as past research has shown them to be in intact families?
Method

Subjects

The subjects were 96 college students between the ages of 17 and 21 ($M = 18.9$ years) who were enrolled in introductory psychology courses at the College of William and Mary. Fifty-two subjects (20 males and 32 females) were from divorced families in which both parents were living, and 44 (25 males and 19 females) were from intact families in which the natural parents were married and living together.

In the divorced families, the mean age of the subjects at the time of their parents' divorce was 9.7 years (range, 1-19 years). Seventeen subjects (35%) had two step-parents, 17 subjects (35%) had only one step-parent, and 15 subjects (30%) had none (3 subjects failed to indicate whether their parents had remarried).

Procedure

The data were gathered over the course of two semesters, and in each semester, data were gathered in two stages. First, as part of a mass-testing procedure, over 600 students in introductory psychology classes completed a Family Background Questionnaire
requesting information about their parents' marital status (see Appendix A). From this pool, 52 subjects from divorced families and 44 subjects from intact families were invited to participate in a study of "family relationships" in exchange for course credit. Subjects were asked to attend one of several evening sessions where they would spend approximately an hour completing questionnaire items.

At the beginning of the test sessions, subjects were told the general nature of the research and given consent forms to read and sign. Subjects were informed that their responses were confidential and that they could cease participation at any time. Each subject was then given a packet of materials including a Family Background Questionnaire that incorporated demographic items; subscales adapted from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) (Bray et al., 1984); an adaptation of the Family Hierarchy Test (Madden & Harbin, 1983); the Crowne-Marlowe Social Desirability Scale (Crowne-Marlowe, 1964); the Revised UCLA Loneliness scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980); the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1978); and a series of items previously used at William and Mary to measure student adjustment to college (see Appendix
Subjects were instructed to respond to questionnaire items in regard to their relationships with their natural parents, and when applicable, to natural parent step-parent dyads. Upon completion of these questionnaires, subjects were informed that a debriefing statement was posted outside of the room and that the researcher was available to provide further debriefing upon request.

**Measures**

**Differentiation of Parent-Child Roles.** The hierarchical structure of students' families was assessed using an adaptation of Madanes Family Hierarchy Test (see Appendix B). The Family Hierarchy Test was adapted to allow the assessment of the caretaking as well as the executive hierarchy of families. Subjects used two sets of four stick figure diagrams to describe the executive and caretaking roles in their natural families, and if applicable, in their step-families. The subjects were asked to choose a diagram that best represents "who takes care of whom" in their family and another diagram that best represents "who is in charge of whom." They were then asked to label figures (e.g., mother, father, and self). Hierarchical incongruities were scored as
present or absent based on which diagram was chosen and how the stick figures were labeled. A hierarchy **collapse** was scored if a subject placed him/herself on the same level as a parent, and a hierarchy **reversal** was scored if a subject placed him/herself above a parent. The Family Hierarchy Test generated a measure of hierarchical incongruities in both the executive and caretaking hierarchies for each possible child-parent dyad (i.e., child and natural mother, child and natural father, child and step-mother, and child and step-father).

**Intergenerational Fusion.** To assess students' perception of family enmeshment/fusion, the Intergenerational Fusion subscale of the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) was used (see Appendix B). The PAFS-Q Fusion subscale requires the respondent to assess statements on a scale from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5) as a measure of "the degree to which a person operates in a fused or individuated manner with his or her parents" (Bray et al., 1984). Reliability tests of the PAFS-Q Fusion subscale have shown the scale to have a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .87 or above in separate studies. The Fusion subscale generated a measure of the degree
to which the subject operated in a fused or individuated manner with each of his or her natural parents, and if applicable, with each of his or her step-parents.

**Intergenerational Triangulation.** To assess students' perceptions of family intergenerational triangulation, the Triangulation subscale of the PAFS-Q was used (see Appendix B). This measure is a five-point Likert scale designed to assess the degree of "conflicting loyalty" triangulation between a person and his or her parents on a scale from Very Often (1) to Never (5) (Bray et al., 1984). Reliability tests of the PAFS-S Triangulation subscale have shown the scale to have a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .80 or above in separate studies. The Triangulation subscale generated a measure of the degree to which the subject was triangulated in his or her natural parents' relationship, and if applicable, in his or her natural parent-step-parent relationships.

**Cross-generational Coalition.** A measure of cross-generational coalition patterns was obtained using a four-item parental coalition scale (Elridge, Coplan, & Rohrbaugh, 1986) which measures the extent to which parents are perceived as together (united) in their
dealings with their children (see Appendix B). This measure has been shown to correlate with measures of personal, social, and academic adjustment in college student samples (Eldridge, et al., 1986). The Parental Coalition scale generated a measure of the strength of the natural parents' coalition, and if applicable, the natural parent-step-parent coalitions.

**Response Set.** Previous research on family functioning based on self-report measures has rarely taken into account the extent to which significant results may reflect subjects' tendency to describe themselves (and their families) in a favorable light. To evaluate and control for this possibility, the Crowne-Marlowe Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) was included in this study.

**Student Adjustment.** Student adjustment was operationalized using information based on the following variables: satisfaction with academic achievement, perceived need for psychological counseling, perceived loneliness as measured by the Revised UCLA Loneliness scale (Russell et al., 1980), and self-reported level of depression as measured by the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1978) (see Appendix B).
Results

**Preliminary Analyses.** Preliminary analyses showed that the Crowne-Marlowe social desirability measure correlated significantly (two-tailed test) with subjects' perceived need for psychological counseling ($r = -0.23, p < 0.05$), level of depression as measured by the Beck Depression Inventory ($r = -0.25, p < 0.05$), and level of loneliness as measured by the Revised UCLA Loneliness scale ($r = 0.25, p < 0.10$). Because social desirability also correlated significantly with a number of the boundary-breaching variables, the response-set measure was controlled statistically in later analyses to take into account its role as a potentially confounding variable.

A series of Pearson correlations were computed to assess the degree of orthogonality (or conversely, interdependence) of the various boundary-breaching variables. Contrary to past research (e.g., Wood & Talmon, 1985, Madden & Harbin, 1983, and Bray et al., 1984) supporting the orthogonality of these boundary-breaching variables, there were several significant correlations between the various boundary-breaching variables (see Appendix C).
Comparison of Boundary Breaching in Divorced and Intact Families. A series of 2 x 2 (gender x family type) analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) and chi-square analyses were performed to compare the degree of breached generation boundaries in divorced and intact families. These analyses focused only on subjects' natural parents. ANCOVAs performed on the parental coalition, triangulation, and fusion measures, with social desirability as the covariate, revealed no significant main effects or interactions involving gender. Table 1 shows means and F-ratios for the parental coalition, triangulation, and fusion measures. As expected, subjects from divorced families reported a significantly weaker parental coalition, and reported more fusion with their natural father than did subjects from intact families. No significant differences were found in levels of triangulation between natural parents or fusion with natural mother.

Insert Table 1 about here

Because the number of reported hierarchy "reversals" on the Family Hierarchy Test (FHT) was quite low, the hierarchy collapse and reversal measures
were combined to form a single dependent measure (referred to as hierarchy collapse). Table 2 shows the chi-square values and percentage of subjects reporting collapsed parent-child roles for the FHT measures. Subjects from the divorced group, when asked "who is in charge of whom" in the family, placed themselves at a level equal to or above both their mother and father significantly more often than did subjects from the intact group. When asked "who takes care of whom" in their family, subjects from the divorce group again placed themselves at a level equal to or above both their mother and father more often than did subjects from the intact group, but the differences were not significant.

Insert Table 2 about here

Because social desirability response-set could not be statistically controlled in the chi-square analyses, a series of 2 x 2 (gender x family type) ANCOVAs with response-set as the covariate were performed with dichotomously coded FHT variables. These analyses found no main effects for gender or gender x family type interactions. Because the
dependent measures in these ANCOVAs were not continuous, the analyses were less sensitive in determining treatment effects, and the negative results should be interpreted cautiously.

**Boundary Breaching and Parental Remarriage.**

Within the sample of divorced families, ANCOVAs and chi-square analyses were also used to determine if the presence of step-parents was related to the degree of boundary breaching occurring in the student's relationship with his or her natural parents. Table 3 shows the means and F-ratios for the parental coalition, triangulation, and fusion measures. Two-way ANCOVAs (gender x number of step-parents) revealed no differences in reported levels of triangulation and fusion for students with no, one, or two step-parents. A near significant main effect for number of step-parents was found for the natural-parent coalition measure, however. Subjects from divorced families in which neither parent had remarried perceived their natural parents as the most united in their dealings with their children (M = 2.76), whereas subjects from families in which both parents had remarried perceived their natural parents as the least united in their dealings with their children (M = 2.00).
The pattern observed between number of step-parents and boundary breaching on the FHT differed from that found for the parental coalition measure, however, as shown in Table 4. When asked "who takes care of whom" in their families, subjects from families with no step-parents and those from families with two step-parents reported the highest level of hierarchy confusion (approximately equivalent), whereas subjects from families in which there was only one step-parent reported the lowest level. A similar pattern was found when subjects were asked "who is in charge of whom" in their families, although differences were not statistically significant. Thus, unexpectedly, on the FHT more boundary breaching occurred in divorced families with greater balance or symmetry in the parental subsystems.

Boundary Breaching and Time Since Divorce. A series of partial correlations were computed to assess
the relationship between time since divorce and boundary-breaching patterns, with social desirability response set controlled. Table 5 indicates near significant \((p < .10, \text{ two-tailed test})\) correlations between time since divorce and the strength of the natural parental coalition, degree of fusion between subject and his or her natural mother, and the degree of triangulation between subject and his or her natural parents. As time since divorce increased, the strength of the parental coalition and the levels of intergenerational fusion and triangulation decreased. There were no significant relationships between time since divorce and boundary breaching in the executive and caretaking hierarchies.

Insert Table 5 about here

Boundary-Breaching and Student Adjustment in Intact and Divorced Families. A series of 2 x 2 (family type x gender) ANCOVAs, with social desirability as the covariate, were performed to compare the adjustment of students from divorced and intact families. Table 6 shows the means and F-ratios for the various adjustment measures. Contrary to most
past research on children's adjustment to divorce, no significant differences in adjustment were found between subjects from intact and divorced families. A main effect for gender on the measure of academic satisfaction was observed, with female subjects reporting greater academic satisfaction.

To examine the relationship between generational confusion and student adjustment, partial correlations between boundary-breaching patterns and measures of student adjustment were computed separately for students from divorced and intact families. Social-desirability response set was the control variable. In both divorced and intact families, generational confusion tended to be associated with poor student adjustment as predicted. Intergenerational fusion with mother and father were the boundary-breaching patterns most strongly associated with poor student adjustment in intact families. In both intact and divorced families, little relationship was found between generational confusion in the family's executive hierarchy and student adjustment.
As shown in Table 7, there were 12 significant correlations between boundary-breaching patterns and student adjustment measures in the sample of intact families, compared to only 2 in the sample of divorced families. If anything, these results suggest that generational confusion was more problematic for students from intact families than those from families of divorce.
Discussion

The results provide empirical support to existing clinical literature that suggests generational integrity is more difficult to maintain in divorced families than in intact families. Compared to subjects from intact families, subjects from divorced families reported greater levels of intergenerational fusion (especially with father), more collapsed parent-child roles, and weaker parental coalitions. The results also support past research that has found the poor adjustment shown by children immediately after their parents' divorce lessens with the passage of time (Wallerstein, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Within the divorced sample, intergenerational fusion and triangulation tended to decrease as time since parental divorce increased.

Despite the finding of more boundary breaching in families of divorce, there were few significant correlations between boundary breaching and student adjustment measures in families of divorce. In contrast, a strong relationship was found between boundary breaching and adjustment in intact families. This discrepancy is surprising given that the correlation between boundary breaching and student
adjustment was expected, if anything, to be stronger in divorced families. This discrepancy puts in question the usefulness or validity of the generational integrity hypothesis in accounting for the negative influence of divorce on childrens' adjustment. The generational integrity hypothesis proposes that the negative influence of post-divorce family processes such as parental conflict on childrens' adjustment is mediated by the lack of clarity in the divorced family's generation boundaries. Although generational confusion was more prevalent in divorced families than in intact families, a concommitant relationship between generational confusion and poor student adjustment in divorced families was not found.

The stronger relationship between boundary breaching and student adjustment in intact families than in divorced families raises an unexpected, yet interesting question: Could boundary-breaching patterns be less dysfunctional in divorced families than in intact families? Most research on generational integrity has focused on intact families. And, prescriptions for healthy generation boundaries or family structures are usually based on those known to be adaptive or healthy in intact families. Divorce,
however, may create a family system in which the norms of the intact family do not apply. Certain family theorists (e.g., Hoffman, 1981; McGoldrick, 1981) suggest that differences exist in the type of family structure or interactional patterns that are adaptive or non-adaptive in families of differing ethnic or cultural backgrounds. For example, research with intact families has consistently found that primary parental alliances (versus primary cross-generational alliances) are important for healthy family functioning (e.g., Teyber, 1983; Kleiman, 1981). Peterson and Rohrbaugh (1986), however, compared the cross-generational alliance patterns in black and white families with an identified high or low functioning high school student and found that primary parental alliances were not as strongly associated with successful student functioning in black families as in white families.

Perhaps then, just as the definition of "healthy" family systems varies among cultures, the family system created by the divorce transition might be qualitatively different from that of the intact family and different norms and rules may apply determining the types of family interactions that are "healthy" or
"dysfunctional". Wood and Talmon (1983) suggest that unusual hierarchy patterns found in families of divorce (typically believed to be dysfunctional, at least in intact families) are often an indication of "normal transitional flux" and, in fact, are adaptive for the family. For example, a divorced mother confiding in her young daughter about her dates or occasionally allowing her daughter to sleep in the same bed with her could reflect a transitional increased proximity caused by the departure of the intimate spouse instead of dysfunctional blurred boundaries. Or, an adolescent daughter of a divorced parent who assumes parental roles after the divorce could represent an adaptive executive subsystem in a single-parent family instead of a sign of confusion in the executive subsystem (Wood & Talmon, 1983). If one views these relationships through the lens of the intact nuclear family, the relationships would be considered dysfunctional. However, if these relationships are evaluated in terms of their functional accomplishment, the relationships could compromise the integrity of the family's generation boundaries without being dysfunctional.

Some limitations of the present study should be noted. First, the college sample used in this study
was fairly homogeneous which may have resulted in a restricted range of adjustment. Family therapy theorists (Minuchin, 1974; Bowen, 1966, 1978) suggest that dysfunctional adolescent behavior occurs in families with breached generation boundaries because adolescents' involvement in these family relationships leaves them without the necessary time and energy to meet normal development tasks (e.g., the development of significant peer relations, individuation from the family of origin). It is possible that the present sample of children from divorced families--college students living away from home--had, for the most part, met normal developmental tasks. Their college attendance suggests past academic success as well as the degree of individuation necessary to live apart from their parents. Future studies, using a less homogeneous sample with respect to adjustment, would better allow researchers to assess whether or not there are characteristic family interactions that distinguish "healthy" from "dysfunctional" divorced families. Second, a self-report method was used to obtain subjects' perceptions of family relationship patterns. Although social desirability response-set was statistically controlled in data analyses, future
research also should include behavioral observations of family interactions. For example, researchers could utilize family interaction tasks such as the one developed by Minuchin, Montalvo, Rosman, and Schumer (1967) in their study of inner-city families. In this task, researchers request family members to discuss a recent family argument in order to stimulate interactions that reveal characteristic intrafamily boundaries. The use of a self-report method to measure family relationship patterns poses an additional methodological problem. The theories on which the generational integrity hypothesis is based were developed by clinicians based on their observations of the structure and interactional patterns in dysfunctional families. In the present research (as in the majority of research in this area), the measure of boundary-breaching patterns in the family system was based on the observations of an individual within the system, not an outside observer. Therefore, a discrepancy exists between the genesis of the theoretical assumptions or hypotheses and the manner in which data were obtained. Finally, the correlational nature of much of this study makes causal interpretations impossible. For instance, it may be
that poor student functioning determines his or her family's boundary-breaching patterns rather than the student's involvement in boundary-breaching patterns determining his or her adjustment. Or, both adjustment and boundary breaching could be a function of a third, possibly unknown, variable.

In summary, the data support the idea that the importance of generational integrity is different in divorced families than in intact families. This suggests that researchers should avoid trying to fit the divorced family into an intact nuclear family mold and begin to define the "healthiness" or "adaptiveness" of the divorced family's generation boundaries in terms of their functional accomplishment and not in terms of their resemblance to those of the healthy intact family. If researchers begin to compare generational boundaries in "healthy" and "dysfunctional" divorced families and find characteristic forms of family interactions in functional families of divorce, the traditional conceptualization of "normal family processes" will need to be expanded to include what could be considered normal for well-functioning divorced families.
References


Orthopsychiatry, 56, 470-474.


Table 1

Comparisons of Boundary-Breaching Patterns in Divorced and Intact Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boundary-breaching pattern</th>
<th>Family type</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Intact</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental coalition</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>97.03</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational triangulation</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational fusion-natural mother</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational fusion-natural father</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means for subjects from divorced and intact families are adjusted for social desirability response set. F-ratios are from analyses of covariance.
Table 2
Percentages of Students from Divorced and Intact Families Reporting Collapsed Parent-Child Roles on the Family Hierarchy Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family type</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Intact</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caretaking Hierarchy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother collapse</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father collapse</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Hierarchy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother collapse</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father collapse</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>10.24</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N) 48 42

Note. Table entries for divorce and intact-family groups represent percentages of subjects placing themselves on the same level (or above) a natural parent on the modified Family Hierarchy Test.
Table 3

Boundary-Breaching with Natural Parents in Divorced Families as a Function of Number of Step-Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Step-Parents</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundary-breaching pattern</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental coalition</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational triangulation</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational fusion-natural mother</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational fusion-natural father</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means are adjusted for social desirability response set. F-ratios are from analyses of covariance.
Table 4

Percentages of Students from Divorced Families Reporting Hierarchical Collapse with Natural Parents as a Function of Number of Step-Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Step-Parents</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caretaking Hierarchy (Who takes care of whom?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother collapse</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father collapse</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Hierarchy (Who is in charge of whom?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother collapse</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father collapse</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Table entries for divorce and intact-family groups represent percentages of subjects placing themselves on the same level (or above) a natural parent on the modified Family Hierarchy Test.
Table 5
Partial Correlations Between Boundary-Breaching Patterns and Time Since Divorce with Social Desirability Response Set Controlled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Since Divorce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Coalition, Triangulation, and Fusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational fusion -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational fusion -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaking Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother collapse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father collapse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother collapse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father collapse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.
For modified Family Hierarchy Test, collapsed parent-child roles were coded 2 if present, 1 if absent. *p<.05, two-tailed.
Table 6

Academic and Personal Adjustment of Students from Divorced and Intact Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family type</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Intact</th>
<th>F-ratio</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Adjustment Measure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic satisfaction</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived need for therapy</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beck depression score</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLA loneliness score</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Academic satisfaction and perceived need for therapy were rated on 1-7 scales. Means for subjects from divorced and intact families are adjusted for social desirability response set. F-ratios are from analyses of covariance.
Table 7
Partial Correlations between Boundary-Breaching and Adjustment for Students from Divorced and Intact Families with Social Desirability Controlled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Satisfaction</th>
<th>Beck Depression</th>
<th>UCLA Loneliness</th>
<th>Need for Therapy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIV</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>DIV</td>
<td>INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Coalition, Triangulation, and Fusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental coalition</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.27  *</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.28  *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusion with natural mother</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.50  ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusion with natural father</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.33  **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Executive Hierarchy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Satisfaction</th>
<th>Beck Depression</th>
<th>UCLA Loneliness</th>
<th>Need for Therapy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIV</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>DIV</td>
<td>INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother collapse</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father collapse</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Caretaking Hierarchy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Satisfaction</th>
<th>Beck Depression</th>
<th>UCLA Loneliness</th>
<th>Need for Therapy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIV</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>DIV</td>
<td>INT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother collapse</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.29  *</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father collapse</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.29  *</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.
* p<.10,  ** p<.05,  *** p<.001, two-tailed test. Higher scores indicate more boundary breaching for all variables except parental coalition.
Sex: 1. __male 2. __female

Age: ___

Class: 1. __Fr 2. __So 3. __Jr 4. __Sr

Your birth order among natural siblings:
1. ___oldest
2. ___youngest
3. ___middle
4. ___only child

Is either of your parents deceased?
1. ___mother 2. ___father
3. ___neither 4. ___both

Did your parents ever separate or divorce? 1. ___no 2. ___yes

IF YOUR PARENTS ARE DIVORCED . . .
(a) How old were you when they divorced? ___
(b) Is your father remarried? 1. ___no 2. ___yes
(c) Is your mother remarried? 1. ___no 2. ___yes

Are your biological parents married and living with each other now?
1. ___no 2. ___yes

Please estimate how many times, over the past year, you consumed 1 to 5 alcoholic beverages on a single occasion ___.

Please estimate how many times, over the past year, you consumed 6 or more alcoholic beverages on a single occasion ___.

Please give your impression of your parents' drinking habits by checking the appropriate spaces below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Habit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Non-drinker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Social drinker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Binge drinker (episodic, heavy drinking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Heavy drinker (regular, frequent drinking in large amounts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Alcoholic drinker (addicted; has no control over alcohol)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Recovering alcoholic (abstinent, but previously had severe problems with alcohol)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How significant is alcohol as a concern in your life?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
no concern moderate concern great concern
APPENDIX B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Background Questionnaire ............... 53-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Adjustment Measures ....................... 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satisfaction with academic achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceived need for psychological counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listing of Family Relationship items that compose the fusion, triangulation, and parental coalition scales ............... 58-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural mother (11-17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural father (18-33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step-father (44-50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step-mother (61-67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural parents (68-74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother and step-father (75-81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father and step-mother (82-88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural parents (89-92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother and step-father (93-96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father and step-mother (97-100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Hierarchy Test ......................... 65-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beck Depression Inventory ....................... 68-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revised UCLA Loneliness scale ..................... 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowne-Marlowe social desirability response-set measure .................. 71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FAMILY BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Sex: 1. ___ male 2. ___ female

Age: ____

Class: 1. ___ Fr 2. ___ So 3. ___ Jr 4. ___ Sr

Number of siblings (not including yourself) ____

Your birth order among natural siblings:
1. ____ oldest
2. ____ youngest
3. ____ middle
4. ____ only child

What is your religious background?
1. ____ Catholic 2. ____ Jewish
3. ____ Protestant 4. ____ Other

What is your ethnic origin?
1. ____ Asian 4. ____ Hispanic
2. ____ Black 5. ____ Other
3. ____ Caucasian

Is either of your parents deceased? 1. ___ no 2. ___ yes

If yes, how old were you at first parent's death? ____

Please rate your current relationship with your mother:
-3  -2  -1  0   +1  +2  +3

Please rate your current relationship with your father:
-3  -2  -1  0  +1  +2  +3

Please rate your (natural) parents' current relationship with each other:
-3  -2  -1  0  +1  +2  +3

Did your parents ever separate or divorce? 1. ___ no 2. ___ yes

IF YOUR PARENTS ARE DIVORCED . . .

(a) How old were you when they divorced? ____

(b) Is your father remarried? 1. ___ no 2. ___ yes
IF YES:

How long after the divorce did he remarry?

_____year(s) _____month(s)

Please rate your current relationship with your step-mother:

-3  -2  -1  0  +1  +2  +3

Please rate your father and step-mother's current relationship with each other:

-3  -2  -1  0  +1  +2  +3

(c) Is your mother remarried? 1. no 2. yes

IF YES:

How long after the divorce did she remarry?

_____year(s) _____month(s)

Please rate your current relationship with your step-father:

-3  -2  -1  0  +1  +2  +3

Please rate your mother and step-father's current relationship with each other:

-3  -2  -1  0  +1  +2  +3

Are your biological parents married and living with each other now? 1. no 2. yes

If no, with whom do you NOW live when you are not at college?

1. mother only 5. mother and father equally
2. father only 6. maternal grandparents
3. mother more than father 7. paternal grandparents
4. father more than mother 8. none of the above

Does at least one parent live . . .

1. within 0 - 30 miles of campus?
2. within 31 - 75 miles?
3. within 76 - 200 miles?
4. greater than 200 miles?

How often do you see or communicate (phone, letter) with your mother?

1. daily
2. several times weekly
3. weekly
4. every week or two
5. monthly
6. several times a year
7. yearly
8. not at all
How often do you see or communicate (phone, letter) with your father?
1. ___daily
2. ___several times weekly
3. ___weekly
4. ___every week or two
5. ___monthly
6. ___several times a year
7. ___yearly
8. ___not at all

How often do you see or communicate (phone, letter) with your step-mother?
1. ___daily
2. ___several times weekly
3. ___weekly
4. ___every week or two
5. ___monthly
6. ___several times a year
7. ___yearly
8. ___not at all

How often do you see or communicate (phone, letter) with your step-father?
1. ___daily
2. ___several times weekly
3. ___weekly
4. ___every week or two
5. ___monthly
6. ___several times a year
7. ___yearly
8. ___not at all

Do you have sibling(s) living at home now? 1. ___no 2. ___yes

Father's education?
1. ___less than high school
2. ___high school
3. ___some college or technical training
4. ___college graduate
5. ___graduate degree

His occupation?  _________________________________________

Mother's education?
1. ___less than high school
2. ___high school
3. ___some college or technical training
4. ___college graduate
5. ___graduate degree

Her occupation?  _________________________________________
Step-father's education?
1. ___ less than high school
2. ___ high school
3. ___ some college or technical training
4. ___ college graduate
5. ___ graduate degree

His occupation? ________________________________

Step-mother's education?
1. ___ less than high school
2. ___ high school
3. ___ some college or technical training
4. ___ college graduate
5. ___ graduate degree

Her occupation? ________________________________

Who was your main parent figure when you were growing up?
1. ___ mother
2. ___ father
3. ___ mother and father equally
4. ___ grandparent
5. ___ other relative
6. ___ non-relative

How would you rate your achievement in college so far?
1. ___ worse than I expected
2. ___ about what I expected
3. ___ better than I expected

How satisfied are you with your academic performance to this point?
not at all  very satisfied
1   2   3  4  5  6  7

What is your current GPA? ________

Did you receive psychological counseling of any kind before coming to college? 1. ___ no 2. ___ yes

Have you received psychological counseling since coming to college? 1. ___ no 2. ___ yes

How seriously have you considered counseling?
not at all  very seriously
1   2   3  4  5  6  7
How satisfied are you with the social relationships you have formed at college so far?

not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7

extremely satisfied

Are you (check all that apply):
1. ___ now married?
2. ___ formerly married?
3. ___ engaged to be married?
4. ___ in a love relationship?
5. ___ going steady (but not "in love")?
6. ___ dating regularly?
7. ___ dating occasionally?

What is your current body weight? _____ lb.

What is the most you have weighed in the past year? _____ lb.

What is the least you have weighed in the past year? _____ lb.

What is your current height? ___ ft. ___ in.
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The following questions ask about your CURRENT relationships with your parents and step-parents. Please use the scales below to indicate how much (or how often) these statements apply to your family.

USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS 1 TO 67:

1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = neutral
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

Questions 1-33 apply to your natural parents:

____1. I usually help my mother and father understand me by telling them how I think, feel, and believe.

____2. I get together with my mother from time to time for conversation and recreation.

____3. I share my true feelings with my mother about the significant events in my life.

____4. I can trust my mother with things we share.

____5. I am fair in my relationships with my mother.

____6. I openly show tenderness toward my mother.

____7. My mother and I have mutual respect for each other.

____8. I am fond of my mother.

____9. My mother and I are important people in each other's lives.

____10. I sometimes wonder how much my mother really loves me.

____11. I often get so emotional with my mother that I cannot think straight.

____12. I worry that my mother cannot take care of herself when I am not around.

____13. I am usually able to disagree with my mother without losing my temper.
14. My mother does things that embarrass me.
15. My mother says one thing to me and really means another.
16. My mother frequently tries to change some aspect of my personality.
17. My present day problems would be fewer or less severe if my mother had acted or behaved differently.
18. I get together with my father from time to time for conversation and recreation.
19. I share my true feelings with my father about the significant events in my life.
20. I can trust my father with things we share.
21. I am fair in my relationships with my father.
22. I openly show tenderness toward my father.
23. My father and I have mutual respect for each other.
24. I am fond of my father.
25. My father and I are important people in each other's lives.
26. I sometimes wonder how much my father really loves me.
27. I often get so emotional with my father that I cannot think straight.
28. I worry that my father cannot take care of himself when I am not around.
29. I am usually able to disagree with my father without losing my temper.
30. My father does things that embarrass me.
31. My father says one thing to me and really means another.
32. My father frequently tries to change some aspect of my personality.
33. My present day problems would be fewer or less severe if my father had acted or behaved differently.

Questions 34-50 apply to your mother and step-father. Skip them if you do not have a step-father:

34. I usually help my mother and step-father understand me by telling them how I think, feel, and believe.
35. I get together with my step-father from time to time for conversation and recreation.
36. I share my true feelings with my step-father about the significant events in my life.
37. I can trust my step-father with things we share.
38. I am fair in my relationships with my step-father.
39. I openly show tenderness toward my step-father.
40. My step-father and I have mutual respect for each other.
41. I am fond of my step-father.
42. My step-father and I are important people in each other's lives.
43. I sometimes wonder how much my step-father really loves me.
44. I often get so emotional with my step-father that I cannot think straight.
45. I worry that my step-father cannot take care of himself when I am not around.
46. I am usually able to disagree with my step-father without losing my temper.
47. My step-father does things that embarrass me.
My step-father says one thing to me and really means another.

My step-father frequently tries to change some aspect of my personality.

My present day problems would be fewer or less severe if my step-father had acted or behaved differently.

Questions 51-67 apply to your father and step-mother. Skip them if you do not have a step-mother:

I usually help my father and step-mother understand me by telling them how I think, feel, and believe.

I get together with my step-mother from time to time for conversation and recreation.

I share my true feelings with my step-mother about the significant events in my life.

I can trust my step-mother

I am fair in my relationships with my step-mother.

I openly show tenderness toward my step-mother.

My step-mother and I have mutual respect for each other.

I am fond of my step-mother.

My step-mother and I are important people in each other's lives.

I sometimes wonder how much my step-mother really loves me.

I often get so emotional with my step-mother that I cannot think straight.

I worry that my step-mother cannot take care of herself when I am not around.

I am usually able to disagree with my step-mother without losing my temper.

My step-mother does things that embarrass me.

My step-mother says one thing to me and really means another.
66. My step-mother frequently tries to change some aspect of my personality.

67. My present day problems would be fewer or less severe if my step-mother had acted or behaved differently.

USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS 68 TO 88:

1 = never
2 = rarely
3 = sometimes
4 = often
5 = very often

Questions 68-74 apply to your natural parents:

68. How often do you feel compelled to take sides when your natural parents disagree?

69. When your natural parents disagree, how often do you feel "caught in the middle" between them?

70. It feels like I cannot get emotionally close to my mother without moving away from my father.

71. It feels like I cannot get emotionally close to my father without moving away from my mother.

72. How often do your natural parents disagree about specific ways to treat you (i.e., how to discipline or how to respond to requests for money or privileges)?

73. How often does your mother intervene in a disagreement between you and your father?

74. How often does your father intervene in a disagreement between you and your mother?
Questions 75-81 apply to your mother and step-father. Skip them if you do not have a step-father:

___ 75. How often do you feel compelled to take sides when your mother and step-father disagree?

___ 76. When your mother and step-father disagree, how often do you feel "caught in the middle" between them?

___ 77. It feels like I cannot get emotionally close to my mother without moving away from my step-father.

___ 78. It feels like I cannot get emotionally close to my step-father without moving away from my mother.

___ 79. How often do your mother and step-father disagree about specific ways to treat you (i.e., how to discipline or how to respond to requests for money or privileges)?

___ 80. How often does your mother intervene in a disagreement between you and your step-father?

___ 81. How often does your step-father intervene in a disagreement between you and your mother?

Questions 82-88 apply to your father and step-mother. Skip them if you do not have a step-mother:

___ 82. How often do you feel compelled to take sides when your father and step-mother disagree?

___ 83. When your father and step-mother disagree, how often do you feel "caught in the middle" between them?

___ 84. It feels like I cannot get emotionally close to my father without moving away from my step-mother.

___ 85. It feels like I cannot get emotionally close to my step-mother without moving away from my father.

___ 86. How often do your father and step-mother disagree about specific ways to treat you (i.e., how to discipline or how to respond to requests for money or privileges)?

___ 87. How often does your father intervene in a disagreement between you and your step-mother?

___ 88. How often does your step-mother intervene in a disagreement between you and your father?
USE THE SCALE BELOW TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS 89 TO 100:

1 = very UNTRUE for my family
2 = fairly UNTRUE for my family
3 = neither TRUE nor UNTRUE for my family
4 = fairly TRUE for my family
5 = very TRUE for my family

Questions 89-92 apply to your natural parents:

____89. Mother and father (natural parents) are usually in agreement where the children are concerned.

____90. Rules for children are determined by mother and father (natural parents) together.

____91. Mother and father (natural parents) are together in enforcing rules.

____92. Mother and father (natural parents) talk about the children in private.

Questions 93-96 apply to your mother and step-father. Skip them if you do not have a step-father:

____93. Mother and step-father are usually in agreement where the children are concerned.

____94. Rules for children are determined by mother and step-father together.

____95. Mother and step-father are together in enforcing rules.

____96. Mother and step-father talk about the children in private.

Questions 97-100 apply to your father and step-mother. Skip them if you do not have a step-mother:

____97. Father and step-mother are usually in agreement where the children are concerned.

____98. Rules for children are determined by father and step-mother together.

____99. Father and step-mother are together in enforcing rules.

____100. Father and step-mother talk about the children in private.
Who takes care of whom? Check the one diagram that best represents who takes care of whom. After you make your choice, write by each stick figure the name of the family member it represents (self, mother, father).

Who's in charge of whom? Check the one diagram that best represents who's in charge of whom. After you make your choice, write by each stick figure the name of the family member it represents (self, mother, father).
Who takes care of whom? Check the one diagram that best represents who takes care of whom. After you make your choice, write by each stick figure the name of the family member it represents (self, mother, step-father).

Who's in charge of whom? Check the one diagram that best represents who's in charge of whom. After you make your choice, write by each stick figure the name of the family member it represents (self, mother, step-father).
Answer the questions on this page as they apply to the current relationships between you, your father, and your step-mother. If you do not have a step-mother, go to the next page.

Who takes care of whom? Check the one diagram that best represents who takes care of whom. After you make your choice, write by each stick figure the name of the family member it represents (self, father, step-mother).

Who's in charge of whom? Check the one diagram that best represents who's in charge of whom. After you make your choice, write by each stick figure the name of the family member it represents (self, father, step-mother).
On this questionnaire are groups of statements. Please read each group of statements carefully. Then pick out the one statement in each group which best describes the way you have been feeling the PAST WEEK, INCLUDING TODAY! Circle the number beside the statement you picked. If several statements in the group seem to apply equally well, circle each one. Be sure to read all the statements in each group before making your choice.

1 0 I do not feel sad.
   1 I feel sad.
   2 I am sad all the time and I can't snap out of it.
   3 I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it.

2 0 I am not particularly discouraged about the future.
   1 I feel discouraged about the future.
   2 I feel I have nothing to look forward to.
   3 I feel that the future is hopeless and that things cannot improve.

3 0 I do not feel like a failure.
   1 I feel I have failed more than the average person.
   2 As I look back on my life, all I can see is a lot of failures.
   3 I feel I am a complete failure as a person.

4 0 I get as much satisfaction out of things as I used to.
   1 I don't enjoy things the way I used to.
   2 I don't get real satisfaction out of anything anymore.
   3 I am dissatisfied or bored with everything.

5 0 I don't feel particularly guilty.
   1 I feel guilty a good part of the time.
   2 I feel quite guilty most of the time.
   3 I feel guilty all of the time.

6 0 I don't feel I am being punished.
   1 I feel I may be punished.
   2 I expect to be punished.
   3 I feel I am being punished.

7 0 I don't feel disappointed in myself.
   1 I am disappointed in myself.
   2 I am disgusted with myself.
   3 I hate myself.

8 0 I don't feel I am any worse than anybody else.
   1 I am critical of myself for my weaknesses or mistakes.
   2 I blame myself all the time for my faults.
   3 I blame myself for everything bad that happens.

9 0 I don't have any thoughts of killing myself.
   1 I have thoughts or killing myself, but I would not carry them out.
   2 I would like to kill myself.
   3 I would kill myself if I had the chance.

10 0 I don't cry any more than usual.
    1 I cry more now than I used to.
    2 I cry all the time now.
    3 I used to be able to cry, but now I can't even though I want to.

11 0 I am no more irritated now than I ever was.
    1 I get annoyed or irritated more easily than I used to.
    2 I feel irritated all the time now.
    3 I don't get irritated at all by the things that used to irritate me.
12 0 I have not lost interest in other people.
   1 I am less interested in other people than I used to be.
   2 I have lost most of my interest in other people.
   3 I have lost all of my interest in other people.

13 0 I make decisions about as well as I ever could.
   1 I put off making decisions more than I used to.
   2 I have greater difficulty in making decisions than before.
   3 I can't make decisions at all anymore.

14 0 I don't feel I look any worse than I used to.
   1 I am worried that I am looking old or unattractive.
   2 I feel that there are permanent changes in my appearance that
      make me look unattractive.
   3 I believe that I look ugly.

15 0 I can work about as well as before.
   1 It takes an extra effort to get started at doing something.
   2 I have to push myself very hard to do anything.
   3 I can't do any work at all.

16 0 I can sleep as well as usual.
   1 I don't sleep as well as I used to.
   2 I wake up 1-2 hours earlier than usual and find it hard to get
      back to sleep.
   3 I wake up several hours earlier than I used to and cannot get
      back to sleep.

17 0 I don't get more tired than usual.
   1 I get tired more easily than I used to.
   2 I get tired from doing almost anything.
   3 I am too tired to do anything.

18 0 My appetite is no worse than usual.
   1 My appetite is not as good as it used to be.
   2 My appetite is much worse now.
   3 I have no appetite at all anymore.

19 0 I haven't lost much weight, if any, lately.
   1 I haven't lost more than 5 pounds.
   2 I haven't lost more than 10 pounds.
   3 I haven't lost more than 15 pounds.

20 0 I am no more worried about my health than usual.
   1 I am worried about physical problems such as aches and pains; or
      upset stomach; or constipation.
   2 I am very worried about physical problems and it's hard to think
      of much else.
   3 I am so worried about my physical problems that I cannot think
      about anything else.

21 0 I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex.
   1 I am less interested in sex than I used to be.
   2 I am much less interested in sex now.
   3 I have lost interest in sex completely.
Use the following scale to indicate HOW OFTEN you feel the way described in each of the following statements.

1 = Never
2 = Rarely
3 = Sometimes
4 = Often

___1. I feel in tune with the people around me
___2. I lack companionship
___3. There is no one I can turn to
___4. I do not feel alone
___5. I feel part of a group of friends
___6. I have a lot in common with the people around me
___7. I am no longer close to anyone
___8. My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me
___9. I am an outgoing person
__10. There are people I feel close to
___11. I feel left out
___12. My social relationships are superficial
___13. No one really knows me well
___14. I feel isolated from others
___15. I can find companionship when I want it
___16. There are people who really understand me
___17. I am unhappy being so withdrawn
___18. People are around me but not with me
___19. There are people I can talk to
___20. There are people I can turn to
APPENDIX C

Intercorrelations Between Boundary-Breaching Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boundary-Breaching Variables</th>
<th>Triangulation</th>
<th>Fusion Mother</th>
<th>Fusion Father</th>
<th>Executive Mother</th>
<th>Executive Father</th>
<th>Caretaking Mother</th>
<th>Caretaking Father</th>
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<td>-.50***</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
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Note. *p < .10, **p < .05, ***p < .001, two-tailed test. Higher scores indicate more boundary breaching for all variables except parental coalition.
Barry Lee Funkhouser

The author was born in Lexington, Virginia on May 22, 1964. He attended Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1986 with a B.A. in psychology. He was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa while at Washington and Lee University. He enrolled in the Master of Arts program in psychology at the College of William and Mary in 1986 and completed his coursework in this program in 1988. Currently, the author is working in a community mental health center in the Appalachian region of Southwest Virginia. He plans to enter a doctorate program in clinical psychology in the fall of 1990.