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BELIEVING IS SEEING: A COMPARISON OF PROCESSES OF CLINICAL
INFERENCE APPLYING FAMILY SYSTEMS AND OBJECT RELATIONS
THEORIES TO THE PRACTICE OF FAMILY THERAPY

City University of New York

Ph.D. 1983

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A COMPARISON OF PROCESSES OF CLINICAL INFERENCE
APPLYING FAMILY SYSTEMS AND OBJECT RELATIONS THEORIES
TO THE PRACTICE OF FAMILY THERAPY

BY

CAROL BECKER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1983

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Clinical Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Chapter I

Introduction

I first came into contact with a genuine systems thinker at the Ackerman Insitute. I found that every time she saw a family what she said was almost the reverse of what I thought about the family. It was very disconcerting. When I thought the mother was holding onto the daughter, she said the father needs the daughter at home. She seemed to think about the family in circles. She was always concerned with the reciprocal when I was focusing on the linear and unidirectional. This way of thinking led her to ask different questions of the family. Her interventions were ones I could never anticipate, and she was rarely ineffective. Therefore, I was both mystified and seduced. I wanted to understand what this new way of thinking was all about, and I wanted to understand the ways it was compatible and incompatible with object relations theory.

I was first introduced to object relations theory in a course on family therapy. In particular, the concept of projective identification appeared to explain the complex reactions between intimates very clearly. Object relations theory was useful and accurate. When I was introduced to systems theory, I was not like a scientist who found a new paradigm and could let go of the old. I was a student with two appealing paradigms, wondering about their relationships to each other.

While simultaneously learning two interesting approaches to understanding the family, I experienced a figure - ground reversal in

the patterns which emerged in the clinical material from the two perspectives. It was as if the two patterns were both similar and different. However, it was not clear to me what these similarities and differences actually consisted of. This dissertation is an attempt to spell out the actual differences in perception, interpretation and pattern which occur for me when I apply these two paradigms to practice. In this dissertation I will focus on comparing the patterns which emerge in an object relations and a family systems formulation of the problem in an interview with a family. I hope to generate some ideas about the impact of these paradigms on the family therapist's perception of a family from my own experience. By examining one session, in this case the initial interview, it will be possible to share the data with the reader in its entirety.

This dissertation is a subjective, in depth account of my own processes of clinical inference when applying theory to practice in family therapy. First, I am presenting my own synthesis and understanding of family systems theory and object relations theory; second, I am applying these theories to a session with a family I saw myself; and third, I am comparing my own processes of selective perception and interpretation of the data. I am hoping that by examining in depth my own thinking in applying theory to practice, these ideas will be useful as a point of comparison (and contrast) for other clinicians working with the same paradigms in their own unique way.

This is clearly only one person's attempt to apply theories which can and will be interpreted differently by individuals and by groups which subscribe to both theoretical paradigms. The problem of

differentiating between other's interpretations of these theories is beyond the scope of this analysis. I am concerned with the impact of the general concepts and principles on a therapist, in this case, myself, rather than the specific ways these theories have been interpreted by different groups. Although there are many different subgroups within these major theoretical groups, and many different individual interpretations, individual integrations, and ongoing debates between people who use similar approaches, these differences and similarities will not be addressed in this paper. By focusing on the principle assumptions and concepts which are generally accepted, I hope to develop an understanding of the concepts without getting sidetracked by debates, controversies and divisions.

I will base the family systems analysis on the concepts made explicit by the system thinkers who worked together in the Palo Alto area, who incorporate cybernetics, or positive and negative feedback loops in their approach. I will focus on the application of object relations theory to family therapy, developed by a group of people who studied the families of adolescents at NIMH in Maryland, since they have written clearly about the relationship between theory and practice.

Since systems theory is not a theory of content, there is no equivalent body of literature to the object relations observations about families of adolescents. Jay Haleys' Leaving Home (1981) is an exception, but it is a structural rather than a cybernetic approach to the families of adolescents leaving home.

Rationale

Believing is seeing and seeing is believing. Our interpretation of what we see depends on our beliefs; through interpretation, our beliefs

influence what we see. We construct our own reality in two ways. First, what we perceive depends on what we expect to see, and how we interpret what we see depends on our previous interpretations. We interpret in ways that are congruent with our beliefs (Hanson, 1958; Levy, 1963; Popper, 1968). Secondly, we act on the basis of our interpretations in such a way that to some extent, again, we bring about what we expect. We may not create a reality we like or approve of, but we participate in constructing our own separate realities nonetheless. In this circular way we create our own reality. What we believe, and the way those beliefs influence what we see and how we act, are very important in determining what our experience will be (Bateson, 1979; Eagle, 1982; Keeney, 1979; Keeney & Sprenkle, 1982; Levenson, 1972; Wachtel, 1981).

We also modify our beliefs based on our experience. In fact, Piaget describes development in terms of both the processes of assimilation and accommodation; assimilation refers to the processes by which one modifies the reality one perceives to fit with preexisting schemas; accommodation refers to the process by which those schemas are modified by experience and perception. To the extent that we assimilate reality into our preexisting schemas, we see what we expect to see. To the extent that we modify our beliefs, we change because of our experience.

The processes of thinking, feeling, perceiving and acting occur phenomenologically almost simultaneously. We differentiate between them in order to use language to describe or name these processes. In reality each of these processes affects the processes of the others in a mutual, circular interaction. Let me illustrate what I mean: what

one perceives depends on a process of selective attention and interpretation; interpretation depends on the way one organizes perceptions into meaningful patterns; what those patterns are depends on previously internalized constructions (Hanson, 1958; Levy, 1963; Sherwood, 1969); what one does depends on one's interpretation of a situation; what one does also influences what happens in the situation. What others do in response, in turn, affects one's beliefs, as well as one's subsequent perceptions, interpretations and actions.

These interpretations depend on one's paradigm. Kuhn defines paradigm in two ways: "On the one hand, it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of remaining puzzles on normal science" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 175). People who share a particular paradigm might be defined as a group precisely because they do share that paradigm. For example, cultural, scientific, religious, and family groups define themselves in accordance with shared perceptions and interpretations of reality. To the extent that a person's actions influence the actions of others around him, the individuals in these groups actually create their own reality so that, to some extent, it in fact reflects their paradigms. In social science a similar phenomenon has been called the self-fulfilling prophecy.

The family therapist, like others, is influenced by paradigms, in the sense of Kuhn's second definition of paradigms as examples or models, in understanding what occurs in the family and in family

therapy. His interpretation of reality depends on his paradigm; this paradigm serves the function of an analogy for organizing and analyzing information. It provides the clinician with a model for how problems ought to be solved. It indicates which aspects of the data are relevant to solving the problem.

The family therapist's paradigm also shapes his attitudes toward the family: what he believes is happening in the family, what he believes is possible for the family, and therefore, what he may help to bring about in the family. The therapist's paradigm becomes one of the contexts for his relationship to the family (Dell, 1982).

The family also has a paradigmatic understanding of what occurs in the family. They interpret events in the family according to a set of assumptions based on interpretations of their past experiences. The family therapist observes the family's history and beliefs in order to understand how family members see events in the family, and the ways these beliefs have been created and confirmed by previous experiences. The family's problem is that their actions and interpretations of events have reciprocally created a reality in which they have problems which they have been unable to resolve successfully. The therapist's goal is usually to relieve them of their symptoms, either through insight or behavior change, depending on his paradigm. The therapist's task is often seen as introducing new possibilities for action and interpretation within the family (Levy, 1963). One way the therapist may attempt to help the family is by influencing them to interpret family events according to his paradigm rather than theirs. If his paradigm is no different from the family's then he is no longer an agent of change or influence. The therapist's paradigm must be

appropriately discrepant from the family's paradigm (DeShazer, 1982b). The therapist's paradigm must be effective in influencing the family both to accept alternative explanations and to act differently, both of which will contribute to changing the reality in the family. The first interview is a time when, perhaps more than any other time in the therapist's contact with the family, his paradigm simultaneously intersects with and contrasts with the family's paradigm. It is a time when the family therapist has the fewest leads about the family. The family and the therapist will soon become a family-therapist system. The therapist will become a part of a system in which feedback from the family will be used to test and modify formulations, and perhaps even the therapist's paradigm. During the initial interview the therapist uses more assimilation than accommodation to organize the abundant data of the session. His paradigm provides a model for establishing coherence in what at first is a confusing overload of information about the family's beliefs, organization, relationships, and problems.

Two paradigms with different premises will be compared in this dissertation by applying the principles and concepts of each to formulating the problem in an initial interview of family therapy. Why examine the therapist's paradigm? The therapist's paradigm is important because it shapes his perception, interpretation and action in relation to others. The family therapist's paradigm influences the reality he helps establish with the family in therapy. The kinds of questions and comments he makes reflect which aspects of the data he considers important and how he considers them important. His questions and comments influence his position in relation to the family and in so doing, the organization of the system of the family plus the

therapist. This organization influences the behavior of the individuals and the subgroups within it. The therapist's actions influence what the family members believe; what the family members believe affects what they do, and what they do affects what they in turn believe.

Why compare the application of these two paradigms? It is important to compare the impact of these two paradigms on the actual differences in one's processes of clinical inference in order to understand the subtle shifts in perception and interpretation involved in using either object relations or family systems approaches in family therapy. By comparing the application of both paradigms, I hope to be able to characterize the similarities and differences between them and generate hypotheses which might not be apparent when one compares the theories themselves.

De Shazer (1982, p.74) describes depth perception as a consequence of binocular vision in which each eye perceives the same thing from a different angle. The difference between what both eyes see creates the perception of depth. Depth is invisible; it is only perceived in the relationship or in the difference between the two perspectives. Bateson says ideas are "news of a difference."; a difference is not located in time or space but in the relationship between things. Information is the difference which makes a difference (DeShazer, 1982a). What difference does the difference make? The intention of this dissertation is that by comparing and contrasting the application of these two paradigms the difference these differences make will become more apparent.

Two Paradigms in Family Therapy

Two paradigms in the field of family therapy will be examined in this dissertation, a psychodynamic paradigm and a family systems paradigm. The object relations approaches in this paper were developed at the National Institute of Mental Health in Maryland by researchers on the family of the troubled adolescent including Roger Shapiro, John Zinner, Edward Shapiro, David Berkowitz, and Helm Stierlin. The concept which unifies all of these approaches is "projective identification" (Zinner & Shapiro, 1972). The specific paradigm within family systems theory addressed in this paper was developed initially by clinicians and researchers at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto. Recent work has been presented by Lynn Hoffman, Steve DeShazer, Paul Dell and Bradford Keeney. The central unifying paradigm of these researchers is embodied in the related concepts "deviation amplifying, reciprocal, causal interactions" and "deviation counteracting, reciprocal, causal interactions" (Maruyama, 1963).

Both of these paradigms illustrate ways that people create their own reality, while at the same time not fully being the masters of their own fates. Within the paradigm suggested by projective identification, individuals influence and are influenced by other individuals who are important to them. In the paradigm suggested by the concepts of deviation amplifying and counteracting reciprocal causal interactions, individuals are influenced by and influence the patterned organization of the whole group of interacting members.

The Family Systems Paradigm

Family systems theory is based on General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1967) and Cybernetics (Weiner, 1954). General Systems

Theory was developed by Von Bertalanffy in an attempt to understand the similarities between all branches of science. Gregory Bateson (1972, part 3), Jay Haley (1959, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1980), Don Jackson (1959, 1961, 1965), John Weakland (1961), (1960), Paul Watzliawick (1967, 1974, 1977, 1978), Fisch (1982) and others applied these principles to family therapy, not specifically to family therapy with the separating adolescent and his family, but more generally to the overall practice of family therapy. Jay Haley's Leaving Home (1980) is an exception. It deals more specifically with the structure of the system in which the troubled adolescent is hospitalized repeatedly and separation from the family remains unresolved for a prolonged period of time.

The family systems approach to the family as exemplified by those associated with the Mental Research Institute, focuses on how people influence others and in so doing, influence the organization of the systems of which they are part. Communication patterns create and are created by the organization of the system. The family systems therapist examines the effect of communication on the organization of patterned interactions in the family. He examines the changing positions of the members of the system in relation to each other, and the specific communication patterns which influence these movements to occur. He tries to disrupt those patterns which maintain the symptomatic behavior in the family.

The Object Relations Paradigm

Object relations theory began as the study of the fantasy life of disturbed children in psychoanalysis by Melanie Klein (1977), and was developed by Fairbairn (1952) who did psychoanalysis with adults.

Object relations theory was applied to group psychoanalysis by

Wilfred Bion (1975). He noted that the interactions between group members appeared to indicate a group regression to participation in a shared unconscious fantasy which interfered with perceiving situations realistically and accomplishing the group task or work. Mahler's interpretation of observations of separation behavior in infants and toddlers (1970, 1971, 1973) sharpened the focus of Object relations theory on separation - individuation issues in development.

This theory of groups was applied to the observations of families with troubled adolescents at N.I.M.H.. Roger Shapiro (1968, 1971), John Zinner (1974, 1975), Edward Shapiro (1975, 1978a, 1978b), and David Berkowitz (1974a, 1974b), noticed that the shared unconscious assumptions and the predominant use of projective identification in these families interfered with the family's task of aiding the adolescent's separation-individuation, much as Bion had observed for the functioning of nonfamilial groups.

Helm Stierlin (1972, 1974, 1977) developed the concept of "transactional mode" for describing separating parents and adolescents by combining aspects of systems theory and object relations theory.

The therapist who focuses on processes of projective identification in the family tries to release the family members from certain shared unconscious assumptions by making the unconscious conscious through expression of affect and increased self awareness. His goal is to free each person from needing to collude in processes of projective identification, and to aid in the development of each person's autonomy.

Developmental Stage

The focus of this dissertation will be to understand the dilemmas in a particular family with a late adolescent from the theoretical

perspectives of object relations theory and family systems theory. Adolescence is an important time of transition within both the object relations and the systems paradigms. Within the psychodynamic framework and within object relations theory in particular, adolescence has been described as the second separation-individuation phase (Blos, 1979, p. 141). The family of the adolescent is often at a stage when the midlife issues of the parents and the adolescent issues of their children converge (Levi, Stierlin & Savard, 1972), requiring individual and family adjustments. It is a time when a change in the degree of mutual dependency and separation is required between family members. It appears to be a time of family regression for families in which separation-individuation issues which have been inadequately resolved in earlier stages of development, are reactivated (Zinner & Shapiro, 1972) (Zinner & Shapiro, E., 1975). For these families adolescence is potentially a time to rework earlier traumas and pathological development. It can be a time which is enormously stressful, which requires more flexibility than the family alone is capable of, to bring about a different developmental outcome.

From a family systems perspective the family with adolescents is going through a transition in family organization and structure (Carter, E., & McGoldrick, M., 1981). How family members realign their positions, and the patterns of interaction which occur with the change in organization, are important from a systems perspective.

From the perspectives of both family systems theory and object relations theory, the family with an adolescent is undergoing change which requires flexibility and adaptability from the individuals in the family, and from the organization of the whole family as a group.

The Organization of the Dissertation

The goal of this dissertation is to compare how two significant perspectives on the family affect one clinician's processes of clinical inference: the selective perception, organization, and interpretation of events in a family therapy session.

The plan is 1) to describe the two theoretical paradigms, highlighting what appears to be the central concepts of each; 2) to formulate the problem in a family from both theoretical perspectives; 3) to analyze the processes of clinical inference involved in interpreting the clinical data; and 4) to compare how the data are explained similarly or differently by the different paradigms, what data are included or omitted from each paradigm, and how each paradigm organizes the data to form a coherent pattern.

The following is a specific description of each chapter of the dissertation:

In chapters two and three each theoretical paradigm will be presented, highlighting the principle assumptions and concepts of each. In chapter four a transcript of a first session with a family will be presented in entirety. In chapters five and six first a formulation of the problem in the session will be presented which emphasizes the whole pattern from each perspective. Second, each formulation will be divided into parts or steps which will be defined and illustrated with examples from the session. The purpose of this analysis will be to document the processes of clinical inference involved in the creation of each pattern. I will describe the formulation, define each related concept and assess the extent to which the data appears to support the application of the particular

theoretical concept. The boundaries of each clinical inference will be spelled out by examining what makes several different instances examples of the same interpretive statement. Each example will be coded as to whether it is omitted or included in the other formulation.

In chapter seven the examples will be divided into three groups: the data considered significant by both paradigms, and the data considered significant initially by the object relations paradigm and not by the family systems paradigm and vice versa.

The focus of the analysis will be 1) to characterize the significant differences between the two interpretations when two interpretations are possible, 2) to illustrate which data are omitted entirely from one perspective although significant from the other perspective, 3) to examine the relative significance of data from each perspective, and 4) to compare the relative position of the same data in the two different patterns.

Chapter II

Object Relations Theory

The purpose of this chapter is to show how principles and concepts of object relations theory have been applied to the problems of families with adolescents who are having difficulty separating. In particular, the concept of projective identification will be examined in order to demonstrate how object relations theory leads the therapist to conceptualize family relationships.

Projective identification is a concept which bridges the interpersonal behavior of family members and the intrapsychic dynamics within each individual. This chapter first explains projective identification as a concept. Then it considers its relationship to normal and pathological development, and to adolescence as a second phase of separation-individuation. Finally, the chapter examines the proliferation of projective identification in families which regress during the adolescent stage of family development.

There are three groups of object relations theorists who have applied object relations theory to their observations of the adolescent and his family: Roger Shapiro and John Zinner's ideas developed from Bion's theory of small group processes; Edward Shapiro (in collaboration with John Zinner, Roger Shapiro and David Berkowitz) based his ideas on Kernberg's perspectives on borderline development (1975), Kohut's views of narcissism (1977), and Mahler's developmental theory of separation-individuation (1975); and Helm Stierlin, whose ideas represent a synthesis of object relations theory and systems

theory based on Boszormenyi Nagy's theory of transactional relational systems (1973). A recent collection of articles by Sally Box (1981) is intended to represent the more general psychoanalytic object relations approach to psychotherapy with families. The writings of clinicians who share the theoretical assumptions of object relations theory suggest that projective identification is a central concept which unifies their observations.

Object relations theory is based on the premise that there is an internal object world consisting of self and object representations, and there is an internal psychic structure with the functions of ego, superego, and id. These metapsychological constructs provide a model for understanding typical internal psychodynamics, their relationship to individual development, psychopathology and interaction.

Modell (1968) says that object relations theory developed in the context of a long standing tradition which stresses internal representations of the external world in the mind. To briefly summarize his description, he says that the problem of distinguishing between what is perceived and what is imagined is ancient. Descartes, Locke, Hume and Kant are part of a western tradition which assumes an inner world of objects which represent the external world. Descartes distinguished between objects of the material world and objects of the mind. He believed in the notion of innate ideas. Locke believed in a simple correspondence between physical objects and their representation in the mind. Hume believed that the real and the imagined could be distinguished by the greater intensity of the real. Kant was the first to accept the limitations of the mind's ability to know objective

reality. He believed that what did not conform to the structures of the mind could not be known. Kant based the difference between objective and subjective reality on one's ability to control the spatial pattern of what was perceived. (Modell, 1968, p. 78)

Object relations theory developed within this tradition. Object relations therapists who have specialized in working with and studying the adolescent and his family attempt to link up the intrapsychic events within the adolescent as distorted or modified versions of actual interpersonal events within the family. The concept which object relations theorists use to explain this connection is projective identification.

Projective identification was originally a concept developed by Melanie Klein (1977). Jaffe describes Klein's concept of projective identification as underlying the feeling of identification people have with other people because they have attributed qualities of their own to others. According to Klein it is bound up with developmental processes arising during the first three or four months of life, when splitting is at its height during the paranoid-schizoid position. Splitting is a defense in which good affects and parts of a relationship are kept separate from the bad affects and parts of a relationship in order to preserve the all good internal object relationship from being destroyed by the infant's rage. Splitting is a defense against persecutory anxiety. Other defenses which accompany it are denial and a fantasy of omnipotent control of internal and external objects.

When one projects good feelings, one attributes to others positive attributes which one disowns and denies in oneself. When one projects

good feelings onto others excessively, one perceives others as strong and the self as weak and the result is ego weakness; one experiences extreme dependency on others who are perceived as having the good parts of one's self. One may feel depleted of good feelings and fear the loss of one's capacity to love as a result. When one reintrojects the good parts of the projected self, idealization of internal objects occurs. Ego depletion and excessive dependency follow when internal objects are idealized at the expense of a positive image of the self.

The projection of a hostile inner world also leads to the impoverishment of good objects in the internal and external world. When bad feelings are projected, they are also re-introjected and become part of a hostile internal world. Therefore excessive use of projection and introjection of both good and bad parts of the self lead to the ego impoverishment, excessive dependency, and a lack of good internal objects (Jaffe, 1968, p. 665).

This concept has been applied and reworked outside the context of Kleinian object relations theory. Recently, there has been much interest in the concept. Grotstein (1981) characterizes projective identification as a concept which underlies all processes of generalization as opposed to splitting which he says underlies all processes of differentiation. Meissner (1981) describes projection and introjection as the main processes involved in projective identification. Projective identification has been described by Malin and Grotstein (1966), Jaffe (1968) and Ogden (1979) as a phenomenon which occurs in transference and countertransference.

Since Ogden's definitions are a composite of previous definitions and since they describe projective identification behaviorally as well

as psychodynamically they will be used here. According to Ogden projective identification refers to a "group of fantasies and accompanying object relations having to do with the ridding of the self of unwanted aspects of the self; the depositing of those unwanted parts into another person, and finally, the 'recovery' of a modified version of what was extruded." (Ogden, 1979 p. 357)

There are three stages to this process. The first involves an unconscious fantasy which serves as a defense: Person A has a fantasy of ridding himself of a part of the self which is experienced as dangerous either because of the reaction of others or because of internal conflict with the ego or superego. Person A has the fantasy of depositing this aspect of himself in Person B. A then imagines taking over Person B and controlling him. The second stage of this process is interpersonal: Person A induces person B to act in accordance with his fantasy by pressuring him in ways that will make B feel the way A feels. How this occurs is not clear. The third stages involves the unconscious perception that person B is "like" person A: Person A reinternalizes and feels connected to this aspect of himself as he perceives it in person B.

Person B is changed in this process; he becomes what A imagined him to be. Attempts by B to be otherwise are denied by A and B is further induced to act in accord with A's fantasies.

Ogden states that there are various functions served by projective identification. As a defense it separates painful or dangerous aspects of A's experience from soothing, comforting ones, as does splitting. In normal development it occurs before the ego has matured sufficiently to be capable of integrating painful and soothing experiences. When

the infant is capable of experiencing bad feelings toward an internal object representation of the parent without those representations being threatened he has achieved object constancy. Object constancy occurs when there has been sufficient gratification and good feelings toward the internal image of the parent such that this good image survives when the infant feels angry, disappointed or frustrated toward the parent. The good object relation (being a good self which is loved by a good parent) is preserved.

Normal Development

In normal development projective identification is a form of object relationship which presupposes internal differentiation between self and other but which precedes true object relatedness and object constancy. During projective identification A's perception of B is distorted by affects, needs, and motivations which fuel the processes of projection and introjection (Meissner, 1981). Other people are perceived as objects of gratification or deprivation rather than as whole, separate people. This occurs in normal and pathological development. In normal development this stage is followed by the gradual ability to integrate good and bad images of self and good and bad images of others; and result is object constancy, the capacity to hold a good experience of the other in mind during absence or deprivation. When parental care has been primarily soothing and gratifying the child will be able to tolerate frustration and deprivation without destroying this internal image of the significant other as a good person through splitting.

Projective identification has also been postulated as a way of communicating between infant and mother before the infant can speak:

the infant communicates his feelings and directs the mother to be responsive to his needs by causing her to experience the same feelings he feels. In a similar way patients in psychoanalysis induce their analysts to experience aspects of their experience in order to communicate and in order to rid themselves of painful experiences. Ogden (1979) and Malin and Grotstein (1966) emphasize the potential healing effect of the analyst's or the mother's processing the projected and induced experience and expressing it back to the patient or infant in a way which transforms it. When it is processed by the analyst or mother it can be reinternalized in a more tolerable, less threatening way by the patient or infant. Projective identification has been described as a process of psychological growth in normal development and in the psychoanalytic experience.

Sources of Defensive Internalization

Stierlin (1973) describes three interpersonal conditions which foster defensive internalizations: prolonged dependency, a conflictual relationship, and an intrusive relationship. All of these occur in relationships in which projective identification is the mode of relating between parent and child. Prolonged dependency may occur when a parent requires that the child accept a distorted perception of the parent as all loving under the threat of emotional abandonment. This child's internalizations will be primarily defensive, and will not serve reality testing and higher level object relatedness. Conflictual relationships stir up anxiety about sudden loss or abandonment; under the threat of abandonment whole, unintegrated representations of objects tend to be internalized in defense, as opposed to selective aspects of the object which are desired as part of the self. In

intrusive relationships the child's boundaries are violated and the child's capacity to distinguish his own needs and perceptions from those of his parents is interfered with; the child may internalize perceptions of himself as bad or weak which are projected onto him by his parents. These conditions lead to distorted internal images of the self and other.

Projection and introjection are modes of defensive internalization and externalization which occur in development midway between the processes of incorporation and identification according to Meissner (1981). In incorporation self and object images are fused, whereas self and object images are differentiated in projection and introjection. In identification the ego undergoes further organization and differentiation, but self representations are not affected, whereas in projection and introjection aspects of the internal self image are projected onto the internal image of the other and then reinternalized as part of the internal self image. These aspects of the self and other are colored by the affects which are experienced with them; these images become distorted as dangerous, exciting, threatening, seductive, etc. Projective identification is a concept which involves projection and introjection as modes of defense and perception. What makes it different from projection and introjection is the implication that there is also an interpersonal process by which A induces B to conform to his internal image of him.

In projective identification as in projection and introjection the other person is perceived as an extension of the self. Attributes of the image of the self are projected onto the image of the other and aspects of the image of the other person are introjected into the image

of the self. Projective identification involves a level of object relations in which the other person is perceived as a transitional object, that is, not as a person in his own right with his own (separate) needs, but solely as an object of need who gratifies or deprives. One assumes that when projective identification is used as a main axis of object relations between two people or in a family, the people in that family are not fully individuated in relation to each other. One infers a level of object relatedness which presumes self and other differentiation, but a quality of object relations in which images of self and others are distorted and the child's development is shaped by these distortions.

Adolescence, the Second Separation-Individuation,
and Identity Formation

Blos describes adolescence as the second separation-individuation (Blos, 1979). During adolescence, separation and individuation occur intrapsychically and interpersonally. As the adolescent matures cognitively, he depends less on the external support (ego) of his parents. His internal images of his parents become more stabilized and neutralized. The consolidation of his superego leads to less reliance on his parents for sanctions or disapproval.

This intrapsychic restructuring can contribute to regressive swings in adolescence. When the adolescent relies more on his own judgement (ego), ego weakness and earlier developmental deficits or failures become more apparent. Moreover, further weakening of the ego may temporarily occur due to the loss of earlier object relations, a sense of loneliness, a sense of identity diffusion in the face of new integrative tasks, and a loosening of the sexual prohibitions which

previously helped to stabilize conflictual feelings. To deal with all this, the adolescent turns to peers in order to replace parental objects and experiment with new identities.

The family's task is to allow the adolescent to change his relationship to the family in order to foster ego growth, superego maturation and the formation of a cohesive and positive sense of identity. If parents withdraw or retaliate in reaction to the adolescent's infantile or oppositional behavior these intrapsychic structural changes will be affected negatively. If the family cannot tolerate the loosening of dependency ties, or cannot reduce the guilt associated with sexual experimentation or the loyalty feelings which interfere with transferring affections to peer relations, the development of a new level of separation-individuation may also be affected detrimentally.

The positive outcome of the first separation-individuation phase is object constancy, the capacity to love and hate without destroying the internal image of the one who is both loved and hated. The positive outcome of the second separation individuation phase is the capacity to perceive the self and others realistically, giving up the idealized images of the self and substituting for the wishful images, ambitions for the future, and giving up the idealized or persecutory images of the parent and substituting for them a modified composite image of the parents as lovable and imperfect.

Projective Identification and Family Interaction in Families
with Adolescents: Identity Formation and Parental Perceptions

John Zinner and Roger Shapiro (1972) observed that parents of adolescents who are hospitalized with various symptoms but with a

common underlying problem in achieving separation-individuation tend to distort when describing particular aspects of their adolescent's personality which have specifically to do with his or her ability to separate and be independent. They have referred to these distortions as defensive delineations (Shapiro & Zinner, 1971) and to the process of distortion as projective identification (Zinner and Shapiro, 1972). A distorted perception occurs during a family regression similar to regressions in small groups. Based on Bion's (1975) concept of basic assumption behavior in small groups they described a kind of basic assumption behavior in families with an adolescent.

Basic assumption behavior is behavior which occurs during regression in a small group in which the unconscious collective reaction of the group is defensive. Fantasies tend to cluster thematically around dependency, fight-flight or pairing. When the group behaves in the modality of basic assumption behavior the group members are unable to accomplish the group task, whether that consists of therapy or business or, in the case of the family with an adolescent, of aiding in the adolescent's separation-individuation. In the families of troubled adolescents the parents' tendency to distort perceptions of their adolescent appeared to Zinner and Shapiro to interfere with the task of separation-individuation; acting on "basic assumptions" the family members distorted aspects of their own and their adolescent's behavior especially in regard to his capacity for separation-individuation.

In a specific case example in one of their papers (Shapiro and Zinner, 1972) the parents interpreted their adolescent son's efforts at independent action as attempts to dominate them. This appeared to be a

projection of the parents' wish to dominate their adolescent. The adolescent in this case accepted the family's definition of his independent actions as attempts to dominate them, and their attribution that he was not capable of real independence. Internally he modified his self representation or self image in accord with their beliefs or assumptions, and this self image became part of his sense of identity.

In normal development, projection and introjection have been described as the processes by which internalizations become modified. "This method of projecting one's inner psychic contents into external objects and then perceiving the response of these external objects and introjecting this response on a new level of integration is the way which the human organism grows psychically, nurtured by his environment" (Malin & Grostein, 1966). Internalizations are modified in the process of comparing one's own internal images with other's perceptions of reality: by projecting one's internalizations and comparing this perception with other's reactions to it, one reinternalizes an image which is modified in accordance with the discrepancies between one's own image and the image of others. Through the dual processes of projection and introjection and the gradual development of the ego one builds up a representational world which includes images of the self and images of others. The increasing strength of one's capacity to reality test which occurs with maturation significantly increases the relative ability to perceive external and internal events accurately. The images of self contribute to an enduring sense of identity. When these self images develop in the context of a family which interprets separation as destructive the

adolescent will have difficulty separating. The parent perceives the adolescent as if he contains elements of the parent's own personality and evokes this behavior in the adolescent. The adolescent accepts the parent's perception of him and acts in accordance with it, because colluding with the parent reduces the parent's anxiety, fosters feelings of self importance for the adolescent, and may allow the adolescent to gratify his own wishes.

The aspects of the parent's representational world which the parent projects onto the adolescent appear to recreate unresolved aspects of the relationship between the parent and the parent's parent. This provides the parent with the experience of restoring his earlier relationships. In this way there is a transgenerational reoccurrence of themes and conflicts.

Narcissistic Disorders

The narcissistic problems of some adolescents have been observed to reflect specific interactional characteristics within the family. According to Berkowitz, et al. (1974a, 1974b) the adolescent's oscillations between grandiosity and inferiority, overdependence on others for approval, and extreme vulnerability to disapproval, can be seen to be related to the parent's use of the adolescent as a narcissistic object. Applying Kohut's approach to narcissistic disorders Berkowitz, et al., observed that the internalization of self esteem regulation of the adolescent which occurs in normal development during adolescence, is interfered with by the parents' use of the child for their own self esteem regulation. The child's feeling devalued is a reaction to the parent's narcissistic rage at his attempts to separate; the child's grandiosity is a response to the parent's

idealization of the child in the attempt to preserve a union between the grandiose self and the perfect parent. The use of the child as a self object leads to an overvulnerability to criticism and praise on the part of the adolescent.

Acting Out Disorders

In adolescents with acting out problems Zinner and Shapiro observed that family interaction illustrates a failure on the part of any one individual to internalize both impulse and restraint. In effect the whole family contains both id and superego, but each individual contains only id or superego. Through projective identification the parent(s) recreate relationships with the parent's parents and thus pass on this failure to integrate superego and id from generation to generation (Zinner and Shapiro, 1974).

Borderline Disorders and Object Constancy

Characteristic defenses of borderline adolescents are also observed as a response to family interaction when the family is observed in therapy. Edward Shapiro and John Zinner observe that the whole family as a group acts as if it can love and hate, but individuals within the family act as if they love or hate (Zinner and Shapiro, E., 1975) The family of the borderline adolescent tends to regress in relation to the adolescent's separation. During regression the use of projective identification fosters the adolescent's use of splitting as a defense and inhibits the achievement of internal images of the parents as both loving and imperfect. The reactions of the parent(s) illustrate a split between all bad and all good internal object relations. The parents react to moves toward independence in the adolescent as hostile abandonment. The parent(s) projects onto the adolescent his internal

images of his rejecting, abandoning parent, and reacts to the adolescent with the unmitigated rage of a deprived infant. In so doing the parent identifies with the rejecting aspect of his own parent. On the other hand, the parent invites the adolescent to fuse in an idealized relationship with the all good parent. Splitting also occurs when the parents split their roles as good and bad parent or when they foster the perception of a split between all good family and the all depriving outside world (Zinner & Shapiro, 1975).

In normal adolescent development there should be progress in the integration of good and bad, loving and hating aspects of the self and other as the adolescent gives up his idealized or persecutory image of his parents and substitutes for it a composite image of imperfect but caring parents. In families of borderline adolescents the use of projective identification and specifically the perception of the adolescent as attacking and destructive interferes with the accomplishment of this intrapsychic task (Shapiro, E., Zinner, & Shapiro, R., et al., 1975). The family and the adolescent appear to share the perception of particular behaviors as attacking: in some families dependency needs are reacted to as if they were draining attacks; in other families autonomous moves are treated as abandoning attacks. In both cases the parent(s) polarize around the theme of dependency or autonomy. One parent becomes the good, gratifying, indulgent parent and the other parent the bad, withholding, depriving parent. The adolescent response may be to get away to avoid the all bad parent, but with a sense of loss and increased dependency he may then feel compelled to return with the fantasy of the all good parent or family. This vacillation between compulsive leaving and returning

takes the place of normal vacillations between coming and going, depending and acting independent (Shapiro, E., 1978a).

James Masterson (1971) has a similar view of borderline adolescents and their families' responses to independent and dependent strivings. He attributes the borderline adolescent's difficulty with separation-individuation to the mother's clinging when the child attempts to individuate. He suggests that the child develops defenses against abandonment depression which interfere with ego development. Since attempts at separation are responded to with withdrawal of love, the child experiences increased dependency and rage at the deprivation of supplies, and anxiety that he may destroy mother or himself. The child remains unaware of his underlying abandonment depression and preserves a fantasy of being fed by projecting the internal image of his rage and mother's deprivation in other relationships. Each step toward individuation is accompanied by internalized guilt for leaving mother. What was once an actual interpersonal experience becomes internalized as an intrapsychic event. According to Masterson, the mothers of borderline adolescents are often demanding and controlling women who need to maintain a symbiotic tie to their child; the fathers are passive men dominated by their wives who keep a distance from their wives which their wives do not mind as long as they are permitted to control the child. Masterson (1971, 1976) views one or both parents as borderline personalities, whereas E. Shapiro, Zinner, R. Shapiro, et al., do not (Shapiro, E., Zinner & Shapiro, R., 1975; Zinner & Shapiro, E., 1975; Zinner & Shapiro, R., 1972). They view the family group as regressing in relation to the specific developmental issues of separation-individuation.

Projective Identification and Modes of Separation

Helm Stierlin's approach to the study of families of troubled adolescents attempts to integrate aspects of systems theory with object relations theory. He is influenced largely by Boszormenyi-Nagy, who has developed his own combined psychoanalytic object relations theory and systems view of families (1973). Stierlin (1974) organizes his findings in terms of transactional modes which characterize particular families at particular times. These various transactional modes account for the effect on the adolescent's behavior in the moment as well as the enduring effect on his internal development.

The general thrust of Stierlin's ideas is not different from those which have been described already. His emphasis on transactional modes emphasizes the reciprocity of those interactions and classifies various kinds of transactions in relation to the separation process between parents and adolescents. The adolescent is most vulnerable to the influence of his parents when he is most dependent on them for survival. Since some transactional modes increase the dependency of the adolescent on the parents these modes increase the adolescent's vulnerability to accepting the parent's perceptions of him. Projective identification is the process by which the adolescent is influenced to believe or identify with the parent's projections. However, within this general framework there are a variety of ways that the family members interact reciprocally with one another, each of which have different effects on the separation process, the adolescent's development and on the degree of continuing influence the parents have over the child.

There are three transactional modes: binding, delegating, and

expelling. The binding mode has the impact of binding the child most closely to the family and therefore increasing the length of the child's dependency on the parents. Stierlin differentiates between various kinds of binding which have different influences on the adolescent's internal development. For example, id binding represents a gratification of id needs; this occurs when the transactions between parents and child involve infantilizing the child. Edith Jacobson (1964) describes this as the mother's use of the child for the fantasy of symbiotic merger. The effect of id binding is that the child experiences helplessness and has difficulty fighting off regressive tendencies and adjusting to the peer group. If the child gives in to the regressive fantasies he returns to the parental orbit. Levy (1931, 1966) Seligman (1975) and Estes (1956) describe a similar phenomenon in different ways.

The transactional mode of ego binding involves processes of parental mislabelling or attributing. During adolescence the child moves out of the family to a greater degree and confronts discrepancies between the family's perceptions and other's perceptions. If the child is unable to adjust to the discrepancy between his parent's and other's perceptions of reality, and if he cannot get the confirmation he needs from his peers, he may also return to the family orbit.

The third binding mode is superego binding, in which the child experiences breakaway guilt when he attempts to separate. Nagy (1973) emphasizes the significance of family loyalty in inhibiting change. Bowlby (1960) describes the cycle of guilt, hostility and anxiety which reinforces separation anxiety. Estes, et al., (1956) emphasize the vicious cycle of hostility, dependency and guilt between mother and

child during the child's attempts to separate.

A child who is primarily bound may be psychotic or schizophrenic. He may be bound in a variety of ways simultaneously. He may also be bound and delegated.

The concept of being delegated to fulfill a mission appears to be a further elaboration on the concept of projective identification. The adolescent who is delegated is identifying with a projection of his parent's wish. He is experiencing himself as sent out of the family on a long rope, with a mission which reflects the needs of the parent. This mission may involve id gratification and superego punishment. The child may be sent out to act out sexually or anti-socially and to be punished. This is similar to the observation of Zinner and Shapiro R. (1974) of the whole family's participation in the acting out and punishment of the adolescent.

The child may be sent out with an ego mission to accomplish something the parent never accomplished. Or he may be delegated to serve the superego function of self observation for the parent: by acting bad or sick he provides the parent with a mirror for a hidden part of the parent's self and helps the parent feel good or healthy in contrast to the child.

The third mode is the expelling mode. The true expelling mode lets the adolescent go out of the family without enough concern about him to hold on. These children are unwanted. On the other hand there are children who are expelled following a heated fight subsequent to the parent's disappointment in the child for failing to meet his expectations.

There are various consequences for separation-individuation of the

various transactional modes. According to Stierlin the consequences of being expelled are often a lack of internalization of concern. Delinquents who show disregard for others lack the loyalty bonds, commitment and caring of delegated or bound adolescents. Adolescents who are expelled after a heated confrontation have the advantage over bound adolescents of the opportunity to learn about life outside the family. However, these adolescents are left with lasting, unresolved difficulties. A sudden cut off interferes with working through more primitive internalizations. Blos (1979) also describes these consequences of family cut off. The negative consequences for a delegated adolescent are that he is vulnerable to depression when he fails to live up to his mission and he may return to the family and have more difficulty with separation. He is susceptible to internal conflict when the missions of a parent or between his parents conflict.

The Marital Couple

The emphasis thus far has been on the whole family's use of splitting and projective identification in relation to the separating adolescent; this literature fails to explain the impact on the adolescent of the relationship between the marital couple. Henry Dicks (1963, 1967) has studied the marital dyad from an object relations perspective. Samuel Slipp (1973, 1976) has attempted a triadic schema for representing the relations between the parents and the child.

Fairbairn's object relations theory has been the basis of Dicks' contribution to the study of marital couples. The observations which led him to apply Fairbairn's theory were that partners in married couples appeared to have built-in role models for the spouse which were based on a perception of the partner as if he were some other person or

part of a person. This often coincided with one spouse's taking a role which complemented the role of the other spouse; in some way one spouse acted like a parent in relation to the other who in turn acted like a child. At an unconscious level the spouses appeared to be working out earlier object relations.

The application of Fairbairn's theory led Dicks to formulate that in a healthy relationship between two healthy people each person has a unified central ego with a reserve of relational potential to a store of good internal objects. Splitting occurs in early development as a defense against excessive frustration: hate is split off from love: the loved object is idealized and the hated object is devalued. The ego's identity is preserved by splitting off (the hating and loving) parts of the self. These parts often remain dormant until they become reactivated in intimate relationships, when each partner experiences his needs as frustrated by his partner. The reactivation of a primitive, split off object relation creates powerful affective experiences of frustration and anger toward the spouse as if he were the bad parent of long ago.

Partners select each other on the basis of recognition of a potential fitness for working through old splits, and simultaneously for the potential collusive joint resistance to painful growth and therefore for the perpetuation of old splits. For example, when one partner frustrates the other he comes to represent the anti-libidinal tyrannical ego (which in psychoanalytic terms would be described as the punitive or forbidding superego). The demanding partner comes to represent the libidinal ego, or the needy, dependent libidinal child (which in psychoanalytic terms would be described as the id). The

couple act as if each were a part of a whole personality, each partner playing out one part of the unrecognized conflict instead of accepting the ambivalence of a whole person. Since one partner enacts the part of the anti-libidinal ego, or the depriving aggressor, and the other, the part of the libidinal ego, or the helpless victim, the aggressor-victim relationship is a common dimension of marital fights, (Dicks, 1963)

In Couples in Collusion by Jurg Willi (1982) one of the collusive couple patterns described consists of a maternal partner and an oral partner. In general collusion occurs when there is a fit between the projective identification of both partners in a dyad. In this pattern the maternal partner acts caring but represses and projects satisfaction of his own oral needs. The oral partner acts the part of the child seeking to satisfy his oral needs, and represses and projects onto his partner the responsibility of mothering. The partners' choice is based on a transaction in which one says he is so helpless because the other is so caring and the other says he is so caring because the partner is so helpless. Conflict arises when the oral partner becomes insatiable and ungrateful in the view of the maternal partner and the maternal partner becomes critical and rejecting in the view of the oral partner. Each has chosen the other to heal old frustrations. The goal of treatment according to Willi, is for them to share the nurturing and nurtured roles.

Samuel Slipp takes this process a step further providing a model for integrating the theory of projective identification between spouses and the projective identification between parents and child. When the gratifying introject is projected between spouses and the spouse fails

to fulfill the expected and hoped for gratifying function, the introject is projected onto the child who then becomes the receptacle for either the gratifying or depriving introject depending on what is projected and how he responds. In this way the family member becomes perceived as all good or all bad.

It is as if there were an unconscious search for someone in the family with whom to replay a conflict within the self which reflects split off aspects of earlier relationships. As family members collude or agree to take on assigned roles old object relations become reactivated creating a transgenerational repetition of conflicted aspects of family life or relationships (Slipp, 1973).

Treatment

Stierlin (1972, 1974, 1977) Shapiro E. (1975, 1978a, 1978b), Shapiro R. (1971) Zinner (1972, 1975), and Berkowitz (1974a, 1974b) advocate a combined approach to adolescents and their families in which the adolescent is seen alone as well as in the family in an insight oriented interpretive psychotherapy. The aim of the treatment is to uncover the projections of family members and through understanding to promote greater integration of each family member in order that each member may function as a differentiated individual within the family rather than as a part of a whole. There are some lovely examples of treatment successes and treatment problems in the works of the above authors. In a case example of E. Shapiro's he shows how as the family members recognize their own depression they begin to see each other more clearly and depend less on the use of projective identification. Interpretation of the underlying affect in the family leads to change in the father's perception of the daughter as a separate person. "I

kind of saw her as-as she was there and I was here and that was it."

(E. Shapiro, 1978)

Simultaneous treatment of adolescent and family aids the therapist in understanding the adolescent's transference reactions. Observing the whole family made it possible for example for a therapist to understand a sudden transference reaction which thematically echoed a family therapy session. The therapist's presence in the session made it more possible for him to have an appropriate empathic response to a sudden perception of him as an all bad parent. This interpretation made it possible for the patient to recognize her reaction as a transference reaction. "A combination of interpretation of the negative transference ("you thought I was saying to you what your father said") clarification of reality ("you were being extruded by...the family") and support for her libidinal needs ("I'm glad you came back")...allowed the patient to work on her symptomatology ("It's sort of like when I first started getting spaced out") observe the pretense demanded in the family ("gotta pretend everything's fine") and re-establish the working alliance ("I can see now what you were saying"). (E. Shapiro, 1977, p. 83)

Masterson, in contrast, suggests that family therapy follow when the adolescent has succeeded in forming an alliance with the therapist, and then serve mainly the function of allowing the adolescent to verbalize feelings about abandonment. The therapist's role is to be a substitute for the parents rather than to help change the family as a whole. (Masterson, 1972)

Levi, Stierlin and Savard (1972) discuss the interlocking crises of the depressed father and the adolescent son in The Interlocking Crises

of Integrity and Identity. Stierlin notes an interesting problem which arose repeatedly in family treatment with these families. The therapists tended to take a supportive position toward the adolescent which had the effect of undermining the fathers' authority in the family as limit setters. Stierlin concluded that the fathers needed to be supported in setting limits on their sons, that the fathers and sons needed to have a loving fight, and that the parents needed to be seen as a couple alone in order to intervene in the triadic cycle between mother, father and son. In this cycle the more the mother failed to get needed supplies from her depressed husband, the more she turned to her son; the more the son acted out to avoid the regressive pulls toward his mother, and the more the father withdrew, the more the mother turned to her son. It is interesting that cybernetic description of the pattern of the family's behavior led the therapists to change their approach to the family.

Chapter III

Family Systems Theory

The purpose of this chapter is to explain what it means to examine a family from a family systems approach. The goal is to show how the general principles and concepts of General Systems Theory and Cybernetics have been applied to the family as a system. Several schools of family therapy use systems theory as a base for understanding what happens in the family. This section will not discuss the different schools of family therapy and how they each adapted principles of systems theory. The purpose of this chapter is to show how the concepts of systems theory apply to aspects of family functioning, how some of the basic ideas have been elaborated upon by family theorists, and how these concepts prepare the therapist to expect certain phenomena in the family.

Systems theory and systems themselves are difficult to define. They are best understood by reviewing the concepts that are key to understanding the family as a system. Von Bertalanffy defines a system as "sets of elements standing in interaction" (Gray and Rizzo, 1967, p.7). A system is "recognizable by the physical proximity of its limits, similarity of its units, common fate of its units and distinct or recognizable patterning of its units" (Miller, 1969, p.9). Anything which has these rather vague properties can be a system. Von Bertalanffy set out to figure out what systems have in common. Since all social systems share certain properties, the family as a social system also has these properties. Once the features of social systems

are known they can form the basis for examining those aspects of the family system. This is the value of systems theory. Systems theory provides a model for investigating systems based on the laws or structural similarities between systems of the same general type. General Systems Theory is "a name which has come into use to describe a level of theoretical model building which lies somewhere between the highly generalized constructions of pure mathematics and the specific theories of the specialized disciplines" (Grinker, 1978, p.208). General Systems Theory was applied to social systems by Roy Grinker and his colleagues (Grinker, 1961), who set out to examine various disciplines which study social systems in order to determine what all social systems have in common. They concluded at the end of the first year of meetings that all social systems had the following four properties in common: wholeness, transaction, information, and feedback loops. Using these four properties, the rest of the chapter will elaborate upon how they are important to systems theory and particularly how they have been elaborated upon by family systems theorists.

Wholeness

The first characteristic that all social systems share is wholeness. The whole is more than the sum of its parts. In other words the organization of the parts "imparts to the aggregate characteristics that are not only different from but that are not found in their components alone; the sum of the parts must be taken to mean... their unorganized aggregation." (Buckley, 1967, p.42) This concept is extremely important to systems theory. The behavior of the individual family member might not appear adaptive without looking at

the whole family and his position in the family as a patterned organization. The significance of wholeness is that the position of a member in the organization contributes to forming and maintaining particular behaviors of that member. A person who looks at an individual's behavior from a systems perspective assumes that at some level this behavior is adaptive, and that there are not many other choices given his position in the system. "Causal explanation is usually positive. We say billiard ball B moved in such and such a direction because billiard ball A hit it at such and such an angle. In contrast to this cybernetic explanation is always negative. We consider what alternative possibilities could conceivably have occurred and then ask why many of the alternatives were not followed, so that the particular event was one of those few which could, in fact, occur (Bateson, 1963, p.29). The level of examination must include, directly or indirectly, an appreciation of the interlocking aspects of each person's behavior in the whole group.

The whole system can be studied in terms of its structure, process and function (Ruesch and Bateson, 1949). The structure is an abstract representation of the system which pictures the interrelationships between the parts spatially and statically without accounting for changes over time. The structure is the enduring aspect of the system that is abstracted from changes from moment to moment.

The structure of the system includes boundaries around the system which define what is inside and outside the system, and boundaries between subgroups within the system. These boundaries have relative permeability; they vary to the extent that they permit inflow and outflow of information from one system to other systems. This becomes

particularlry important when one considers whether the system is relatively open or closed. If there is too little permeability between the system and other systems the family may take on attributes of a closed system, because in closed systems there is no inflow and outflow or communication between it and other systems. On the other hand, if the boundaries are too permeable the system may lose definition and integrity and may be in the process of structure change or dissolution.

Subsystems may be organized hierachically. The parental subsystem might be described as hierarchically above the subgroup of the children until they reach middle adulthood. The "children" might then begin to take care of and make decisions about their parents as the parents reach old age. Every system can be viewed as a subsystem of a more inclusive system; in fact, all systems might be viewed as concentric circles in which some systems are subsystems of some larger system.

The function of a system has to do with what it does. Rapaport calls this the "acting" of a system, as compared with the structure which is the "being" of a system (Buckley, 1967, p.xx). The function of events within the family can be a focus of the family therapist who wishes to understand what these events do in the system, how they effect the way the system acts.

The process of the system has to do with what happens in the system over time; the process consists of the repeating sequences of events which happen in the family. This will be elaborated upon later under the headings of transaction and feedback loops.

The wholeness of a system is related to another important law which family theorists have applied to the study of the family, Bertrand Russell's Theory of Logical Types. The Theory of Logical Types makes

the distinction that what involves all of a collection must not be confused with a member of a collection. For example, the class of elephant does not have a trunk. The class has different properties from the member of the class. This theory has been applied to communication by Bateson (1972, 1979) to explain paradox as the confusion which arises when member and class are not clearly differentiated. It has also been applied to the problem of change in the family, since change can occur to a member of the family without having an impact on the patterned interactions in the family as a whole. It also applies to change that occurs in a particular behavior, but might not occur at the level of the pattern of behavior.

For example, often the solution to a problem appears to be to introduce its opposite, and often this creates a struggle between "doing a" and "not doing a", as if there were only two alternatives. A vicious cycle ensues in which the individual attempts to stop himself from doing "a" and does "not a", but finds that going from one extreme to another only perpetuates the problem. It seems hard for the person to break out of this "illusion of alternatives" (Watzliawick, 1974, p.90). Consider, for example, the cycle between mother and child in which the mother has difficulty setting limits; the child becomes increasingly out of control; the mother reaches a breaking point and severely punishes the child because she loses control; she feels guilty and becomes over solicitous; lacking parental limits the child begins to act out.

Consider also the problem of the alcoholic who tries to stop drinking. He is caught between drinking and not drinking, always struggling within the frame of these two alternatives. It often takes

a solution at a higher level of abstraction, a change in the entire set, to break out of the set of having only the polarities as choices. Bateson (1972, pp.309-337) describes how AA serves this purpose for the alcoholic in that it makes the alcoholic engage in a struggle with AA to prove that he is not always an alcoholic, rather than in a struggle with himself about whether to drink. The conflict now exists at a higher level, at the level of the class of behaviors, whether he will always be an alcoholic as AA says he will, whether it is out of his control as AA says it is, rather than whether he can control his own desire, as he thinks he should.

Watzliawick calls change which occurs at the level of the individual or at the level of a behavior, first order change, and change which occurs at the level of the whole family or the whole pattern, second order change. Change of this kind requires a change in the set; it requires being able to generate meta-rules, or rules for change. Most people who cannot change a pattern cannot see the pattern because seeing it requires being outside of it. They cannot comment on the pattern because they only see the individual moves. Commenting on the pattern requires being able to step outside of the pattern enough to understand that it is a pattern. Watzliawick and other family therapists often use reframing or redefining the problem as a way of shifting the individual or family's view of a problem sufficiently to help them break out of the set in which there appear to be only two alternatives, doing "a" or "not a." Prescriptions serve a similar purpose; they will be discussed after the rest of the concepts which social systems share are presented.

Transaction

The second concept which describes social systems is transaction. In systems information, matter and energy are exchanged via reciprocal circular patterns, or transactions. Transactions are circular chains of interaction; they have no beginning and no end. Since they have no beginning or end, no person initiates an interaction or ends an interaction. From the perspective of the family as a system all the members are participating in ongoing exchanges. Family members usually punctuate a sequence of interaction from their own point of view, seeing themselves as reacting to someone else in the family. Often in family therapy members blame each other for starting certain exchanges. However, from the systems perspective, both or all members are reacting. Any punctuation of the sequence is arbitrary. Therefore, the way the family punctuates the sequence is valuable information as to how the family perceives the problem, and which roles they attribute to various family members.

The systems therapist will not look for causal relationships between two events or behaviors. All reactions are mutually causal. There are no linear chains of causality. There is no stimulus and reaction. The explanation of an interaction is a description of how that interaction takes place, of what happens in a cycle of behavioral interaction in which all the behaviors are mutually causal. The why question can only be answered at the level of the pattern. Johnny hit his mother because in this family mother does X, father does Y, and Johnny does Z when this pattern takes place.

Family members' transactions have a profound effect on the actual occurrence of physiological changes between family members. Children's

psychosomatic symptoms were observed to increase with the increase of certain family tensions, thereby serving the function of momentarily reducing them (Minuchin, 1978). Phobic spouses became less phobic as their spouses became more phobic in couple's treatment (Fry, 1962). The symptom of one person in a family disappears and another symptom appears in another member (Napier and Whitaker, 1978). In this way the family as a whole acts as if energy, matter and information are exchanged between members.

Information

The third characteristic which social systems appear to share is information. The Communications theorists of family therapy founded by Bateson and Ruesch (1951) followed by many other distinguished reseachers and family therapists (Wazliawick, et al., 1967, 1977) developed this aspect of systems theory and its application to family systems. Two axioms of the Communication School are that all behavior is communication, and that all communication has both a command and report dimension. All behavior is communication because everything human beings do intentionally or unintentionally gives a message about that person to others; it defines his position in relation to others. If a person says nothing and is absorbed in some activity in which he does not acknowledge others, he gives the message that he wants to be left alone. He cannot not communicate.

The command aspect of the communication is at a level of abstraction above the report aspect in that it is a comment on the report. It tells the receiver of the message how the sender intends the report to be taken. Is it serious or is it a joke? Is it sad or happy? Is it a request or a demand? The command aspect of every

communication occurs verbally and nonverbally, it is the relational aspect of the message. By gesture, tone of voice, facial expression or other nonverbal as well as verbal signals person A tells person B how he intends his message to be taken. This comment on how the message is to be taken is also a comment on the kind of interaction A wishes to establish with B; it also implies the kind of relationship A is establishing with B.

A might establish or define a superior position in relation to B in which he says about his message, interaction and relationship that he expects to be obeyed or followed. If B responds by agreeing to this definition of the relationship and effectively says I will do what you want, he is also saying I will let you define the nature of this exchange, and control the relationship at this moment. If as the relationship develops A often defines the relationship in this way, and B often agrees to A's definition, then their relationship is complementary, and A is in a one up position in relation to B, and B is in a one down position in relation to A. If B responds to A's message that A expects to be obeyed or agreed with by disagreeing, and establishing a counter command that he expects to define the exchange and the relationship, then his response can be described as symmetrical because his behavior mirrors A's behavior. If these exchanges continue A and B may be competing for dominance; symmetrical exchanges are often competitive since A and B want the same thing. If A wants nurturance and B wants nurturance then A and B still have a symmetrical relationship (Bateson, 1965).

Usually the question of who defines or controls the relationship is not the dominant aspect of the relationship when the family functions

well, but it is often the dominant characteristic of a relationship in which the family members do not function well. Struggling about who has the right to define the relationship can take up most of the energy of a relationship and interfere with the exchange of information or content. When the exchanges are relatively contentless, the relationship is dominated by a lack of resolution about who defines the relationship, and at a higher level of abstraction, who is going to allow whom to define the relationship.

The double bind hypothesis (Bateson, 1972b) submits that extreme confusion and discomfort result when contradictory messages are sent simultaneously at different levels in certain circumstances. In these circumstances there is a relationship of total dependency in which there is no way of commenting on the discrepancy between the messages and there is no way to leave the situation. Disobedience means punishment and at an emotional level, annihilation. If this situation recurs with frequency over a period of time under intense threat, the result is that the receiver of the message is placed in a double bind, and experiences confusion and distress. This double bind hypothesis was a contribution to the explanation of schizophrenic behavior which interpreted psychotic symptoms as an adaptation to the family's simultaneous communication at different levels that opposite kinds of behavior would be punished, in a relationship which also prohibited leaving the field. The schizophrenic solution was described as a way to leave the field without leaving the relationship by saying "It is not I who is speaking it is God; it is not I who is determining my action it is the voices; it is not I who is moving my arms and legs it is a computer." By not taking responsibility for his own behavior the

schizophrenic is presumed to avoid the repercussions of the double bind. Haley went on to show that when one of his patients acted schizophrenic in the way described above, the family members ceased to use the double bind in communicating with him (Haley, 1972).

Jay Haley extended the double bind theory to apply to the symptomatic member's position in the family. Expanding the unit of analysis to the triangle, which Haley and others (Bowen, 1966) agree is a natural unit for the study of the family, he wondered what kind of triangular arrangement would lead to a pathological system. He called the perverse triangle one in which at least one person involved is at a different hierarchical level from the others; a person of one level (generation) forms a coalition (secret alliance) with a person of another level aimed at action against a third person who is a peer; and this coalition is denied (Haley, 1972).

To repeat, the person who is in a double bind is in a situation in which he is being told to do opposite things simultaneously and therefore cannot possibly comply; nor can he escape the relationship because the consequences would be extreme punishment or annihilation. When one person is dependent on the other as a child is on a parent, the threatened punishment may be emotional or physical abandonment. Likewise, the person in a perverse triangle is caught between two levels in an organization. On an overt level he might be in an executive position, whereas covertly on an emotional level he is not in control since others have formed a coalition which undermines his power. Therefore, these two positions call for opposite responses to the situation. If the person is unable to make a comment about his dilemma or identify the confusion in his situation, he will experience

distress.

In a family system this can be an experience of conflicting loyalties. At the level of roles the child is subordinate to his parents; if at an emotional level he is being used by one parent in a coalition against the other parent, he is hierarchically in a contradictory position. He will experience conflict, and may experience extreme distress if responses are required simultaneously from both parents. He is in a position of conflicting loyalties.

Assume that A offers behavior which fits the operating needs of System One (which might be the person or might be a subsystem like the parental dyad) and that conflicting behavior is simultaneously demanded that fits the needs of System Two (which might be the extended kin group). If one system is a subset of the other, and the two arenas are not clearly differentiated or kept apart, confusion will arise. It is the same kind of confusion that Bateson saw at the heart of the Russellian paradox: the difficulty of discerning the difference between class and subclass. There will always be a two-level dilemma, never clearly spelled out, regarding which system's rules are to be obeyed (Hoffman, 1981, p.112).

The difference between this dilemma and ambivalence is that ambivalence is a process of changing one's mind depending on the aspect of the situation one focuses on. In a perverse triangle and in a double bind the situation demands a different response at the same time since one demand is inclusive of another; different responses are demanded at different levels in the system.

Feedback Loops

The fourth and last concept which describes all social systems is feedback loops. Feedback loops are circular chains of mutual causal information exchanges by which the actual performance or state is

compared with a goal state in order to increase or decrease the discrepancy between the actual and goal state or behavior. Cybernetics was modelled on information processing in the computer. Von Bertalanffy claims that the relationship between Cybernetics and General Systems Theory is that Cybernetics is concerned with a subclass of systems in which the feedback loops are unidirectional, and the composition of the system is not changed by the actual exchange of energy or matter as in living (biological) systems. He says that in the information processing model, feedback systems serve mainly regulatory or homeostatic purposes. (Von Bertalanffy, 1967, pp.132-133).

Recently Keeney (1981, 1982), Hoffman (1982), Dell (1982), and DeShazer (1982a, 1982b) have claimed that understanding the family as a cybernetic system is key to the most revolutionary aspect of the family systems approach to studying the family. Bateson first described the applicability of Cybernetics to social systems in Naven (1965). When analyzing the results of his study of the Iatmul tribe in New Guinea, he recognized that certain interactions occurred repeatedly and in particular sequences. He wondered about their relationship to each other and to the notion he was developing of schismogenesis, or progressive change. He described the two kinds of interactions which occurred in the Iatmul culture as complementary and symmetrical; symmetrical interactions occurred when the behavior of two people in interaction mirrored each other as in any kind of rivalry or competition. Complementary interactions occurred when the behavior of two people fit together as in dominant-submissive or nurturer-nurtured.

He reasoned that if all the interactions were symmetrical or complementary one would see rapid progressive change in the direction

of increased symmetrical rivalry or increased complementary differentiation.

"I made an effort to account for the presumed dynamic equilibrium of the system by pointing out that the symmetrical and complementary processes are in some sense opposites of each other so that the culture containing both of these processes might conceivably balance them one against the other....the problem became totally changed with the growth of cybernetic theory.... the formal study of feedback systems.... Now we had mechanical models of causal circuits which would if the parameters of the system were appropriate seek equilibria or steady states.... The ideas themselves are extremely simple. All that is required is that we ask not about the lineal chains of cause and effect but about the characteristics of systems in which chains of cause and effect are circular or more complex than circular. If, for example, we consider a circular system containing elements A, B, C, and D - so related that an activity of A affects an activity of B, B affects C, C affects D, and D has an effect back upon A - we find that such a system has properties totally different from anything which can occur in lineal chains.

Such circular causal systems either seek a steady state or undergo progressive exponential change; this change will be limited either by the energy resources of the system, or by some external restraint, or by a breakdown of the system as such.

The self corrective characteristic of the circuit as a whole depends upon there being within the circuit at least one link such that the more there is of something, the less there will be of something else. In such cases the system may be self corrective, either seeking a steady rate of operation or oscillating about such a steady state" (Bateson, 1965, pp.287-288).

Changes which occur at the level of the oscillations around a steady state are called changes in variables; changes which occur in the system as a whole are changes in parameters. A change in parameters changes the setting around which the oscillations occur to

maintain or approximate a steady state (Bateson, 1965 p.242).

Negative feedback loops are deviation counteracting operations, in which the actual performance or state is compared with the desired state and operations are triggered which bring the behavior of the individual system back into alignment with the standard. Positive feedback loops are circular chains of information exchange in which the mismatch between the expected and actual performance leads to a reaction which increases the difference between the individual or system's behavior and the standard or expected behavior (Maruyama, 1963).

Whether a feedback loop is deviation amplifying or deviation counteracting depends on the level of analysis (Hoffman, 1971). In a family system, for example, an individual's deviant behavior might be amplified at the same time that the conflictual interpersonal behavior of others is counteracted: Johnny gets an asthma attack when his parents argue, and his parents stop arguing when he gets an asthma attack. This cycle increases the likelihood of Johnny's asthmatic behavior since it amplifies his deviant behavior by counteracting the deviant behavior between his parents, i.e., their fighting.

Feedback loops are not random cycles. They are governed by a goal state (Buckley, 1968, p.xix). In a family this goal state can be deduced from the range of behavior of the family. The goal state is equivalent to the concept of a family rule. The concept of a family rule suggests that family members act as if their behavior is governed by a rule which defines the parameters of what is and is not permissible in the family.

There appears to be a range around the standard or goal state which

remains within the rule of what is appropriate and permissible behavior in the family. Behavior which transgresses this rule is reduced through a process of negative feedback. Certain deviant behaviors may develop spontaneously; when they become part of a pattern it indicates that they serve a function for the family. Sometimes the symptomatic behavior protects the family rule. For example, if the family rule is that disagreement is not permitted, then the deviant behavior, for example, the asthmatic reaction, serves to regulate the degree of disagreement in the family. Deviant behavior is amplified when it is followed by positive feedback. Deviant behavior can occur as a sudden reaction to a crisis in which some stress triggers behavior in the family which exceeds the range of acceptable or comfortable behavior; if it distracts family members from the crisis and reduces the family's discomfort about the external stress, it can be said to serve a negative feedback function for the family. Whereas, the external stress disorganizes the family, the deviant behavior of the family member organizes the family by bringing the family together (Hoffman, 1971). For example, if the father loses his job, or a close relative, he might become depressed and function poorly. If the family cannot tolerate the change in his functioning, a child might distract the family by becoming ill or depressed. The family might pull together to take care of the child; and feel effective in doing so. Whereas the family was not able to bring back the lost parent or job, the family is able to take care of the child. This is an example of a situation in which the family's reaction serves the function of positive feedback to the child's problems whereas the child's problems serve the function of negative feedback to the crisis in the rest of the family. If a child

misbehaves, his behavior may serve the function of organizing the family by helping them reassert their conviction in the family rule; together they can focus on this child as having broken the rule. The child serves as an organizer by going against the rule. Or if the child fails in school, this might organize or bring the family together by requiring that they help their child (Hoffman, 1971, 1981).

Some family systems are more flexible than others and adapt to crisis or change through transformation when necessary. Jackson (1959) describes families in therapy which do not adapt to change; he coined the term "family homeostasis" for the negative feedback processes which occur in a family to maintain stability when the therapist is encouraging change. In these families, family members appear to function as controls for each other's behavior in a way that positively reinforces the symptomatic behavior, and negatively reinforces the input of the therapist.

In some families the homeostasis is maintained by what appears to be an exchange of symptoms. As one person's symptoms diminish another person's symptomatic behavior increases. The family as a whole maintains its homeostasis, whereas the individual members change roles. At the level of the individual change appears to occur, but at the level of the family group the family's pattern of interaction is maintained by redistributing the parts.

Sometimes in order to maintain homeostasis in the extended family, the family of origin might break down; for example, when a person serves a homeostatic function as a deviant in the extended family he may not be able to serve his executive function as a parent. If a parent's symptom serves the function of keeping his own parent (in the

grandparent generation) strong by making himself submissive, it may interfere with that parent's ability to serve the executive function in the family in which he is a parent, because he is undermined by his submissive role in his extended family. At the level of the extended family his behavior may be positively reinforced; it might reduce tension or distract family members from something else, help the family maintain its organization, or reorganize in a time of crisis. At the level of the family in which the person is a parent his behavior might be negatively reinforced, therefore placing him in a stressful position. The adaptive role of his behavior might not be understood if it is not seen in the enlarged context of the extended family group.

Family systems are open systems. There are multivariable feedback loops which function to achieve the same end state such that blocking one of these does not necessarily mean changing the system. More than likely it means that that loop will reroute and take another form which still is consistent with the parameters of the family's behavior (the family rule). Some family systems operate in such redundant ways that they take on some of the characteristics of closed systems. Closed systems (machines) have established arrangements in which the loops have order and direction. In open systems the system can adapt to change without losing its integrity in the face of new input from outside the system. The structure of the system allows for adaptation and development in the direction of increasing organization and differentiation. In a closed system the feedback mechanisms serve primarily regulatory homeostatic purposes. In families which cannot adapt to change, the patterns are often rigid and redundant. There are two important implications of this for family therapy.

Families that function like closed systems will have clearly repeating sequences of behavior in which the symptomatic behavior both reinforces the patterns of behavior in the family and is reinforced by these patterns of behavior. This much is essentially definitional.

These patterns will serve such an important homeostatic function that they will be difficult to change. Although first order change might occur easily (an individual's behavior might change), changing the patterned arrangements which contribute to the system's organization will be difficult. These systems are self-corrective to the extent that any input from the therapist is corrected by the family as a whole.

The next question is how and where to intervene. This leads to a discussion of some of the methods and techniques used by system therapists to change the structure and process of the whole family system.

Treatment

The therapeutic bind or simple bind has been used by many family therapists as a way to affect change in the whole family group rather than in an individual member, and to change the family's thinking-acting-reacting cycle rather than a specific behavior. Changes initiated from within a system often express the alternative of doing "a" or "not a," rather than breaking set and creating an entirely new possibility. Reframing involves redefining the behavior in the family in such a way that the family members experience a different relationship to the behavior. For example, one might suggest that a behavior is actually doing the whole family a favor. In a case in which a young boy was caught stealing, the reframe suggested that the

boy was actually trying to help his adolescent brother and mother get together during periods when the adolescent brother's separation efforts were threatening to the mother. By emphasizing the effect of his behavior rather than his motives, the boy was allowed to feel less shame and humiliation, and the family was encouraged to address the other problems from which his behavior had diverted them.

When a negatively connoted behavior is positively reframed, then an antagonistic relationship to the behavior might be substituted by a more sympathetic one. For example, if someone who feels he is not succeeding at a problem is told instead that he is working too hard on it, his relationship to that behavior might change in the direction of feeling less worried or upset about it.

Reframing might involve restraining the family from change by emphasizing the positive effects of the behavior for others in the family. If a fighting couple is encouraged to fight because it shows their families that they are loyal first to their families of origin and second to each other, it allows the couple to decide that they would rather please themselves than their families (Weingarten, 1982). Or when an adolescent girl is told that it seems that she believes that it is really more important to bring her mother and grandmother together by failing, and that she should continue to stay home from school lest they draw too far apart, it allows her to decide to do something for herself. By enlarging and changing the context from one in which she thinks she is unable to do the work, to one in which she is doing something for others at great cost to herself, it makes her feel she is capable and good, and it empowers her to decide whether that is what she wants to do.

Strategic therapists prescribe the symptom sometimes with the assumption that by changing the set within which that behavior occurs from involuntary to voluntary, they make change possible when it was believed impossible. For example, by prescribing staying home from school to a school phobic child, or insomnia to an insomniac, the symptom is reframed as voluntary behavior. Either it is actually involuntary (insomnia) and the prescription aims to reduce the efforts to sleep which actually keep the person awake, or it allows the person (school refuser) to view his behavior as voluntary.

Olga Silverstein and Peggy Papp (1977) prescribe not only the symptom, but also the cycle of interaction which maintains the symptom. By suggesting that each person continue to do his part and by describing how it is helping each other person, they reframe the whole system's interlocking pattern, and prescribe it. Usually this has the effect of creating a recoil in which the family members' resist helping each other in this way. This frees them up to do something different.

Another approach (Hoffman, 1982) is to describe the dilemma they are in if they do change. Spelling out the alternatives and the consequences, and the way in which the family requires that things stay the way they are, can change the whole family's attitude toward what they are doing. In a family dealing with the problem of blending two families, by positively connoting fighting as a way for the family to reorganize, when reorganization is necessary at this point in the family's development, the therapist redefines the family's problem at a higher level, which includes alternatives "a" and "not a". The problem becomes redefined as how to get organized rather than whether to fight or not (Hoffman, 1982).

Dell (1982, p.37) says there are two basic epistemological errors, the passive error and the active error. The passive error involves not accepting that what is, is . The active error is to try to control others and make them do what you want them to do. This is an error because control is impossible. In families these errors are often committed by individuals in relationship to themselves as well as in relation to others. The result is that people keep trying to change each other or deny the immutable.

Rigidly stereotyped patterns evolve from repeated attempts to do the same thing in the same way. Reframing, restraint from change, prescribing the symptom, prescribing the whole system's sequences of interactions, and feeding back the family contradictions to the family are all techniques which attempt to break through the redundant patterns which have been the family's attempted solutions to their problems which have in turn become the problem. Reframing becomes the therapist's way of changing the meaning of the family's behavior in order to correct the epistemological error.

Chapter IV

Transcript

In this chapter a transcript of a first interview with a couple in their fifties will be presented. In the following chapters the problem in this family will be formulated from the perspectives of object relations and family systems theory. These formulations will be illustrated with examples from this transcript in order to demonstrate how the data in this session are selectively perceived, interpreted and organized from both perspectives. In the last chapter these analyses will be compared in order to describe characteristic similarities and differences in how these clinical data were viewed when applying these two theoretical paradigms to practice.

In the transcript W. will stand for wife. H. will stand for Husband. D. will stand for Daughter. T. will stand for Therapist.

This interview was transcribed from an audio tape. As the tape recorder was set up the wife began asking about the therapist's credentials.

- 1 Wife (W) -...We went from what she was to something as far as the
2 psychiatrist - I didn't know what it was...
- 3 Husband (H) - [speaking at the same time] No, no, there is nothing
4 else...
- 5 W. OK, whatever, it doesn't matter - as long as
6 something will help.
- 7 T. OK, Good. It raises the questions that everybody always has
8 when they start, "Who are you? The therapist. And what - you
9 know - what - Can you really help us?"
- 10 W. If I want to discuss my life, I want to know something of
11 yours. Right?
- 12 T. Let's see if I can put something up against...
- 13 H. Well, if you know how to do that...
- 14 T. If I can do that I can fix anything. [laughter]
- 15 H. Well.
16. T. OK. So why don't we start by telling me something about how
you see the problem that brings you here.
- 17 W. Can I ask... I'm sorry, Carol, one more thing I must ask
you...
- 18 T. Sure.
- 19 W. I'm going to call you Carol if you don't mind. Ok, uh, when S.
20 took all the information from us....
- 21 T. Mmm, humm.
- 22 W. I was hoping we wouldn't have to go through the whole thing
23 again. Did she give you any information?
- 24 T. Yes, she wrote...

1. W. I, I'd rather not start at the very beginning, then if we can get a little further into it rather than go over the whole thing all over again.
2. T. Well, you can and you can't.
- 3 W. Yeh, I know we have to skim over certain parts, you know.
- 4 T. She wrote down a lot of what was said, but there's no way that
5 I have of knowing exactly what you said.
- 6 W. Or how we expressed it.
7. T. Right, and I, of course, want to hear from you very directly,
8 and it's not just a matter of getting information, but, I
9 think what you say and how you present it is very much what
10 we're here for.
- 11 W. You start.
- 12 H. Well, really, it's, it's, it's a situation - we have been
13 married for 31 years - you know - you probably know that. You
14 probably got that written -- we have two children. A boy.
15 He's 25. [sigh] And I have a daughter that's 21 and a half -
16 that's about the right age - and the basis of this thing is
17 really our daughter uhh - maybe it was our son too. We didn't
18 realize it at the time, but he went to X. College and he left
19 the house because he had to live in the dormitory - he had
20 played basketball 10 miles away from the house. But, we live
21 in X. - but that's college life I suppose - if you want to be
22 part of it you live there, which was all well and good, and he
23 graduated cum laude and came out and had an operation which
24 was a very minor operation, but he came home and went to
25 work. He's in television and does commercials, things like
26 that. And he saved himself up some money and decided he was
27 going to go out on his own. At the particular time he was
28 what? 22?
- 29 W. I know, but what does that have to do...?
- 30 H. I'm giving her some background on this.... She wants to know
31 that. Right?
- 32 T. Well, actually I asked you what, how you saw the problem that
33 brings you here.
- 34 H. Well.

- 1 T. The background we can get a little bit later... but I really want...
- 2 H. The problem is our daughter. Our daughter is under some sort
3 of psychiatric care. She goes to group therapy and she goes
4 to a psychologist - yeh, the psychiatrist...
- 5 W. She's seeing a young lady who is...
- 6 H. Who's a psychologist...
- 7 H. & W. ...and her husband is a psychiatrist
- 8 H. And she goes once a week to group therapy thing with the
9 psychiatrist and she sees the psychologist once a week, too, so
10 she goes somewhere in the vicinity of about three times a week
[inaudible]
- 11 W. She goes three times a week.
- 12 H. She goes three or four times a week.
- 13 H. ...type of thing. You probably know what that is better than
14 we do.
- 15 T. Well.
- 16 H. Her problem started, maybe about 2 or 3 years ago, when something
- 17 W. Excuse me - I have to differ with you, I...
- 18 H. Why don't you tell the story?
- 19 W. No, but it started a lot longer, further than that...
- 20 H. Why don't you tell the story?
- 21 W. It came to a head...
- 22 H. Would you like to tell it...?
- 23 W. No, I'm trying to just...
- 24 H. All right, about 2 or 3 years ago, I started to notice - that -
25 well, she went to college - she started out at University of X

1 and she went through for about a year and she said she was
2 going to take a year off - which I wasn't very happy about, but
3 nevertheless, she never did go back - and she went into the
4 work situation and I started to see something - which really -
5 didn't - I saw it and I didn't see it. It meant nothing to
6 me. She got a job - it was very easy for her to get a job -
7 'cause she was a very outgoing person at the time, and she
8 went "I got a job." "What are you doing?" "Oh, I'm a
9 receptionist, I'm doing this and she'd be all right - and
10 everything would be fine on this particular job until - all of
11 a sudden - she'd come home one night "Guess what? They're
12 going to take me out of what I'm doing now and I'm going to
13 have to do this --- going to be a big responsibility --- she
14 could do this, so I thought and the minute, anytime anybody
15 came over to her and the responsibility started, you know, she
16 had to have some sort of responsibility - the job ended and it
17 became a series of jobs - which lasted 3 or 4 months maybe and
18 everything was [inaudible].

19 The last job she had was, which was - I thought - a great job -
20 pay and everything, was, she was working in an advertising
21 agency - and everything was fine - until all of a sudden one
22 day, out she came and she says, well, she says, they're going
23 to take me off the switchboard or receptionist and they're
24 going to put me into the - oh gee, how did she put it? - in
25 some department - the creative department and she was going to
26 work with the creative department and that's when her problems
27 really started - she was great until - uhh

28 T. How does this have to do with you're being here now?

29 H. Well, this all started - she got to a point where she started
30 to get very, very depressed - and we started to notice that in
31 between jobs she would sleep her life away. She'd get up in
32 the morning - have something to eat and go back to bed again!

33 T. Mmmmm, hmm.

34 H. And, uh, this was a continuous thing. Headaches, sleep,
35 tonsils and she had wisdom teeth. Whatever she could find,
36 anything she could find ---.

37 W. You can't say that...

38 H. Well, I'm telling the story. If you want to...

39 W. Well, I have to interrupt.

- 1 H. This is our problem.
- 2 T. What's your problem?
- 3 H. My problem is that she doesn't let anybody talk - whether it's
4 me, a stranger, or anybody else. You want to tell the story,
5 why don't you? This is the way I see it. You want to tell
6 it the way you see it, you tell it.
- 7 W. Go on.
- 8 H. And, when you talk, I keep my mouth shut.
- 9 W. No, go ahead.
- 10 H. I forgot what I was saying.
- 11 W. You were talking about her - the wisdom teeth.
- 12 H. Whatever it was, whatever she could find - and crazy enough,
13 you read about it afterwards, you read articles in books and
14 magazines and newspapers - you read'em a thousand times and
15 they meant nothing to you but then all of a sudden you start to
16 read'em and you see your daughter. You see her -- with the
17 stomachaches, with the problems with her period, with the
18 sleeping, headaches, numerous other things, which all come
19 together to - probably - since everybody writes about it they
20 must be real classic examples - what happens to someone ---
21 someone who finds she couldn't get along with her friends and
22 that's that. She just wound up with this really, even the
23 class of friends that she started to come up with - I wasn't
24 very happy with -- and, uh, even with boys it got to the point
25 that even - it just was a whole different girl - you know --
26 the telephone didn't ring like it used to ring. She's a
27 beautiful girl, you have to see her to appreciate her - a very
28 pretty, pretty girl and it wasn't the way a girl like her - it
29 shouldn't happen that way - maybe we were too stupid to see
30 it. But finally, when we did see it - uh, she got to us, she
31 absolutely couldn't get along with us - under, no way, no
32 matter what you say - even myself - with me - no matter what
33 we said - we said it wrong - we were just wrong. That
34 provoked trouble, fighting, not fighting, but between my wife
35 and I. I would tell her to leave her alone. Stop telling her
36 what to do. Stop criticizing her. And if she wants to sleep
37 - let her sleep. And if she, she wants to help herself - we
38 didn't stop her. She's smart enough for that and she just -

1 she just couldn't. It was just, "D. this, D. do this. Why
2 didn't you do this D.?"

3 T. Then you two disagreed about how to handle her?

4 H. Basically it was how to handle her. A lot of it was - we
5 argued between ourselves because of her. We were married for
6 a long, long time. We had a very good marriage. We were very
7 happy, and I still think in a sense we're happy and still
8 think about loving each other. But I think that all that's
9 come between us in a sense - and the two of them when she was
10 living at home I was just up... I was just nervous. I
11 couldn't stay in the den and listen to the raised, the voices,
12 you know, in the other end of the house. They couldn't talk
13 to each other without yelling you see. And there would always
14 be some sort of criticism. "D. do this, D. do that." And I
15 kept telling her "So, why don't you leave her alone - you know
16 - let her find her own way - do certain things that - we tried
17 to do everything - you know - to stay out of her way - so that
18 she wouldn't have this hostility towards us. And, then we did
19 the wrong thing! Who the hell knows what we did? Whether we
20 were doing the right thing the wrong thing? I thought the
21 best way to handle it was to leave her alone - let her do
22 something herself - then come and tell us that this is what we
23 wanted her to do - but she wouldn't do that.

24 T. So you see the problem between you as somehow caused by the
25 problem you daughter is having.

26 H. Oh, yeh.

27 T. Is that right?

28 H. Yes, absolutely.

29 T. And you feel that you two - your point of view is that you two
30 have had a good, happy marriage, your daughter started to have
31 very severe troubles and that the two of you began to argue
32 about how to deal with those problems she was having.

33 H. Yeh, basically that's it. She's a very, in a way, a very, very
34 stubborn person also. I keep telling her - I just said, "Leave
35 her alone." Like even now when she moved out of the house -
36 but, she had to move out the house, it was impossible for her
37 to stay with us. And she'd say "Why don't you call her and
38 tell her something? Call her and tell her that." Or even now
39 she'll say "Call her and tell her this" or "call her and tell

- 1 her that."
- 2 T. And you think that's the problem. Your sense is that that's the problem.
- 3 H. I think that between us - you know - I got to the point now
4 that I could care less about my daughter. Not that I don't
5 love her. Don't, don't misunderstand what I mean - but with
6 her problem right now, I can really care less. I don't care
7 anymore. My problem that I do care about is - us.
- 8 T. You care about...
- 9 H. Us.
- 10 T. How you two get along.
- 11 H. That's right, that's what I care about.
- 12 T. So that's what you're here for.
- 13 H. Basically, that's what we're here for. Not my daughter. I can give a damn less right now. Let her go and do anything she wants - whatever she wants to. It's beyond me at the moment because I can't do anything to help her.
- 14 T. Mmm, hmm. So, so, you're here because the two of you have been
15 arguing.
- 16 H. We haven't really been even arguing. I'm here, why we're here, this is only the second time I've been. She's been going -- for how long?
- 17 W. Half a year.
- 18 H. It's well over a year.
- 19 W. Who's been going well over a year?
- 20 H. We've been going to the other place - we started last summer.
- 21 W. We stopped for a short time.
- 22 T. This is only the second time you're here?
- 23 H. That I've been here.

- 1 W. I have come to see S. before this - I was - the girl that D. is
2 seeing (?) suggested that we see S.
- 3 T. As a couple.
- 4 W. Yes.
- 5 H. I really think...
- 6 T. And, then how did...?
- 7 W. I started first - and I saw S. alone. She asked if he'd come
8 and I said yes.
- 9 T. So S. saw the two of you then? Together. So you really
10 haven't been here as a couple except for one other time.
- 11 W. Yes.
- 12 T. All right, and you, you have been here how many times with S.
13 3 - 4 - 5?
- 14 W. At the most.
- 15 T. OK. Why don't you tell me how you see...
- 16 W. I can't be quite as cool as he is.
- 17 T. Well, how do you see the two of you coming in together right
18 now? How do you see what the problem is between the two of
19 you? What brings you in today?
- 20 W. The first part - all that started with the fact that D. became
21 very hostile to us, not really hostile, just [inaudible] - what
22 he said about her tonsils was something that had to be done.
23 She was having strep throat too many times. She kept going to
24 the office, there's a woman there who kept going back and
25 forth to help her. She lost about 7 pounds. Before that she
26 did have her wisdom teeth out. Now you don't have your wisdom
27 teeth out unless you have to have them out. They were
28 impacted. They had to be. OK? Right?
- 29 H. Sure.
- 30 W. She didn't have them out because she wanted to. I had to be
31 done - but that's besides. What he said about her jobs - is
32 true. She had wanted responsibility. Whoever she worked for

1 felt she had the capability. She came up to my office today.
2 She was going to have her resume typed. This girl that she
3 sees helped her with it. I said bring it in I'll be glad to
4 type it for you. She's a terrific person. I cannot hold
5 back. I do suggest which is the wrong thing to do. I don't
6 do it out of animosity certainly. I do it because I love her
7 and I can see things that she doesn't see and if I suggest
8 something it's because I think it's going to be good for her.
9 I noticed the last couple of days she seemed to be a little
10 mad at herself. I don't know. Many times we've been in the
11 car together because I've let her use my car.

12 You know, let me start a little further back for a moment.
13 When she came to - she was seeing someone from Family
14 Service. We both were. It was last summer and I found it was
15 not good. I mean I would leave after a session - he was a
16 social worker - very nice - and I left after a session and I
17 just couldn't handle it. It was just too much for me. I
18 wouldn't walk in the house.

19 T. You were seeing a social worker with your daughter.

20 W. Yes, Family Service.

21 T. In what sense couldn't you handle it?

22 W. I became much too emotional. It was too much of a strain for
23 me and I felt...

24 I really couldn't afford to do it and I felt it was not really
25 doing enough for me and I said, D. if you wish to you go,
26 perhaps it's best for you but right now I can't and I stopped
27 and after a while she found it was not enough for her either
28 and we were still having our differences. Then finally she
29 came to me at 2 o'clock in the morning once and she just cried
30 and said, "Mother I need more help, I've got to get more
31 help." And I said, "You'll get it. Anyway she found this
32 place. The Center for Psychotherapy in X. Someone had
33 recommended it to her. I think a friend, someone who had gone
34 through the throes of divorce and this girl's parents had been
35 divorced and so forth and so she (?) I had told (?) and for
36 some reason (?) I don't know, why from this office and

37 T. How, I'm not sure how this is all related to why the two of
38 you are here now.

- 1 W. I'm just giving you a little background about her.
- 2 T. Yes, but there's time for background and I'm concerned with ...
- 3 W. I don't know, where we're concerned, it's been a long time, in
4 fact it's been months that I feel I've been treated like a
5 mother that's been loved, or a wife, or a woman, for that
6 matter - who's felt loved. For I haven't felt it for a long,
7 long time. And I'm sure he feels the same way. I don't know
8 what's become of us.
- 9 Because we've had a very happy marriage up until, I'd say, 30
10 years ago. I feel like we've lost a whole year of our lives.
11 We've gone through a great deal....
- 12 T. You've had a happy marriage up until when?
- 13 H. Up until a year ago (laughs).
- 14 W. That's right.
- 15 T. You said, "Up until 30 years."
- 16 H. (At the same time) thirty years of marriage. She meant the
years.
- 17 W. We're married 31 years. Up until one ...
- 18 H. Thirty years of happiness and one year of strife.
- 19 T. It sounded like one year of happiness and 30 years of strife.
- 20 H. I know that.
- 21 W. That's not it. I didn't mean it to sound that way.
- 22 H. That's the way she said it. Let's go on with.... (laughs)
- 23 W. I just feel...
- 24 T. So for one year...
- 25 W. We have been through Hell...
- 26 T. ...you have not felt that you've been loving...
- 27 W. No, and we're usually a very emotional, very loving family.

- 1 T. Couple?
- 2 W. Family
- 3 T. Couple?
- 4 H. Couple
- 5 W. And couple. By that I mean the kids would come in and kiss us.
6 And when they'd leave they'd kiss good-bye.
- 7 T. Are you an emotional close family or couple?
- 8 W. Both.
- 9 H. You know my son is 25 years old and he'll kiss his father.
- 10 T. But I'm wondering whether you also - are you talking about
11 having been a very loving couple?
- 12 H. Oh, yes. We've gone to a marriage encounter. I'm talking
about...
- 13 W. We'd come in together, he'd kiss me and hug me and there was
14 never, this was never hidden from our children. They saw love
15 in my house - at all times. I'm not saying they saw us sleep
16 together. I'm talking about affection.
- 17 H. They saw that too..
- 18 T. So the two of you are here from your point of view - the two
19 of you are here because you have...
- 20 W. I don't know what his point of view is. I'm telling you mine.
- 21 T. From your point of view.
- 22 W. I do not feel like I have been treated as a loving wife.
- 23 T. You don't know if you've been treated as a loving wife.
- 24 W. No, I have not been treated as a loving wife. I have not been
25 treated as a loving mother...
- 26 I feel...

- 1 T. But do you see yourself as coming here for the problems
2 connected with feeling that your daughter isn't treating you
3 as a loving daughter should?
- 4 W. It's all connected. The whole thing is all wound up in here,
5 the whole thing. Um.
- 6 T. Have you...?
- 7 W. There's a great deal of resentment I have now, more so than
8 ever against my family... I resent them.
- 9 T. Who in your family?.
- 10 W. Every one of them. My husband. My daughter. Sometimes my
11 son. I resent every bit of it because I've done more... Let
12 me just give you a little bit - OK? Things that you skipped
13 over and I think it may have a great deal to do with
14 everything and why these things have happened.
- 15 T. Right now I'm not especially concerned with why they
happened...
- 16 W. Well, I think it's important to know.
- 17 T. It is important but right now...
- 18 W. Is it important to know he had a heart attack? Is it important
19 to know that we lost our business and almost lost our home?
- 20 T. Mmm. Hmmm.
- 21 W. And that I'm out working. He's struggling. We're both
22 struggling. All this has to do with a great deal to do with
23 it. If that couldn't have been worked out because...
- 24 T. How is it that you think these things have brought you here
now?
- 25 W. We are not seeing, we're not seeing each other's viewpoint.
26 When I've said it him "You call your daughter", it's because I
27 can't speak with her.
- 28 It might be that day she yelled at me and I don't want to talk
29 to her.
- 30 It might be that day she said to me [weeping] "It's your fault."

1 It might have been that day that she said to me, "You're the
2 cause of it." Which he has also said to me and I resent it,
3 cause...

4 T. Did you know that she felt you were saying that she was the
5 cause of it? Did you know that?

6 W. My advice...

7 H. There's a few times - she really - I don't like to say this.

8 W. Well, you might as well...

9 H. She really is - she's not really the cause of it but she
10 certainly knows how to throw more logs into the fire...

11 W. Not deliberately. Not intentionally.

12 H. I know it, I know it, I know it - we - our particular problem -
13 You can't really separate our problem from what happened to my
14 daughter.

15 T. Mmmmm. Hmmm.

16 H. There's no way. Because if they said to you, we just put it
17 off - but we went to a marriage encounter and we were a very
18 happy married couple and we went through a lot which is true
19 but like she - you heard her say - I would - she would tell me
20 to call my daughter.

21 T. But you're saying that you don't feel that W.

22 T. W.! OK and you're H.

23 H. I'm H.

24 T. You don't feel that W. caused the problem but she added fuel to
25 it.

26 H. I think it's a problem where probably both of us are guilty in
27 a sense - way back because this problem didn't start overnight.

28 T. But I'm trying to get a sense of how you see it.

29 H. All right. When I did tell her that she did cause part of it
30 she did cause it. It is partially her fault, probably
31 partially my fault too. Well I'm telling you what I did say -

1 see - getting away from all that. My daughter's not in my
2 house for three months. I do say that I come home and don't
3 snip at my wife. We went out last Saturday. I took the day
4 off and we went last Saturday and we walked through a shopping
5 mall. We held hands! And we hadn't done that for God knows
6 how long! And we talked to each other and we got along with
7 each other pretty damn good! I think that as much as you say
8 "Well, I don't want to know about your daughter and her
9 problems," that this is all my daughter's problem, not my
10 son's problem. My daughter's the cause...

11 T. So your sense is that your daughter is causing...

12 W. What he's saying is our children are a big part of our life, a
13 very big part of our lives.

14 H. She caused this problem and she is still causing this problem -
and...

15 W. Your talking about me or D.?

16 H. D.

17 I feel the more we ignore her the better off we are. My
18 attitude is that if she never called me, I don't think I'd ever
19 call her. I really mean that - it's very difficult to say.

20 T. So at this point you would like to kind of...

21 H. Send her to California.

22 W. H., you couldn't...!

23 H. ...and we would get along very well.

24 W. He's saying that - not literally.

25 T. This is the kind of disagreement that you're feeling that you
26 have?

27 W. No, I love her too much.

28 H. If she would like to keep hold of and keep calling her and -
29 "H., Call up D. and tell her that if she wants to come to eat
30 she can come to eat."

31 W. I don't have to tell her that.

1 H. "Call D. and tell her we bought her some yogurt, it's in the
2 refrigerator. I don't want to answer the phone in case it's D.
3 - you talk to her..."

4 T. The disagreement is about how much to let D. continue to be a
5 part of your lives. Is that it? Is that right?

6 W. How can you turn something like that off?

7 H. I can turn it off.

8 W. I can't.

9 T. So you're still very involved with your daughter...

10 W. That's true, there are things... It's very difficult for me to
11 say no to her. I'm very vulnerable where she's concerned.

12 H. You don't think for a minute that I don't love her as much as
13 you do.

14 W. I know you do but I can't understand your attitude.

15 H. My attitude is that I...

16 W. I can't be that cool about it, H.

17 H. You can't.

18 W. No, I can't, I can't...

19 H. To tell you the truth, I really know you longer than I know her
20 and I can shut her out very easily. But you won't let me.
21 It's just a question that you won't let anybody turn D. off.

22 W. She calls me, she doesn't call you.

23 H. She calls up and says, "This is D." You go "click!"

24 T. Since she seems to be so much a part of your lives...

25 W. When she called me today...

26 T. ...had you thought about bringing her in as part of this
27 treatment?

28 H. & W. [inaudible]

1 H. Absolutely not.

2 W. Yes, but not yet.

3 H. I don't want her to come. I don't want to go to her, and I
4 don't want her to be here.

5 W. I wouldn't want her to hear that she's to blame.

6 H. Well, she is.

7 W. Because I think that will only cause more problems for her.
8 She's trying very hard right now to get a job. She's finally
9 at the stage where I hope and pray she can work...

10 T. Well are there some things that you can work on as a couple
11 that will not have to do directly with her because in fact
12 she's not going to be here and so talking about her while
13 she's not here wouldn't be useful but to talk about her when
14 she is here would be.

15 H. & W. [inaudible]

16 W. I don't think....

17 H. There's nothing in our lives...

18 W. I'll tell you what, C., what I'd like you to do, and I'm sure
19 you were going to eventually anyway is talk with P. yourself.
20 The young lady that she does see.

21 T. Her doctor?

22 H. No, she's her psychologist.

23 W. Well, she -- her husband is the doctor.

24 H. Well, she's a doctor.

25 W. So you will - were to speak with her, I know S. did.

26 T. Sure, I'd be happy to but that's not the issue.

27 W. inaudible]

28 H. Really, it is but it isn't.

1 T. What I'm asking you is - is there something that you can talk
2 about, is there some focus that you can agree on, that has to
3 do with the two of you?

4 W. Do you want my honest opinion?

5 H. No, there really isn't...

6 W. Do you want my honest opinion? OK, you're looking at two
7 people who are heartbroken because of this and I just pray
8 we're going to get out of it because I don't...

9 H. I want to ignore her - I feel

10 T. Heartbroken because of the problem she's having or...?

11 W. No.

12 H. Let me tell you something. She's not...

13 T. You're heartbroken because of her problems?

14 W. Yes, I am. I'm torn inside.

15 T. That's what your tears are about?

16 W. And what it's done with us.

17 T. What has it done?

18 H. What hasn't it done? It'd be easier to give you that list -
19 but the fact...

20 W. We live as two people - we talk, around everything - but we're
21 not really (?) where we... a...in life.

22 H. You want to know something point blank? It's affected our sex
23 life.

24 T. How?

25 H. How? I don't know how - I just don't have - I just don't --
26 It's me.

27 W. You just don't care.

28 H. It's not that I don't care.

- 1 T. You mean that you don't initiate?
- 2 H. No. We don't do anything.
- 3 T. For how long?
- 4 H. Probably six months - wouldn't you say? This thing has torn me
5 apart. Psychologically, as far as sex life - between us there
6 hasn't been any sex life as far as that's concerned. This here
7 all stems from one thing - and we can't really separate the
8 two - in as much as you'd like to - I notice, as I said to you
9 here, it's getting a little better.
- 10 W. It is?
- 11 H. I think it is.
- 12 T. How did you feel when you walked in the mall?
- 13 W. Oh, I know this. That's funny. I thought of it too.
- 14 T. You liked that.
- 15 H. We used to always do that. This is a step in the right
direction.
- 16 H. We always did that! In fact, this is a step. I feel that - I
17 think it's a step in the right direction. I think it's
18 something - I don't think it's - it's really getting better.
19 It's getting so the longer she stays away the better it is.
20 She threatened us the other day - she was going to come home.
- 21 T. Who initiates the contacts between you - you're pointing your
finger.
- 22 W. You mean between D. and us.
- 23 T. Yes.
- 24 H. Yes. You do.
- 25 W. She calls me. Many times.
- 26 T. Does D. call you or do you call her?
- 27 W. She calls me at the office. I call her occasionally.

- 1 H. You call her.
- 2 W. I try not to because she...
- 3 H. And I never call her, I would never call her.
- 4 W. I would rather not call her - not because I don't want to.
5 It's because I invariably will ask questions that she doesn't
6 want to answer - there are so many things I've missed that I
7 resent having lost.
- 7 She's at the age when I can enjoy her - maybe that's selfish.
8 But she's at an age where we can both... She's a young woman! -
9 She's a young lady! I can enjoy her. I should be able to
10 speak to her, confide in her, I wanted to and I would love her
11 to confide in me as not only a parent-daughter relationship as
12 a friend. I resent that. I miss her. It's something I've
13 always looked forward to and I don't know when I'll ever have
14 it. I hope I will. But I will someday tell my children -
15 when they get married - right now that's the way I feel,
16 "Don't love your children too much."
- 17 T. You feel you've loved your two children too much? That's the
18 problem?
- 19 W. I never thought I did. I loved them. I had a normal
20 childhood. I loved my parents. They loved me. I never
21 remember anything like this.
- 22 T. Are your parents living?
- 23 W. My mother is.
- 24 T. Where does she live?
- 25 W. She's at the X. Rehabilitation Center.
- 26 T. How's she doing? Good?
- 27 W. She's doing well for her age. I speak to her everyday - more
28 - sometimes twice a day. I visit her two or three times a
29 week. I resent the fact that the children don't get to see
30 her as often. They love her. I know they do.
- 31 She's a very much with it woman. She's 83.
- 32 H. Or thereabouts.

1 T. What?

2 H. (?) or thereabouts.

3 W. She's quite - her mind is quite clear and good thank God.
4 She's had two hips broken - she gets around with a cane. She
5 does well. She minds not seeing them. I can't tell her about
6 D.

7. T. She doesn't know about her.

8 W. Doesn't know about D. There are a lot of great many things...

9 T. Did she ever live in the family with you?

10 W. Yes, she did.

11 T. For a long time?

12 W. For a while.

13 T. 'Til when?

14 W. Uhh. She's at the home now about three years.

15 T. She left you about three years ago?

16 W. And she lived with my sister for a while - and she went there
17 and visited - met a lot of her friends there - and decided
18 that she wanted to go.

19 T. You have a sister?

20 W. Yes, I have, and I had a twin brother, too - he died.

21 T. When did he die?

22 W. In '72.

23 T. Of what?

24 W. Heart attack.

25 T. Had he been sick before that?

26 W. He had had a heart attack before that. He was young. We're a
27 close family! I have another brother.

1 H. [Inaudible]

2 W. And a sister and we're close with his family. He has two
3 brothers and a sister-in-law. We're very close. Two brothers.

4 T. Which one are you?

5 H. I'm the youngest.

6 W. He's the youngest.

7 T. You're the youngest in the family? Are your parents living?
8 When did they die?

9 H. My daughter is named after my mother.

10 W. Your mother died in '48.

11 H. My father died about 10 years ago.

12 T. Your daughter is named after your mother...

13 W. Not '48, I'm sorry.

14 T. ... because she was born after your mother died?

15 H. Right.

16 W. His mother died in '54.

17 H. When my mother died my son was about a year old.

18 W. Not quite.

19 T. And your father died -

20 H. My father died about - maybe 10 years ago. He was 92.

21 T. [Inaudible]

22 H. [Inaudible]

23 W. There are a lot of things by the way that we haven't touched
24 on - not to change the subject. There are a lot of things
25 that I resent now. More than I ever did. But if I say them
26 then you get angry.

- 1 H. No.
- 2 W. Yup. [Inaudible]. ...very much the present.
- 3 H. I have to admit I do get angry.
- 4 W. I resent the fact that he says he wants to ignore her.
- 5 H. Well I think.
- 6 W. But you wouldn't ignore your son.
- 7 H. I don't have to ignore my son...
- 8 W. Right. Ok.
- 9 H. ...because my son doesn't give me a day -- He never - in
10 reality - he, thank God - he never really gave me one...
- 11 W. He's a good kid. She is too.
- 12 H. ...bad day in his entire life.
- 13 W. Let me tell you.
- 14 H. This kid here could rip my life apart.
- 15 W. Let me tell you something.
- 16 T. Are you angry at D.?
- 17 W. [Inaudible]
- 18 H. Yeh, in a way. I'm not angry in the sense that I could - oh -
19 murder her or something like that.
- 20 W. He get's [inaudible].
- 21 H. I'm mad - I tend to hold things in. I get... I'm so mad at her
22 sometimes I could bite nails. But I just let it go.
- 23 W. T., he has a much better relationship. I just can't do it.
- 24 H. I don't see, I know that the problem...
- 25 W. H., excuse me, this is my turn.

1 H. Wait, let me finish.

2 W. and I'm going to take it.

3 H. You've been talking so long already. I've been timing you.

4 W. She comes into the house and she will kiss him.

5 T. How do you usually decide...

6 W. And go right by me.

7 T. How do you usually decide who's going to talk?

8 H. Whoever gets there first.

9 T. A little competition about who's going to...

10 H. We really get along. I really don't understand her
11(laughs)

12 W. There are so many things that are welled up.

13 H. I don't understand why we're even here (laugh). You know, we
14 got along for so many years. We've known each other since she
15 was maybe 10 years old. We grew up together basically. We
16 got married. We've lived with each other for 30 years and we
17 really get along so damn well. Right now we don't just get
18 along. We really didn't fight or have this problem because of
19 us. You know - really. We had this problem because of a
20 third party and that's been eating us up basically. She shows
21 the emotion more perhaps than I do, but I can assure you....

22 T. You usually take the position that you would like to let D. be
23 on her own more...

24 H. Yes, I would... I would...

25 T. Do you see that as a rejection of sorts or do you see that as a
26 kind of positive step?

27 W. No, I'd like her to be on her own. Absolutely.

28 T. So do you agree about letting her be on her own?

29 W. But she's not quite capable yet.

- 1 H. Oh well, it's a matter of opinion.
- 2 T. She's not capable?
- 3 W. She hasn't got a job.
- 4 H. What do I care if she's got a job or not? She's getting along.
- 5 T. She's... But you said...
- 6 H. I don't care. She'll get a job.
- 7 T. You said you've got a problem with loving your children too much.
- 8 W. That's right.
- 9 T. From your talks with S. - did you get the sense that it was
10 - would be positive for your daughter that you be less actively
11 involved with her, or...
- 12 W. I didn't hear what you said, because of what?
- 13 T. I wondered whether in your talks with S. you came somehow to
14 the conclusion that it might be best for D. and for you to
15 have less involvement. Is that correct?
- 16 H. Not really.
- 17 W. I don't know... Right now, I suppose it is - at this point,
18 she's not, she comes to me.
- 19 T. Is that your - you think you should have a little more distance
20 from her at this point?
- 21 W. I must have more distance from her because I'm no good for her.
- 22 T. So for her sake...
- 23 W. Evidently, I am no good for her.
- 24 T. How did you come to that realization? That's what I'm
wondering.
- 25 W. He's told me that. She's told me that. I have no other way of
26 thinking.

- 1 T. So she said that? You kind of agree with H.?
- 2 W. And yet when she needs something - she doesn't hold it in, she
3 comes to me.
- 4 T. But it sounds like you kind of agree with B. You sort of share
5 his view that you should let her be more on her own - struggle
6 these things out for herself more.
- 7 W. Up to a point. If she can.
- 8 H. I don't want to say that. I will never let her, she's my
9 daughter.
- 10 W. You don't sound...rejecting to me.
- 11 H. I would never let her - no, no, let me tell it - I would never
12 let her starve to death. You can understand that. I would
13 never let her be out in the street - you know - and not have
14 no place to live - as a matter of fact I would even call her
15 on a hot night like this and say, "We have a house that's
16 centrally air conditioned" - and she's living up in an
17 apartment on the third floor - in an attic room perhaps, and
18 say "come home and sleep here tonight." I'm not that hard-
19 hearted and I don't want to get - this - but I feel that I
20 don't have to call her - there's no reason in the world that I
21 have to call that girl.
- 22 T. And you're willing to...
- 23 H. I'm willing not to call her - but my wife isn't willing not to
24 call her. My wife wants to hear from her although she says
25 "Well, I don't want to talk to her." But she wants someone to
26 talk to her like she talks to her mother - every day - maybe
27 twice a day.
- 28 W. No. No that isn't necessary.
- 29 H. No, well, you don't think so but it works out that way.
- 30 T. So, your sense is that maybe you should back off a little bit
31 and give her a little room?
- 32 W. I've tried to do that.
- 33 T. ...because in fact she does have a lot of therapists.

- 1 W. D. has our car which she's not supposed to do. She's borrowed
2 it for a month, but she picks me up in the morning and takes
3 me to work. When she worked before she used to share a car
4 with me. When she needs something she calls me. If I asked
5 her a question and it's one too many, or not the right
6 question I get an awful answer sometimes...
- 7 T. So, she...
- 8 W. It upsets me all day and I find it very difficult to
9 concentrate at work.
- 10 T. So she's kind of telling you that she wants to be more on her
11 own - you - but at the same time she's using your car and
12 she's still very involved with you.
- 13 H. She's using the car.
- 14 W. I said to her once I don't mind you um [inaudible]. I don't
think she means to...
- 15 H. Unfortunately the problem is you kind of accept it. You
16 can't because nothing happened between our marriage until this
17 started.
- 18 T. OK. I understand that and I just wanted to know if there was a
19 way we could focus what was going on between you because she's
20 not here.
- 21 H. We have a different view. Both of us have a different
22 view - if you would. She keeps telling me I'm the cause of
23 it. I don't believe in that at all - no way.
- 24 W. You mean...where D. is concerned?
- 25 H. No way.
- 26 T. You feel you're being blamed?
- 27 H. No. That has nothing to do with it. D - this thing started
28 with D. - I think it probably started with D.
- 29 W. In high school.
- 30 H. In high school. Yeh. She had jobs in between that and you
31 know something? I can even think back now when she worked for
32 a store like P. in between school - right and the thing dawned

1 on me while we were sitting here talking and the thing stuck
2 in my mind. How far back this goes and she was in high school
3 when the owner of P., who we happened to know - his wife went
4 over and said - D. - she walked into that store in X. and we
5 never sold cosmetics until D. there - D. was an outgoing,
6 bubbly thing. She was able to sell herself and show people
7 how to do it. I didn't think it was great in that store -
8 mind you - working part time, just making a few bucks a week -
9 and until the owner's wife came over and said, "You know D.,
10 how would you like to run the cosmetics department in the
11 store? The job ended. And you know something - now that you
12 look back you can see these little things - that really
13 started even as far back as that - and the only thing that I
14 ever remember her taking responsibility for - the only way -
15 the only thing - and that was because it helped in something
16 else - was in high school - was when she belonged to the
17 mental health club and she was the president of mental
18 health. Boy did she work her fanny off! And she raised money
19 for it and she worked more than anybody ever had at X. High
20 School because of this thing, and that was the only time that
21 I can ever go back and see whether - now something happened
22 after that.

23 W. Because the fellow she was working with...

24 H. [inaudible].

25 W. I didn't know.

26 H. I can say.

27 W. H., you know something I didn't want you to know and you know
28 why. Maybe things would happen when you got sick - in the
29 hospital - you were sick. I was with you that evening. When
30 you came home things were happening...

31 H. What?

32 W. But there were things - maybe little things - maybe something a
33 little bigger.

34 H. If I didn't find out about it they really could not be that
35 important but...

36 W. There were some things that were important - but I said let's
37 not mention it to dad because I'm not sure but I think down
38 deep there were things that may have happened that she felt
39 guilty about. And maybe.

- 1 H. Oh no, no, come on.
- 2 W. I don't know, I'm just trying to rationalize.
- 3 T. When were you sick?
- 4 H. It happened in '79.
- 5 T. And how are you now?
- 6 H. Terrific.
- 7 W. Overweight.
- 8 H. Overweight.
- 9 W. Which I also resent.
- 10 T. You had a heart attack? Have you had a heart attack since
11 then? What kind of restrictions are you on? What's your
12 regime? Diet? Exercise? Smoking?
- 13 H. I should lose weight. I had to give up smoking. I was a four
14 pack a day. I gave that up. I used to smoke cigars - I gave
15 that up. I don't smoke at all I drink very rarely. I am a
16 little overweight. An the only thing...
- 17 T. How's your heart?
- 18 H. Good. I thought I had a doctor's appointment and the
19 only thing, and was in there at 11 o'clock this morning - and
20 she says "What are you doing? - you're supposed to be here
21 tomorrow" and I have to go back tomorrow.
- 22 H. It was high blood pressure - up higher than it was.
- 23 T. Do you watch your pressure?
- 24 H. No - let me tell you something - something very interesting.
- 25 W. [Inaudible]
- 26 H. My doctor said a very, very interesting thing. The last
27 time I went to see him which was about 5 or 6 months ago
28 and I started telling him about my daughter "the same thing
29 happened to me. She's married now. She has children." He
30 says, "everybody's got that." I say, "Well, I guess." And he

1 says, "You know something, I know exactly what you're going
2 through," he says, "because I went through it."

3 W. It's reassuring. It's...

4 H. And I've talked to more people who've gone through this
5 thing. And that's why I keep saying to myself, I know, I tell
6 you - we haven't, in reality, - I have - I don't know about
7 her - I haven't in reality lost an ounce of love for my wife
8 as far as that's concerned. I haven't got the patience that I
9 had.

10 T. For what?

11 H. For a lot of things that she does and what she says.

12 T. W. or D.?

13 H. W. There are a lot of things that she says. She tried to do
14 and think it. And I just don't have the patience for it. I
15 have a tendency to keep things in. I don't cry.

16 But there's a lot that's bothering me. I don't say anything. I
17 can't. I feel I could kill myself over it but I feel first of
18 all I've never lost any love for her so help me God. I've
19 never lost any love for her.

20 I told her that myself. I've got a lot in me right now.
21 There's no question about that - I've got a lot...

22 T. On your mind?

23 H. ...on my mind. I don't like to see what's happening to my
24 daughter - I really don't like it. I say, "Ship her to
25 California" - well, I say that in the sense that I wish that
26 something would happen - that it would get straightened out.

27 T. So you're saying that even though W. may talk about D. a lot -
28 and you don't, you still worry an enormous amount about her.

29 H. Listen. I worry about her - I have a police radio at home -
30 she lives in the third floor of a house and I have the X.
31 Police - and if I hear there's a fire alarm or something...

32 T. So you're a worrier...

33 H. I'm not that much of a worrier - but I do worry - I listen for

1 accidents - I know she's got the car and I keep worryig to hear
2 the names and the kind of car over the air.

3 T. So you worry about her safety.

4 H. Of course I do. I'm not... She's my daughter you know.

5 T. Did you know?

6 W. I knew that.

7 H. Of course she knows - but I mean that I just feel that the
8 time has come and I've said this before. She said it to
9 me. I would as soon...

10 W. Our problem is the way he thinks about me.

11 H. No, that's not the way it is

12 W. This is the way I think...

13 T. Do you think part of the problem has to do with the fact that
14 you had been feeling rejected or criticized by H.?

15 W. Absolutely.

16 T. So that - really - one of the things that for you is it feels
17 like you're not being appreciated.

18 W. I've been double crossed.

19 T. By H.?

20 H. You haven't been double crossed. She's doing it wrong.

21 T. I'm just trying to understand.

22 W. [Inaudible].

23 T. But for you feel kind of like you want B. to appreciate - how -
24 what you've tried to do?

25 W. I don't know.

26 T. And you are - really - seem to be trying to preserve your
27 marriage by pulling W. back toward you.

1 H. I think it's the only way it can be. I really try. Maybe
2 I'm not trying the right way - I don't now how the hell to do
3 it.

4 T. You - it seems
5 W. You're an intelligent man, you should know how.

6 H. I don't know. It's not that easy.

7 T. What could you do?

8 H. I don't know.

9 H. Some days -- I'll tell you there are sometimes she comes up
10 with things, I'll tell you, God Almighty.

12 T. What could he do?

13 W. He should know.

14 H. [Inaudible]

15 T. You're not sure you want to tell him

16 W. No.

17 T. You don't have that feeling.

18 W. I must admit I am angry.

19 T. It seems like you're hurt. You said you felt double crossed.

20 H. I don't think. In theory we were double crossed - by our
21 own daughter.

22 W. I resent you're saying it.

23 H. You resent my saying it because I know the kid is sick.

24 T. It sounds like in a way you may feel jealous because W.'s been
25 so involved with D.

26 H. No. I'm not jealous.

27 H. No. Absolutely not. I would love to see my kids - I love my
28 son - he comes in with his beard - he comes in and he comes

1 over and he kisses me - and cause I always kissed my father -
2 I mean this is something.

3 W. This is a different generation.

4 H. I don't know - uh --

5 W. On the other side...

6 H. I don't

7 W. [Inaudible]

8 H. Once in a while

9 W. I'm not concerned... I probably shouldn't have.

10 T. Well, I have to cut this short because our time is coming to a
11 close and I want to wrap this up a little bit in terms - not in
12 terms - of what we've been talking about - but at least in
13 terms of where we are going to go from here.

14 W. [Inaudible]

15 H. [Inaudible]

16 W. You know - the only encouraging thing I can say is maybe she'll
get a job.

17 H. Not unless she's been cured.

18 T. I guess

19 H. ...from past history...

20 W. She might get a job and not like it

21 H. From her past history - you can see

22 I know there's a lot she could do

23 I don't know if she's reached a point now where she's
24 completely cured and can be left alone and say this is going to
25 be your job 'til you get married - I think she'd be great -
26 but it hasn't happened to her -

1 T. We're going to have to stop. I know you may feel interrupted.
2 Do you have any questions?

3 W. [inaudible]

4 T. Let's - I think it's important to talk about things. Let's
5 spend a few weeks getting to know one another and you can
6 figure out where you're going to go over the new few weeks.

Chapter V

The Object Relations Formulation

In this and the next chapter a formulation of the problem in this family will be presented from a particular theoretical perspective in order to illustrate how one's formulation might vary with one's theory. These two formulations organize the data into two different patterns which selectively attend to and interpret the data in their own fashion.

In chapter one it was argued that the therapist's paradigm influences his perception of clinical material, that his actions depend on his perception of events, and that his perception of events affects the reality he helps to create. In chapters two and three, the concepts and assumptions of two influential paradigms in family therapy were presented. I shall now show how the data of this session would be selectively perceived, interpreted and organized on the basis of these two different paradigms.

Each example will be assessed in terms of how well it fulfills the criteria of the paradigm to which it is being assimilated. In order to clarify just what makes each example fit the explanatory picture of the paradigm, I shall indicate what kinds of changes in the example cited would result in its no longer fulfilling the criteria implicit in the correspondence rules of the paradigm.

In order to compare the selective perception of data from each perspective, the examples will be coded so that the reader will be able to identify whether an example included in the family systems

formulation is also included in the object relations formulation and vice versa. In addition, it will be possible to see where it occurs in the other formulation and how it is used. A letter or number will be placed in parenthesis next to those examples which are included in the other formulation indicating where it can be found. When the data are omitted from the other formulation it will be indicated in parenthesis next to the example. Each example in the family systems paradigm will be lettered and each example in the object relations formulation will be numbered. Thus, a unique opportunity for comparative analysis will be provided. Please note that some examples will be referred to several different times in different contexts in order to illustrate different aspects of the formulation.

In chapter VII the implications of what is included and excluded from each perspective, and the similarities and differences in the interpretations of the same data will be discussed in detail.

In this and the following chapter first a formulation will be presented, then it will be subdivided into steps, each of which will be illustrated with examples from the session.

The Formulation

The family shares the unconscious assumption that separation means abandonment and deprivation, and love involves protecting and providing. This basic assumption obstructs the parents' ability to establish clear expectations and limits with their daughter in a way that will optimize her separation-individuation. The family's unconscious assumption leads them to cater to their daughter's needs and to prolong her dependence on them. This leads to a conflictual relationship since the daughter's developmental needs push her to

resist them as she moves toward increased separation-individuation.

Intrafamilial Splitting

Intrafamilial splitting occurs around issues related to separation. When one person, usually the mother, expresses wishes to hold onto their daughter, the other, usually the father, expresses wishes to get rid of her. The extreme position each takes reinforces the family's assumption that love equals holding on and letting go means abandonment.

Intrapsychic Splitting

The intrafamilial splitting is partially caused by the use of intrapsychic splitting by each spouse. Each spouse tends to split off the all good object relation from the all bad object relation in order to preserve the fantasy of an all good union between parent and child.

By projecting onto their daughter the internal representation of the helpless child, each parent is able to restore and reenact the fantasied all good parent-child union, at the same time avoiding dangerous feelings of helplessness. By enacting the part of protector and provider both parents share the view of themselves and each other as all good parents to a helpless but grateful child. As long as their daughter remains available, needs them, and responds gratefully to their provisions, projective identification works successfully to aid the parents in parenting.

When the daughter begins to rebel against the identification of herself as helpless and dependent and fights with her parents, the parents idealizing defenses begin to crumble. In theory the split off bad object relation between the helpless, infantile, self-representation (the libidinal ego) and the punishing, attacking

object representation (the anti-libidinal ego) become reactivated. The parents then perceive the daughter as depriving and attacking. They experience themselves as helpless children attacked by the abandoning, punishing parent.

Mother and Projective Identification

At this point the previously synchronous needs of the parents diverge. The mother is motivated to reestablish the all good mother/child union to regain lost gratifications. Through projective identification the mother attempts to recreate the earlier union. She projects onto her daughter her own cravings for nurturance and feelings of helplessness. She induces her daughter to act hungry and helpless by doing too much for her, and by treating her as if she cannot make her own decisions. The daughter responds by, in fact, acting needy, helpless, and incapable of directing her own life. The mother identifies with the disowned and projected parts of herself as they appear in her daughter. She becomes anxious, and in order to reduce her own anxiety she attempts to control her daughter's helplessness by pushing her to become active and successful.

It is essential that the mother continue to provide for her daughter's needs because she feels nurtured through identification with her daughter; her self esteem depends on being viewed as a loving mother, which means providing for her daughter; furthermore, providing for daughter induces the daughter to remain dependent and close which makes it possible for the mother to project her neediness onto her daughter, and to maintain contact with this part of herself. Once she induces her daughter to feel needy, she identifies with that neediness and it makes her anxious. In the third stage of projective

identification she attempts to control daughter by pushing her to be active when she sees her depressed.

Contrasting Defenses of Mother and Father

The spouses fight, in the object relations view, because their defensive needs conflict. Both parents wish to restore a sense of union with their daughter in order to preserve the fantasy of the all good object relation. The internal representation of the bad object is reactivated in both of them when they fail to preserve this fantasy of union. For the husband the all bad object relation takes the form of a dominating parent and a helpless, failing child.

When his wife and daughter fight he feels anxious and he imagines that by expelling his daughter or suppressing his wife he will be able to get rid of his own aggressive wishes and restore a nonconflictual relationship with his family.

When he tries to suppress his wife, she experiences him as both depriving her of the relationship she needs with her daughter, and as criticizing her for her needs. The wife tries to explain herself and gain her husband's support in trying to woo back her daughter. She perceives her husband as depriving and abandoning her when he refuses to support her.

Each of them reacts to the other as if he or she were the victim of the other's assaults. By projecting the aggressor and victim introjects onto the spouse and daughter each spouse is able to view himself as the all good rescuer. In this way the denied and projected aspects of themselves as helpless are perceived in their daughter and the internal representation of a depriving, abandoning, attacking bad parent is projected onto the spouse; each spouse, according to this

view, perceives his own internal drama as if it were played out between the other spouse and their child. The perception of the split off, disowned bad object relation arouses anxiety and both spouses feel the need to control either the other spouse or the child in order to allay their own anxiety. Denied internal experiences return to haunt them and each perceives his own frustration and hurt as the other person's fault.

The precipitating events to this family's current crisis are multiple; they are all problems which are typical at this stage of family development: the midlife crisis of the father who has suffered attacks on his health, his ability to provide, and his ability to perform sexually; the midlife crisis of the mother who has suffered the impending loss of her role as mother and has had to enter the work force in order to help support the family; the crisis of having aging parents, deaths in the family, separating adolescents, and losses in power, money and status.

In the following section the above pattern will be divided into steps and illustrated with examples from the session. Each step will be restated, and defined, and the boundaries of each inference will be explicated. The examples of each step will be discussed first as a group in order to point out their similarities and differences.

Basic Assumption Behavior

Basic assumption behavior occurs during periods of family regression in families with adolescents as well as in other families with unresolved issues around separation-individuation (Zinner & Shapiro, 1971). A basic assumption is an unconscious, shared belief which operates as a family defense against anxiety and interferes with

the family's task to foster their adolescent's separation-individuation. It consists of irrational thinking. It can be inferred from the associations, fantasies, and reactive behavior in the family.

In the examples which follow, the first, second and fourth examples illustrate the value placed on being a close and loving family; in the third example the wife reveals that she associates criticism with not being loved. This is an example of basic assumption behavior because her reaction is extreme. She cannot differentiate between criticism and lack of love. Acts of differentiation are experienced as acts of hostility. In example three the wife is reacting to actions which may have actually been intended to reject her. Presumably she would have been able to recognize her daughter's actions as the actions of a separate person if she did not depend on particular kinds of responses for the maintenance of her own self esteem and the gratification of her own dependency needs.

In example five the compulsive, irrational quality of the wife's thinking is more obvious. She reacts as if letting the daughter go were equivalent to abandoning and depriving her of love. She equates being cool, and having more distance with not loving. In examples six and seven the husband's fantasies indicate that he also equates letting go with abandoning and depriving their daughter; he acts as if he has to prove he loves her with fantasies of omnipotent acts of protection.

If these parents were to show that they understand the value of allowing their daughter to be independent and that they do not experience setting limits as acts of abandonment, they would demonstrate rational thinking rather than basic assumption thinking or

behavior.

The husband shows a capacity to challenge his and his wife's basic assumption thinking at two points. In example five he tries not to polarize helping and not helping as loving and not loving. He says, "You don't think for a minute that I don't love her as much as you do." In example six he differentiates between calling and having to call his daughter, which shows that he appreciates the difference between being willing to help and needing to help his daughter. For a few moments he is able to take a position in which he integrates his love and hate, and differentiates between letting go and abandoning their daughter. Usually, however, their argument pulls both parents to think and act on the basis of their basic assumptions that love equals protecting and providing and letting go equals abandonment or hate.

The first four examples do not illustrate the family's basic assumption behavior. They show the mother's tendency to equate closeness and love, and distance and rejection. Examples five, six, and seven illustrate basic assumption behavior.

The wife describes what was good about her family.

Example 1. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 10, L. 27

W: We're usually a very emotional, very loving family.

The wife emphasizes the contrast with how things have been currently.

Example 2. (J)

P. 11, L. 24

W: I have not been treated as a loving wife....or mother.

The wife feels unloved when she is blamed for her daughter's problems.

Example 3. (J)

P. 12, L. 30

W: It might be that day she said to me "It's your fault... You're the cause of it, which he has also said to me and I resent it."

The mother equates allowing their daughter more distance with not being good for her, as if closeness were good, and distance were bad.

Example 4. (M)

P. 24, L. 19

T: Is that your point - you think you should have a little more distance from her at this point?

W: I must have more distance from her because I'm no good for her.

T: So for her sake...

W: Evidently I am no good for her.

T: How did you come to that realization? That's what I am wondering.

W: He's told me that. She's told me that. I have no other way of thinking.

Basic Assumption Behavior and Intrafamilial Splitting

When intrafamilial splitting occurs individual family member's positions on letting go and holding on become polarized such that the family as a whole takes on attributes of a whole ambivalent individual,

whereas the individuals within it appear preambivalent. (In other contexts these individuals may demonstrate ambivalence.) In this family the mother presents her attitude toward her daughter as if this mother/daughter relationship were an all good, part-object relationship between the providing parent and the gratified child. She denies feeling ambivalence toward her. She expresses only wishes for union. In contrast, the husband expresses only wishes to abandon his daughter as if he were expressing a preambivalent part object relationship between the all bad parent and child.

When the mother expresses disappointment in her daughter, she acts as if she herself were the victim, and her daughter the aggressor. The husband expresses only frustration and wishes to get rid of his daughter, rather than a balance between his frustration and his wishes to help or hold onto her.

The husband expresses his caring for his daughter in examples six and seven. The content of his fantasies implies that he shares the basic assumption that letting go is equivalent to abandonment. In examples six and seven he does not agree that his daughter ought to be allowed to work out her problems with the help of her therapist. Instead he defends himself against this suggestion as if he had just been accused of abandoning her; this extreme reaction and his associations make six and seven examples of basic assumption behavior.

The first two examples illustrate both basic assumption behavior and intrafamilial splitting. The first example illustrates basic assumption behavior because the wife reacts to her husband as if the alternative to helping their daughter were to abandon her. It also illustrates intrafamilial splitting because as individuals the family

members express only the wish to hold onto or expel their daughter whereas between them they express both sides of their ambivalence. The content of their extreme positions reflects (and probably also reconfirms) their basic assumption that loving one's children means doing all one can for them and letting go means abandoning them.

Example 5.

P. 14, L. 17 (E)

H: My attitude is that if she never called me, I don't think I'd ever call her. I really mean that - it's very difficult to say.

T: So at this point you kind of...

H: Send her to California.

W: You couldn't.

H: ...and we'd get along very well.

W: He's not saying that - not literally.

T: This is the kind of disagreement you're feeling you have?

W: No, I love her too much.

H: She would like to keep hold of and keep calling her, and "Call up D. and tell her that if she wants to come to eat she can come to eat."

W: I don't have to tell her that.

H: "Call D. and tell her we bought her some yogurt, it's in the refrigerator. I don't want to answer the phone in case it's D. - you talk to her."

T: The disagreement is about how much to let D. continue to be a part of your lives. Is that it? Is that right?

W: How can you turn something like that off?

H: I can turn it off.

W: I can't.

T: So you're still very involved with your daughter...

W: That's true there are things... It's very difficult for me to say no to her. I'm very vulnerable where she's concerned.

H: You don't think for a minute that I don't love her as much as you do.

W: I know you do but I can't understand your attitude.

H: My attitude is that I...

W: I can't be that cool about it.

H: You can't.

W: No I can't... I can't...

H: To tell you the truth, I really know you longer than I know her and I can shut her out very easily. But you won't let me. It's just a question that you won't let anybody turn D. off.

In the following section the husband reveals that he shares the same basic assumptions as his wife that love involves only protecting and providing for one's child, and that separation means abandoning and depriving her.

The following sequence is also an example of intrafamilial splitting; the husband takes the opposite position from the one the therapist takes even though he now contradicts the position he took earlier in the session. In this way the family as a whole acts as if it were one whole person, in which each person acts as if he were a part object expressing only one side of an issue. In intrafamilial

splitting any individual member might at any time express a given position while in the family as a whole, both sides are always expressed.

The husband reacts as if the therapist suggests that he abandon and deprive his daughter when she says he seems to be saying he wants to allow her to struggle on her own.

Example 6. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 25, L. 4

T: But it sounds like you kind of agree with H. You sort of share his view that you should let her be more on her own - struggle these things out for herself more.

W: Up to a point. If she can...

H: I don't want to say that. I will never let her, she's my daughter...

T: You don't sound rejecting to me.

H: I would never let her starve to death. You understand that. I would never let her be out in the street, you know, and not have no place to live; as a matter of fact, I would even call her on a hot night like this and say... We have a house that's centrally air conditioned and she's living in an apartment on the third floor in an attic room, perhaps, and say "come home and sleep here tonight." I'm not hard hearted and I don't want to get.... but I feel that I don't have to call her. There's no reason in the world that I have to call that girl.

His associations vividly conjure up images of abandonment in response to the suggestion that they allow their daughter to struggle

these things out for herself more. He acts as if the therapist is suggesting that he should abandon his daughter.

In the next example the father implies that love involves protecting his daughter, even in a magical way by listening to the police radio. The father reacts as if he is defending himself against the accusation that he doesn't love his daughter because he said he wants to let go of her.

Example 7. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 29, L. 23

H: I don't like to see what's happening to my daughter. I really don't like it. I say, "Ship her to California." Well, I say that in the sense that I wish something would happen, that it would get straightened out.

T: So you're saying that even though W. may talk about D. alot and you don't, you still worry an enormous amount about her.

H: Listen, I worry about her, I have a police radio at home, and she lives in the third floor of a house and I have the police, and if I hear there's a fire alarm or something...

T: So you're a worrier...

H: I'm not that much of a worrier but I do worry. I listen for accidents, I know she's got the car and I keep worrying to hear the names and the kind of car over the air.

T: So you worry about her safety.

H: Of course I do. I'm not... She's my daughter you know.

Intrapsychic Splitting

The spouses both use a defensive style which resembles intrapsychic splitting. The all good object relation consists of the protector/provider and the helpless, appreciative child. The bad object relation is reactivated by a disruption of the good object relation. The all bad object relation consists of the attacking or depriving abandoning parent and the helpless, bereft child. The split off bad object relation is activated when the daughter rebels against her parents' intrusiveness.

The following examples suggest that intrapsychic splitting occurs within these spouses. However, there are aspects of their defensive style which do not actually fit the characteristics of splitting. When intrapsychic splitting occurs the good and bad object relations are completely separated, and the individual reacts at different moments in very extreme ways, idealizing the good object or devaluing the bad object. In splitting the individual's internal experience is totally good or bad. His behavior and experience are characterized by unconnectedness between these two internal states and lack of moderation in his reactions.

In these examples the husband and wife appear to exaggerate their reactions in a histrionic way rather than expressing unmitigated rage or pure idealization. They do not claim to have ever had a perfect family, only an affectionate family. They do not deny hostility, they minimize it. "D. became very hostile to us, not really hostile, just... (P. 7, L. 26). This section of the hypothesis cannot be substantiated by the evidence from this session. In general, intrapsychic structures and defenses are characterized based on

inference from data collected over a long period of time and they are more difficult to prove or recognize than interactional events.

In the following examples the parents each say that their relationship was loving as long as they felt loved by their children. When their daughter became hostile, they began to fight, and the wife began to feel unloved. The husband became angry but could not fully acknowledge it. Both parents have difficulty admitting that hostility became a part of their lives: W. says and takes back that their daughter was hostile, and H. says and takes back that the couple began fighting.

In example eight the mother's slip (we had a happy marriage until 30 years ago) reflects her denial of marital problems during the marriage. It also may indicate that she experiences the recent changes of the past year as if all 30 years had been lost.

Example 8. (J)

P. 10, L. 3.

W: I don't know where we're concerned, it's been a long time, in fact it's been months that I feel I've been treated like a mother that's been loved, or a wife, or a woman, for that matter - who's felt loved. For I haven't felt it for a long, long time and I'm sure he feels the same way. I don't know what's become of us. Because we've had a very happy marriage up until, I'd say, 30 years ago I feel like we've lost a whole year of our lives. We've gone through a great deal.

Example 9. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 10 L. 25

W: We have been through hell.

T: You have not felt that you've been loving...

W: No, and we're usually a very emotional, very loving family.

T: Couple?

W: Family.

T: Couple?

H: Couple.

W: And couple. By that I mean the kids would come in and kiss us. And when they'd leave they'd kiss us goodbye.

Example 10. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 11, L. 9.

H: You know my son is 25 years old and he'll kiss his father.

T: But I'm wondering whether you also - are you talking about having been a very loving couple.

H: Oh yes. We've gone to marriage encounter. I'm talking about...

W: We'd come in together, he'd kiss me and hug me and there was never, this was never hidden from our children. They saw love in my house at all times. I'm not saying they saw us sleep together, I'm talking about affection.

H: They saw that too.

The good object relation for the parents consists of being appreciated and loved for being good loving parents.

Example 11a. (J)

P. 11, L. 24.

W: No I have not been treated as a loving wife. I have not been

treated as a loving mother. I feel.

T: But do you see yourself as coming here for the problems connected with feeling that your daughter isn't treating you as a loving daughter should?

W: It's all connected. The whole thing is all wound up in here. The whole thing, um.

Example 11b. (J)

P. 14, L. 12.

W: What he is saying is our children are a big part of our lives, a very big part of our lives.

When the daughter rebels the bad object relation is reactivated.

Example 12. (B)

P. 5, L. 30.

H: But finally when we did see it - uh she got to us. She absolutely couldn't get along with us - under no way, no matter what you say even myself with me, no matter what we said - we said it wrong. We were just wrong. That provoked trouble fighting, not fighting, between me and my wife.

Example 13. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 8, L. 20.

W: All that started with the fact that D. became very hostile to us, not really hostile, just... What he said about her tonsils was something that had to be done.

The mother experiences herself as the bereft abandoned child who

has been hurt by the bad parents. She emphasizes her role as the recipient of love or the victim of unlove, as if she saw herself as the child, rather than the parent.

Example 1 again.

P. 10, L. 3.

W: I don't know where we're concerned, it's been a long time in fact it's been months that I feel I've been treated like a mother that's been loved or a wife or a woman for that matter who'd felt loved. For I haven't felt it for a long time.

The husband also experiences himself as the victim of his daughter's actions.

Example 14. (K)

P. 14, L. 1.

H: My daughter's not in my house for three months. I do say I come home and don't snip at my wife....I think that as much as you say "Well, I don't want to know about your daughter and her problems", that this is all my daughter's problem....My daughter's the cause....She caused this problem and she is still causing this problem.

The Mother and Projective Identification

The mother projects onto daughter her own denied needs for nurturance and feelings of helplessness. The mother perceives the daughter as more needy and helpless than the daughter actually is: i.e., she misrepresents the daughter's behavior as something other than it is. The following examples illustrate how the mother distorts her

perceptions of her daughter.

In the first three examples of step one the mother emphasizes the daughter's helplessness and deemphasizes the daughter's rebelliousness. In the fourth example the mother responds to the suggestion that she should give her daughter room by suggesting it is not she who approaches her daughter, but her daughter who approaches her. Although she describes the daughter's ambivalence she acts shocked by the daughter's anger and confused at the idea of the daughter's ambivalence.

The ideal example would show the contrast between the daughter's behavior and the mother's description of her behavior. In this example the mother emphasizes her daughter's needs and underplays their fighting. This is not a strong example; nonetheless, it indicates that she probably distorts her perception of her daughter to fit her own need to see her daughter as helpless and dependent.

These examples would not fit the definition of a distorted or skewed perception of the daughter, if the mother could acknowledge the independent aspect of her daughter's behavior as well as her helplessness; for example, if she were to say "D. acts independent sometimes, and needy, at other times."

In examples 15, 16, and 17 the mother changes the subject from her daughter's hostility to her daughter's helplessness and illnesses. Whereas the husband implies that the daughter is bad or malingering, the wife emphasizes that the daughter is sick or helpless. This is significant because when a child is perceived as malingering, she is perceived as responsible for her actions, whereas when a child is perceived as sick she is not held responsible for her behavior. A child labelled sick is more likely to be bound, which will hinder her

attempts at independent action and separation from the family. The child labelled bad is more often delegated or expelled from the family than bound. The slight advantage of the delegated or expelled child over the bound child is that she has the opportunity for experiences outside the family, and exposure to values and beliefs other than those found in the family. The disadvantage of the child who is labelled bad and expelled is that this child misses an opportunity to rework family relationships because she is usually cut off from the family before these issues are resolved.

In examples 15 and 16 the mother deemphasizes the fighting by rapidly changing the subject from their "differences" to the daughter's need for help.

Example 15. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P.9, L. 28.

W: We were still having our differences. Then she finally came to see me at 2 o'clock in the morning once and she just cried and said "mother I need more help, I've got to have more help."
And I said you'll get it.

In examples 16 and 17 the father suggests that the daughter created these problems, and the mother insists that these problems were real, and the daughter was actually helpless and ill.

Example 16. (A)

P. 4, L. 34

H: And uh this was a continuous thing. Headaches, sleep with tonsils and she had wisdom teeth. Whatever she could find,

anything she could find.

W: You can't say that...

Example 17. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 8, L. 20

W: The first part - all that started with the fact that D. became very hostile to us, not really hostile, just... what he said about her tonsils was something that had to be done. She was having strep throat too many times. She kept going to the office, there's a woman there who kept going back and forth to help her. She lost about 17 pounds. Before that she had to have her wisdom teeth out. Now you don't have your wisdom teeth out unless you have to have them out. They were impacted. They had to be. OK? Right?

In example 18 the mother tells an anecdote which implies that the daughter is ambivalent about her mother's help; however, the mother selectively perceives the daughter's needs and requests; she is confused by her daughter's anger at her. The intensity of the mother's experience of rejection when her daughter pushes her away suggests that the mother's motive for distorting her perception of her daughter is to protect herself from experiences of abandonment.

Example 18. (D, M)

P. 25, L. 30

T: So, your sense is that maybe you should back off a little bit and give her a little room?

W: I've tried to do that.

T: Because she does have a lot of therapists.

W: D. has our car which she's not supposed to. She's borrowed it for a month but... She picks me up in the morning and takes me to work. When she worked before she used to share a car with me. When she needs something she calls me. If I asked her a question and it's one too many, or not the right question I get an awful answer sometimes.

T: So she...

W: It upsets me all day and I find it very difficult to concentrate at work.

T: So she's kind of telling you that she wants to be more on her own but at the same time she's using your car and she's still very involved with you.

W: I said to her once I don't mind you um... I don't think she means to ...

In example 19 the husband suggests that the mother is the needy one.

Example 19. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P.25, L. 25.

H: But she wants someone to talk to her like she talks to her mother - every day - maybe twice a day.

In example 20 the mother corroborates that she needs her daughter, and is overinvolved with her. Her daughter's absence and attempts to set limits on her mother cause the mother to feel rejected and abandoned. The mother acts as if the daughter were a need gratifying object, rather than a separate person with her own needs.

Example 20. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 19, L. 4.

W: I would rather not call her - not because I don't want to. It's because I invariably will ask questions that she doesn't want to answer. There are so many things that I've missed that I resent having lost. She's at an age when I can enjoy her. Maybe that's selfish. But she's at an age where we can both... She's a young woman. She's a young lady. I can enjoy her. I should be able to speak to her, confide in her, I wanted to and I would love her to confide in me, as not only a parent-daughter relationship, as a friend. I resent that. I miss her. It's something I've always looked forward to and I just don't know, I don't know when I'll ever have it. I hope I will. But I will someday tell my children, when they get married, right now that's the way I feel, "Don't love your children too much."

Step Two of Projective Identification Between Mother and Daughter.

The second step of the process of projective identification is that the mother induces her daughter to feel and act needy, helpless and incapable of making decisions for herself.

In example 21 the mother offers her daughter too much help and induces her daughter to depend on her excessively. The picture she presents is that she cannot help helping her daughter. The mother associates doing too much for her daughter with the daughter's depression: "She seemed a little mad at herself." Since the mother arranged that the daughter use her car and this means that they drive

in the car together every day, the daughter may be mad at herself for depending too much on her mother, and for allowing herself to accept the consequences of taking too much from her mother: increased contact means an increased feeling of dependency, and less sense of independence and self reliance.

What makes example 21 an illustration of the mother's inducing the daughter to act needy is the mother's associations. From the daughter's difficulty with responsibility at work, mother associates to doing too much for her daughter, and from that to her daughter's appearing angry at herself. This example is highly inferential. The mother appears to make a connection between the daughter's difficulty with responsibility, mother's infantilizing of daughter, and daughter's depressed mood. In the context of the object relation paradigm these events are related in a causal way. The mother's infantilizing of daughter makes daughter less capable of responsibility, more dependent, and more depressed. In example 23 again the mother acknowledges that she gives the daughter more than she's supposed to by lending her the car. In example 22, the mother behaves in a protective way. This example is equivalent to the others in that the mother inhibits certain assertive or aggressive responses by acting overprotective, the consequence of which is to induce the daughter to remain dependent.

If the mother were to say in example 22 that she wants the daughter to know she blames her for the marital problems, or if in example 21 or 23 she were to encourage her daughter to do more on her own, these examples would no longer fit the definition of step two of projective identification.

Example 21. (C)

P. 8, L. 30.

W: She didn't have them out because she wanted to. It had to be done. But that's besides. What he said about her jobs is true. She wanted responsibility. Whoever she worked for felt she had the capability. She came up to my office today. She was going to have her resume typed. This girl that she sees helped her with it. (C) I said bring it in and I'll be glad to type it for you. She's a terrific person. I cannot hold back. I do suggest which is the wrong thing to do. I certainly don't do it out of animosity. I do it because I love her and I can see things that she doesn't see and if I suggest something it's because I think it's going to be good for her. I noticed the last couple of days she seemed a little mad at herself. I don't know. Many times we've been in the car together because I've let her use my car.

In example 22 the mother suggests that she ought to hide her blame from her daughter, and express only helpfulness; this avoids the possibility that the daughter might react with anger instead of with helplessness.

Example 22. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 16, L. 5.

W: I wouldn't want her to hear she's to blame (for the marital problems).

In example 23 the mother implies that she has loaned their daughter

their car even though the daughter is not supposed to have it (she implies that it's against her better judgement or against some agreement she made about it). This loan places the daughter closer and more dependent on her.

Example 23. (M)

P. 26, L. 1.

W: D. has our car which she's not supposed to. But she's borrowed it for a month but... She picks me up in the morning, and takes me to work. When she worked before she used to share a car with me. When she needs something she calls me.

Step three of Projective Identification Between Mother and Daughter

In the next step of projective identification the mother identifies with the disowned part of herself as it emerges in her daughter and reacts to her daughter's helplessness the way she would react to this part of herself. The mother's compulsive need to get in touch with her daughter, according to the theory is caused by her need to stay connected with this part of herself in order to feel nurtured through nurturing her daughter. Her overresponsiveness and overinvolvement with her daughter suggests that she treats her daughter as if she were part of herself.

The mother is particularly attached and vulnerable to aspects of the daughter's feelings which she herself does not express, and she attempts to treat those feelings the same way she would treat her own, i.e., she overreacts to these aspects of her daughter's behavior. The mother describes how attached and vulnerable she feels in response to her daughter's helpless behavior, and she responds by attempting to

control this aspect of her daughter.

In the first seven examples of step three of projective identification the mother is described by herself and her husband as compulsively making contact with her daughter. If in any of these examples the mother could tolerate distance or anger from her daughter this example would not fit the definition of this step of projective identification.

In examples 24 to 27 the mother cannot resist making contact with her daughter.

Example 24. (H)

P. 6, L. 37.

H: And she'd say "Why don't you call her and tell her something. Call her and tell her this," or "call her and tell her that."

Example 25. (C)

P. 9, L. 4.

W: I cannot hold back... I do it because I love her...

Example 26. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 13, L. 19.

H. Like you heard her say I would - she would tell me to call my daughter.

Example 27. (E)

P. 14, L. 28.

H: If she would like to keep hold of and keep calling her and D.

"Call her, and tell her that if she wants to eat some yogurt she can come and eat... Call her and tell her we bought her some yogurt. It's in the refrigerator." "I don't want to answer the phone in case it's D., you talk to her."

In examples 28, 29, and 30 the mother feels and acts overresponsive to her daughter's helplessness and neediness.

Example 28. (E)

P. 15, L. 6.

W: How can you turn something like that off?

H: I can turn it off. (E)

W: I can't.

T: So you are still very involved with your daughter..

W: It's true there are things... It's very difficult for me to say no to her. I'm very vulnerable where she's concerned.

Example 29. (E)

P. 15, L. 20.

H: I can shut her out very easily but you won't let me. It's just a question you let anybody turn D. off.

W: She calls me; she doesn't call you.

Example 30. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 25, L. 23.

H: I'm willing not to call her but my wife isn't willing not to call her. My wife wants to hear from her although she says "Well, I don't want to talk to her." But she wants someone to talk to her like she talks to her mother.

Example 31 is similar to examples 32, 33, and 34 in that in reaction to her own feelings of insecurity the wife's style of handling uncertainty is to take control, and dominate others. If the wife were to allow herself to experience her own anxiety about feeling helpless, these examples would no longer fit the definition of this step of projective identification.

In these examples the mother is described by the husband as arguing with and pushing the daughter relentlessly. This gives one the impression that the mother wishes to control her daughter's helplessness and passivity in the same way she controls her own feelings of helplessness, by pushing her to act, and take control.

In example 31 the husband implies that the wife reacts to his daughter's helplessness by trying to get her to act responsible.

Example 31. (B)

P. 5, L. 35.

H: I would tell her to leave her alone. Stop telling her what to do. Stop criticizing her. And if she wants to sleep, let her sleep. And if she wants to help herself, we didn't stop her. She's smart enough for that. And she just, she just couldn't. It was "D. do this, D. do this." "Why didn't you do this D.?"

In examples 32, 33, and 34 the wife denies her own feelings of helplessness. Her style of handling situations in which she might feel anxious or insecure is to take over. In the following examples the wife takes control of the session when she might feel helpless or

uncertain, and when the husband appears to feel uncertain.

The following dialogue occurs after the therapist asks what brings the couple in for therapy and the wife responds by asking about the therapist's credentials.

Example 32

P. 1, L. 10.

W: If I want to discuss my life, I want to know something of yours. Right?

T: Ok. So why don't we start by your telling me something about how you see the problem that brings you here.

W: Can I ask... I'm sorry, Carol, one more thing I must ask you...

T: Sure.

W: I'm going to call you Carol if you don't mind. Ok, uhh, when S. took all that information from us... I was hoping we wouldn't have to go through the whole thing again.

In example 33 the wife tells her husband to start to tell their story, but when he shows uncertainty the wife takes charge. She interrupts him, he attempts to stop her, she continues to interrupt but refuses to tell the story herself.

Example 33. (I)

P. 2, L. 11.

W: You start.

P. 3, L. 10.

H: She goes somewhere in the vicinity of about three times a week.

W: She goes three times a week.

H: She goes three or four times a week, that type of thing. You

probably know more about what that is than we do.

T: Well...

H: Her problems started maybe two or three years ago.

W: Excuse me I have to differ with you, I...

Example 34. (I)

P. 4, L. 35.

H: Whatever she could find...

W: You can't say that.

H: Well I'm telling the story. If you want to...

W: Well I have to interrupt.

H: This is our problem.

T: What is your problem?

H: My problem is that she doesn't let anybody talk - whether it's me, a stranger or anybody else. You want to tell the story why don't you? This is the way I see it. You want to tell it the way you see it, you tell it.

W: Go on.

H: And when you talk I keep my mouth shut.

W: No, go ahead.

H: I forgot what I was saying.

W: You were talking about her wisdom teeth.

Step four of Projective Identification Between Mother and Daughter

When the daughter fails to comply and accept the projection onto her that she is helpless and needy, the mother feels extreme anguish. When the daughter resists her mother's help by arguing and fighting

with her, the mother feels enormous discomfort, as if she feels emotionally abandoned or deprived.

Examples 35, 36, 37, and 38 are inferential. First, the mother does not say she feels abandoned; she says she is not treated as a loving mother. It is necessary to infer that she means she feels emotionally abandoned.

Second, the daughter behaves in a hostile way according to both parents. Therefore, it is not only the failure to comply which makes the mother feel abandoned and deprived; it is the daughter's actual rejection of her which causes the mother to feel unloved.

The degree of the mother's difficulty with the daughter's rejection fits with the definition of projective identification, but the mother's reaction appears also to fit with a normal reaction to being rejected by one's child. Therefore, these examples do not prove that the mother's anguish is related only to the lack of compliance with the mother's projective identification.

Example 35.

P. 11, L. 24. (J)

W: No I have not been treated as a loving wife. I have not been treated as a loving mother.

P. 12, L. 7 (J)

W: There's a great deal of resentment I have now more than ever against my family.

W: I resent every bit of it because I've done more.

Example 36. (J)

P. 12, L. 28.

W: It might be that day she yelled at me and I don't want to talk to her. It might be that day she said to me (weeping) "It's your fault."

W: It might have been that day that she said to me "You're the cause of it."

Example 37 is the same as example 20. In this instance it is used to illustrate the mother's overinvolvement with the daughter and her treatment of the daughter as a part object, i.e. a person whose purpose is to gratify the mother's needs, rather than as a person with needs and feeling of her own. This example illustrates the mother's dependence on the daughter for oral supplies, i.e., for nurturance and comfort.

Example 37. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 19, L. 4.

W: I would rather not call her... because invariably I will ask questions that she doesn't want to answer... There are so many things I've missed that I resent having lost. She's at an age when I can enjoy her. Maybe that's selfish...I wanted to confide in her and her to confide in me... as a friend. I resent that. I miss her. It's something I've always looked forward to and I just don't know when I'll ever have it.
..."Don't love your children too much."

In example 38 the mother shows her dependence on her daughter's positive reactions in order to feel good. The mother's entire day is

upset by the daughter's negative reaction to her. This illustrates the mother's use of the daughter for narcissistic needs, i.e., for her own self esteem regulation.

Example 38.

P. 26, L. 4. (M)

W: If I asked her a question and it's one too many or not the right question I get an awful answer sometimes... It upsets me all day and I find it very difficult to concentrate at work.

Conflict Between the Spouse's Defenses

Each parent's reaction to the activated bad object relation is different. Their defensive needs conflict. The husband splits off and projects his angry punishing feelings and needs to avoid conflict, aggression, and feelings of impotence in order to preserve the all good object relation. The mother splits off and projects her helpless feelings and needs to reestablish union with her daughter in order to nurture herself. She experiences her husband's attempts to suppress her involvement with her daughter as abandonment and deprivation.

The husband needs to avoid conflict and aggression and related feelings of impotence. In the instances in example 39 the husband reveals that he feels angry. In example 40 he says that fighting makes him nervous. It appears that the husband uses denial and suppression to defend against anxiety related to conflict. One assumes that he is anxious because he is denying his own aggressive feelings. Denial of his own aggressiveness makes him vulnerable to feeling impotent.

Example 39. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 22, L. 3.

H: I have to admit I do get angry...

P. 24, L. 14.

H: This kid could rip my life apart...

P. 22, L. 18.

H: I'm not angry in the sense that I could oh - murder her or something like that...

Example 40. (B)

P. 6, L. 4.

H: Basically it was how to handle her. A lot of it was we argued between ourselves because of her. We were married for a long, long time. We had a very good marriage. We were very happy and I still think in a sense we're happy and still think about loving each other. But I think that all that's come between us in a sense and the two of them when she was living at home I was just up... I was just nervous. I couldn't stay in the den and listen to the raised, the voices, you know in the other end of the house. They couldn't talk to each other without yelling you see. There would always be some sort of criticism. 'D., do this, D., do that.' And I kept telling her: "So why don't you leave her alone - you know - let her find her own way," do certain things that - we tried to do everything-you know- to stay out of her way - so that she wouldn't have this hostility toward us.

In examples 41 and 42 the husband shows that he handles anger by

avoidance and denial. He describes himself as avoiding conflictual situations: he says he lets go of his anger, he doesn't say anything about it, he doesn't cry and tends to hold things in. When he says he doesn't understand why they are in therapy he denies the conflict which is occurring at that moment between his wife and himself.

There are times in the session when he talks about anger but his tone is usually humorous. He consistently avoids, minimizes, or denies conflict. If he were to show a capacity to sustain conflict, express his anger, or tolerate his wife's anger, one would not say he avoids conflict and denies his own aggression.

Example 41. (L)

P. 22, L. 21.

H: I'm mad - I tend to hold things in. I get so mad at her
sometimes I could bite nails, but I just let it go.

W: Carol, he has a much better relationship. I just can't do it.

H: I don't see, I know the problem.

W: Excuse me, this is my turn.

H: Wait let me finish.

W: and I'm going to take it.

H: You've been talking so long already. I've been timing you.

W: She comes in the house and she will kiss him.

T: How do you usually decide who's going to talk.

H: Whoever gets there first-

T: A little competition about who's going to

H: We really get along. I really don't understand her. (laughs)

W: There are so many things that are welled up!

H: I don't understand why we're even here. You know we got along for so many years. We've known each other since she was maybe 10 years old...

Example 42. (N)

P. 29, L. 4.

H: and I 've talked to more people who've gone through this thing. And that's why I keep saying to myself, I tell you we haven't in reality, I have- I don't know about her- I haven't really lost an ounce of love for my wife, as far as that's concerned.

H: I haven't got the patience that I had.

T: For what?

H: For a lot of things she does and what she says.

T: D. or W.?

H: W. There are a lot of things that she says. She tries to do and I think it's. And I just don't have the patience for it. I have a tendency to keep things in. I don't cry. But there's a lot that's bothering me; I don't say anything. I can't. I feel I could kill myself over it, but I feel first of all I've never lost any love for her. So help me God, I've never lost any love for her. I told her that myself, I've got a lot in me right now.

T: On your mind.

H: On my mind. I don't like to see what's happening to my daughter.

The husband's difficulty with aggression is related to feelings of impotence. The bad object relation for the husband appears to consist of an aggressive, dominating object and a helpless, or impotent self. He projects his aggression onto his wife and experiences himself as an impotent victim of his wife's aggressive domination.

There is no proof in these examples that the husband's difficulty with aggression is related to feelings of impotence. All that is shown is that he feels powerless and that he perceives his wife as aggressive. This hypothesis is mainly based on theory. If the husband were more assertive it would suggest he is not responding to an internal image of himself as powerless. If he were to perceive his wife and daughter as fighting together rather than his wife as dominating his daughter, it would be clear he was not responding to an image of his wife as an aggressor and his daughter as a victim.

In both these examples the husband describes his wife as attacking or dominating his daughter and him, both of whom are described as victims of the wife. His perception of himself as powerless and his wife as the aggressor suggests that the bad object relation consists of a dominating object victimizing an impotent self.

Example 43. (J)

P. 5, L. 3.

H: My problem is that she doesn't let anybody talk whether it's me, a stranger or anybody else.

Example 44. (B)

P. 5, L. 35.

H: I would tell her to leave her alone. Stop telling her what to do. Stop criticizing her. And if she wants to sleep-let her sleep... She just couldn't. It was just, "D. do this, D. do this. Why don't you do this D.?"

The husband attempts to get rid of the conflict in the house by suppressing his wife or expelling his daughter. Examples 40 and 47 illustrate the husband's attempts to stop his wife from calling or pushing his daughter. Blaming his wife for his daughter's problems is also his way of suppressing her.

If the husband were to help discipline their daughter, or attempt to help his wife set limits and expectations with their daughter, it would be clear that he is not avoiding conflict and that he does not experience himself as powerless. Blaming his wife reflects his perception of his daughter as a victim. His attempt to stop his wife rather than help her to be more effective by supporting her might be said to reflect his difficulty with conflict and aggression and related feelings of impotence.

Example 46. (B)

P. 5, L. 33.

H: That provoked trouble, fighting, not fighting, but between my wife and I. I would tell her to leave her alone. Stop telling her what to do. Stop criticizing her. And if she wants to sleep, let her sleep. And if she wants to help herself, we didn't stop her. She's smart enough for that. And she just she just couldn't. It was just, "D., do this. D., do that.

Why didn't you do this, D.?"

Example 47. (G)

P. 6, L. 33

H: She's a very, very stubborn person also. I keep telling her I just said, "Leave her alone." Like even now when she moved out of the house, but she had to move out of the house, it was impossible for her to stay with us. And she'd say "Why don't you call her and tell her something? Call her and tell her that." Or even now she'll say, "Call her and tell her this" or "call her and tell her that."

The husband is sexually inactive because he experiences himself as an impotent victim, who is overpowered and controlled by his wife. The husband's sexual impotence might be interpreted as an expression of his identification as an overpowered victim.

Example 45. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

p. 17, L. 13.

T: You're heartbroken because of her problems.

W: Yes, I am. I'm torn inside.

T: That's what your tears are about?

W: And what it's done with us.

T: What has it done?

H: What hasn't it done? It'd be easier to give you that list but the fact...

W: We live as two people; we talk around everything. It's affecting our sex life.

T: How?

H: How, I don't know - I just don't have, I just don't. It's me.

W: You just don't care.

H: It's not that I don't care.

H: No. We don't do anything.

T: For how long?

H: Probably six months - wouldn't you say? This thing has torn me apart. Psychologically as far as sex life between us there hasn't been any sex life as far as that's concerned. This here all stems from one thing - we really can't separate the two - in as much as you'd like to - I notice. As I said to you here, it's getting a little bit better.

W: It is?

H: I think it is.

The husband's wish to expel his daughter represents a fantasy that his aggressive feelings will be eliminated by expelling her. In examples 48, 49, and 50 the father uses splitting to deny his own angry and aggressive feelings. He projects his aggression onto his daughter, (perhaps even induces his daughter to express rebellion against her mother, although there is no proof in this session that this is so), and imagines getting rid of the conflict with his wife by expelling his daughter. There is no actual proof that the husband's expressed wish to get rid of his daughter represents a fantasy that all of his own aggressive feelings will be eliminated by expelling her. This is a theoretical supposition. One would know that the father did not think he could get rid of his bad feelings by expelling his daughter if he were able to acknowledge that asking his daughter to move out might

avoid conflict for the moment, but would not solve the problems between husband and wife which are caused by the husband's denial of his own aggression, and his related experience of himself as an impotent victim.

Although in example 48 the husband claims that he has come for therapy to help his wife and himself, in examples 49 and 50, he reverses his position and denies that there is a couple problem independent of his daughter. One could interpret example 48 as evidence that he is ready to address conflict with his wife and their marital problems. However, in the context of his statements at other times, it seems more likely that this is his way of expelling his daughter from the discussion, and therefore attempting to avoid conflict with his wife.

Example 48. (M)

P. 7, L. 4.

H: I could care less about my daughter. Not that I don't love her. Don't misunderstand what I mean but with her problems right now I can really care less. I don't care anymore. My problem that I do care about is us.

T: You care about.

H: Us.

T: How you two get along.

H: That's right. That's what I care about.

T: So that's what you're here for.

H: Basically that's what we're here for. Not my daughter. I can give a damn less right now. Let her go and do anything she wants wherever she wants to. It's beyond me at the moment

because I can't do anything to help her.

Example 49. (K)

P. 14, L. 1.

H: Getting away from all that. My daughter's not in my house for three months. I do say that I come home and don't snip at my wife. We went out last Saturday. I took the day off and we went last Saturday and we walked through a shopping mall. We held hands. And we hadn't done that for God knows how long. And we talked to each other and we got along with each other pretty damn good. I think that as much as you say "Well I don't want to know about your daughter and her problems" that this is all my daughter's problem, not my son's problem. My daughter's the cause.

Example 50. (E) (K)

P. 14, L. 17.

H: I feel the more we ignore her the better off we are. My attitude is that if she never called me I don't think I'd ever call her. I really mean that it's very difficult to say.

T: So that at this point you would like to kind of

H: Send her to California.

W: You couldn't

H: ...and we would get along very well.

The wife says she feels unloved and acts as if she is being abandoned and deprived by her husband when he fails to ally himself

with her and support her. Examples 51, 52, 53, and 54 all show the extent of the mother's unhappiness since her husband has not supported her by agreeing with and accepting her point of view. The supposition that she feels abandoned or deprived is based on object relations theory, which suggests that frustration is experienced by some people in absolute terms, as total loss of the object (abandonment) or total loss of the object's love (deprivation). The mother's unhappiness is expressed in various ways in these examples; it is particularly her feeling of not being loved which suggests that she feels emotionally abandoned. Her reaction to the therapist's suggestion that she involve herself less with her daughter is interpreted as the therapist's having said she is no good for her. She experiences the suggestion that she detach herself from her daughter as if needed supplies are about to be withheld as a punishment for not having been a good enough mother.

In these examples, if she were able to integrate good and bad feelings and differentiate between the good and bad aspects of her relationships, these examples would not indicate splitting. If she had some perspective about being criticized, for example, that it is painful but useful, it would be clearer she did not split off good and bad experiences. It is the unmodified quality of her bad experience which suggests that she splits good and bad experiences.

Example 51. (J)

P. 10, L. 4.

W: "It's been months since I feel I've been treated like a mother who's been loved or a wife, or a woman, for that matter, who's been loved.

Example 52. (K)

P. 10, L. 9.

W: "We've had a very happy marriage up until, I'd say, 30 years ago. I feel like we've lost a whole year of our lives."

In example 53 mother acknowledges directly that she feels betrayed when her husband disagrees with or criticizes her.

Example 53. (L)

P. 30, L. 10.

W: Our problem is the way he thinks about me.

H: No that's not the way it is.

W: This is the way I think.

T: Do you think part of the problem has to with the fact that you had been feeling rejected or criticized by H.?

W: Absolutely.

T: Really, one of the things for you is that it feels like you're not being appreciated.

W: I've been double crossed.

T: By H.?

H: You haven't been double crossed; she's doing it wrong.

In the next example the therapist takes the husband's side and suggests that the wife ought to back off and give her daughter more distance; the wife reacts as if the therapist has also abandoned her by telling her she is no good for her daughter. The mother's distortion of what the therapist says, followed by her interpretation that others

are saying she is no good for her daughter, indicate that she feels abandoned by the lack of support for the gratification of her needs.

Example 54. (M)

P. 24, L. 7.

T: You said you've got a problem with loving your children too much.

W: That's right.

T: From your talks with S. did you get the sense that it would be positive for your daughter that you be less actively involved with her.

W: I didn't hear what you said, because of what?

T: I wondered whether in your talks with S. you came somehow to the conclusion that it might be best for D. and for you to have less involvement. Is that correct?

H: Not really.

W: I don't know... Right now I suppose it is - at this point, she's not, she comes to me.

T: Is that your - you think you should have a little more distance for her at this point?

W: I must have more distance from her because I'm no good for her.

T: So for her sake...

W: Evidently, I am no good for her.

T: How did you come to that realization?

W: He's told me that. She's told me that. I have no other way of thinking.

T: So she said that? You kind of agree with H.?

W: And yet when she needs something - she doesn't hold it in, she

comes to me.

Each spouse projects the victim introject onto the daughter, the aggressor introject onto the spouse and perceives himself as the rescuer. These examples show the spouses acting as if each of them were rescuers protecting their daughter from a real or imagined assault. In examples 55 and 56 the wife perceives herself as rescuer and her husband as aggressor. The wife implies that her husband is unloving toward his daughter because he wants to ignore her. If she were to demonstrate some understanding of the validity of his position rather than insinuating that he is doing harm to his daughter these examples would not fit this description.

Example 55. (L)

P. 21, L. 23.

W: There are a lot of things by the way that we haven't touched on, not to change the subject, there are a lot of things I resent now, more than I ever did... but if I say them you get angry.

H: No.

W: Yup, very much in the present.

H: I have to admit I do get angry.

W: I resent the fact that he says he wants to ignore her.

H: Well, I think.

W: But you wouldn't ignore your son

H: I don't have to ignore my son.

Example 56. (E)

P. 15, L. 12.

H: You don't think for a minute that I don't love her as much as you do.

W: I know you do but I can't understand your attitude.

W: I can't be cool about it.

The husband also views himself as rescuer and his wife as aggressor in relation to their daughter as victim. In examples 57 and 59 the husband takes the position of protector of his daughter against his wife's intrusions and rejections. In example 57 he describes his wife as making things worse with his daughter, but does not actively try to rescue her. In Example 60 he describes himself as his daughter's fantasied protector, although not from his wife. Examples 57 and 60 do not fit the description as well as examples 58 and 59.

If the husband were to see his own part in exasperating his wife's or daughter's difficulties, it would be clear that he no longer viewed his wife as the aggressor, his daughter as the victim, or himself as the rescuer.

Example 57. (J)

P. 13, L. 9.

H: She really is - she's not really the cause of it but she certainly knows how to throw more logs into the fire.

Example 58. (E)

P. 14, L. 17.

H: I feel the more we ignore her the better off we are.

P. 14, L. 28. (E)

H: If she would like to keep hold of and keep calling her and
"Call up D. and tell her if she wants to come to eat she can
come to eat." "Call D. and tell her we bought her some yogurt,
it's in the refrigerator." "I don't want to answer the phone
in case it's D., you talk to her."

Example 59. (E)

P. 15, L. 22.

W: She calls me; she doesn't call you.

H: She calls up and says, "This is D.," and go click!

Example 60. (E)

P. 29, L. 29.

H: Listen, I worry about her. I have a police radio at home. She
lives in the third floor of a house and I have a police - if I
hear there's a fire alarm or something.

T: So you're a worrier.

H: I'm not that much of a worrier, but I do worry. I listen for
accidents. I know she's got the car and I keep worrying to
hear the names and the kind of car over the air.

T: So you worry about her safety.

H: Of course I do. I'm not. She's my daughter you know.

The Precipitating Events to the Current Crisis

The midlife crises of the husband and wife interlock with the

identity crisis of the daughter. Examples 60, 61, 62, and 63 illustrate the coincidence of the husband's recent health problems, his financial and business difficulties, his sexual problems, and in example 70, the separation from home of both his adolescent children. Examples 64, 65, and 66 illustrate the wife's sense of loss in relation to her changing role as mother, the change in her status as she enters the work force to help support the family, and its coincidence with the separation from home of both her children. Examples 67, 68, and 69 illustrate changes in the health of the wife's aging mother, the death of the wife's twin brother, the status of the parents as the older generation now that their parents have almost all passed away; all of these occur at the time of either the son's or daughter's leaving the family to live away from home. This family regresses in reaction to separation issues. The losses in the extended family increase the parents' pressure on the daughter to help them defend against issues related to loss by providing them with nurturance, and to restore the dead parents by reenacting earlier object relations with each parent as an active recipient of their projective identifications.

The following examples illustrate the husband's losses in the areas of health (example 61), business (example 62) and sexual activity (example 63).

Example 61 (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 12, L. 18

W: Is it important to know he had a heart attack?

P. 28, L. 3 (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

T: When were you sick?

H: It happened in '79.

T: And how are you now?

H: Terrific.

W: Overweight.

H: Overweight.

W: Which I also resent.

T: You had a heart attack? Have you had a heart attack since then? What kind of restrictions are you on? What's your regime? Diet? Exercise? Smoking?

H: I should lose weight. I had to give up smoking. I was a four pack a day. I gave it up.....

Example 62. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 12, L. 18

Is it important to know that we lost our business and almost lost our home?

Example 63. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 17, L. 22

H: You want to know something point blank? It's affected our sex life.

T: How?

H: How? I don't know how - I just don't have - I just don't...
It's me.

W: You just don't care.

H: It's not that I don't care.

T: You mean that you don't initiate.

H: No. We don't do anything.

T: For how long?

H: Probably six months - wouldn't you say? This thing has torn me apart. Psychologically as far as sex life - between us there hasn't been any sex life as far as that's concerned. This here all stems from one thing - and we can't really separate the two in as much as you'd like to.

The following examples illustrate the changes in the mother's life, the loss for her in modifying her mothering role (examples 64 and 65), the change of her role from homemaker to worker (example 66), the change in maternal grandmother's living situation from their home to a nursing home (example 67), and the death of mother's twin brother (example 68).

Example 64 (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 11, L. 24

W: No I have not been treated as a loving wife. I have not been treated as a loving mother...

Example 65 (J)

P. 19, L. 6

W: There are so many things I've missed that I resent having lost. She's at an age when I can enjoy her - maybe that's selfish. But she's at an age where we can both... She's a young woman! She's a young lady! I can enjoy her. I should be able to

speak to her, confide in her. I wanted to and would loved her
 to confide in me as not only a parent/daughter relationship,
 but as a friend. I resent that. I miss her. It's something
 I've always looked forward to and I don't know when I'll ever
 have it. I hope I will. But I will someday tell my children -
 when they get married - right now that's the way I feel.

 "Don't love your children to much."

Example 66 (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 12, L. 21

 W: And that I'm out working. He's struggling. We're both
 struggling.

 The following examples illustrate the issues of aging parents,
 deaths in the family, and separating adolescents.

Example 67. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 19, L. 22

 T: Are your parents living?

 W: My mother is.

 T: Where does she live?

 W: She's at the Rehabilitation Center. She's doing well for her
 age. I speak to her every day - more sometimes twice a day.

P. 20, L. 9 (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

 T: Did she ever live in the family with you?

 W: Yes she did.

 T: For a long time?

 W: For a while.

T: Till when?

W: She's at the home now about three years.

T: She left you about three years ago?

W: And she lived with my sister for a while - and she went there and visited - met a lot of her friends there and decided that she wanted to go.

Example 68 (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 20, L. 20

W: I had a twin brother too - he died.

T: When did he die?

W: In '72.

T: Of what?

W: Heart attack.

T: Had he been sick before that?

W: He had had a heart attack before that. He was young. We're a close family.

In this example the daughter's special meaning to the father is suggested; she was born after paternal grandmother's death and named for her.

Example 69. (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 21, L. 7

T: Are your parents living?

H: My daughter is named after my mother.

W: Your mother died in '48.

H: My father died about 10 years ago.

T: Your daughter is named after your mother?

W: Not '48. I'm sorry.

T: ...because she was born after your mother died?

H: Right.

W: His mother died in '54.

H: When my mother died my son was about a year old.

W: Not quite.

T: And your father died?

H: My father died about maybe ten years ago. He was 82.

In the next example the husband perceives the family's problem as the separation from home of both his adolescents. He suggests that for him the issue is his feelings about both of his adolescents leaving home.

Example 70 (Omitted from the Family Systems Formulation)

P. 2, L. 14

H: We have two children. A boy. He's 25, (sigh) and I have a daughter that's 21 and a half - about the right age - and the basis of this thing is really our daughter. Maybe it was our son too. We didn't realize it at the time, but he went to college and he left the house because he had to live in the dormitory. He had played basketball...but that's college life I suppose - if you want to be a part of it you live there.

In this chapter the object relations formulation was presented and illustrated with examples from the session in an attempt to show which data would be significant to the family therapist operating within this

paradigm. Each example was also coded to give the reader a sense of which examples are included in the family systems paradigm. I have attempted to share the processes of clinical inference involved in fitting the data of this session into the paradigm suggested by the concepts of object relations theory.

Chapter VI

The Family Systems Formulation

Chapter VI consists of two sections. In the first section the family systems formulation will be described. This pattern represents a cybernetic description of the feedback cycles which maintain the dysfunctional behavior in this family, including the daughter's symptoms, and the couple's attempted solutions, all of which are mutually causal and system maintaining.

Following this description of the family the pattern will be divided into ten steps which make up the whole recursive cycle. The session will be analyzed showing how these steps occur in the session with great redundancy.

The husband's view of the problem is that his wife's response to their daughter adds fuel to the fire: he thinks that by criticizing and directing the daughter the mother makes the daughter angrier, and the hostilities in the family escalate. The husband's attempted solution to this problem is to try to influence his wife to stop directing and criticizing their daughter. He does this by telling her that she is making the problem worse.

His solution perpetuates the problem. The more he tells his wife to leave their daughter alone, the more his wife persists in justifying her involvement with their daughter. For example, she says she cannot help herself though she knows it's wrong. She says her daughter comes to her when she needs help, and she loves her too much not to try to help her. On the other hand, she says her daughter owes her

companionship and affection. The more the husband tries to show his wife in various ways that he can let his daughter go and she should do the same, the more his wife insists on the necessity of remaining involved with her.

The wife's view of the problem in the couple is that her husband criticizes and blames her for their daughter's problems. Her solution is to tell her husband that his view of her makes her feel hurt and angry. The effect this has on her husband is that he changes the subject and blames their daughter for their current marital discord.

The immediate effect of changing the subject is that it ends the symmetrical escalation between the couple by uniting them in their common concern for their daughter. Even when the wife objects to her husband's blaming the daughter she appears to have forgotten her anger at her husband for the moment. The long term effect of the husband's changing the subject is that the couple do not resolve their differences. The wife in fact becomes increasingly tenacious. Reciprocally the husband becomes more subtle in his diversionary tactics.

The couple's solutions to their problem have become the problem. The couple's solutions maintain the daughter's dysfunctional behavior; the husband's attempts to influence his wife have the effect of increasing her resistance to his suggestions: she increases her involvement and her rationalizations for her involvement. The more involved the mother is with the daughter, helping, advising, criticizing, and directing her, the more difficulty the daughter has separating. The more the mother does for the daughter, the less the daughter does for herself, and the more dysfunctional she acts.

The daughter's dysfunctional behavior has the effect of both tightening and loosening the mother's hold on the daughter. The mother becomes more concerned about the daughter which brings the mother closer. The daughter's dysfunctional behavior also brings in other helpers and this potentially decreases mother's involvement with daughter.

The daughter's fighting with her mother also maintains the family pattern. When the daughter pushes her mother away she gains distance and can do things for herself. But there are many pulls in the family which reestablish the mother and daughter closeness. The husband's use of the daughter to diffuse the tensions with his wife refocuses the wife's attention on her daughter. (At home it is probable that the daughter is cued to reengage her mother when she senses that the tensions between her parents are too great.) The mother's attempts to be a better mother by being even more helpful encourage the daughter to depend on her again. The mother's display of hurt has the effect of drawing the daughter closer to her mother.

From the point of view of the participants this is a no win situation. From within the system there are no obvious solutions. Each person sees his dilemma in terms of a choice between limited, dichotomous options. The wife sees the possibilities as helping or neglecting her daughter. The husband sees his choices in terms of blaming his wife or his daughter. The daughter probably perceives her options as complying with her mother or fighting with her. Each person shares the belief that if he tries harder he will be able to make the other person act the way he wants him to and in so doing will be able to make his own life better.

The redundant pattern in this session will be described as two loops which frequently repeat. The first loop is described by the husband and wife as one which occurs at home between the daughter, husband and wife. That one goes like this: When the daughter shows signs of depression or difficulty functioning, mother engages her by trying to help her, and the daughter asks for or accepts her mother's help. (One closes this loop by inserting that the daughter probably shows increased difficulty functioning, since the more she depends on her mother, the less she does for herself.) This is a positive feedback sequence: the more the mother tries to help her, and the more the daughter accepts help, the more daughter's depression is amplified, and the more helpful mother tends to be.

When the daughter resists her mother's attempts to offer help, advice, or direction, the mother and daughter fight. (One imagines that this probably reduces daughter's depression and at some point inhibits mother's helpfulness.) However, the more the mother and daughter fight, the more likely father will intercede in their fight. This is an example of triangulation since the father is brought into the mother-daughter fight. It is also an example of a possible coalition between father and daughter since the father intercedes on the daughter's behalf and tries to change his wife's behavior rather than his daughter's. This sequence illustrates both how the mother and daughter fight deescalates when the father enters, and how the mother and father fight is initiated in response to the problems of the daughter.

The next part of this redundant feedback loop occurs primarily between father and mother. It can be observed throughout the session.

The topic of their argument is how to treat the daughter but the argument takes place between the spouses. In this fight one of the spouses tries to direct the other's behavior, and the other resists. In this session there are several instances in which the husband tries to correct his wife's behavior by trying to influence her to leave their daughter alone, and the more he tries to make her stop involving herself with the daughter, the more the wife defends her right to be involved with the daughter and in some way or another resists her husband's influence. The more she resists his influence the more he tries to change her. This part of the sequence is an escalating sequence; i.e., it shows positive feedback. The more one person pushes, the more the other resists.

This escalating sequence is followed by a deescalating sequence in which the couple's relationship is restabilized by the following sequence of moves. The wife complains that her husband is hurting her feelings, or making her angry usually by adding that he is blaming her for their daughter's problems. This has the effect of deescalating the conflict since the husband usually responds by changing the subject and blaming the daughter for the spouses' problems. The more the wife blames the husband for blaming her for the daughter's problems, the more the husband blames the daughter for causing the parent's fighting. Although initially the wife complains when he blames the daughter, usually they reestablish their roles as good parents by showing concern about their daughter's problems. They shift from blaming her to sympathizing with her, and in the process they show mutual concern for her and each other. The triangulation and blaming of the daughter are reinforced by the deescalation of the spouse

conflict.

However, this cycle is followed by another positive feedback loop, since the husband usually follows this moment of mutual concern by showing anger at his wife for her part in the daughter's problems. Their conflict escalates again since the more he tries to influence his wife to stop what she does, the more she resists, and the more he blames his wife. The more he shows blame, the more his wife shows hurt; the less the husband blames his wife, the more he blames his daughter, which in turn calms the relationship with his wife. Thinking about his daughter's problems leads the husband to criticize his wife, and the sequence repeats. The short term effect of triangulating the daughter to divert conflict between the spouses is to deescalate conflict, but the long term effect is to maintain the pattern in which spouse conflict recurs.

Next, this pattern will be divided into steps. The steps of this sequence are all related functionally; i.e., each step serves the function of perpetuating the sequence, and therefore, of maintaining the homeostasis, or stability of this pattern. Any two or more steps form a cycle A, B, A, beginning and ending with the same step. For clarity they will be set out as a series of steps which are numbered and which will each be illustrated by the text in the following section of this chapter. The following series of steps describe the sequences which recur in this session. Some are observed and some are described in the session. Sometimes they occur in this order. Sometimes they occur in variations in which two or three steps occur in sequence leaving out several steps which might occur at another time. Sometimes the observer only views part of the pattern, though the participants

are reacting as if the whole sequence had occurred. Although all the steps do not always actually occur in this order in the session, they are functionally related in this order. The escalating sequences are interrupted by the deescalating sequences; and those in turn are interrupted by the escalating sequences.

The first sequence is described by the husband and wife, it occurs at home when the daughter is present. The first three steps illustrate an escalating sequence in which the more mother helps daughter, the worse daughter functions:

1. The daughter has increasing difficulties functioning.
2. The mother engages the daughter by trying to help her.
3. The daughter requests or accepts help.

Step four interrupts the progressive complementarity of the mother's and daughter's roles. Steps four and five illustrate a progressively symmetrical interaction.

4. The daughter resists help.
5. The mother and daughter fight.

The second sequence is observed in the session, it occurs both with and without the daughter present. Step six interrupts the progressive symmetrical interaction between mother and daughter, and begins the symmetrical interaction between the spouses (steps six and seven).

6. The husband tries to influence his wife to leave their daughter alone. His methods include telling her he thinks she is causing the daughter's problems or making them worse.
7. The wife resists her husband; her repertoire includes explaining that she is needed, that her daughter comes to her, that she cannot help herself, and that her daughter owes her

something.

Step eight initiates a complementary interaction between wife and husband, interrupting their symmetrical escalation.

8. The wife shows her husband how hurt and angry she feels because he blames her for her daughter's problems.

9. The husband changes the subject, diverting his wife's attention to their daughter's problems, and blaming his daughter for their marital difficulties.

Step ten leads to step six, in which the husband criticizes his wife, beginning the symmetrical escalation between the spouses again. It also naturally leads to steps one, two and three, since the mother's attention is redirected to the daughter's problems.

10. They discuss their daughter's problems, uniting first by blaming her, and second by showing mutual concern for her problems.

In the next section the steps in this cycle occur repeatedly in varying sequences. (To give the reader a sense of when sections of the text have been omitted and when the text follows without omissions, gaps in the text will be indicated with three stars ***). The reader is encouraged to view these sequences as a series of recursive loops which begin and end with the same step.

The reader is reminded that the numbers in parenthesis next to an example refer to the numbers of the examples used in the object relations formulation.

The Relationship Between the Mother-Daughter

Conflict and the Spouse's Conflict

Examples A, B, C, and D are examples of sequences in which steps one through seven occur in various combinations. What they have in common is that they all convey the picture that the mother and daughter engage together in a complementary dyad: the mother giving and the daughter taking (compliantly) when at some point, the daughter resists and a symmetrical struggle ensues between mother and daughter. This fight is followed by a symmetrical struggle between the spouses.

If in any of these examples the daughter had said to her mother that she would prefer to do things for herself, or if the mother had said that she would like to help her daughter but thinks it is important for her daughter to do things on her own, the mother and daughter would not be viewed as having a complementary relationship. If the mother and daughter engaged in a complementary relationship, but if, when the inequality of their positions became too great, the daughter or mother agreed that the daughter needed to do more on her own, the mother and daughter would no longer be viewed as engaged in a symmetrical struggle. If when the daughter resists, and a fight ensues, the parents did not start arguing, then one would not say that a symmetrical struggle occurs between them. If the husband supported his wife, by sympathizing with her or helping her to set limits with the daughter, then their interaction would be complementary rather than symmetrical.

The sequences in examples A and B illustrate the functional relationship between the daughter's symptomatic behavior and the spouse's arguing. In example A it is not clear what triggers their sudden confrontation. In example B the husband explains the point of disagreement between them.

In the first example (steps one and seven) the husband begins by telling the therapist about the daughter's dysfunctional behavior, and the wife interrupts to object to what he is saying. The husband cues the wife to object when he suggests that the daughter is malingering. Indirectly the husband's definition of the daughter as malingering implies a criticism of the wife. If the daughter is malingering, then the wife is an accomplice who is catering to the malingerer, rather than a helper who is doing a necessary task. In this way this example is similar to other examples in which the daughter's difficulties trigger the parents' fighting.

In the other instances described by the husband, there are intervening steps which lead to the parents' fighting: in example B the husband describes how when the parents finally recognized that the daughter had problems, the daughter's fighting with them precipitated fighting between the parents. The difference between example A and example B is that in example A the mention of the daughter's difficulties cues an argument. The two examples are similar in that in both sequences the parents object to each other's way of handling the situation with the daughter. In example A the wife objects to the husband's way of defining the daughter's problems, and in example B, the husband objects to the wife's way of handling the daughter, and the fighting which results from it. Both examples describe a link between the daughter's difficulties (symptomatic behavior) and the spouses' fighting about how to handle her.

Example A

Step One and Step Seven.

Step one: The daughter has difficulties functioning.

P. 4, L. 29 (16)

H: Well, this all started - she got to a point where she started to get very depressed- and we started to notice that in between jobs she would sleep her life away. She'd get up in the morning - have something to eat and go back to bed again!

T: Mmmm. Hm.

H: And uh this was a continuous thing. Headaches, sleep, tonsils and she had wisdom teeth. Whatever she could find, anything she could find...

Step seven: The wife resists her husband.

W: You can't say that...

H: Well I'm telling the story. If you want to...

W: Well, I have to interrupt.

H: This is our problem.

T: What's your problem?

H: My problem is that she doesn't let anybody talk- whether it's me, a stranger, or anybody else. You want to tell the story, why don't you? This is the way I see it. You want to tell it the way you see it, you tell it.

W: Go on.

H: And when you talk I keep my mouth shut.

W: No, go ahead.

H: I forgot what I was saying.

W: You were talking about her - the wisdom teeth.

Example B.

Step One, Step Five, Step Six, Step Seven (12, 31, 40, 44, 46)

Step one: The daughter has difficulties functioning.

P. 5, L. 12 (Omitted from the Object Relations Formulation)

H: Whatever it was, whatever she could find - and crazy enough, you could read about it afterwards, you read articles in books and magazines - you've read 'em a thousand times, and they meant nothing to you, but then all of a sudden you start to read 'em and you see your daughter. You see her with the stomachaches, with the problems with her period, with sleeping, headaches, numerous other things, which all come together to probably... they must be classic examples - what happens to someone - someone who finds she couldn't get along with her friends and that's that. She just wound up with this really, even the class of friends that she started to come up with I wasn't very happy with, a whole different girl you know - the telephone didn't ring like it used to ring. She's a beautiful girl, you have to see her to appreciate her - a very pretty, pretty girl and it wasn't the way a girl like her - it shouldn't happen that way - maybe we were too stupid to see it. (12) But finally when we did see it - uh, she got to us. She absolutely couldn't get along with us - under, no way, no matter what you say - even myself with me no matter what I said - we said it wrong - we were just wrong.

Step six: The husband tries to influence his wife to leave their daughter alone.

P. 5, L. 33 (12)

H: That provoked trouble, fighting, not fighting, but between my

wife and I. (44) I would tell her to leave her alone. Stop telling her what to do. Stop criticizing her. And if she wants to sleep - let her sleep. And if she wants to help herself- we didn't stop her. She's smart enough for that and she just couldn't.

Step Five: The mother and daughter fight.

P. 6, L. 1 (46)

H: It was just, "D. this. D., do this. Why didn't you do this, D.?"

The next sequence in example B also illustrates the transition between two sequences: how the mother and daughter's arguing cues the husband to criticize his wife; and how the husband and wife argue when the husband criticizes his wife for her way of responding to their daughter's difficulties.

Steps Six and Seven: The husband and wife argue.

P.6, L. 4 (40)

H: A lot of it was - we argued between ourselves because of her. We were married for a long, long time. We had a very good marriage. We were very happy and I still think in a sense we're happy...

Step Five: The mother and daughter fight.

The two of them, when she was living at home... They couldn't talk to each other without yelling... And there would always be some sort of criticism. "D., do this. D., do that."

Step Six: The husband tries to influence his wife to leave their

daughter alone.

P. 6, L. 14 (31)

H: And I kept telling her "So why don't you leave her alone...
let her find her own way."

Example C illustrates the progressively complementary sequence in steps two, three and one. In step two the mother engages the daughter by trying to help her, in step three the daughter complies to a point, and in step one the daughter's difficulties functioning increase. In example C, the mother describes her offer to help her daughter (step two) and her daughter's acceptance (step three) is implicit. The daughter's apparent anger at herself is interpreted here as equivalent to step one (the daughter has difficulties functioning); step one is interpreted in this example as both a function (or effect) of the mother's help and as a cue to the mother's help.

Example C:

Steps two, three and one.

Step two: The mother engages the daughter by trying to help her.

Step Three: The daughter accepts help.

P. 9, L. 3 (21, 25)

W: I said "Bring it in I'll be glad to type it for you." She's a terrific person I cannot hold back. I do suggest which is the wrong thing to do. I certainly don't do it out of animosity. I do it because I love her and I can see things that she doesn't see and if I suggest something it's because I think

it's going to be good for her.

Step One: Daughter gets depressed.

I noticed that the last couple of days she seemed a little mad at herself.

In example D the mother implies that she has offered the daughter help, and the daughter has accepted the use of the car. She says that the daughter often calls her when she needs something, but that at some point, perhaps at the point of the daughter's threshold for her increasing one-down position as helpee, the daughter also resists her: "I get an awful answer sometimes."

Example D.

Steps Two, Three, and Four.

Step Two: Mother engages daughter.

P. 26, L. 1 (18)

W: D. has the car which she's not supposed to do. She's borrowed it for a month, but she picks me up in the morning and takes me to work. Where she worked before she used to share a car with me.

Step Three: Daughter asks for help.

P. 26, L. 4

W: When she needs something she calls me.

Step four: Daughter resists help.

P. 26, L. 4

W: If I asked her a question and it's one too many, or not the

right question I get an awful answer sometimes...

The Spouse's Conflict

In steps six and seven the husband and wife engage in a symmetrical interaction cued by the mother and daughter's fighting. The essence of what is similar in all of the following examples is that the wife and husband are trying to change each other. The husband tries to change his wife's behavior. He tries to convince his wife to leave their daughter alone. His tactics include telling her that he can easily leave their daughter alone, and that she is making the daughter's problems worse. The wife's response is consistently to resist her husband. This takes various forms: she describes that her daughter needs her and comes to her, and that she cannot help herself; she says she needs and deserves intimacy with her daughter.

The wife is also engaged in trying to change her husband. She tries to get him to be more involved with the daughter in her place when she feels she cannot call her. She tries to influence the way he tells the story of their daughter's problems, and she implies that he is unloving when he is not willing to comply. Both spouses are trying to change each other.

In examples E, F, G, and H the husband tries to influence his wife to stop arguing with and trying to help their daughter. In examples J and E the wife tells her husband what to do. In example E, the wife is reported to tell her husband to call their daughter about relatively trivial things. In example J, the wife interrupts her husband and objects to his description of the story.

These examples would not be examples of steps six and seven if at some point the wife accepted her husband's lead: if she were to say "It's true that I am overinvolved with my daughter, and I feel terrible about it. I will agree to do whatever is necessary to stop interfering with her." Or if the husband were to say "Spend more time with D. Try harder to help her," or "you are doing a terrific job as a mother. It's clear that you have done all you could possibly do, and I appreciate your efforts."

If the husband or wife did not react to the other by trying to control the other's behavior, these examples would no longer fit the essential description of steps six and seven, in which one spouse directs the other, and the other resists.

Example E also illustrates the progressive polarization of the husband's and wife's positions in this symmetrical escalation.

Example E:

Steps Six and Seven.

Step six: Husband tries to influence his wife.

P. 14, L. 17 (5)

H: I feel the more we ignore her the better off we are, My attitude is that if she never called me, I don't think I'd ever call her. I really mean that - it's very difficult to say.

T: So at this point you would like to kind of

H: Send her to California

Step Seven: Wife resists.

W: H., you couldn't

H: ...and we would get along very well...

W: He's saying that - not literally.

T: Is this this kind of disagreement that you're feeling that you have?

Step Seven: Wife resists.

W: No I love her too much.

Step Six: Husband tries to influence his wife.

H: If she would like to keep hold of and keep calling her and "D. Call up D. and tell her that if she wants to come to eat she can come to eat."

Step Seven. Wife resists.

W: I don't have to tell her that.

Step Six. Husband tries to influence his wife.

H: " Call D. and tell her we bought her some yogurt; it's in the refrigerator. I don't want to answer the phone in case it's D. You talk to her."

T: The disagreement is about how much to let D. continue to be a part of your lives? Is that it? Is that right?

Step Seven. Wife resists. (5, 28)

W: How can you turn something like that off?

Step Six. Husband tries to influence his wife.

H: I can turn it off.

Step Seven. Wife resists.

W: I can't.

T: So you're still very involved with your daughter...

Step Seven. Wife resists.

W: It's true that there are things... It's very difficult for me

to say no to her. I'm very vulnerable where she's concerned.

Step Six. Husband tries to influence his wife.

H: You don't think for a minute that I don't love her as much as you do.

Step Seven. Wife resists.

W: I know you do but I can't understand your attitude.

H: My attitude is that I...

W: I can't be that cool about it.

Step Six. Husband tries to change wife.

H: You can't.

Step Seven. Wife resists.

W: No I can't, I can't...

Step Six. Husband tries to change wife.

H: To tell you the truth, I really know you longer than I know her and I can shut her out very easily. But you won't let me. It's just a question that you won't let anybody turn D. off.

Step Seven. Wife resists.

W: She calls me, she doesn't call you.

Step Six. Husband tries to change wife. (5, 59)

H: She calls up and says "This is D." and you go click!

Example F.

Steps Six and Seven. Husband tries to influence wife. Wife resists.

P. 5, L. 33. (46)

H: That provoked trouble, fighting, not fighting, but between my wife and I. I would tell her to leave her alone. Stop

telling her what to do. Stop criticizing her. And if she wants to sleep-let her sleep. And if she wants to help herself - we didn't stop her. She's smart enough for that, and she just couldn't. It was just, "D. do this. Why didn't you do this D?" A lot of it was- we argued between ourselves because of her.

Example G.

Step Seven. Husband tries to change wife.

P. 6, L. 14. (47)

H: And I kept telling her "So why don't you leave her alone... let her find her own way."

Example H

Step Six and Step Seven. Husband tries to influence wife. Wife resists.

P. 6, L. 33. (24, 47)

H: She's a very, very stubborn person also. I keep telling her - I just said, "Leave her alone."... And she'd say, "Why don't you call her and tell; her something? Call her and tell her that." Or even now she'll say "Call her and tell her this or call her and tell her that."

In example I the sequence begins when the wife, who has told her husband to tell the therapist what problem has brought them into family therapy, objects to what her husband says. Example I overlaps with example A, in which the emphasis was on the functional relationship

between the daughter's problems and the parent's fighting. In example I the emphasis is on the escalation of the parent's fight.

Example I

The wife tries to change/resist the husband's definition of the problem.

P. 3, L. 16.

H: Her problem started, maybe about 2 or 3 years ago, when something...

W: Excuse me - I have to differ with you, I...

Step six. The husband tries to change the wife.

H: Why don't you tell the story? (Omitted from the Object Relations Formulation)

W: It came to a head.

Step six. The husband tries to change the wife.

H: Would you like to tell it?

Step seven. The wife resists.

W: No I'm trying to just...

H: And uh this was a continuous thing. Headaches, sleep, tonsils, and she had wisdom teeth. Whatever she could find, anything she could find.

Step Seven. The wife resists. (34)

W: You can't say that...

Step Six. The husband tries to change his wife.

H: Well, I'm telling the story. If you want to...

Step Seven. The wife resists.

W: Well I have to interrupt.

H: This is our problem.

T: What's your problem?

Step Six The husband tries to change his wife. (43):

H: My problem is that she doesn't let anybody talk, whether it's me, a stranger or anybody else. You want to tell the story, why don't you. This is the way I see it. You want to tell it the way you see it. You tell it.

The Spouse's Symmetrical and Complementary Interactions

Steps six, seven, eight, nine, and ten occur in various sequences throughout the transcript. Except for several examples of step eight they will be presented in the context in which they occurred at three different times during the session in order to preserve the integrity of the whole pattern. The feedback loops are multivariable. At times the sequences appear in an abbreviated form; the respondents react as if the whole pattern had just occurred.

What makes all of the sequences similar is that the pattern remains the same although the order of the occurrence of the steps changes. Sequences which escalate conflict are counteracted by other sequences which alleviate conflict and stabilize the pattern. The pattern consists of alternating positive and negative feedback loops.

In example J, the mother expresses her feelings, the husband admits that he accuses her of making things worse at home; the wife follows by expressing hurt and the husband changes the subject.

In the example K again the husband acknowledges his complaint against his wife and changes the subject. However, he follows this by (again) complaining about his wife's behavior, as if talking about his daughter's problems has reminded him of his complaints about his wife, (i.e., as if he imagines steps one to five, the sequence in which his

wife and daughter fight, and begins again with step six, his attempt to change his wife.)

The wife's complaints and expressions of hurt temporarily divert her husband from complaining about her. The husband's changing the subject after his wife shows hurt or anger, perpetuates the wife's use of expressions of hurt and anger as a way of regulating her husband's behavior. The wife's cooperation with her husband's diversion to their daughter helps stabilize his use of changing the subject to calm her down. To change the pattern the wife could acknowledge her part in escalating conflict with the daughter, rather than defend herself. As it is the wife cues the husband to change the subject by showing hurt rather than accepting responsibility for her actions; by being easily diverted her behavior serves the function of stabilizing the pattern in which the husband changes the subject.

If the husband were to persist with his complaints about his wife in spite of her complaints and hurt feelings he might also have the effect of changing the pattern: according to family systems theory allowing the fight between them to escalate beyond its usual comfort zone might have the effect of placing the wife in the position of deescalating the conflict, or creating a runaway in which the pattern is dissolved and something new occurs in its place.

Example J begins with two examples of step eight (the wife shows hurt or anger) which are out of context. They illustrate the wife's characteristic response to her husband and daughter's criticism, although she does not specify what she is reacting to in these instances.

Example J.

Step Eight. The wife shows hurt and anger at being blamed for the daughter's problems.

P. 10, L. 4. (51) (65)

It's been months that I feel like I've been treated like a mother that's been loved, or a wife, or a woman, for that matter-who's felt loved. For I haven't felt it for a long, long time. And I'm sure he feels the same way I don't know what's become of us. Because we had a very happy marriage up until, I'd say, 30 years ago. I feel like we've lost a whole year of our lives.

Step Eight. The wife shows hurt or anger at being blamed for daughter's problems.

P. 11, L. 22. (35)

W: I do not feel like I have been treated as a loving mother or as a wife and I resent it very much.

T: You don't know if you've been treated as a loving wife.

W: No, I have not been treated as a loving wife. I have not been treated as a loving mother.

P. 12, L. 7. (35)

W: There's a great deal of resentment I have now, more so than ever against my family.

T: Who in your family?

W: Every one of them. My husband. My daughter. Sometimes my son. I resent every bit of it because I've done more.

In the following example step eight is in context; step eight (the wife shows hurt) is a reaction to step six (the husband tries to change

the wife); the function of step 8 (the wife shows hurt) is to bring about and reinforce step nine (the husband diverts the wife's attention by changing the subject to his daughter's problems).

Step Eight: The wife shows hurt and anger.

P. 12, L. 25.

W: We are not seeing, we're not seeing each other's viewpoint.

When I've said to him "You call your daughter," it's because I can't speak to her.

(36) It might have been that day she yelled at me and I don't want to talk to her. It might have been that day she said to me (weeping) "it's all your fault. It might have been that day that she said to me "you're the cause of it" which he has also said to me and I resent it cause...

T: Did you know that she felt that you were saying that she was the cause of it?

Step Six: The husband tries to influence his wife to leave their daughter alone. One of his tactics is to tell her she is making the daughter's problems worse. (57)

H: There's a few times - she really, I don't like to say this.

W: Well you might as well.

H: She really is. She's not really the cause of it but she certainly knows how to throw more logs into the fire...

Step Eight: The wife shows her husband hurt and or anger, about being blamed for the daughter's problems.

W: Not deliberately. Not intentionally.

Step Nine: The husband changes the subject, diverting his wife's attention to his daughter's problems and blaming his daughter for their

marital difficulties.

H: I know it I know it I know it - we - our problem - you cannot really separate our problem from what happened to my daughter.

T: Mmmmm, Hmmm.

H: There's no way. Because if they said to you we just put it off, but we went to marriage encounter and we were a very happily married couple and we went through a lot which is true but like she - you heard her say she would tell me to call my daughter.

Example K.

In example K the husband responds to the wife's expression of hurt in the previous sequence (in example J) by changing the subject and blaming his daughter for the marital conflict (step 9). Thinking about his daughter's problems begins the marital fight again (steps 6 and 7: the husband tries to change his wife, and the wife resists.)

Step Six: The husband tries to influence his wife to leave their daughter alone, by telling her she causes the daughter's problems.

P. 13, L. 29. (Omitted from the Object Relations Formulation)

H: All right. When I did tell her that she did cause part of it she did cause it... It was partially her fault, probably partially my fault too. Well I'll tell you...

Step Nine: The husband changes the subject to their daughter, diverting his wife's attention and blaming the daughter for their problems.

(49)...what I did say - see getting away from all that. My daughter's not in my house for three months I do say that I

come home and don't snip at my wife. We went out last Saturday. I took the day off and we went last Saturday and we walked through a shopping mall. We held hands! And we ah hadn't done that for God knows how long! And we talked to each other and we got along with each other pretty damn good! I think that as much as you say "Well I don't want to know about your daughter and her problems" that this is all my daughter's problem not my son's problem. My daughter's the cause...

T: So your sense is that your daughter is causing

W: What he is saying is our children are a big part of our life, a very big part of our lives.

H: She caused this problem and she is still causing this problem and...

W: Are you talking about me or D.?

H: D.

Steps Six and Seven follow: The husband tries to convince his wife to leave their daughter alone and the wife resists.

(50)H: I feel the more we ignore her the better off we are. My attitude is that if she never called me, I don't think I'd ever call her. I really mean that- it's very difficult to say.

T: So at this point you would like to kind of

H: Send her to California

W: H., you wouldn't...

Example L.

Example L and M are almost a continuous excerpt from the

transcript. Within it there are two instances of a build up to a fight or argument followed by a defusion of the fight when the husband changes the subject. His change of subject marks the end of one cycle and the beginning of the next. In example L the details of the pattern differ in actual content from the instances in example I and K. The wife engages the husband by taking the same position she took in the previous examples, against ignoring her daughter. The argument that follows (about who will speak) is similar to steps six and seven in the sense that in both of these escalations the partners try to influence or dominate each other. The content is different since it is about what is occurring in the moment. The pattern is the same: when the spouse's conflict is addressed directly by the therapist the husband changes the subject, while concurrently the wife is beginning to express hurt feelings.

If the husband refused to engage in the offer to fight initiated in this sequence by the wife, or if the husband did not change the subject once the argument began between them, this pattern would be changed. If either respondent did not reinitiate at any point the pattern would change. According to family systems theory when either participant stops acting by reacting he introduces a constant; introducing a constant interrupts the pattern.

Example M begins when the therapist focuses on the differences between the spouses after the husband changes the subject. The spouses argue and the therapist takes a position analogous to the husband's position in relation to the wife. Example M is different from example L in that the therapist participates in the struggle with the wife. But this difference is not significant: the wife reacts as if the

therapist said the same thing to her that her husband says. She reacts by showing hurt, and resisting the idea of backing off from the daughter. Again the sequence ends when the husband diverts attention from the conflict between the husband and wife to his daughter. The exact form of his diversion is different but the function of his comments is the same.

This example would no longer be representative of this pattern if the wife had responded without showing anger or hurt to the therapist, or if the therapist had taken the wife's side in an extreme way with the effect of creating a recoil in either or both the husband and wife's positions. The pattern would also change if both parents were to agree to set limits or let go of their daughter.

In example L, the wife begins the sequence as if reacting to steps one through six (in which the mother and daughter fight and the husband interjects by criticizing his wife). She engages her husband in the same argument that they had in example K, the content of which is whether or not to ignore their daughter.

Example L.

Step eight: The wife shows hurt and anger at being blamed for her daughter's problems.

P. 21, L. 23 (55)

W: There's a lot of things by the way that we haven't touched on - not to change the subject. There are a lot of things that I resent now. More than I ever did. But if I say them then you get angry.

H: No.

W: Yup. Very much in the present.

H: I must admit I get angry.

Step Seven: The wife resists her husband's efforts to get her to leave her daughter alone. She reengages the fight with him by taking her usual part.

W: I resent the fact that he says he wants to ignore her.

H: Well I think.

W: But you wouldn't ignore your son.

H: I don't have to ignore my son...

W: Right okay. (Omitted from the Object Relations Formulation)

H: Because my son doesn't give me a day. He never in reality he, thank God he never really gave me one...

W: He's a good kid. She is too.

H: bad day in his entire life.

W: Let me tell you.

H: This kid here could rip my life apart. (39)

W: Are you angry at D.?

H: Yeh, in a way. I'm not angry in the sense that I could murder her or something like that.

Step Six: Husband tries to convince wife to leave daughter alone. (41)

W: He gets

H: I'm mad - I tend to hold things in. I get... I'm so mad at her sometimes I could bite nails... But I just let it go.

Step Seven: Wife resists.

W: Carol, he has a much better relationship. I just can't do it.

Step Six: Husband tries to change wife.

H: I don't see, I know that the problem...

Step Seven: Wife resists.

W: H., excuse me, this is my turn.

H: Wait.

W: Let me take it. She comes into the house and she will kiss him.

T: How do you usually decide

W: and go right by me.

T: who's going to talk?

H: Whoever gets there first.

T: A little competition over who's going to...

H: We really get along. I really don't understand her.

Step Eight: Wife expresses hurt.

W: So many things are welled up!

Step Nine: Husband changes the subject to daughter blaming her for the couple problems and diverting wife's attention from her feelings toward him.

H: I don't understand why we're here. You know we got along for so many years. We've known each other since she was maybe ten years old. (Omitted from Object Relations Formulation) We grew up together basically. We got married. We've lived with each other for thirty years and we really get along so damn well. Maybe it's time... Right now we don't just get along. We really didn't fight or have this problem because of us. You know really. We had this problem because of a third party and that's been eating us up basically. She shows the emotion more perhaps than I do, but I can assure you...

Example M.

(continues from previous example) (Omitted from the Object

Relations Formulation)

T: You usually take the position that you would like to let D. be
on her own more...

H: Yeh, I would... I would....

T: Do you see that as a rejection of sorts or do you see that as
a kind of positive step?

W: No I'd like her to be on her own. Absolutely.

T: Do you agree about letting her be on her own?

Step Seven: Wife resists

W: But she's not quite capable yet.

Step Six: Husband tries to change wife.

H: Oh well, it's a matter of opinion.

T: She's not capable?

Step Seven: Wife resists.

W: She hasn't got a job.

Step Six: Husband tries to change wife.

H: What do I care if she's got a job or not! She's getting along.

T: She's... But you said...

Step Six: Husband tries to change wife.

H: I don't care. She'll get a job.

T: You said you've got a problem with loving your children
too much. (54)

W: That's right.

T: From your talks with S. did you get a sense that it would be
positive for your daughter that you be less actively involved

with her, or...

Step Seven: Wife resists.

W: I didn't hear what you said, because of what?

Step Six: Therapist tries to influence wife to leave daughter alone.

T: I wondered whether in your talks with S. you came somehow to the conclusion that it might be best for D., and for you to have less involvement. Is that correct?

H: Not really.

W: I don't know... Right now, I suppose it is- at this point, she is not, she comes to me.

T: Is that you - you think you should have a little more distance from her at this point?

Step Eight: Wife shows hurt.

P. 21, L. 21.

W: I must have more distance from her because I am no good for her,

T: So for her sake...

Step Eight: Wife shows hurt.

W: Evidently, I am no good for her.

T: How did you come to that realization? That's what I am wondering.

Step Eight: Wife shows hurt.

W: He's told me that. She's told me that. I have no other way of thinking.

T: So she said that? You kind of agree with H?

Step Seven: Wife resists husband. (18)

W: And yet when she needs something - she doesn't hold it in, she

comes to me.

P. 25, L. 30. (18)

T: So your sense is that maybe you should back off a little bit
and give her a little room?

Step Seven: Wife resists.

W: I've tried to do that.

Step Six: Therapist tries to influence wife to let daughter go.

T: Because in fact she does have a lot of therapists.

Step Seven: Wife resists.

W: D. has our car which she's not supposed to do. She's borrowed
it for a month but...she picks me up in the morning and takes
me to work. When she worked before she used to share a car
with me. When she needs something she calls me.

Step Eight: Wife shows hurt. (18 and 38)

W: If I asked her a question and it's one too many or not the
right question I get an awful answer sometimes...

T: So she

W: It upsets me all day and I find it very difficult to
concentrate.

Step Six: Therapist tries to influence wife to let daughter go.

T: So she's kind of telling you that she wants to be more on her
we - you - but at the same time she's using your car and she's
still very involved with you.

W: She's using the car.

Step Seven: Wife resists.

W: I said to her once I don't mind you um. I don't think she

means to...

Step Nine: Diversion. (Omitted from the Object Relations Formulation)

H: Unfortunately the problem is you kind of accept it. You can't because nothing has happened between our marriage until this started.

T: OK. I understand that and I just want to know if there was a way we could focus on what was going on between you because she's not here.

H: We have a different view- both of us have a different view- if you would. She keeps telling me I'm the cause of it. I don't believe in that at all- no way.

W: You mean where D. is concerned.

H: No way.

T: You feel you're being blamed?

H: No. That has nothing to do with it. D. This thing started with D. I think it probably started with D.

Step Ten: The husband and wife unite to discuss their daughter's problems.

W: In high school

H: In high school. Yeh she had jobs in between and you know...

Example N.

Example N illustrates how thinking about his wife's behavior cues the husband to worry about his daughter, and worrying about his daughter triggers his complaints about his wife.

Step Six: Husband tries to change wife.

P. 29, L. 4. (42)

H: And I've talked to more people who've gone through this thing. And that's why I keep saying to myself, I know, I tell you - we haven't in reality I have- I don't know about her - I haven't really lost an ounce of love for my wife as far as that's concerned. I just haven't got the patience that I had.

T: For what?

H: For a lot of things that she does and what she says.

T: For W. or D.?

H: W. There are a lot of things that she says. She tries to do and I think it's, and I just don't have the patience for it. I have a tendency to keep things in. I don't cry. But there's a lot bothering me. I don't say anything. I can't, I feel I could kill myself over it but I feel first of all I've never lost any love for her, so help me God. I've never lost any love for her.. I told her that myself. I've got a lot in me right now. There's no question about that- I've got a lot...

T: On your mind.

Step Nine: Husband diverts attention to daughter.

H: On my mind. I don't like to see what's happening to my daughter.

In Example O the wife focuses again on the couple's problems. The therapist encourages the wife to express her feelings. This does not affect the pattern, however, since the symmetrical struggle ends as usual when the husband changes the subject and the couple focus on their daughter in united concern.

Change could occur in the pattern if either spouse were to introduce a constant into the system. If either spouse refused to react to the other he or she could stop the cycle from continuing. The wife might be influenced to refuse to react to her husband's criticism. Or the husband might be coached to support his wife no matter what happened. This would interrupt the sequence and make it possible for a spontaneous event to occur.

Example O (53)

Step Eight: Wife shows hurt.

P. 30, L. 10.

W: Our problem is the way he thinks about me.

Step Six: Husband tries to influence wife.

H: No that's not the way it is.

Step Eight: Wife shows hurt.

W: This is the way I think.

T: Do you think part of the problem has to do with the fact that you had been feeling rejected by H?

W: Absolutely.

T: So that really one of the things for you is that it feels like you're not being appreciated.

W: I've been double crossed.

T: By H?

Step Six: Husband tries to influence wife to let daughter go.

H: You haven't been double crossed. She's doing it wrong.

(Omitted from the Object Relations Formulation.)

T: I'm just trying to understand. You feel like you want H. to appreciate how, what you've tried to do.

W: I don't know.

T: And you seem to be trying to preserve your marriage by pulling
W. back toward you.

H: I really try I think it's the only way it can be. Maybe I'm
not trying the right way. I don't know how the hell to do it.

Step Eight: Wife shows hurt.

P. 31, L. 5.

W: You're an intelligent man, you should know how.

H: I don't know how. It's not that easy.

T: What could you do?

Step Six: Husband tries to change wife.

H: I don't know. Some days I'll tell you there are some times
she comes up with things, I'll tell you, God Almighty.

T: What could he do?

Step Eight: Wife shows hurt and anger.

P. 31, L. 13.

W: He should know.

T: You're not sure you want to tell him.

W: No.

T: You don't have that feeling...

W: I must admit I am angry.

T: It seems like you're hurt. You said you felt double crossed.

Step Nine: Husband diverts wife's attention to daughter.

P. 31. L. 20. (Omitted from the Object Relations Formulation)

H: I don't think... In theory, we were double crossed by our own
daughter.

Step Eight: Wife shows hurt.

W: Yet I resent your saying it.

Step Nine: Husband diverts attention to daughter.

H: You resent my saying it because I know the kid is sick.

T: It sounds like in a way you may feel jealous because W. has been so involved with D.

H: No I'm not jealous.

W: No I don't think he's jealous.

Step Ten: They discuss their daughter's problem together in a united way. (Omitted from the Object Relations Theory)

H: No absolutely not. I would love to see my kids. I love my son - he comes in with his beard - he comes in and he comes over and he kisses me and cause I always kissed my father - I mean this is something.

W: This is a different generation.

H: I don't know...

In this chapter the family systems formulation was presented and illustrated with examples from the session in order to show how the clinical material was interpreted to fit the formulation. The examples were defined and an attempt was made to illustrate the boundaries of each inference by distinguishing between changes which do and do not significantly alter the meaning of the examples. In these examples as long as the functional relationship between the sequences remains the same, the essential pattern in the family interaction is unchanged.

In the next chapter these two formulations will be compared. The focus will be on characterizing the similarities and differences in the interpretation, selective attention, and organization of data, when

applying the models of object relations theory and family systems theory to clinical material.

CHAPTER VII

Comparisons of the Two Formulations

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and characterize the differences between the two interpretations in chapters five and six. The following issues will be examined in this chapter: 1) The selective perception of material as reflected by the inclusion and exclusion of data in each formulation; 2) The similarities and differences in interpretation of the same data; 3) The organization of information to create a coherent whole, and the relative position of the same events in the two patterns created by the object relations and family systems formulations.

Several related concepts which Gregory Bateson develops in Mind and Nature (1979) will be used to clarify the differences between the interpretations of the data from a family systems and an object relations perspective: logical types, context, coevolution, relationship versus thingness, circular versus linear causality, and binocular vision.

Bateson emphasizes the importance of differentiating logical types or classes of events; when a class and its members are not differentiated confusion and paradox result. This idea was originally a contribution of Bertrand Russell's. Just as the characteristics of an elephant are not the same as the characteristics of the class elephant, the characteristics of the family members are not the same as the characteristics of the family. Analogously, the characteristics of a thing reported differ from the characteristics of the way it is

reported. They are all members of different classes or logical orders of events. The way something is reported subclassifies the things reported. The command aspect of the report or meta-communication provides a context for the thing reported which indicates how the thing reported is to be understood. The thing reported might be subclassified as a joke, a question, a command, or a provocation, depending on the tone, gestures and other nonverbal signals accompanying it.

Another important idea in Mind and Nature (1979) is the significance of context for establishing the meaning of events. Things have meaning through their relationship to other things. The spatial context defines the elephant's trunk as a nose, a thing between the eyes and the mouth. A temporal context defines the elephant's trunk as a nose because it smells; i.e., the nose plays a given part in a sequence of interaction between the creature and the environment (Bateson, 1979). Context provides meaning to an event through that event's relationship to other events. The pattern of relationships in the family is one important context of family behavior.

A third concept of Gregory Bateson's which will be applied in comparing object relations and family systems interpretations is coevolution. Context evolves as pattern through time (Bateson, 1979, p. 15). The patterns of events which have developed between two people over time shape how those two people will respond to each other today. (Ibid, p. 16). The pattern of a relationship between two people coevolves; it forms a coherent whole from a mutual fit between the two participants. The pattern which endures goes on, Bateson suggests (1979), for its survival value for either the individual members or the

whole group. What is best for the survival of the species may differ from what is best for the survival of the individual. The same might be said to be true in the family. What is best from the whole family may differ from what is best for a particular individual within it.

Bateson suggests (1979) that although we see "things" when we see or think about events, human beings, or ideas what we really perceive is the news of a difference; that is, we perceive a change which occurs between what happens to one part of an event at different times, or between two parts of an event in relation to each other. This distinction is described by Bateson (1979) as a difference between perceiving relationship versus thingness. He gives the example of chalk on a blackboard. He says we do not see the chalk on the board. It is the difference between the chalk and the board, or the relationship, which we perceive, not the thing itself. The syntax of our language emphasizes the things themselves, and leads us to assume that we see things rather than relationships. Bateson suggests that we should shift our focus to the relationships between events in order to think correctly. "Relationship is not internal to the single person, it is nonsense to talk about 'dependency' or 'aggressiveness' or 'pride' and so on. All such words have their roots in what happens between persons not in something inside a person" (Bateson, 1979, p. 146).

Also described by Bateson in Mind and Nature (1979) is the difference between circular and linear causality. He says "In the material world a force acts upon something creating a cause and effect relationship. But in the world of ideas and human beings, the perception of difference or relationship activates the receiver.

Events which occur in the world of ideas behave according to principles of circular causality. When causal systems become circular a change in any part of the circle can be regarded as a cause for a change at a later time in any variable anywhere in the circle" (Bateson, 1979, p. 66). In circular causal systems there is reciprocity in every exchange. The minimum unit of interaction contains three components: stimulus, response, and reinforcement; however, in circular causal systems the second event is reinforcement for the first; the third event is reinforcement for the second, and the first event is reinforcement for the third. When change in any variable can be regarded as cause for change at any time later in the circle, there is no clear cause and effect relationship at the level of the variables. Each event is reciprocally causal. The whole idea of causality becomes changed. Every event becomes perceived as mutually causal to every other event.

Another important idea of Bateson's is binocular vision; he describes the perception of depth as the effect created by the difference between information from two different perspectives. Depth perception is neither the perception of the event from one eye or the other, but it is the difference rendered by placing the perceptions from one eye in the context of the perceptions of the other eye. If we let two overlapping circles represent these relationships, A would represent vision from one eye, B would represent vision from the other eye and AB would represent the added perception of depth, the difference between what is perceived from A and B. AB is information of a different logical type. When A is placed in the context of B and B is placed in the context of A, in the members of AB information from

the second source has imposed a subclassification upon A that was previously impossible (Bateson, 1979, p. 78). "To think straight it is advisable to expect all qualities and attributes, adjectives, and so on to refer to at least two sets of interactions in time" (Ibid, p. 67). What this implies is that one sees only part of the picture unless one superimposes interactions which occur from one direction and the other in a set of interacting events. One must view the reciprocity between these interactions in order to examine something as a system.

These ideas will be used to elaborate on the differences in selective perception, interpretation and organization of clinical data from an object relations and a family systems perspective.

A Comparison of the Interpretations When the
Same Data are Included in Both Formulations

The objective of this section is to compare the two interpretations of the data when the same data is included in both formulations. In this and the following sections the data referred to will be presented in its entirety when describing the data would itself impose on the data a particular theoretical interpretation.

One example appears to be described the same way by both formulations. Part of example 21 overlaps with example C of the family systems pattern. The following selection from example 21/C is described similarly by both theoretical formulations. However, the explanation of these events, and the organization of these events in the whole pattern differ.

W: I said "Bring it in I'll be glad to type it for you." She's a terrific person. I cannot hold back. I do suggest which is the wrong thing to do. I certainly don't do it out of

animosity. I do it because I love her and I can see things that she doesn't see and if I suggest something it's because I think it's going to be good for her. I noticed the last couple of days she seemed a little mad at herself.

From a family systems perspective this example fits the description of step two: the mother engages the daughter by offering to help her; step three: the daughter accepts help, and step one: the daughter seems more depressed. The object relations interpretation of these events is similar: this is an instance which illustrates one step of projective identification between mother and daughter: the mother induces her daughter to act needy by doing more than she thinks she should for her ("I cannot hold back. I do suggest which is the wrong thing to do.") The mother appears to associate doing too much for her daughter with her daughter's acting "a little mad at herself lately". Both interpretations place significance on the mother's influencing the daughter to behave dependent by doing too much for her.

However, the two formulations differ in their explanation of these events. From an object relations perspective the mother does too much for the daughter because she represses or denies her own feelings of neediness; she both induces and maintains the daughter's dependency on her so that she will not have to feel her own needs. The daughter's subsequent depression is a reaction to having accepted the projective identification onto herself as needy and helpless.

The family systems perspective explains what the mother and daughter do in the context of the structural relations in the family. It does not interpret the motives of individual family members. Mother and daughter are viewed as equal participants in a sequential

interaction in which a complete cycle occurs with great frequency: the more the mother helps her daughter, the more helpless the daughter feels, the more the mother helps the daughter. The mother's position in the dyad is dominant, or one-up to the daughter. Whereas in contrast, in the triad of mother, father, and daughter, the father and daughter form a coalition against the mother which places them one-up in relation to the mother. The mother's one up position in both dyads is counterbalanced by the father-daughter coalition against the mother in the triad. The implication of viewing the family structure this way is that one would not expect the mother to change her position in relation to her daughter without there also being a shift in the father-daughter coalition.

From the object relations perspective the same event is explained differently. The mother's motive for subordinating and controlling her daughter is to defend against internal experiences of anxiety and loss. The belief is that it is necessary for the mother to experience her own disowned feelings before she will be able to treat her daughter differently. The goal would be to help the mother to reown her early experiences of loss and separation and her related feelings of helplessness and need in order to change the relationship between mother and daughter (rather than to attempt to reorganize the whole family). Even though the initial descriptions of the data in example 21/C appear similar, the explanation of these data, and way these data are related to other data about the family and the implications for what the therapist ought to do are all different.

These differences might be characterized by a difference in levels of interpretation, punctuation, and context. The levels of

interpretation are different because the family systems analysis observes the characteristics of the whole family, whereas the object relations analysis focuses on the characteristics of the mother and how these impact on her relationship to her daughter. The punctuation is different since the object relations interpretation examines what occurs between mother and daughter from the point of view of one person and punctuates events as beginning in the mother and ending in the daughter. The family systems interpretation considers the cycle as a circle with no beginning or ending. The context is different since the family systems analysis views these data in relation to ongoing events between husband and wife, whereas the object relations interpretation considers the relevant context to be the mother's inner world of object relations and associated experiences. Throughout the following analyses these characteristics are considered central to the differences in object relations and family systems interpretations.

In the following example 40/B the object relations interpretation focuses on the content of what the husband says: the husband experiences anxiety in reaction to his wife and daughter's arguing. The family systems interpretation focuses on the pattern implied by what the husband says: when the wife and daughter argue the husband intervenes in order to try and stop them by telling his wife to leave his daughter alone. The family systems description emphasizes action. The significant words are the verbs, and the verbs are active rather than passive. In the object relations description the significant words are descriptive; the verbs are passive. The emphasis is on the state of the individual rather than the actions between the individuals.

H. Basically it was how to handle her. A lot of it was we argued

between ourselves because of her. We were married for a long, long time. We had a very good marriage. We were very happy and I still think in a sense we're happy and still think about loving each other. But I think that all that's come between us, in a sense, and the two of them, when she was living at home, I was just up...I was nervous. I couldn't stay in the den and listen to the raised, the voices, you know in the other end of the house. They couldn't talk to each other without yelling you see. There would always be some sort of criticism. "Do this. Do that." And I kept telling her: "So why don't you leave her alone - you know - let her find her own way", do certain things that - we tried everything you know - to stay out of her way - so that she wouldn't have this hostility toward us.

The object relations paradigm emphasizes the father's feelings in reaction to the fighting. This paradigm focuses the viewer on the content of his speech, the thing reported. From a family systems perspective the actions and their sequences are significant. This paradigm focuses the viewer on the pattern described in the content of the husband's speech. The object relations paradigm considers the crucial aspect of his statement to be the statement about his feelings. The family systems perspective considers the description of the interaction between the participants to be the crucial aspect of his statement.

Next we will examine the relative significance of these data in each paradigm. The relative significance of this information is related to whether it is part of the central hypothesis or a subsidiary

hypothesis. In the family systems paradigm this information is central, because the central hypothesis describes the interrelationship between the struggles between husband and wife, and mother and daughter. The information in this example is significant because it illustrates how the husband is cued to engage his wife when the wife and daughter's fighting surpasses his threshold for tolerating their fighting. What is significant is that when he engages his wife, his daughter and wife disengage for the moment. This perspective emphasizes the effect of his actions whereas the object relations perspective emphasizes the fact of his threshold, i.e., his intolerance of his anxiety in reaction to their fighting. This illustrates again a subtle figure-ground shift in which the focus of attention in one case directs one to examine when an action takes place, and in the other case, why it takes place. The when question focuses the viewer's attention on interactive sequences; the why question focuses the viewer on the father as a person, and his inner world and internal psychic structure.

The same example is peripheral to the object relations paradigm. The husband's intolerance of his own and other's aggression is a subsidiary hypothesis. There is too little data in the session to provide information about why the father reacts the way he does; the lack of these substantiating data contribute to making this event less significant in the formulation based on this session alone. Therefore, his avoidance of conflict, and his difficulty with his own and his wife's anger are subordinate to the central hypothesis (for which there is abundant data) which focuses on the mother-daughter relationship.

From a family systems perspective often the same data are

interpreted simultaneously at two different logical levels whereas from an object relations perspective it appears that the focus of the therapist's attention is directed predominantly to only one level of an event. In many examples (11 J, 24 H, 28 E, 29 E, 31B) the object relations interpretation focuses on the content of what a person says; whereas the family systems interpretation is more likely to direct one's attention to the process and content of the same statements.

For example, in 24/H, as in many other of the examples in this section, the husband says that his wife cannot resist contacting his daughter.

H: And she'd say "Why don't you call her and tell her something call her and tell her this," or "call her and tell her that."

From a family systems perspective this example is interpreted simultaneously in the context of the husband's attempts to influence his wife and as evidence that the wife compulsively contacts her daughter. In the context of the husband's attempts to influence his wife the relevant data are that when he does this, his wife becomes stubborn and refuses to do as he says. Simultaneously the husband informs the viewer about the content of their fight: when the mother is overinvolved with the daughter, the mother and daughter fight. The two pieces of information in these data are: information about the process of the husband and wife's fighting (when the husband pushes his wife, she resists), and information about the content of their fight (when the mother pushes the daughter, the daughter resists).

The object relations paradigm focuses one's attention primarily on the content of the husband's complaint. The central hypothesis is that the mother uses projective identification with her daughter. Since the

content of what the husband says substantiates the hypothesis that the mother is overinvolved with the daughter, on the basis of this paradigm, one tends to focus on the content of the information in the husband's complaints rather than the pattern occurring between the spouses at the time when he complains. Instances in which the mother shows that she needs her daughter too much, denies her own needs, and feels betrayed and panicky without her daughter's approval are all equivalent. These events are central to the hypothesis of projective identification, and therefore to the therapist's attention when using this paradigm. By contrast, from the family systems perspective the data about the mother-daughter relationship are regarded as subsidiary to the central hypothesis which focuses on the spouse's fight. It is the fights, and their escalation and deescalation that are central; the content of, and the trigger to, the couples' escalations and deescalations are the escalations and deescalations in the mother-daughter relationship.

Family systems and object relations interpretations examine the same data from different points of view. Family systems interpretations focus on events at the level of the whole pattern as if they formed a dance of interacting parts. The point of view of the analysis is from a position outside the system. Object relations interpretations examine the pattern from a point within the system, from the point of view of each individual family member. Interpretations of examples 43/J, 44/B, 48/K, 51/J, 52/K, 53/O, 54/M, 55/P, 56/E, 58/J, 59/E, 60/E differ in point of view.

In example 43/J the husband says "My problem is that she doesn't let anybody talk whether it's me, a stranger, or anybody else". From

an object relations perspective this comment is interpreted as an example of the husband's perception of his wife as dominating him, and his image of himself as an impotent victim overwhelmed by his aggressive wife. This interpretation is based on the idea that a person's behavior reflects his internalized image of himself. The formulation suggests that his loss of sexual interest in his wife might be considered partially an expression of his sense of himself as an overpowered, and therefore, impotent victim. The point of view of this interpretation is the individual and his relationship to his internal image of himself and others. The emphasis is on what is inside the husband, i.e., his self image in relation to his image of his wife.

The family systems view of this data is that it is an example of a pattern in which the more the husband attempts to change his wife, the more the wife resists, and the more the wife tries to influence her husband, the more he resists. The emphasis is on the events which occur between them viewed from a point outside both of them.

Example 43/J occurs when the spouse's escalating struggle reaches its high point. When all of the husband's previous efforts to stop his wife from correcting his description of the problem have not succeeded, he stops her by criticizing her for all of her attempts to dominate him and their daughter, "for not letting anyone else talk." He does not recognize that he participates in inviting his wife to assert herself by showing uncertainty and hesitation about the details of the daughter's problem. Reciprocally, his wife influences him to behave with uncertainty by repeatedly interrupting him. This mutual interaction escalates until the husband takes a stand in which he blames his wife for interrupting everyone. After this statement the

wife attempts to influence her husband to take a less critical and possibly less assertive position toward her by showing him how hurt and angry she feels about his criticizing her.

The systems interpretation of this sequence views it from a point outside both members of the couple; this view assumes that both of them have coevolved a pattern which fits together to mutually reinforce their current styles of responding to one another. The object relations explanation focuses on the husband's behavior from the perspective of his internal images of himself and his wife.

In the following examples the issue of context is treated differently by the object relations and family systems formulations. In the first example the object relations interpretation places the event in the context of internal events whereas the family systems interpretation places the event in the context of external events.

Example 18/O.

T: "So your sense is that maybe you should back off a little bit and give her a little room"?

W: I've tried to do that.

T: Because she does have a lot of therapists.

W: D. has our car which she's not supposed to do. She's borrowed it for a month but... She picks me up in the morning and takes me to work. When she worked before she used to share a car with me. When she needs something she calls me. If I asked her a question and it's one too many or not the right question I get an awful answer sometimes.

T: So she

W: It upsets me all day and I find it hard to concentrate at work.

In the family systems interpretation the current context is extremely important to the meaning of this event. In the current pattern the therapist's behavior is structurally the same as the husband's in relation to the wife. Reciprocally the wife cues the therapist to take this position in relation to her. Her tendency to patronize the therapist and to take charge of the session influence the therapist to respond by telling the wife to back off from her daughter, just as the therapist would probably like the wife to back off from her. By reacting the same way the husband does in relation to the wife, the therapist demonstrates that she is coevolving with, or has been inducted into the pattern of relationships in the family.

The therapist's suggestion to the wife occurs in the context of a pattern in which the wife is repeatedly blamed for the daughter's problems by the husband when he tells her to leave the daughter alone. In this context the wife shows hurt feelings and resists his suggestions. Her response to the therapist is similar. She shows the therapist that she is hurt by the daughter, and the meta-message of her behavior is that she is hurt by the therapist's comment.

The relationship between the therapist and wife might be described in the object relations view as early signs of transference and countertransference. The wife's hurt, resistant reaction to the therapist might be considered an early transference reaction to the therapist. The therapist's directive response to the wife might be considered a counter-transference reaction, in which the wife's controlling and condescending reactions induce the therapist to experience the wife's anger and to unconsciously wish to push her away (in the same way the husband and daughter usually do). When viewing

this repetition within the session as transference or counter-transference, the emphasis is on the therapist's feelings toward the patient rather than her position in relation to the patient. These feelings would cue the therapist to wonder about the wife's relationship with her parents, and whether the mother's perpetual experience of being pushed away reflects and recapitulates an early experience of rejection or emotional abandonment by her parents.

From an object relations perspective the context of this event is not the events which occurred previously in the session, but events which may have occurred in the mother's development, which are reactivated as the daughter attempts to separate. The therapist becomes the repository for the feelings of being rejected and abandoned as well as the feelings of wishing to reject and abandon, through the process of projective identification. Subsequently, the therapist feels rejected and acts rejecting. In the object relations paradigm the therapist internalizes and neutralizes these experiences by not acting on them, and this is considered part of the therapeutic value of the relationship.

From an object relations perspective the context of this event is the other instances of the wife's oversensitivity. The degree of the wife's discomfort indicates that the wife is reexperiencing an earlier rejection, abandonment or withdrawal of love. This earlier experience has been reactivated by her relationship with her daughter, and she attempts to control this experience by controlling her daughter, ie, by maintaining her daughter's dependence on her in order to minimize her own experience of rejection or abandonment. The context for this event is internal; it is assumed to be in the mother. The mother's excessive

vulnerability to rejection, her subsequent interpretation of events in all or nothing terms, and her unconscious equation of rebellion or withdrawal with emotional abandonment cause her to be unable to handle her daughter's separation in adolescence with appropriate detachment. From a family systems perspective the context of this event is the ongoing pattern in which attempts to influence the wife to let the daughter alone meet with resistance and a display of a hurt or angry feeling. The context of the event is the pattern which recurs.

When one perceives an event in the context of an ongoing pattern the meaning of that event is based partially on the meaning of previous instances of such events; that is, they are interpreted in context. When interpreted in context the examples 25/C and 27/E are equivalent from an object relations view, but not from a family systems view. In example 25/C the wife says "I cannot hold back...I do it because I love her..." In example 27/E the couple have the following interaction:

H: She would like to keep hold of and keep calling her, and
"Call her and tell her that if she wants to eat some yogurt she can come and eat."

W: I don't have to tell her that.

H" "Call her and tell her we bought some yogurt. It's in the refrigerator." "I don't want to answer the phone in case it's D., you talk to her."

The context of these examples from an object relations perspective is that the wife cannot resist making contact with her daughter. The implication is that the wife needs to control her daughter's reactions in order to reduce her own anxiety about feeling abandoned. She needs to keep her daughter dependent in order to project onto daughter her

own denied or repressed feelings of neediness and helplessness.

From a family systems perspective these two examples are viewed in two different contexts. The first example 25/C taken in context is an expression of (step 2) the wife's inducement to her daughter to remain dependent; it occurs in the context of (step 1) her daughter's helpless and needy behavior. Whereas example 27/E is an example of the husband's attempt to change his wife (step 6) and the wife's resistance (step 7); it occurs in the context of the spouse's argument about how to handle their daughter. These two events occur in different contexts when the context is the pattern of interaction in which the messages occur. Each paradigm influences how one organizes events to form a coherent pattern. Which of these events are considered equivalent (in the pattern) depends to some extent on the theoretical paradigm which defines what is significant about the event.

In examples 42/N, 44/B, and 46/B and F, and 47/G, the husband talks about the relationship between his wife, himself, and his daughter. In example 46/B and F, the husband says: "That provoked trouble, fighting, not fighting, between my wife and I. I would tell her to leave her alone. Stop telling her what to do. Stop criticizing her, and if she wants to sleep, let her sleep; and if she wants to help herself we didn't stop her. She's smart enough for that, and she just couldn't. It was just "D. do this. D. do that. Why didn't you do this D.?"

From an object relations perspective this example illustrates the husband's perception of himself and his daughter as victims of the wife. He describes two dyadic relationships: the relationship between the wife and the daughter and between the husband and the wife. What

is missing is a concept which describes the relationship between these two dyadic relationships.

The concept binocular vision provides an image or analogy for organizing and conceptualizing the relationship between the mother and daughter's, and husband and wife's relationships. Let us imagine that all husband and wife conflicts are members of class A, and all mother and daughter conflicts are members of class B; let us say that AB represents those conflicts within each dyad which occur in the interrelationship to the other dyad. The interactions in class AB represent the relationship between the relationships, or the influence of each dyad on the other dyad.

The following statements describe the sequence of what happens: As the mother - daughter conflict reaches the father's threshold for tolerating conflict the father engages his wife, and the daughter withdraws. As the husband-wife conflict reaches the threshold of the husband, or the family, the daughter is brought in (or cued) to provide a common enemy and a common concern which brings the spouses together again and deescalates the conflict between them. The next statements translates this sequence into a structural description: The coalition between father and daughter against mother places the mother in a one-down position in the triad, whereas in each dyad, the mother is in a one-up position to her daughter and her husband. Next is a description at a higher logical level of the relationship between these relationships: As the fighting between mother and daughter increases, the fighting between husband and wife increases, and the rapport between father and daughter improves. As the discrepancy between the rapport between father and daughter, and mother and daughter increases,

the fighting between husband and wife also increases. When the discrepancy between the rapport between these two sets of relationships decreases the husband and wife get along much better. Those interactions in each dyad which occur in the context of the other dyad or dyads, represent a triadic sequence. In a family systems description one can show how each third person is affected by observing two other family members interact, and how each dyadic relationship functions partially in the context of each other dyadic relationship. (The possibilities for what cues any dyadic interaction are mind boggling in number and complexity.)

In the object relations formulation the triadic description of the husband-wife-daughter relationship suggests that the husband views himself as rescuer, his wife as aggressor, and his daughter as victim. The husband projects both the victim and aggressor introjects and perceives himself as rescuer. In this triadic description the positions of the husband, wife, and daughter are described from the husband's point of view or from the wife's point of view, whereas the family systems description provides an overview of the family relationships as a whole from a point outside the system.

The essential difference between the family systems and object relations description of these relationships is that the systems descriptions are capable of describing the attributes of the class (for example, the whole family or the pattern of behavior) which are different from the attributes of a member (for example, a family member or an individual's behavior) by differentiating between logical levels, and by developing a language which describes events at the level of the pattern rather than at the level of the individual participants. The

essential significance of differentiating between the whole and the sum of its parts is not that it is necessary to include all the members of the family in the treatment, but that it is important to understand what occurs at the level of the family as a whole, and to be able to differentiate those events from those which occur at the level of the individual, the dyads or the subgroups.

A Comparison of the Interpretations of the
Data Included in the Object Relations Formulation
and Excluded from the Family Systems Formulation

Some data which were meaningful in the object relations formulation could not be interpreted in the family systems formulation unless the context were expanded to clarify the pattern. Examples 10, 14, and 22 could not be interpreted by the family systems paradigm for this reason.

In example 22 the wife says she wouldn't want her daughter to hear that her parents think she's to blame for their marital problems. From an object relations perspective the mother's avoidance of overtly blaming the daughter is further evidence of the mother's attempts to inhibit the daughter's rebelliousness and to increase her dependency. If the daughter were to hear that her parents blame her for their marital problems, the daughter might become more angry with her parents, and might feel less bound by guilt or loyalty not to express it, and therefore might rebel more. From a family systems perspective it is not clear what this statement means unless it is viewed as part of a larger pattern. Since it does not fit into the central pattern, it would probably be considered insignificant.

In example 14 the husband says "D. caused this problem and she is still causing this problem....." This fragment might fit into the

family systems formulation as further evidence of step nine - the father tends to blame his daughter for his marital problems when the spouse conflict reaches a certain threshold. Without the data which shows what the father is responding to, or the effect of his response, this data does not form a complete subunit. The husband's statement does not provide information out of context from a family systems perspective. In order to interpret his reactions, and the reactions of other's one must view a statement at least in the context of what preceded or followed it.

Example 10 was also not interpreted from a family systems perspective. The husband says:

"You know my son is 25 years old and he'll kiss his father."

T: "But I am wondering whether you are also--are you talking about having been a very loving couple?"

H: Oh yes. We've gone to marriage encounter. I'm talking about.

W: We'd come in together he'd be kissing and hugging me and there was never, this was never hidden from our children. They saw love in my house at all times. I'm not saying they saw us sleep together. I am talking about affection.

H: They saw that too. (laugh)

From an object relations perspective these data were interpreted as examples of the family's value on affection and closeness to the exclusion of anger and conflict. From a family systems perspective it is not clear how or whether this passage fits into the central pattern of interaction and therefore it was ignored.

However, example 10 might have been considered significant to the family systems therapist in another way. The family communicates what

they consider to be acceptable behavior in a number of ways. One way is clearly by their negative feedback when certain behaviors exceed the tolerable range for that behavior in the family. Another way they communicate what is acceptable or unacceptable is their use of language. In this instance, when asked whether they were a loving couple before the problems with their daughter began, the parents respond using the words loving family instead of loving couple. Their repeated use of the phrase loving family rather than loving couple tells the therapist that they are connected to each other through their family. Their emphasis on how affectionate their family is tells the therapist that they will not easily tolerate being viewed as other than affectionate, and that they probably have difficulty with behavior which they perceive as unaffectionate. This is corroborated by the sequences of behavior in the central pattern. The mother attempts to suppress or coopt her daughter's rebelliousness, the mother shows hurt and anger when the husband blames her for the daughter's problems, and the father intercedes when the mother and daughter argue. All of these reactions serve a negative feedback function of counterbalancing an escalating disagreement.

The characteristic difference between the interpretations in the next group of examples is the number of levels at which they are interpreted. The object relations formulation appears to focus primarily on one logical level, whereas the family systems formulation appears to address these data at two logical levels. The examples which belong to this group are: 15, 17, 20, 30 and 37 (which is the same as 20).

In example 20 (and 37) the wife says:

"I would rather not call her - not because I don't want to. It's because I invariably will ask questions that she doesn't want to answer. There are so many things that I've missed that I resent having lost. She's at an age when I can enjoy her. Maybe that's selfish. But she's at an age when we can both - she's a young woman. She's a young lady. I can enjoy her. I should be able to speak to her, confide in her, I wanted to and I would love her to confide in me, as not only a parent daughter relationship, as a friend. I resent that. I miss her. It's something I've always looked forward to and I just don't know, I don't know when I'll ever have it. I hope I will. But I will someday tell my children when they get married, now that's the way I feel, "Don't love your children too much."

If this example had been included in the family systems formulation, it would have been an example of step eight. (The mother shows hurt and anger when blamed for daughter's problems.) It occurs at the end of a sequence in which the wife has complained (shows hurt) that her husband does not show an interest in sex (step 8), after which the husband blames the daughter for their sexual problems (step 9), and the husband accuses his wife of initiating contacts with their daughter (step 6).

The object relations interpretation of these data is that the mother denies and projects her own neediness onto her daughter. The mother suggests that she has looked forward to a time when the daughter would be able to take care of her as a confidante and when the daughter would provide a feeling of closeness (fusion). This leads the

therapist to assume that the mother needs the daughter to help her defend against feelings of loss, rejection, and abandonment related to earlier experiences in her development. From an object relations perspective the mother is saying something about herself: she needs her daughter and feels she deserves what she needs from her because her daughter owes it to her. This leads the therapist to assume that she intentionally if unconsciously, pressures her daughter to comply with meeting her needs, and that she probably uses her daughter's guilt to coerce her to comply with her wishes.

This analysis treats this statement primarily as a message about the mother's relationship to herself, her inner objects and her daughter. It focuses on the content of what the mother says. Inferences are made about the pattern which occurs between the mother and daughter from the content of what the mother says. The mother's expression of feeling is key to understanding her relationships to other family members.

The family systems perspective emphasizes the process: attention is on the wife's message in the context of the pattern of which it is a part. The wife is showing hurt feelings in response to the husband's ongoing accusations that she holds onto her daughter, and in the context of the therapist's question about who initiates the contacts with the daughter. The internal experience described by the wife is not considered significant. Her self expression is viewed in relation to its effect on other messages, as a cue for what follows. The family systems perspective examines the pattern that is revealed by the content of the mother's statement also. The content describes a separate, subsidiary pattern which occurs between mother and daughter.

The mother's feelings themselves or her internal experience as an individual are not attended to when using only a family systems paradigm.

In summary, the family systems perspective in this case focuses on this data at two different logical levels: one aspect of which is the pattern between mother and daughter and the other aspect of which reveals the pattern between the wife and husband. The pattern between mother and daughter is revealed in the content of what is said. The pattern between husband and wife is revealed in the sequential exchange of messages in which her statement occurs. At neither level is the mother's self expression considered significant in relation to her experience as an individual. The object relations perspective focuses primarily on the inner world of the mother as an individual, her internal structure, defenses, and motives, and her behavior in relation to others is inferred from analyzing her as an individual. The focus is primarily on the content of what the mother says, rather than on the pattern of actions revealed by the content, or the pattern of actions of which her message is a part.

The contrasting interpretations of example 32 are intended to illustrate the difference between unidirectional and reciprocal causality.

The wife begins by asking about the therapist's credentials. Then she says:

W: If I want to dicuss my life I want to know something of yours, right?

T: Okay. So why don't we start by your telling me something about the problem that brings you here.

W: Can I ask...I'm sorry, one more thing I must ask you.

T: Sure.

W: I'm going to call you Carol if you don't mind. Okay, um, when S. took all that information from us, I was hoping we could not have to go through the whole thing again.

This example is interpreted by the object relations formulation as evidence that the mother handles situations in which she might feel anxious or insecure by taking control of the situation, by directing the session, asking questions, and presuming to call the therapist by her first name. Object relations theory punctuates events as beginning within an individual. The level of analysis is the relationship between two people from the point of view of the individual.

Although this example was omitted from the family systems formulation it fits into the pattern in which the mother reacts to being directed by the therapist by resisting the therapist's attempts to take charge of the session. However, family systems theory does not punctuate this event as a cycle beginning with the wife. The level of analysis is the game (or sequence) and the assumption is that the sequence can only be punctuated arbitrarily. The wife reacts to the therapist's starting the session as if it were part of a continuing sequence between the members of her family. In this paradigm each person reacts to a reaction to his behavior. The wife reacts to the therapist's directing the session by taking charge of the session herself. The therapist later reacts to the wife's attempts to direct her daughter by directing the wife not to direct her daughter. The therapist and wife are engaged in the same pattern that the wife and husband are engaged in, in which each one reacts by pushing the other.

The husband says that the reason he wants to change his wife's behavior toward their daughter is that he objects to his wife's attempts to tell him what to do. In example 26 he says "Like you heard her say I would, she would tell me to call my daughter." He tries to change his wife by making her less involved with their daughter, in reaction to his wife's attempts to change him by making him more involved with their daughter. His solution to being pushed is also to push. These are examples of circular causal sequences in which the husband, wife, and therapist are all involved in reacting to each other, and none of them would be viewed as the clear initiator to any interaction. The game in this family might be described as push and be pushed; any member of the system might fill any position.

From an object relations perspective the wife is viewed as controlling the husband and therapist. The husband appears reactive to his wife's control. The concept of projective identification punctuates the action as beginning within the individual; and the other's response is viewed as a reaction to her action. In the cycle in which the wife induces the therapist to push her away (by violating the therapist's boundaries and making the therapist feel angry) the action is assumed to begin in the wife. The difference between the family systems and object relations descriptions is the difference between saying: the therapist/husband/wife are cued to join the game in which each person pushes and is pushed, versus the therapist/husband are induced to act like the wife's significant others and in so doing becomes a recipient of the wife's projective identification onto her/him of a rejecting object; the husband induces the wife to act aggressive and to take control in relation to him, and forms a

collusion with her in which each individual's defenses creates a complementary fit with the other's. In the first description the therapist takes a position in a reciprocally causal set of events. In the second description the wife is viewed as causing the therapist or husband to experience anger, act critically and attempt to control or direct the wife. The husband is viewed as causing the wife to control him by acting submissive or subordinate.

The level at which these events are described is different from the object relations and family systems perspectives. Since the object relations interpretation analyzes these events at the level of the individual's relationship to another individual, from the point of view of the individual, one individual appears to cause another individual to feel and act in a particular way. Imagine one cycle starting in the wife and one cycle starting in the husband; since both individuals include the other in their projective identification, there are two overlapping cycles which fit together in a collusion.

The family systems interpretation analyzes these events at a higher level of abstraction. Using the analogy to depth perception, when one imposes double description on every event or interaction (which Bateson claims is required to view the world accurately) each individual's behavior must be viewed simultaneously from two points of view. When one superimposes the two individual cycles, the result is information of a higher logical type. The system of interactions describes the pattern created where the two cycles overlap; at this level one views the pattern of events as steps in a dance or notes in a song, but the individuals doing the dance or singing the notes are disregarded.

The last group of data omitted from the original family systems

formulation are the historical data about the family. From an object relations perspective the historical information indicates that the family is dealing with multiple losses including deaths, separations, business-financial losses, and sexual-emotional losses. These events are viewed as precipitants to the current family problems, since current losses activate earlier unresolved losses. The daughter's separation activates earlier experiences of abandonment and loss of love for the parents. Other family losses might be displaced onto the daughter so that in a sense she becomes the scapegoat for all of the family problems. As has been said, the fighting about the daughter is a consequence of multiple projective identifications in which various split off aspects of self and object representations are projected onto other family members and earlier relationships are reactivated and restored.

From a family systems perspective the same events are not considered precipitants. The daughter is not considered the recipient either of displacements or projective identifications. However, these events might be viewed as demarcating points of change in the coevolution of the family's current patterns of interacting. Coevolution has been defined as the gradual development of patterns of interaction which fit together to form a coherent whole, which evolve and survive for their adaptive function for some part of the system. Lynn Hoffman's coevolutionary model (1981) punctuates the family's development from past time to present and future time. According to Hoffman historical events are significant as times of change in the family's structure or patterns of alliances.

From this perspective the same data which one might consider

precipitating events in the object relations formulation could be interpreted as times of structural change in the family from a family systems perspective.

For example, if we imagine that before either adolescent left home the mother and daughter formed one alliance and the father and son formed another alliance, the son's leaving home would have destabilized this arrangement. One can speculate that both parents began to compete for the daughter's alliance in a coalition against the other. When the father had a heart attack, the mother's protective attempt to keep upsetting events a secret from her husband may have solidified her coalition with her daughter. The balance of the family at that time may have consisted of an alliance between mother and daughter in which mother promised to keep secrets from father for the sake of his health, which further bound the daughter to her mother when those secrets concerned the daughter's misconduct. On the other hand, the husband's way of establishing power and equalizing his relationship with his wife may have been to use his health problems to control or regulate how expressive his wife could act toward him; perhaps he kept her from complaining or demanding too much from him by gaining weight or showing vulnerability in some other way. When the daughter left home the family structure would have been destabilized since the couple would have had to settle their differences without a coalition with a third person (although they might have used a neighbor or other family member).

The father's bankruptcy influenced the daughter to move home; this probably restabilized the family by providing a means of detouring marital issues through her. As the parents reincorporated the daughter

into their problem solving, her involvement had the effect of restabilizing the couple, and destabilizing the daughter. The more the mother tried to help her daughter, the more the daughter depended on her mother until she became increasingly dysfunctional. When the daughter began therapy, she probably began to rebel more openly as which point her mother probably tried harder to control and direct her.

In this family systems description the son's separation from home, the husband's heart attack and bankruptcy are not viewed as precipitants to the current problem; nor is the daughter's separation viewed as reactivating earlier conflicts, as in the object relations formulation. Instead these two critical times in the family's past might be considered significant as times of change in the coalitions and alliances in the family structure.

A Comparison of the Interpretations of the
Data Included in Family Systems Formulation
and Excluded from the Object Relations Formulation

Sections of examples L, M, and O are omitted from the object relations formulation; these sections illustrate step 9 (the husband diverts attention to the daughter) and 10 (the couple unite in common concern for their daughter) of the family systems pattern. Steps 9 and 10 are transitional steps in the pattern. They illustrate how the couple's interaction restabilizes following a symmetrical escalation (a fight), which occurs in steps 6 and 7. Step 8 (the wife shows hurt or anger) and 9 (the husband diverts attention to the daughter, blaming her for the marital problems) illustrate the couple's tactics for deescalating the conflict and for reestablishing equilibrium through a complementary interaction. Step 10 (the couple unite in common concern

for their daughter) reinforces the husband's use of detouring to avoid his wife's anger or hurt expressions, just as step 9 (the husband diverts attention to his daughter's problem) reinforces the wife's use of hurt and anger to influence her husband to stop criticizing her. These steps illustrate circular causality. Steps 9 and 10 complete the cycle by leading back to both steps 1 to 5 (the mother-daughter interaction) and steps 6 and 7 (the marital fight): the couple's focus on the daughter's problems leads the mother to try to help her daughter, and the husband to criticize his wife for her behavior toward the daughter.

Three out of four of the examples of steps 9 (in examples L, M, and O) and all of the data in the examples of step 10 (also in examples L, M, O) are omitted from the object relations formulation.

Example N illustrates step 9: the husband diverts attention from the marital problems to the daughter's problem blaming her for their difficulties.

The husband says:

"We grew up together. We got married. We've lived with each other for thirty years and we really get along so damn well. Maybe it's time...Right now we don't get along. We really didn't fight or have this problem because of us. You know really. We had this problem because of a third party and that's been eating us up basically. She shows the emotion more perhaps than I do but I can assure you...."

From an object relations perspective this statement might have been interpreted as evidence of the father's fantasy that by expelling his daughter he can rid himself and the couple of their current

difficulties, since through projective identification he would fantasize that all his own aggressive feelings would be shunted onto his daughter and expelled with her. The function of this statement in the context of the family systems paradigm is quite different. It is evidence of his attempt to assuage his wife who has been escalating her expression of hurt feelings, following critical statements about her by her husband.

This family systems interpretation focuses on the functional relationship between the actions rather than on the actors or actions themselves. The functional relationship between the wife's gradual increase in expression of hurt and the simultaneous increase in the husband's use of diversionary tactics illustrates the subtle ways the couple influence each other or cue each other to respond in keeping with the pattern.

In example M step 6 is enacted by the therapist who tries to influence the wife to leave the daughter alone; as she does this the wife shows greater distress (step 8). The husband intervenes and changes the subject (step 9) by saying:

"Unfortunately the problem is you kind of accept it. You can't because nothing has happened between our marriage until this started."

He continues:

"We have a different view - both of us have a different view - if you would. She keeps telling me I'm the cause of it. I don't believe that at all - no way."

W: You mean where D. is concerned?

H: No way.

T: You feel you're being blamed?

H: No. That has nothing to do with it. D. This thing started with D. I think it probably started with D.

Step 10: The couple unite in common concern.

W: In high school.

H: In high school.

The husband's rather detailed accounts of the daughter's failures in high school follow. They serve the function of bringing the couple together in common concern for their daughter.

In example 30 again the husband expresses irritation and criticism toward his wife (step 6); the wife shows anger (step 8); and the husband changes the subject by joining with his wife and identifying the common enemy as their daughter (step 9): "We were double crossed by our own daughter". His wife says she resents his saying that, and he responds "You resent my saying it because the kid is sick." In the exchanges which follow this the fight appears to have been forgotten as the couple express mutual interest in their child.

What are the implications of omitting these events from the object relations formulation? These steps complete the cycle which recurs in the session. These steps show how the couple deescalate conflict, and how the daughter is brought in to divert them from conflict. The content of what the husband and wife say is not particularly significant in the family systems view. In the context of the whole pattern the differences which one perceives in their behavior in steps 6 and 7, and in steps, 8, 9, and 10 illustrate the couple's process of regulating each others' behavior, and the stability in the pattern which results from this regulation.

In the whole pattern steps 6 and 7 (the husband tries to change his wife's behavior and the wife resists), and steps 8 and 9 (the wife shows hurt and the husband changes the subject), illustrate the oscillations between symmetrical and complementary interactions (reflecting escalating and deescalating conflict) which occur within the pattern. Those oscillations create stability in the pattern. These steps illustrate the principle that stability is created by changes in the form of small oscillations at the level of the variables. These oscillations represent first order change and are not to be confused with second order change, in which stability at the level of the variables creates a runaway which produces change in the pattern as a whole.

Since the object relations paradigm does not direct one's attention to these details or to the significance of these details the object relations therapist might miss altogether the father's active part in reinforcing his wife's close involvement with the daughter's problems. From an object relations perspective one might assume that the father may be doing his part to use his daughter (for example, by projecting onto her his aggressive feelings and imagining that by expelling her he could clear up the family's problems), but the paradigm does not lead one to assume that he is directly reinforcing the mother's involvement with the daughter. These subtle maneuvers to direct his wife's attention toward their daughter counterbalance his overt attempts to direct his wife away from her. In the object relations view one might overemphasize the father's potential effectiveness at neutralizing the symbiotic tie between mother and daughter by intervening in their relationship. If one punctuates events in terms of the husband's need

to minimize conflict by suppressing his wife or expelling his daughter, one appreciates his efforts to intervene in the mother-daughter relationship, and therefore his potential effect as a buffer between them. The therapist who subscribes to this view might support the husband's active involvement intervening between mother and daughter. If one includes the whole cycle in one's analysis, the husband's part in reinforcing the mother-daughter involvement is more obvious. The implications are that the therapist ought to influence the husband to support his wife, since the paradoxical effect, if you will, of this intervention would be to shift the coalition patterns and loosen the mother's attempt to hold onto her daughter. (Haley, Minuchin and Bowen, among others have made this point many times.)

A Comparison of the Positions of the Same Events in the Two Formulations

Most of the events which occur between mother and daughter are classified by the object relations paradigm as evidence of projective identification between mother and daughter. Some of these events overlap with those events which occur in step 1 (the daughter acts dysfunctional), step 2 (the mother offers help), step 3 (the daughter requests or accepts help) in the family systems formulation. These steps illustrate the dependence of the daughter on the mother and the mother's encouragement of that dependence. These events are described similarly in the object relations section on projective identification, which emphasizes the mother's behavioral inducements to the daughter to act helpless. Events which describe the mother's selective perception of her daughter as primarily needy, the mother's partially disowned neediness, and the mother's tendency to take control when she might otherwise feel helpless, are included in the projective identification

section, and are not included in steps one, two, and three of the family systems pattern which focuses primarily on behavioral interaction sequences.

In the object relations interpretation mother induces helplessness, and then pushes her daughter to act responsible when she acts helpless because she becomes anxious when she identifies with the disowned part of herself. The mother is ambivalent about daughter's helplessness in this view; her wish to hold onto her daughter conflicts with her anxiety about her daughter's helplessness. From a family systems perspective the effect of the mother's behavior is the same both when she holds onto her daughter and when she pushes her to be more active: in both cases the effect of the mother's help and advice is to make daughter feel and act more helpless.

Data in steps 4 and 5 (the daughter resists her mother's help and the mother and daughter fight) are viewed as further evidence of the mother's efforts to maintain the daughter's dependence from an object relations perspective, whereas from a family systems perspective the emphasis is on the sequence of the daughter's non-compliance, and the mother-daughter fight which cues the husband to enter to disengage mother and daughter. As previously stated, from an object relations perspective the husband's intervention decreases the symbiotic mother-daughter bond, whereas from a family systems perspective the husband intervenes when the mother and daughter fight, and supports the mother's overinvolvement with daughter by using daughter's problems to detour marital conflicts.

In the family systems formulation many examples of steps 1-5 (the mother-daughter fight) overlap with examples of 6 and 7 (the spouse's

fight) since the same data are interpreted at two levels by the family systems formulation. The data in these examples are often interpreted as evidence of projective identification between mother and daughter by the object relations formulation.

The family systems pattern describes two kinds of interactions between the spouses: steps 6 (the husband tries to change his wife's relationship to their daughter) and 7 (the wife resists) illustrate the symmetrical escalation or battle between the spouses. Steps 8 (the wife shows hurt), and 9 (the husband diverts attention to the daughter) and step 10 (the couple unite in common concern for their daughter or children) illustrate the counterbalancing, complementary aspect of their interaction. The oscillation between these two kinds of interaction provide overall stability in the couple's relationship. The fact that when they discuss their children this often leads back to step 6 (the husband tries to change his wife's behavior) completes the cycle and illustrates it's recursiveness.

Although often the data in examples of steps 6 and 7 (the couple's fight) are interpreted as evidence of projective identification between mother and daughter, in the model example of steps 6 and 7 (the couple's fight) in example 5/E these same data are interpreted as evidence of basic assumption behavior, intrafamilial splitting and intrapsychic splitting by the object relations formulation.

The emphasis when describing this sequence as splitting is on the state which results between the partners. The emphasis when describing this interaction as a symmetrical escalation is on the progressive change in the sequence. The difference between emphasizing action and state is a significant difference between the focus of family systems

and object relations interpretations. Since splitting is a static concept, the therapist tends to view the couple's behavior as relatively constant, and overlooks the moment to moment changes which one tends to see when the couple is assumed to gradually polarize their positions around a particular issue.

Example 5/E

H: I feel the more we ignore her the better off we are. My attitude is that if she never called me, I don't think I would ever call her. I really mean it - it's very difficult to say.

T: So that at this point you would kind of like...

H: Send her to California.

W: You wouldn't.

H: And we would get along very well.

W: He's saying that not literally.

T: Is this the kind of disagreement that you're feeling that you have?

W: No, I love her too much.

H: If she would like to keep hold of and keep calling her and D. "Call up D. and tell her that if she wants to come to eat she can come to eat."

W: I don't have to tell her that.

H: Call D. and tell her we bought her some yogurt; it's in the refrigerator. I don't want to answer the phone in case it's D. You talk to her.

T: The disagreement is about how much to let D. continue to be a part of your lives. Is that it. Is that right?

H: I can turn her off.

W: I can't.

T: So you're still very involved with your daughter.

W: It's true that there are things....it's very difficult for me to say to her I'm very vulnerable where she's concerned.

H: You don't think for a minute that I don't love her as much as you do.

W: I know you do but I don't understand your attitude.

H: My attitude is that I...

W: I can't be that cool about it.

H: You can't?

W: No, I can't, I can't!

H: To tell you the truth, I really know you longer that I know her and I can shut her out very easily. But you won't let me. It's just a question that you won't let me. It's just a question that you won't let anybody turn D. off.

W: She calls me, she doesn't call you.

H: She calls up and says "This is D.", and you go click!

The data in examples of step 8 (the wife shows hurt) overlap to some extent with instances which illustrate the wife's sense of betrayal when her husband or daughter differentiate themselves from her and criticize her behavior. These examples illustrate that the mother experiences lack of agreement with her as if she were being abandoned or deprived of love; they show the all or nothing quality of her affective experience and her associated view of others as all good or all bad.

In the family systems view feelings are considered moves in a game; they are viewed in terms of their impact on others, rather than in terms of the mother's internal experience. The family systems paradigm

does not and cannot do justice to the internal experience of the individual since it is not a theory which directs attention to the meaning or emotional impact of events on the individual.

For example, in 53/O the therapist tries to support the wife by helping her express her feelings. This encouragement lengthens the amount of time the wife spends describing her feelings, but it has no impact on changing the interactive pattern. The husband still interrupts the sequence by changing the subject and eventually the wife shifts her attention to their children in a complementary interaction with her husband.

Examples of the last two steps in the sequence (the husband changes the subject and the wife joins him in common concern for their children) are almost entirely excluded from the object relations formulation. When included, what is interpreted as the husband's changing the subject from a family systems perspective is interpreted as evidence of the father's fantasy that he can dispel his bad feelings by expelling his daughter from the family. In the following example the data which illustrate steps 9 and 10 (the husband changes subject and the couple unite) are omitted from the object relations interpretation.

Example 53/O

W: Our problem is the way he thinks about me.

H: No, that's not the way it is.

W: This is the way I think.

T: Do you think part of the problem has to do with the fact that you had been feeling rejected by H.?

W: Absolutely.

T: So that really one of the things for you is that it feels like your not being appreciated.

W: I've been double-crossed.

T: By H.?

H: You haven't been double-crossed. She's doing it wrong. (End of example 53).

T: I'm just trying to understand. You feel like you want H. to appreciate how, what you've tried to do.

W: I don't know.

T: And you seem to be trying to preserve your marriage by pulling W. back toward you?

H: I really try, I think it's the only way it can be. Maybe I'm not trying the right way. I don't know how the hell to do it.

W: You're an intelligent man, you should know how.

H: I don't know how. It's not that easy.

T: What could you do?

H: I don't know. Some days I'll tell you; there are some times she comes up with things, I'll tell you, God Almighty!

T: What could he do.

W: He should know.

T: You're not sure you want to tell him.

W: No.

T: You don't have that feeling...

W: I must admit I am angry.

T: It seems like you're hurt. You said you felt double-crossed.

H: I don't think...in theory we were double-crossed by our daughter.

W: Yet I resent your saying it.

H: You resent my saying it because I know the kid is sick.

T: It sounds like in a way you may feel jealous because W. has been so involved with D.

H: No, I'm not jealous.

W: No, I don't think he's jealous.

H: Absolutely not! I would love to see my kids, I love my son - he comes in with his beard - he comes in and he comes over and kisses me and cause I always kissed my father - I mean, this is something.

W: This is a different generation.

H: I don't know. (end of example O.)

Overview

The central configuration in the object relations pattern is the mother-daughter relationship. Subsidiary hypotheses refer to the father-daughter relationship, the spouse's relationship and the effect of the parent-child relationships on the spouse relationship. The overall pattern includes hypotheses about the functioning of the family as a whole as well as individual dyads within the family. However, the interrelationship between the dyads, and between dyads and the whole family's functioning is not specified.

The central configuration in the family systems pattern emphasizes the interrelationship between the spouse's and the mother and daughter's escalating and deescalating fights. Inferences are made about the father-daughter relationship as it affects the spouse's and mother-daughter relationship. Data at the level of the individuals' feelings or motives are not included in the pattern.

The organization of data in the two patterns is quite different. The data in the family systems pattern are organized in sequences which

emphasize the effect of one person's behavior on another person's behavior in the context of a stable overall pattern. Particular sequences exemplify the relationship between the "moves" of the family members and their circular, repetitive aspect. Other events are then organized to fit into the pattern in the central hypothesis.

The object relations pattern organizes the data according to thematic repetition and causal relationships rather than the sequential repetition of functionally related interactions. The content of the important themes reflect the significance (in the object relations paradigm) of particular emotional responses to specific kinds of situations, especially those involving loss and separation.

In the object relations paradigm the emphasis on separation issues alerts the therapist to themes which inform the therapist about individual's responses to separation from significant others. Inferences are made about psychic structure depending on how well family members handle separation issues. The overall hypothesis about the shared unconscious assumptions in the family explain the family's extreme reactions (or regression in response) to separation. At the level of the family group one describes these reactions as shared assumptions; at the level of the dyads one describes these reactions in terms of projective identification. Collusion occurs when there is a reciprocal fit between the projective identifications of two intimates.

The family systems paradigm alerts the therapist to the processes of stability and change in the family, how the swings between complementary and symmetrical interactions maintain the overall stability in the family, how individuals' perceptions of their own choices are often limited by either-or alternatives which inhibits the

successful resolution of their relationships dilemmas.

The explanation for the difficulty resolving problems differs in each paradigm. The explanation for the individual's dilemma is a description of the whole set of interrelationships in the family systems paradigm; the explanation for the whole family's dilemma ultimately rests in each individual in the object relations paradigm.

In the dyadic and triadic subgroups there are similarities and differences in the explanation of the problem. In both paradigms the child is viewed as a more or less involuntary but active participant in resolving the problems of the parents. However, the parents or a parent is viewed as using the child to resolve internal problems from the object relations perspective. The daughter is viewed as a means of diverting attention in order to detour a spouse conflict from the family systems perspective. The difference in these analyses is that the problem the daughter is helping to resolve is viewed at different levels from each perspective: the problem is within the parent or parents versus between the parents.

The descriptions and explanations for what occurs in the dyadic interactions is also similar in some ways, but essentially different. The dyadic interactions are considered in terms of projective identification from an object relations perspective. The dyadic interactions are considered in terms of jockeying for relative position in the family systems view.

The central concept of object relations theory, projective identification, organizes events into cycles which are punctuated beginning and ending in the individual. These cycles are linear, unidirectional, causal sequences. For example, because the mother

denies and projects her dependency needs, she induces the child to remain dependent on her. Because the father cannot tolerate his own aggressive feelings, he denies and projects them onto his wife or daughter. These relationships create a cyclic pattern of behavior in which the behavior in the dyad is considered reciprocal: however, the reciprocity of a unidirectional, linear sequence is different from the reciprocity of a circular causal sequence. In the object relations paradigm the wife denies her dependency needs and induces the husband to act more dependent; the husband denies his aggression, and induces the wife to act more aggressive. Contrast this description with the reciprocity in the family systems pattern, in which the wife's show of feeling functions to regulate her husband's expression of criticism, and the husband's criticism functions to regulate his wife's expressiveness. The former describes two simultaneous unidirectional causal chains. The latter describes these events at the level at which these two unidirectional sequences overlap. At this level one is concerned with the function or the effect, of each behavior on other behaviors in a circular causal sequence in which one person's behavior is regulated, modified, or reinforced by the other's.

In a system in which the end state is relatively constant the effect on an event can be said to be its function. This explanation is actually descriptive rather than explanatory. In a recent article in Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought Michael Moore (1980) distinguishes between functional and causal explanations, and tries to clarify the confusion which arises between the concepts motive and function when both connote purpose.

"Functional explanations involve causal laws, but 'in reverse': rather than explaining the heart's beating by reference to its causes a functional explanation explains it by reference to one of its effects (circulation of the blood). The relationship of cause and effect is asserted in such explanations, but we are told what has been caused by the part or process about which we are curious, not what causes it to be or do what it does....Much of the use of functional statements such as that about heartbeats, is not explanatory of the heartbeat at all; the attribution of functions in such statements is often merely a description of the heart or heartbeat that is used in an explanation, the effect... that is called the function does not play the role of a cause of the item to be explained." (pp. 500-501)

"For systems which do in fact tend to return to some end-state despite varying conditions in the environment, it is a legitimate form of explanation of a part or process to cite its function in the maintenance of some larger system. Where there are such regularities, the attribution of functions and explanations in terms of them is appropriate." (p. 502)

"Functional explanations, if they explain an event at all, explain it in neither of the two ways that motives explain human actions: 1) assigning a function to an event is not to render that event intelligible in the same way that a possible motive renders an action intelligible, ... nor does the function an action may serve in any way involve the mind of the actor - he need not believe his action will have the effect called its function, nor need he desire (in any sense) to bring about this effect nor need he have privileged access to or even knowledge of the function of his actions as he does for his own motives, conscious or unconscious." (p. 503)

"Although there is a clear enough distinction between "purpose" used as "motive" and its use as "function", functional explanations are often misunderstood as being motivational in nature." (p. 506)

In the family systems view the function of the daughter's problems is to divert the couple from focusing on their own problems. In the object relations view the daughter is considered a recipient of repressed or denied aspects of the parent's self and object images. The implication in both instances is that the parents ought not to use their daughter to avoid dealing with each other or their own feelings.

The parents are considered responsible for their daughter's current difficulties. In the object relations approach one believes that the parents are unconsciously motivated to use their daughter to avoid something in themselves, and that the daughter colludes with this use of her for the defensive purposes of her parents. This leads the therapist to judge the parents negatively for (albeit unconsciously) hurting their daughter.

The family systems view assumes that the function the daughter serves is to detour the marital conflict, but the parents are not viewed as motivated to create that event. The daughter's symptomatic behavior is viewed as functionally related, or as an effect of the marital detour. Reciprocally, the daughter's behavior might be said to serve the function of perpetuating the marital detour.

The family systems approach assumes that all of the participants are victims of the dance and have little capacity to solve their dilemmas from within the system. If the therapist succeeds in perceiving the dance rather than the individuals, and the circular causality of the system rather than unidirectional causality between individuals, the therapist would not consider anyone to be the perpetrator and anyone to be the receiver or victim. This would support the therapist's efforts not to take sides or judge family members as causing the problems in the family.

When the therapist communicates negative judgements about the parents (from a family systems perspective) he or she establishes a covert coalition with the child, in this case the daughter, which may further exacerbate the family's dilemma. In this family the therapist would create a redundancy in which the mother again feels excluded and

would create a redundancy in which the mother again feels excluded and abandoned emotionally, or one-down in the triad; in order to rebalance or equalize her position she might again try to take charge in each dyadic relationship, which in turn would reinforce the coalitions against her, in a circular causal loop.

In an object relations view individuals are assumed to be responsible for their own behavior, although their choice of action in a situation is limited by their pathology and related defenses. The family systems paradigm describes individuals as responsible for the whole system's behavior, although they might not be capable of generating rules for change from their positions within the system. Both paradigms view individuals as needing a different view of the problem in order to resolve it. The language in which this new view is framed differs depending on the conceptual framework of the therapist. The language of object relations theory addresses the individual's relationships from the point of view of the individual and the dyad, whereas the language of family systems theory assumes that all relationships are part of an interlocking, patterned network, and addresses individual behaviors from the point of view of their function in the pattern.

Concluding Remarks

What differences do these differences make to the clinician practicing family therapy? There are significant implications for the clinician's assumptions about change in the family: what he will consider the greatest leverage point for change, where and how he will attempt to intervene and what he will consider change to be. There are significant implications for the clinician's position in relation to

the family, his attitude toward family member's behavior, whom he includes in treatment, and what he considers significant information in the session.

The object relations clinician will assume that change is most significant at the level of the individual's psychological structure, and that this change occurs very slowly through analyzing the relationships between family members and their relationships to the therapist. Change is considered genuine only if it affects the individual's internal organization.

The family systems clinician will assume that change is most significant and most resistant at the level of the pattern which interlocks the behavior of all the involved family members. He looks for a point of leverage in the relationships between the relationships in the family. He attempts to unbalance the family system in order to allow new information and spontaneous behavior to occur. Change is considered genuine only when a new pattern begins to coevolve which makes symptomatic behavior unnecessary in the whole family organization.

The family systems clinician's paradigm places him in a position outside the family organization; this helps him to avoid the pulls of a heated emotional field. He views the individuals' statements and actions as moves. The paradigm does not foster empathy with each individual's subjective experience. However, it does encourage the therapist to view each person's behavior as adaptive in the context of the recurring pattern in the family.

The object relations paradigm places the clinician in a position inside the family by facilitating his capacity to empathize with the defensive needs of the individual. The clinician uses his own feelings

and fantasies in response to family members, and develops an emotional relationship to family members. In this context he attempts to remain individuated in order to foster the further individuation of each of the family members. He views symptomatic behavior as the expression of a particular defensive constellation rather than primarily as a response to a specific situation, or as part of a coevolving pattern.

The family systems therapist will include in the treatment those family members who appear involved in maintaining the recurrent family pattern. He will want information about each person's way of perpetuating the pattern. In order to collect that information he will look for a cycle which recurs. He may ask questions about who cues whom to do what, and when someone does something. He attempts to enlarge his view of the current context of events. He wants to find out what occurs before and after those events which the family emphasizes in order to understand the effects of certain actions in the whole family.

The object relations therapist will include in treatment those members of the family who are directly involved with the symptomatic member. He will be most interested in the family's collusive behavior as it reflects the needs of individual family members. He considers most significant information about what events mean to people; he attempts to infer their unconscious assumptions and unacknowledged feelings from what they say. He attempts to explain current events in the context of past events in a way which makes them more acceptable and understandable to family members. He is especially interested in helping each person to accept his own feelings and discover his own intentions. His goal is to help each family member integrate

previously disowned aspects of themselves, in order to allow the possibility of true individuation by making collusive processes such as projective identification unnecessary.

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