

INTERGENERATIONAL DYNAMICS OF ADULT OFFSPRING
LIVING IN THE PARENTAL HOME

by

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to contribute to a base of information about adult offspring who reside in the parental home, with particular emphasis on intergenerational relationships. The variables investigated included intimacy with parents, individuation from family of origin, triangulation, intimidation, and personal authority. These were selected to provide a theoretical basis for an understanding of the relational dynamics within the parent-adult child household and of differentiation of the adult offspring in the study.

Sixty-six adults living in their parents' homes participated in the study. Each completed five subscales from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) and a demographic questionnaire.

Demographic results indicated that moving home after a separation or divorce was not prevalent, even to receive assistance with child care. A greater proportion of females

than males lived at home during the ages of 22-29, with proportions of females growing smaller until the ages of 40-45, when the ratio became 50-50. Fewer than half of the respondents paid for rent and household expenses regularly, even with over 80% employed full time and over 68% earning \$10,000.00 or more annually.

Multivariate analyses revealed that these adult children reported significant degrees of intimacy and personal authority under conditions of satisfaction with the living arrangement, as well as significant levels of fusion in conjunction with both satisfaction and age being over forty. Intimidation was significantly less with those who have resided at home two to seven years, and greater with those who have lived in the home only one year.

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my father, the late William Howard Whitlow (1904-1958), whose love, humor, and faith in my abilities have carried strongly for thirty years.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Demographic research has shown that more adult offspring are remaining in or returning to the parental home than has been the case in the recent past (Glick & Lin, 1986; Young, 1984). How this affects relationships is not clear, however. Although there has been a plethora of popular media attention given to this topic, there has to date been little actual research conducted to explore the relational dynamics of adult children who live in their parents' homes.

The research which has been conducted has been mainly demographic (Glick & Lin, 1986; Young, 1984). A small, non-representative sample of parents of the young adults was surveyed by Clemens and Axelson (1985), and was found to be experiencing a variety of conflicts in both parent-child relationships and in the parents' marital relationship. This preliminary study raised questions regarding the function of sharing living quarters and the potential effects on both individual and family development. Other recent research (Suitor & Pillemer, 1987) has indicated little conflict reported by either parents or adult children in this living arrangement. However, this study relied only on reports of conflict (apparently without defining or exemplifying the term) rather than relational dynamics.

Other related research deals with different aspects of this living arrangement, such as economic conditions (high unemployment rates, underemployment, and high cost of living), later age of marriage, and the earlier adolescent issues of identity and separation (Anderson & Fleming, in press; Fleming & Anderson, 1986; Moore & Hotch, 1983; Rashkis & Rashkis, 1981).

Popular media have given adult children in the home the most attention during the 1980's. Television talk shows (Donahue, 1986), articles in both large and smaller circulation newspapers (New York Times, 1986; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 1987), and periodicals geared to readers encompassing a wide range of interests, such as Money, Mademoiselle, Time, and Catholic, have all published articles about adult children in the parental home. In addition, books dealing partially or entirely with the topic have been published, including such titles as The Postponed Generation (Littwin, 1986), Cutting Loose (Halpern, 1976), Coming Home (Ginandes, 1976), and Making Peace with Your Parents (Bloomfield, 1983).

The works mentioned above have typically been directed at a general, popular readership. They appear to fall into three categories: (1) works written by professional writers, using clinicians as frequent references; (2) works authored by non-clinicians, based partially or entirely on their

personal experiences; and (3) works written by clinicians, based on their clinical (and sometimes personal) experience. What all of these have in common is a basis in theory, opinion, or experience, and not in research. All sources agree that the living-at-home practice is current and fairly widespread. Some approach the situation from a causal, non-relational perspective; for example, young adults are more concerned with short-term goals--a new car, new clothing, entertainment--rather than living independently. Others assert that parents "hold on" to avoid an anticipated empty-nest loneliness, or that young adults stay on to avoid adult responsibilities. Still others argue that this is a viable alternative for healthy families and that criticism is unwarranted.

The purpose of this research is to establish a reliable base of information about adult offspring living with parents. The research will determine if there are measurable differences in autonomy and parent-adult child relationships which may be explained by specific variables within the group being surveyed.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on a multigenerational perspective, including both theoretical and therapeutic aspects (Bowen, 1978; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973; Framo, 1981; Williamson, 1981). According to the multigenerational

view, current individual, marital, and family behaviors result from learned behavioral patterns that have been passed from previous generations.

Much of this work has been synthesized and extended to what is called an intergenerational perspective (Bray, Harvey, & Williamson, 1986; Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a; Harvey & Bray, 1985; Williamson, 1981, 1982a, b; Williamson & Bray, 1985, 1986). Whereas multigenerational theorists recommend assessing from 3 to 10 generations to better understand current behaviors, intergenerational theorists focus on only two generations: adults in the first three decades of adult life and their parents. This narrower focus identifies the current behavior patterns which are causing difficulties and allows, in many cases, the individuals involved to change patterns of relationships to those which are healthier and more functional.

The intergenerational model identifies two influences on family function and development: family life cycle events and multigenerational family patterns. It focuses on the process of development across the generations and on the ways that families teach or transmit interactional and emotional patterns (Williamson & Bray, 1986).

Multigenerational Family Patterns

The key family patterns to be assessed, according to multigenerational family theorists, are individuation,

fusion, triangulation, covert loyalties, unresolved grief reactions, intimacy, and personal authority. These patterns are formed through a mixture of overt and covert expectations and attributions about certain family members, which then become behavior patterns by reinforcement, social learning and modeling (Bandura, 1977; Williamson & Bray, 1986).

Individuation (differentiation of self) refers to two processes. One occurs with individuals, and the other between people and their relationships with others (Bowen, 1978; Kerr, 1981, 1984). The first, which this writer terms intra-individuation, refers to the degree to which one is able to: discriminate between, and have control over, one's thoughts and emotions; respect one's own judgement in deciding upon action; and take responsibility for those actions (Bray & Williamson, 1987). The second, which could be termed inter-individuation, concerns the degree to which a person behaves autonomously and can function optimally around significant others while neither feeling responsible for them nor controlled or impaired by them. In families, differentiation allows the members to behave independently and autonomously, even in the face of anxiety and stress. These families allow and promote the growth and health of all members, with no one needing to take a sacrificial role (Bray & Williamson, 1987).

Fusion is the polar opposite of individuation, referring

to relationships which are emotionally enmeshed and over-dependent. Boundaries tend to merge and become blurred (Guerin & Guerin, 1976; Karpel, 1976). Individuals who are fused do not have a clear sense of self, and function in dependent, emotionally reactive, often near-automatic and irrational ways. They are likely to become symptomatic under stress. In families, fusion is exhibited when members attempt to think, feel, or function for each other. The level of fusion reflects the degree of unresolved emotional attachment. As with individuals, high levels of family fusion generally result in some members being symptomatic or impaired in some way (Bray & Williamson, 1987).

Emotional cut-off is the other extreme in dealing with fusion. It involves limiting contact with the family of origin or emotional distancing, as through preoccupation or withdrawal. These people tend to "overinvest" in current relationships (Kerr, 1981, 1984).

The basic level of family fusion or differentiation may be measured in terms of its most undifferentiated member (Bray & Williamson, 1987). Although a member may appear to be quite individuated, stress may be a catalyst to the appearance of symptomatic behavior.

One reaction to stress and fusion is the formation of triangles. Bowen (1978) suggested that the fusion inherent in dyads (two-person systems) creates an instability,

resolution of which is attempted by bringing in a third person. The triangle experiences tension because two members are generally interacting more closely, with the third member being "out." This dynamic process usually changes constantly, so that all members experience being both "in" and "out" at different times. When the interactions get stuck, however, roles do not change and the triangle becomes pathological (Bowen, 1978).

Intimacy has been described as a close relationship with another while clear boundaries of identity are maintained (Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, & Phillips, 1976; Williamson, 1982b). Having four aspects--trust, love-fondness, self-disclosure, and commitment (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a)--intimacy can be initiated or terminated at the individual's discretion. Although it shares some characteristics of fusion, intimacy differs in the individuation aspects of being voluntary and having boundaries.

The concept of covert or invisible loyalties has been advanced by Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973). According to this theory, loyalty and fairness to not only parents but also to the extended family of origin provide the premise for behavior in relationships. This loyalty develops through the generations and involves a certain amount of trust and commitment to a relationship. Invisible loyalties operate as

mandates on an unconscious level, and thereby mold or direct individual behavior; therefore "...every move toward emotional maturation represents an implicit threat of disloyalty to the system" (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973). An example would be the young adult who continually enters unfulfilling relationships because a successful relationship would be perceived as disloyal to his/her own parents' unfulfilling marriage.

The fairness aspect is addressed in terms of "multigenerational accounts of justice." For example, a delinquent boy "may be expected in wishful fantasy to repay all his parents' suffered losses through punishing society" (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973).

These loyalties operate covertly (thus "invisible"). The covert nature often, when expressed, appears as dysfunction. Split loyalties also involve loyalty and fairness, but they appear in triangulated relationships in which an individual's loyalty to one person occurs only at the expense of loyalty to the other (Bray & Williamson, 1987).

Family Life Cycle

The second process in multigenerational theory involves both predictable and unpredictable occurrences during the family life cycle (Carter & McGoldrick, 1980). The normal stages and sequences that families experience compose the

predictable aspect. Even the predictable events are often stressful because they require transitions in each member's roles and relationships. Although these events are mostly predictable, the manner in which different families progress through these transitions varies greatly. The events which are unpredictable often produce great stress because of their very unpredictability and their uncontrollable aspect (as wars, sudden illness or death).

Predictable and unpredictable events produce stress on the family. It is understandable that when both types of events occur in tandem, the anxiety is likely to be greater. In any event, these occurrences often activate fused relationships and/or unresolved emotional issues in families. Because transitional periods (as early marriage or children leaving the nest) are especially stressful, symptoms are more likely to be exhibited at these times. Bowen (1978) describes three ways symptoms are expressed. Marital conflict may be experienced, a spouse may become in some way dysfunctional, or one or more children may exhibit dysfunction due to triangling. Spousal or child dysfunction may be apparent as physical illness, psychological and/or social dysfunction. The symptoms express a family's response to stress in view of the basic level of differentiation and their covert loyalties. A more differentiated family can tolerate greater stress before becoming symptomatic and will

also recuperate more quickly after a stressful occurrence.

Bray and Williamson (1987) emphasize that the family members' perception of events and relationships (rather than "what really happened") is the most important factor to consider in developing an understanding of symptomatic families. This is important to consider in doing research, because the internal perceptions are the "truths" by which individuals and families operate. They are also the focal points for intervention, so these perceptions are the important things to measure in research.

Intergenerational Framework and Relativity to the Study

Because the intergenerational framework deals more specifically with the developmental and transitional issues involving all family members, it is appropriate to apply to this study. It focuses directly on the clinical-relational problems described by family members. The Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a, b) was developed with a firm basis of intergenerational theory. It specifically examines, based on responses from individual family members, the following dynamics:

- 1) Spousal Intimacy
- 2) Spousal Fusion/Individuation
- 3) Nuclear Family Triangulation
- 4) Intergenerational Intimacy

- 5) Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation
- 6) Intergenerational Triangulation
- 7) Intergenerational Intimidation
- 8) Personal Authority

All of these issues are important in adult development, wherever the adults reside. It is duly noted that these issues are not limited to adults in the parental home; yet a basic question has yet to be addressed: Are there developmental/ individuation differences among adults living at home? With this question in mind, five subscales from the PAFS-Q were used: Personal Authority and the four Intergenerational measures. The Nuclear Family and Spousal subscales were deleted because they address the issues which pertain to specific relationships within the family of procreation, which is not being examined in this study. The five subscales which were used are:

Intergenerational Intimacy
Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation
Intergenerational Triangulation
Intergenerational Intimidation
Personal Authority

Research Questions

The general research questions addressed involve the intergenerational dynamics and personal authority of adult children who are residing in the parental home, and how these

dynamics may be affected by other specific variables. The scores on the PAFS-Q subscales serve as dependent variables, with responses to eight of the questions on the separate questionnaire being the independent variables. The independent variables and the research questions they address are discussed in the following paragraphs.

1. **SATISFACTION:** Intergenerational theory suggests that general satisfaction is more likely when a person experiences less intimidation, fusion, and triangulation with his family of origin, and more intimacy and personal authority. The question here is specific and two-fold:

Are scores on the five PAFS-Q scales significantly different for those who report varying degrees of satisfaction with living in the parental home?

Are scores on the PAFS-Q scales significantly different for those who report varying degrees of perceived parental satisfaction with the living arrangement?

(Appendix A, questions 5 & 6).

2. **PARENTAL MARITAL STATUS:** Theory expounded by intergenerationalists states that parent-child relationships influence the issues of intimacy, fusion, triangulation, intimidation, and personal authority. The issue of marital status of parents has not been addressed in this light. The question raised here is:

Do the five PAFS-Q subscale scores differ significantly

for those who live with a single parent vs. married parents?

(Appendix A, question 1).

3. RETURNING VS. REMAINING HOME/LENGTH OF TIME AT HOME:

Research has indicated that making a physical move from home is an indicator of beginning individuation (Anderson & Fleming, 1986a). The actual length of time at home has not been addressed by either research or theory in terms of intergenerational relationships or personal authority. These issues are examined in the two-fold question:

Do PAFS-Q scores differ significantly for those who have returned home vs. those who have remained home?

Do PAFS-Q scores differ significantly for those who report varying lengths of time at home?

(Appendix A, questions 2 & 3).

4. AGE: Intergenerational theory, as described by PAFS-Q developers, suggests that ages 30-45 are the most important years in resolving issues of individuation and intergenerational relationship difficulties. This study involves an extension of that age group by examining those between ages 22 and 45. The research question examining this is:

Do PAFS-Q scores differ significantly for those of varying ages?

(Appendix C, question 1).

5. GENDER: Intergenerational theory does not

distinguish between the sexes on interfamilial relationships.

The question is:

Are there significant differences on PAFS-Q subscale scores for males vs. females?

(Appendix C, question 2).

6. RACE: Intergenerational theory indicates that race does not influence intergenerational relationships. This question will address that issue within the context of living in the parental home:

Do PAFS-Q subscale scores differ significantly according to race?

(Appendix C, question 6).

Remaining research questions are descriptive in nature, and are not used to explain or predict, but to describe the sample. (Appendix A, question 4; Appendix C, questions 3, 4, 5, 7, & 8).

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Demographic Research

The most definitive research on adult offspring living in the parental home has been demographic, mostly through population studies. In spite of young adults being one of the two groups of cohorts most likely to be living alone (Richards, White, & Tsui, 1987), the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1969, 1984) reports that the number of families with one adult child 25 years of age or older increased 58.3 percent between 1968 and 1983, while families with two adult children in the same age range increased 64.8 percent during the same fifteen-year period. The tendency of more adult children to choose to live with their parents was identified as a social trend by Saluter (1983). Heer, Hodge, and Felson (1985) soon added more time points and adjusted for residence of college students. Young (1984), a housing specialist for the Census Bureau, explains that the economy is largely to blame for the 1982-1983 decrease in young Americans establishing their own homes, the lowest rate since the 1950's. A researcher for a private research organization, Carliner (1984) reports that these young adults are staying home longer than in earlier decades, and this group includes substantial numbers up to the ages of 35 and 40. Shehan, Berardo, and Berardo (1983) also provide

evidence of this increase, citing job scarcity and higher divorce rates as a primary cause. Eversley (1983) echoes the same trend in Great Britain, blaming economic depression, and researchers in Japan note young adults are living with their parents more than in the past (Asahi, 1988).

Although handicapping conditions certainly would account for some young adults remaining in the home, there has been no corresponding rise in these conditions to account for the overall increase. Chemical dependency (including alcohol and other drugs) has been long identified as a factor in remaining in the parental home. Vaillant (1966) discovered that a full 90 percent of addictive 22-year-olds were still living with their mothers. Noone and Reddig (1976) report that 72.5 percent of addicted young adults had lived with their families within the year previous to the study. Sixty-six percent of addicts who averaged 28 years of age either lived with or saw their mothers daily, according to research by Stanton, et al (1978).

There has been an increase in divorced men and women (454,000) and married couples (over 300,000) living with parents in 1980 (Glick, 1986), and a decrease in lone mothers with young children maintaining separate residences (Glick, 1984). Goldscheider and DaVanzo (1985) note that single males are the most likely group to reside with

parents, and the next most likely group are young adults (married or not) who are themselves parents. Although numerous, the married or formerly married group (age 18-29) does not account for the overall increase. The U.S. Census Bureau (1980) reports that 94 percent of persons in the 18-29 age group living with parents or other relatives had never been married.

Relational Research

Fleming and Anderson (1986) used the PAFS-Q subscales Intergenerational Fusion and Intergenerational Triangulation with 126 college students ranging in age from 18 to 23, and measured how these factors correlated with personal adjustment. They found significant correlations between less fusion and greater self-esteem ($r = -.33$, $p < .001$), mastery ($r = -.51$, $p < .001$), less college maladjustment ($r = -.47$, $p < .001$), and fewer number of reported health problems ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$). There were also significant relationships between less triangulation and greater self-esteem ($r = -.17$, $p < .05$) and mastery ($r = -.23$, $p < .01$).

Shaver's (1979) study of loneliness revealed that adults living with their parents reported the greatest degree of loneliness, more than single adults living alone. Goldscheider and Waite (1987) support this with their findings that single young adults discover more options outside of the family, and further speculate that women may

gain more from independent living than men. Compared to men, women living alone appear to be more integrated in social networks and apparently have more protection from the risks (including mortality) associated with isolation (Kobrin & Hendershot, 1977).

Teyber (1983) studied 72 18-year old male college freshmen and found high correlations existing for failure of academic subjects, external locus of control, and primary bond in the family other than mother-father (in most of these cases, the primary bond was mother-son). Conversely, there was a high correlation among passing academics, internal locus of control, and mother-father primary bond. Kenny (1987) examined parental attachment in college freshmen and discovered that the quality of parental relationship was the best single predictor of assertive behavior. Parents who were available, accepting, respectful of individual differences, and encouraging of their child's independence produced more assertive students who report they enjoy interacting with their parents and seek parental help without difficulty, when necessary.

Parents whose children have moved out of the home have less stress, get more satisfaction out of life, and "seem to be the group with the best mental health of all," according to a study by Edmondson (1987). Other empty-nest studies confirm that this period is characterized by easing tensions

and increasing marital and family satisfaction (Axelson, 1960; Deutscher, 1964; Glenn, 1975; Harkins, 1978; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Petranek, 1970; Radloff, 1980; Rollins & Cannon, 1974; Spanier, Lewis, & Cole, 1975).

In a preliminary study, Clemens (now Seagle) and Axelson (1985) found several relationship difficulties. Of parents of adult children aged 22 and older who still lived at home, 80 percent expressed that they had not planned to have the child in the home at this time. Noteworthy negative effects on the marital relationship were reported by 47.6 percent of the married-parent respondents. When the sample was broadened to include adult children as young as 18, 42.4 percent of parents reported serious conflicts with a resident child. Apparently, the late teenage years were not as stressful to the parents as the years past 22, when most parents expected adult children to be on their own.

In a sample of 146 Boston area respondents, parents of adult children (age 18 and older) still living at home reported little conflict with their adult offspring. However, Suitor and Pillemer's (1987) findings did reveal that the primary variable explaining marital conflict in the sample was parent-child conflict. Earlier studies by the same researchers indicate that age of the adult child is strongly related to parent-child conflict (Suitor & Pillemer, 1986). It is questionable whether this study

could be readily generalized to the entire population because of being representative of a large metropolitan area, which could be expected to include a large number of ethnic groups who, as previously noted, often have different expectations for adult offspring. Another difficulty, shared with some other studies reported, is the use of the age 18 as the lower age studied. Results could be skewed by inclusion of 18 to 22 year olds who live in college dormitories (yet are counted as residing with parents for census data) or full-time students or part-time students who are also employed. Living at home while in college is a viable option for many students, many of whom could not afford a college education otherwise. One surmises that this could be a frequent occurrence in the Boston area, with a large number of post-high school institutions.

In a series of studies among college students, Moore and Hotch (1981, 1982, 1983) attempted to identify what constitutes the best leaving-home indicators. Although financial independence first appeared to be the greatest factor, subsequent results clearly indicate that a sense of personal control (making own decisions, less parental control, necessity of doing things for self now, and feeling mature enough) is the most important indicator. Less parental control implies relationships which are neither fused, triangulated, nor intimidating. Students also

responded that the most negative indicator of successful separation was emotional dissociation (Moore & Hotch, 1981, 1982).

Anderson and Fleming (1986a) attempted to evaluate whether the four highest indicators reported by Moore and Hotch (1981, 1982, 1983) could be used to predict level of ego identity and college adjustment. The four predictors were personal control, economic independence, emotional attachment-dissociation, and separate residence. Using multiple regression analyses, the four predictors were found to be highly significant with both ego identity and college adjustment variables. It was further noted that emotional attachment-dissociation accounted for less variance than the other predictors, suggesting that personal control and physical separateness needs outweigh needs for maintaining positive, supportive relationships with parents.

Using correlational and multiple regression analyses, Anderson and Fleming (1986b) attempted to measure the relationship between ego identity and individuation from family. Two subscales from the PAFS-Q were used to measure individuation: Intergenerational Fusion and Intergenerational Triangulation. In general, the results were highly significant and support the hypothesis that late adolescents' identity development is related to

transactional processes between the adolescent and the family system.

Clinical Works

A number of works have been authored by clinicians, either focusing entirely or partially on the problematic aspects of leaving home. Premiere among these works is Haley's Leaving Home (1980). His focus begins much earlier, examining both the failure of the adolescent to accomplish the necessary developmental tasks (Erikson, 1968) in order to be able to leave home and the family dynamics which may contribute to this failure. Echoing theories of Bowen (1978) and Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973), Haley suggests that the need to maintain the family "stability" is more important to these adolescents than their own growth and development. Fearing what would happen if parents focused on their own marital issues, the adolescent keeps parents actively and intensely involved with his/her own difficulties, ranging from apathy and failure in school to drug addiction, mental illness, and criminality. This is one way of remaining triangulated. Haley further attributes some of the leaving-home difficulty to the lack of a formal ritual in American culture to mark a distinct time that behaviors of both parents and offspring must change in expected and prescribed ways (Goleman, 1980). This is supported by van Gennep (1960) in The Rites of Passage, in which he describes how various

cultures recognize the child as a mature adult by ritualizing separation from the family of origin.

In their work, Family Connections (1982), Maslow and Duggan identify lack of resolution in family relationships as a cause of separation difficulty. They admonish parents to act as role models, to encourage children to make mistakes and learn from them, and to deal directly with their own anxieties about the leaving-home transition.

Halpern (1976), a clinical psychologist, focuses on the young adult as having the primary responsibility to make the move away from home successful. He points out that much of the difficulty results from double-bind messages from parents' "grow up/don't grow up" injunctions.

Ginandes (1976) states that parents who can allow their children to separate, even when deeply involved in trouble of their own, are committing an act of genuine giving. These parents have learned to get their own needs met elsewhere rather than expecting their children to fulfill those needs.

In a somewhat different vein, Bloomfield (1983) addresses specific ways to resolve relationship difficulties with parents. Speaking directly to adult offspring, he offers insight and understanding based on his own struggle to resolve these issues. A practicing psychiatrist, he outlines various therapeutic exercises to perform in a

prescribed sequence, with great detail and caution. These are aimed toward the general population, whether living in the parental home or not.

Wechter (1983) speaks of the separation difficulties she observes between hospitalized (psychiatric) young adults and their parents. She describes how her personal difficulties with separation and individuation from her family of origin hampered her progress with her patients and their families. She stresses the importance of therapists resolving their own similar issues before being able to intervene successfully.

From their studies of older adults, Mancini and Bliezner (1985) offer advice to medical professionals who are often asked to counsel patients about issues of adult children currently living in the home or returning to the home. Again, a focus on the relationship is primary, along with such instrumental issues as physical or financial need.

Basing therapeutic intervention on Haley's (1980) Leaving Home model, Perrotta (1986) extends the model to the later stages of treatment, after the family has made some progress but before therapy is complete. He uses a case study to exemplify how family motivation may wane later in the course of therapy and how hierarchy problems may resurface. He offers both direct and indirect strategies for maintaining gains and continuing progress in therapy

until young adults and their families can successfully accomplish the separation task.

The Popular Media

The amount of attention focused on adult offspring in the parental home by the popular media cannot be ignored. This issue has received continual attention since the early 1980's in popular magazines, newspapers, and television talk shows. Many of these works give a balanced perspective, while others have a definite slant in the direction of being either "pro" or "con" regarding the advisability of adult children living in the home. Others provide information without a blanket endorsement for either type of living arrangement.

Donahue (1986), a popular television talk show which often focuses on controversial topics, addressed this issue on a broadcast in which guests were parents and adult offspring, and Donald Bloch, Ph.D., director of the Ackerman Institute for Family Therapy in New York. The importance of this broadcast was the national attention it gave to this issue, and the emotionality it evoked.

Newsweek focused on college students living at home not by choice, but because of dorm shortages in many universities (Tsiantar, 1986). People interviewed Susan Littwin (1986), the author of a book describing the delayed maturity of young adults in our culture today. Littwin

referred to psychiatrist and prize-winning author Robert Coles to help explain the phenomenon: his theory of entitlement suggests that young adults are not prepared from the early years to face the challenge of having to work or struggle to make gains in life; rather, like nobility and aristocracy, they feel entitled to the benefits with minimal effort on their part (Adelson, 1986).

A number of works have given attention to specific financial reasons for living with parents (Time [Cary, 1980; Toufexis, 1987] Black Enterprise [Campbell, 1982], Money [Azzarone, 1980], Newsweek [Langway, 1980]). They focus on the economy (unemployment and low wages and salaries) as a primary reason for the influx of adult offspring into the parental home. Taking this at face value, these articles offer advice on how to make the situation easier for everyone. Although the advice is valid (for example, allowing others in the household their freedom, dealing with each other in an adult, respectful manner), the issue is not addressed of how really necessary it is to remain so dependent on the family. Many interviewees cited the opportunity to buy new cars, more clothing, have more money for personal interests and entertainment and fewer instrumental responsibilities.

Other popular works have examined relational issues as being of the greatest importance in living at home or

leaving (Woman's Day [Eberle, 1987], McCall's [Rooney, 1980], Glamour [Billings, 1979; Disario, 1982], Good Housekeeping [Anonymous, 1982], Mademoiselle [Behan, 1983; Malinovich, 1979; Gallagher, 1980])). They address such issues as parental overprotection and guilt, separation anxiety on the part of both parents and offspring, and the felt need to come home to either help solve parents' problems or to better resolve adult-child relationships.

Newspapers have addressed the issue in news stories and features (Ommerman, 1983; Lindsey, 1984; O'Neill, 1988), lifestyle features (Slade, 1985; Stewart, 1987), and editorial features (Goodman, 1986; Buchwald, 1988). These, much like articles in other popular media, focus on issues from the economy to relationships, and usually offer advice on how to either cope or successfully leave.

Conclusions

Despite the large volume of literature about adult offspring in the parental home, there has been, as previously stated, very little research to investigate how intergenerational theory is actually enacted. This study is an attempt to add to that aspect of current information.

Chapter III

Research Methodology

Sample

The sample for this study included 66 adults from ages 22-45 who were currently residing in the parental home. Subjects included both those who had returned home and had resided there for one year or more as well as those who had never left home. Adult children who lived with one parent or both parents were included. Only adults 22 years of age and older were surveyed, to avoid the large cohort of college students.

The sample was non-random and non-representative. The sample included volunteers who had attended Mental Health Association workshops dealing with adult children in the home, had responded to a newspaper feature story (O'Neill, 1988), and had heard of the research through acquaintances.

Questions used to describe the sample included those which examined education, marital status, parenthood status, employment, income, and financial dependence. Other descriptive questions functioned as independent variables: race, gender, age, number of years living at home, returning vs. remaining home, and parental marital status (Appendix A & Appendix C).

Instruments

The Personal Authority in the Family System

Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) is a self-report instrument which, using intergenerational family theory, assesses important relationships in the three-generational family system (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a, b). This study utilizes five of the eight scales, deleting family of procreation and spousal scales to focus on the two-generation adult child-parents system. Scales selected are: Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation, Intergenerational Triangulation, Intergenerational Intimacy, Intergenerational Intimidation, and Personal Authority.

Items for the PAFS-Q were developed from relevant literature, clinical experience, and previously developed measures. All items are measured on a 5-point scale.

Reliability studies on the initial versions of the PAFS-Q yielded acceptable ranges. In studies with non-clinical adults, internal consistency, coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951), yielded mean coefficients of .90 and .89 at Time 1 and Time 2, respectively. Further studies revealed an acceptable coefficient range of .74 to .96 (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a).

Test-retest reliability estimates calculated ranged from .55 to .95, with a mean test-retest reliability of .74. All reliabilities were within an acceptable range (Nunnally, 1976), with the exception of the Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation scale. Anecdotal evidence suggests that

actually taking this scale produces an intervention which changes perceptions of parents. It is likely that this phenomenon, rather than mood swings, accounts for the changes which produce the low test-retest reliability on this scale (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a).

Internal consistency was also measured using a clinical sample. The subjects completed the PAFS-Q following completion of therapy. Reliability coefficients were all within an acceptable range, with coefficients from .75 to .96 (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984b).

Content validity was evaluated by participants in a "Transgenerational Family Therapy" course and a group of mental health professionals with both training and personal therapy experience in intergenerational therapy. Each item was examined in terms of its content and face validity in evaluating the relevant concepts and behaviors. Items were transferred to other scales, re-worded, or dropped based on these recommendations (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984b).

Concurrent validity was assessed by correlating responses on the PAFS-Q, the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES-I; Olson, Bell, & Portner, 1978), and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976). Results indicated that the Adaptability scale of FACES-I and the PAFS-Q scales measure different things, based on their low correlations. Significant correlations were found

between the FACES-I Cohesion scale and the PAFS-Q Intergenerational Intimacy scale. Correlations between the PAFS-Q scales and the Social Desirability scale of the FACES-I scale were generally low, indicating that people did not tend to answer the scales in a manner perceived as socially desirable. The exceptions to this are Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation and Intergenerational Intimacy scales, both of which correlated higher than .30 with the Social Desirability scale. The authors suggest that these correlations be considered in the interpretation of these scales, and that researchers and practitioners be aware that respondents appear to have a tendency to respond in ways they consider to be more socially acceptable or desirable (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a).

Several of the PAFS-Q scales correlated with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). While not large, the correlations were significant and all in the expected direction. Greater dyadic adjustment correlated with more intimacy, individuation and less triangulation (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a).

Further studies involved correlating the PAFS-Q with the FACES-II (Olson, Portner, & Bell, 1982), the DAS, and the Symptom Index (Sheely, 1982) to assess concurrent validity in a clinical sample. The intergenerational scales did not correlate highly with the DAS, as had been seen in

the previous study (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984b).

The only substantial correlations between the PAFS-Q and the family-of-origin FACES-II were between the Cohesion scale and the Intergenerational Intimacy and Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation scales. More cohesion correlated positively with more intimacy and individuation. Most of the PAFS-Q scales correlated significantly (negatively) with the Symptom Index. This indicates that fewer physical and psychomatic symptoms and stresses correlated with more individuation, intimacy, and personal authority, and less intimidation and triangulation (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984b).

Construct validity was measured by factor analysis, in a sample of 400 non-clinical adults. All of the PAFS-Q scales (except for Nuclear Family Triangulation, which was omitted from the study because of the smaller number of participants who had children) loaded on the corresponding factors. A second factor analysis was employed using the smaller number of subjects who completed the Nuclear Family Triangulation scale (n=244). That scale loaded on the corresponding factor, and the remaining pattern of the analysis was similar to the first analysis (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a).

A second-order factor analysis was performed on the factor scores from the previous analyses. Eigenvalues

greater than one appeared in three higher-order factors. The first higher-order factor contained the Intergenerational Individuation factor, Intergenerational Intimacy factor, and the Personal Authority factor. The Intergenerational Intimidation factor, the Spousal Fusion factor (not used in this study), and the Intergenerational Triangulation factor loaded on the second higher-order factor. The third higher order factor included the remaining two factors, neither of which are used in this study (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a).

Use of the PAFS-Q in the Study

The five subscales on the PAFS-Q which will be used in the study are as follows:

Intergenerational Intimacy--Items in this subscale assess the degree of intimacy and satisfaction with parents. There are separate items for mother and father.

Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation--Items measure the degree to which a person operates in either a fused or individuated manner with parents.

Intergenerational Triangulation--The items on this subscale measure triangulation between individual and parents.

Intergenerational Intimidation--These items measure the degree to which a person experiences intimidation in relation to one's parents.

Personal Authority--This subscale assesses interactional aspects of "personal authority" (Williamson, 1982b) by reflecting topics of conversation which require maintaining an individuated stance while having an intimate interaction with a parent.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire accompanying the PAFS-Q was composed of 14 questions. Of these, two were non-demographic questions which measure perceptions of satisfaction (Appendix A, questions 5 & 6). They acted as independent variables for the first research question. There were six demographic questions which are considered as independent variables for the remaining five research questions (Appendix A, questions 1, 2, & 3; Appendix C, questions 1, 2, & 6). They included questions on age, gender, race, number of years living at home, returning vs. remaining home, and parents' marital status. The remaining questions were demographic in nature and were used solely to describe the sample in terms of education, financial dependency, marital status, whether subjects themselves are parents, employment, and income (Appendix A, question 4; Appendix C, questions 3, 4, 5, 7, & 8).

Method

The demographic questionnaire (Appendix A & Appendix C), and PAFS-Q (Appendix B) were combined into a booklet and

mailed to the subjects, along with a cover letter (Appendix D). The cover letter explained the purpose of the study. Subjects were offered the opportunity to receive a summary of the results, at their request. The questionnaire packet was mailed to 85 subjects.

After one week, a follow-up telephone call (Appendix E) was made to all who were sent the initial mailing, expressing gratitude for their participation and reminding those who had not returned the surveys do do so. One week later, a letter (Appendix F) with the same information as the telephone call (but with the additional emphasis on the importance of the study) was mailed to all participants. After an additional week, a postcard (Appendix G) was sent to all participants urging them to turn in their responses if they had not done so. All three follow-up messages contained the offer to send a new packet if the original was lost or misplaced.

Data Analysis

Research questions were analyzed by different statistical methods, depending on the question asked. A brief explanation of each analysis follows.

1. SATISFACTION: Satisfaction of the young adult and the perceived satisfaction of their parents concerning the living arrangement was measured by a 5 level response (Appendix A, questions 5 & 6). The first two responses were

collapsed into one "satisfied" category, and the next three responses were collapsed into one "dissatisfied" category, thus reducing responses into two categories. Additionally, the scores for both offspring satisfaction and parental satisfaction were combined into two scores, with the first score indicating that both child and parents are satisfied, and the second indicating that child and/or parents are dissatisfied. The original five responses are important in order to discriminate among those who are ambivalent, and would be likely to choose a response which would not entirely reflect their attitude.

Statistical analysis was done by multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA).

2. PARENTAL MARITAL STATUS: Again, five categories of responses (Appendix A, question 1) were collapsed into two: single parents and parents who have a spouse (whether the spouse is parent or step-parent to the adult child). The five PAFS-Q subscales and these two independent variables were analyzed by multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA).

3. RETURNING HOME VS. REMAINING HOME/LENGTH OF TIME AT HOME: These are actually two related questions (Appendix A, questions 2 & 3). The first has 2 categories of the independent variable (collapsed from three for purposes of accuracy), and was analyzed by MANOVA. The second has three categories of response: one year at home, 2 to 7 years at

home, and over 8 years at home. Analysis of length of time at home was done by MANOVA.

4. AGE: As in length of time at home, age groups were collapsed into three groups. This was done by decade (20's, 30's and 40's), and analyzed by MANOVA (Appendix C, question 1).

5. GENDER: The two categories of this independent variable were analyzed, along with the 5 subscale dependent variable scores, by MANOVA (Appendix C, question 2).

6. RACE: This question (Appendix C, question 6) has three categories of response which were to be collapsed into two (white and non-white), depending on response. This was not analyzed because of a low number (n=1) of non-white respondents.

Descriptive Data Analysis

Descriptive data gathered was analyzed by various methods, including frequencies, percentages, means, and ranges.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

Of the 85 surveys mailed, a total of 69 responses (81%) were received. The first day of returns brought 12 responses (14% of total). By the end of the first week, 29 responses (34%) had been returned. The second week, after the telephone follow-up, brought 31 additional responses for a total of 60 (70.6%).

The telephone follow-up reached 45 respondents directly. Messages were left with family members of four subjects, and seven respondents were not reached at all. Two of these had no telephone, and the remaining five yielded no answer to calls placed at three different times over two days. One subject related his ineligibility due to having moved away from the parental home a few weeks previous to the study. Another subject stated unwillingness to complete the questionnaire.

After the letter and postcard follow-ups, another nine questionnaires were returned. This accounts for 71 of the original questionnaires, leaving only 14 (16.5%) not returned or accounted for.

Of the 69 surveys returned, three were judged to be unusable. Two of these were not completely filled out, and one contained the explanation that living at home had never been a matter of choice due to the respondent's physically

handicapping condition. Sixty-six surveys were complete and used in the analysis.

Demographic Data

Geographic Area. All but five subjects represented an area in Virginia within a 60-mile radius of a metropolitan area (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, population = 225,000). Twenty-four (35%) were from this metropolitan area, while nine (13%) represented other metropolitan areas (population ranges from 30,000 to 65,000) within the radius. Thirty-one subjects (45%) resided in smaller towns (under 30,000) and rural areas. The remaining five subjects (7%) were from small localities in South Carolina, North Carolina and West Virginia, and from New York City.

Age. The mean age of the 66 respondents whose surveys were analyzed is 29.01, with a range of 22 to 45. The median age is 27, reflecting that half of the respondents are in the 22-27 age range, while the other half represent a larger range (27-45).

Gender. Forty of the subjects were female (60.6%), while there were 26 males responding (39.4%). Percentages of males and females changed as this was calculated for above and below mean ages. Of the 40 subjects below the mean of 29, 37.5% were male and 62.5% were female. Above the mean of 29, 37.5% were male and 62.5% were female. Above the mean were 45.5% males and 54.5% females. Because

this change was fairly large, percentages were calculated by decade. In the 22-29 age range (n=44), 36.4% were male and 63.6% female. There were 43% males and 57% females in the 30-39 range (n=14). In the 40-45 range (n=8), males and females were equally represented at 50%. This may indicate that more females are likely to remain at home somewhat longer in their early twenties. It is likely that many of these women may move out because of marriage.

Expenses Paid. Fewer than half of the subjects (37.9%, n=25) regularly pay rent, grocery and other household expenses. A full 40.9% (n=27) make no contribution to household expenses at all. The remaining 21.2% (n=14) make irregular contributions to such things as groceries and miscellaneous expenses. Several respondents added that they were responsible for their own personal expenses, although this was not asked in the survey.

Marital Status. Fifty-three subjects (80.3%) have never been married, while four (6.1%) were currently married. Nine (13.6%) were divorced. None is currently separated or widowed. Of the divorced subjects, seven (77.8%) were female. This may reflect the greater economic toll of divorce upon women, leaving them with fewer choices of residence.

Children. Only seven respondents (10.6%) reported having children of their own. Of those, three are females

who have children still living with them, and two are currently married while one has never married. Four subjects (two divorced females, one divorced male and one never-married male) reported having children who do not reside with them.

Education. Most respondents (45.5%, n=30) reported having some post-high school education or training. Those with four-year college degrees comprised 27.3% (n=18), and 7.6% (n=5) reported having a postgraduate college degree. High school graduates composed 18.2% (n=12) of subjects, while one respondent (1.5%) reported never having completed high school.

RACE. Only one non-white subject responded, despite efforts to reach a broad range of respondents. Race was to have been a research variable. This low response in no way indicates that non-whites do not live in the parental home, but rather suggests that random sampling or an ethnic study with vigorous subject recruitment is indicated to get a more accurate picture of non-whites living in the parental home.

Employment. The great majority of subjects (80.3%, n=53) are employed full-time. The remainder includes those who are employed part-time, 20-35 hours per week (9.1%, n=6); those who are part-time employed, fewer than 20 hours weekly (6.1%), n=4); and those who are unemployed (4.5%, n=3), two seeking work and one not. It is possible that

some who are not employed full-time are students, although a question to that effect was not asked.

Income. There were 34 respondents (51.5%) reporting their income to be in the \$10,000 to \$19,999 bracket. Twenty-one respondents (31.8%) fell below that level, with 9.1% (n=6) earning less than \$5,000. Eight subjects (12.1%) reported earning in the \$20,000-29,999 category. Three additional subjects (4.5%) disclosed earnings of \$30,000 or more.

Several widely held and repeated assumptions in both popular and professional literature are not supported by this sampling. It was anticipated that more of the respondents would be divorced or separated because of a focus on this in the popular and clinical literature (Cary, 1980; Glick, 1986; Langway, 1980; Lindsey, 1984; Ommerman, 1983; Rooney, 1980). Whereas it may be that many separated and divorced children return home, they may remain there for only a few months. It is possible that they find it difficult to return to the parental home after having established homes of their own. It may also be that only a few months are usually necessary to get "back on their feet" both financially and emotionally. It may be appropriate to return home for a brief time after a divorce as a healing and gaining support process (Billings, 1979; Disario, 1982).

Much has been mentioned in popular literature about the

necessity of living with parents when young adults with children cannot manage maintaining their own residence (Glick, 1986; Langway, 1980). This is partially based on financial conditions and particularly on the assumption that child care is either not affordable or available. However, this survey found that only three subjects (4.5%) had children with them. Thus, aid in child rearing/child care was not a factor in this study.

Low income, unemployment, and/or underemployment have often been mentioned as reasons for remaining or returning home (Cary, 1980; Disario, 1982; Glick, 1986; Langway, 1980; Lindsey, 1984; Rooney, 1980; Stewart, 1987). Over one-third of the respondents (34.55%, $n=23$) fell below the \$10,000 income level. It is disturbing to associate that figure with the 80.3% who are employed full time. This indicates that underemployment may be associated with remaining/returning home, although that in no way indicates causality. It is also possible that living at home and other associated factors may tend to undermine motivation or necessity for financial achievement.

It is particularly interesting to note that the two subjects who are unemployed and seeking work are both college graduates, as are two of the four employed half-time or less. Only one of the half-time or less group has no more than a high school education. Additionally, of the six

who are employed 20-35 hours per week, two have post-graduate college degrees, one has a four-year college degree, and three have some college or vocational training. The sole subject with less than a high school education is employed full time, with an income in the median bracket. It appears that underemployment/unemployment or lack of motivation may be a greater factor for those with some college education, including baccalaureate and post-graduate degree holders.

The only demographic data from this study supporting current thinking about remaining at home is that of expenses paid. It has been proposed that many adult children take advantage of free housing and such residential benefits as board, laundry, and maintenance (Adelson, 1986; Cary, 1980; Disario, 1982; Glick, 1986; Langway, 1980; Lindsey, 1984; Rooney, 1980; Stewart, 1987). It may be that when parents charge for room and board, adult children do not remain at home as readily. In this sample, only 37.9% paid expenses on a regular basis. There was a slightly higher percentage of dissatisfaction with the living arrangement among those who paid regular expenses (30.4%) than with the overall sample (25.7%). The possibility then comes to mind that dissatisfaction and payment of expenses encourage launching.

Statistical Analysis

Multivariate statistical analyses were used to discern

differences among groups on five PAFS scores. These scores are coded as follows: Intergenerational Intimacy, INTCY; Intergenerational Individuation/Fusion, FUSION; Intergenerational Triangulation, TRIANG; Intergenerational Intimidation, INTIMID; and Personal Authority, PERAUTH.

Independent variables consisted of (1) satisfaction (NEWSAT), (2) parental marital status (PARMAR), (3) returning home vs. remaining home (REMAIN), (4) number of years lived at home (NEWYRS), (5) age of respondent (AGE), (6) gender of respondent (GENDER), and (7) race of respondent (RACE).

Research Question One. The first research question addresses the issue of parent-adult child satisfaction with the child's living in the parental home. The independent variable "satisfaction" had two levels: (1) Satisfied, indicating that both adult child and parents (as perceived by the child) are satisfied with the present living arrangement and are willing to continue as it is with minor or no changes; and (3) Dissatisfied, which indicates that the adult child and/or the parents are dissatisfied with the arrangement and are not willing to continue or are willing to continue only with great changes.

A multivariate test of significance (MANOVA) of the dependent variables (INTCY, FUSION, TRIANG, INTIMID) and PERAUTH) with the independent variable satisfaction was

significant at the .001 level (See Table 1). This indicates a significant difference between the two levels of satisfaction as they affect the PAFS scores as a group.

Table 1

Multivariate Tests of Significance for Satisfaction

<u>Test Name</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Exact F</u>	<u>Hypoth. DF</u>	<u>Error DF</u>	<u>Sig. of F</u>
Pillais	.27733	4.60500	5.00	60.00	.001
Hotellings	.38375	4.60500	5.00	60.00	.001
Wilks	.72267	4.60500	5.00	60.00	.001
Roys	.27733				

Note: F statistics are exact.

Further univariate analysis (ANOVA) revealed that the mean average of the following three dependent variables (INTCY, $p < .001$; FUSION, $p < .01$; and PERAUTH, $p < .05$) were significantly different by higher or lower satisfaction (see Table 2). Satisfaction mean scores were: INTCY--satisfied $\bar{X} = 102.86$, dissatisfied $\bar{X} = 89.88$; FUSION--satisfied $\bar{X} = 29.4$, dissatisfied $\bar{X} = 25.82$; PERAUTH--satisfied = 31.24, dissatisfied $\bar{X} = 27.76$. An analysis of the mean scores of the two levels of satisfaction revealed that greater satisfaction is associated with increased intimacy, increased individuation (decreased fusion), and increased personal authority.

Table 2

Univariate F-Tests for Satisfaction

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Signif of F</u>
INTCY	2124.720	1	2124.720	12.473	0.001
FUSION	165.892	1	165.892	9.085	0.004
TRIANG	150.240	1	150.240	1.553	0.217
INTIMID	142.297	1	142.297	0.533	0.468
PERAUTH	152.865	1	152.865	4.427	0.039

Note: (1,64) D.F.

Multivariate analysis was designed for discerning differences on several independent variables, not for causality. Thus, an appropriate summary statement for this research finding is that it can be generalized that in similar, larger populations, a satisfied score implies greater intimacy, individuation, and personal authority. If any causality is implied, it is likely that the significant dependent variables contribute to the overall satisfaction reported.

Research Question Two. This research question addresses the issue of parental marital status (married or single, and whether it has an effect on the five dependent variables. Parents who were married at the time of the study (either both natural parents or one parent and a step-parent) and single parents were the two levels of the variable among the

dependent variables (see Table 3).

Table 3

Multivariate Tests of Significance: Parental Marital Status

<u>Test Name</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Exact F</u>	<u>Hypoth.DF</u>	<u>Error DF</u>	<u>Sig.of F</u>
Pillais	.04405	.55297	5.00	60.00	.735
Hotellings	.04608	.55297	5.00	60.00	.735
Wilks	.95595	.55297	5.00	60.00	.735
<u>Roys</u>	<u>.04405</u>				

Note: F statistics are exact.

This result indicates that adult children living with a single parent are no more likely to be more intimate, fused, or intimidated than if they live with a married parent; and that living with married parents is no more likely to encourage triangulation than living with a single parent.

It might appear likely that living with a single parent would present more opportunity for intimacy, fusion, or intimidation because of the potential greater contact and interdependency between the child/parent dyad. It might also be reasonable to expect more opportunity for triangulation to occur when the adult child lives with a married parent, particularly if the marriage is turbulent. Although intergenerational theory does not attend specifically to marital status of parents, it does describe how similar conditions contribute to both positive and negative relationships (Bowen, 1978; Bray & Williamson,

1987). This expectation was not supported, but can be interpreted by acknowledging that intimacy, fusion, intimidation, and triangulation can occur whether or not parents are married. Additionally, marital status of parents has no significant effect upon the personal authority of the adult child.

Research Question Three. Returning home after living away as opposed to remaining at home is the independent variable examined by the first part of this research question. Analysis by MANOVA reveals no significant effects upon the PAFS scores (see Table 4). Apparently, the experience of having lived away from the parental home does not produce significant differences in the parent-adult child relationship as measured by the five PAFS scores.

Table 4

Multivariate Tests of Significance for Returning vs.
Remaining in the Parental Home

Test Name	Value	Exact F	Hypoth.DF	Error DF	Sig.of F
Pillais	.03000	.37115	5.00	60.00	.866
Hotellings	.03093	.37115	5.00	60.00	.866
Wilks	.97000	.37115	5.00	60.00	.866
Roys	.03000				

Note: F statistics are exact.

The results may be explained in part by the assertion that living away does not remove or necessarily change

intergenerational issues, although it may be an attempt to do so or to avoid them. Returning to the home (or remaining there) may be viewed in this light as allowing an opportunity to work on intergenerational issues. Operating from apparent intergenerational perspectives, Broderick (cited in Billings, 1979) and Hayes (cited in Rooney, 1980) view returning home as an opportunity for young adults to complete the growing up process and for parents to recognize and acknowledge the attainment of adult status by their children.

The second part of this research question focuses on whether the length of time the adult child has lived with parents has an effect on the dependent variables. This independent variable, which had continuous values (number of years home), was grouped into three levels: (1) has lived at home one year, (2) has lived at home 2-7 years, (3) has lived at home nine years or longer. These groupings were determined by frequencies and natural breaks.

A multivariate test of significance of the dependent variables within groups revealed no significance at the multivariate level (see Table 5), but did reveal significance with the dependent variable intimidation.

Table 5

Multivariate Tests of Significance for Number of Years
Lived in the Parental Home

Test Name	Value	Approx.F	Hypoth.DF	Error DF	Sig.of F
Pillais	.24874	1.70439	10.00	120.00	.087
Hotellings	.28512	1.65369	10.00	116.00	.100
Wilks	.76638	1.67909	10.00	118.00	.093
Roys	.14317				

Note: F statistic for Wilk's lambda is exact.

An analysis of variance showed that the effect of number of years home on the dependent variable intimidation was significant at the .05 level (see Table 6).

Table 6

Univariate F-Tests for Number of Years Home

Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Signif of F
INTCY	390.447	2	195.224	.973	.383
FUSION	44.804	2	22.402	1.094	.341
TRIANG	96.898	2	48.449	.489	.616
INTIMID	1662.398	2	831.199	3.361	.041
PERAUTH	49.966	2	24.983	.680	.510

Note: (2,63) D.F.

Mean intimidation scores of the three groups were (1) one year home, $\bar{X} = 93.44$; (2) 2-7 years home, $\bar{X} = 105.54$; (3) nine and more years home, $\bar{X} = 99.6$. Further post hoc

analysis using Scheffe's test for unequal size groups revealed that the significance lies in the difference between groups one and two. There were no significant differences between groups one and three or between groups two and three.

The disparity between groups one and two may be partially explained by the contrast in numbers. The group living at home one year was by far the modal group ($n=16$), with a sharp drop in frequencies for each of the following number of years home (two years home, $n=9$; three years home, $n=5$; four years home, $n=8$; five and six years home, each $n=5$; seven years home, $n=3$). This reveals that many young adults living at home make an exit after having lived at home one year past the age of 22.

Although it was not a purpose of this study to analyze present findings in comparison to the PAFS normative groups, it is of interest to note that the group two (2-7 years home) intimidation mean ($\bar{X} = 105.54$) indicates less intimidation than the PAFS normative group ($\bar{X} = 98.55$). Also, the group one (one year at home) mean of 93.44 is lower than both the normative mean of 98.55 and the clinical group mean of 98.94 (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984a; Williamson, Bray, & Malone, 1984). The similar normative and clinical PAFS means may indicate that a symptomatic member may not be treated in intimidating ways, or may find

symptomatic behavior to be a protection from intimidation.

Research Question Four. This research question concerns age as the independent variable, and its effects upon the dependent variables. Because responses to this question were continuous, they were regrouped according to decade: (1) ages 22-29, (2) ages 30-39, and (3) ages 40-45.

A multivariate test of significance of the dependent variables within age groups was significant at the .05 level, indicating at least one significant difference among the groups analyzed (see Table 7).

Table 7

Multivariate Tests of Significance for Age

<u>Test Name</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Approx.F</u>	<u>Hypoth.DF</u>	<u>Error DF</u>	<u>Sig.of F</u>
Pillais	.30671	2.17359	10.00	120.00	.024
Hotellings	.38320	2.22254	10.00	116.00	.021
Wilks	.71051	2.19897	10.00	118.00	.022
Roys	.23270				

Note: F statistic for Wilk's lambda is exact.

The univariate f tests reveal significance on the dependent variable fusion (see Table 8). The mean fusion scores of the three groups were: (1) $\bar{X} = 28.98$, (2) $\bar{X} = 29.36$, (3) $\bar{X} = 24.5$. Differences between the first two age groups were not significant, while the difference between the last age group and each of the first two was

significant. Scheffe's test for unequal group numbers confirms this significance.

Table 8

Univariate F-Tests for Age

Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Signifi of F
INTCY	504.348	2	252.174	1.269	.288
FUSION	148.293	2	74.147	3.938	.024
TRIANG	251.367	2	125.683	1.300	.280
INTIMID	950.772	2	475.386	1.838	.168
PERAUTH	64.719	2	32.359	0.887	.417

Note: (2,63) D.F.

These results indicate that adults in their twenties and thirties who are living with parents are likely to be more individuated (less fused) than adults in their forties. This does not appear in the analysis concerning the length of time lived in the home.

Perhaps entering the forties may be regarded as a time in which adults give up home or willingness to become more individuated. Popular references to the forties reflect a cultural attitude of lost youth, ability, and opportunity ("over the hill" and "middle-aged," negative connotations in a youth-oriented society). The "biological clock" indicates a decline of fertility or safe child-bearing for women. In particular, lack of a stable intimate relationship may

discourage these adults from further individuation (Bowen, 1978; Bray, Williamson & Malone, 1984a).

Fused relationships are often viewed as positive ("they are so close") and may be confused with intimacy. Becoming less fused might be seen as a threat to the relationship. This is understandable in light of the theory of "invisible loyalties" (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973).

Research Question Five. The fifth research question examines gender of respondents as the independent variable. The multivariate test of significance of the dependent variables with gender revealed no significant effects (see Table 9).

Table 9

Multivariate Tests of Significance for Gender

<u>Test Name</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Exact F</u>	<u>Hypoth.DF</u>	<u>Error DF</u>	<u>Sig.of F</u>
Pillais	.05632	.71618	5.00	60.00	.614
Hotellings	.05968	.71618	5.00	60.00	.614
Wilks	.94368	.71618	5.00	60.00	.614
Roys	.05632				

Note: F statistics are exact.

This result supports the underlying assumption that gender is not a factor in intergenerational relationships. This is viewed as an assumption because intergenerational theory does not specifically address gender. It would be of interest to view this variable in an ethnic study, because

of the differences in roles that sons and daughters play in many cultural groups.

Research Question Six. The final research question deals with race as an independent variable. This question was not analyzed because of insufficient responses (n=1) in the non-white category.

As intergenerational theory does not address race, it may be inferred that it assumes race not to be a factor. A research question addressing ethnic identity might examine some of the cultural influences on intergenerational dynamics, as race alone does not attend to cultural and ethnic considerations.

Race, however, is not to be disregarded as a variable. Sufficient numbers could be better obtained by either studying a more representative population or by confining a study to minority racial or ethnic groups.

Summary of Statistical Analyses

Significant results in this study reveal a complex picture of the intergenerational dynamics with families of adult offspring living in the parental home. Higher satisfaction with the arrangement was associated with increased intimacy and personal authority, as well as increased fusion. Fusion was also significantly higher in the forties age bracket. Intimidation was significantly greater with subjects who had lived at home only one year,

and was significantly less for those who had lived at home for two to seven years. Triangulation was not significantly different for any of the conditions presented. It could still be very much a factor which occurs under different conditions.

Popular and clinical literature focus on intimacy, individuation, and to a smaller degree, triangulation issues. This focus is supported to a great degree by the research presented in this study. The aspect of triangulation that this study does not support is that of parent-adult child-grandchild. While this configuration does occur, it may not be as prevalent as has been assumed. Until larger numbers are studied and additional questions are asked, little more will actually be known about the hierarchical dynamics of two sets of apparently dependent children in the home.

Although there has been scant research into living at home and leaving home issues, one series of studies (Moore & Hotch, 1981, 1982, 1983) found that one of the best leaving-home indicators were personal control and the most negative was emotional dissociation. It is interesting that personal authority and intimacy were positively associated in this study with satisfaction in living at home. Perhaps these are positive factors across living situations.

The research findings presented in this section

represent an important beginning endeavor to learn more about young adults in the parental home. Because this lifestyle is becoming more prevalent, it is well worth researching to avoid inaccurate generalizations and stereotypes.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

Sixty-six adult offspring living with their parents took part in a study which involved demographic and intergenerational relationship measures. Volunteers aged 22-45 who had lived with parents at least one year responded to questionnaires through the mail, yielding 78% usable responses. Dependent variables measured were five subscales from the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire: Intergenerational Intimacy, Intergenerational Individuation/Fusion, Intergenerational Triangulation, Intergenerational Intimidation, and Personal Authority. Independent variables were satisfaction with the living arrangement (their own and their perception of parental satisfaction), age of subject, gender, parental marital status, length of time at home, and remaining vs. returning home.

Demographic information revealed that the great majority of these subjects had never married and had not borne children. Most had some post high school education, including a large group of those with four-year college and postgraduate degrees. Employment rates were high, and income levels averaged in the \$10,000-19,000 annual income category. Only 37.9% of the subjects regularly paid rent

and household expenses. Average age of respondents was 29 (greatly influenced by a modal age of 22), and the average length of time at home was in the two to seven year category. Sixty-two percent had never left home other than college or military service. Only one non-white subject responded, so no conclusions can be made on the basis of race.

Intimacy, fusion, and personal authority scores were significantly higher when associated with increased satisfaction. Fusion was also significantly greater in subjects over the age of forty. The length of time at home had an effect upon intimidation; those living at home only one year were significantly more intimidated, while those who had been home 2-7 years were significantly less intimidated. There was no significant effect discovered by living at home more than eight years. These findings support intergenerational theory by finding that many of the theorized dynamics do occur within these families, and that the degree to which they occur is affected by certain conditions.

Research Findings Related to Intergenerational Theory

The results of this research indicate that several aspects of Intergenerational Theory apply well to adult offspring in the parental home. However, some results are contrary to what the theory would lead to believe.

Satisfaction with the living arrangement was marked by both increased intimacy and increased fusion (or decreased differentiation of self). More fusion was also found with adults over the age of 40. This contradicts intergenerational theory, which suggests intimacy and fusion cannot coexist. The voluntariness and boundaries of intimacy contradict the blurred boundaries of fusion.

Satisfaction also affected personal authority scores, indicating, paradoxically to the increased fusion, that adult children in the home interact with parents intimately while retaining an individuated position. Therefore, the contradiction about boundaries continues. The questions raised by these results reflect the possibility of the instrument being unable to discriminate among the constructs of intimacy, fusion/individuation, and personal authority.

Another finding which suggests further exploration into theory is that of length of time at home affecting intimidation in different ways. One year at home is associated with increased intimidation, while 2-7 years is a period marked by less intimidation. Theory might explain that more intimidation without increased fusion or triangulation, and without decreased intimacy and personal authority, may provide some impetus for moving on. This supports intergenerational theory in that fusion and

triangulation have aspects of mutual interaction which intimidation does not.

Finally, results did not include any significant effect on triangulation. Three possible explanations are lack of random sampling, incapability of the instrument to measure this construct, or a weakness within the theory which describes this construct.

Conclusions and Research Recommendations

The research conducted in this study has yielded valuable information for the extension of knowledge about adult offspring who live in the parental home. It has indicated that many of the assumptions popularly held may not be true, and that the issue itself is a complex one.

Living in the home with one or both parents appears to offer some good opportunities to increase intimacy within the parent/adult child dyad, under conditions of satisfaction with the living arrangement. Personal authority may also be enhanced. However, there is increased risk of intimidation among those who have resided only one year and among those who have lived over nine years in the parents' home. In addition, less individuation (more fusion) may occur even when there is satisfaction with living with parents. This is especially a factor for adults in the 40-45 age range.

Demographic data suggest that issues of finance may be involved, as has been suggested by census information combined with national economic indicators. The necessity for further research into the economics of living with parents is indicated. Most of the respondents fell within or above the annual income range of \$10,000 to \$19,000, which many adults find adequate to enable them to live away from the family of origin. Perhaps the idea of entitlement (Coles, cited in Adelson, 1986; Stewart, 1987) is one to explore in relation with this data. Many adults in the 22-45 age bracket have been raised by parents who endured the financial and emotional hardships of the Great Depression. Perhaps a common vow is that "my children will never have to suffer as my parents and I did." Their children then would possibly be raised with lower expectations of self-sufficiency than they themselves were. Further research into this prospect might prove valuable.

Other data in this study suggest that living with parents may not be an option as widely chosen as has been assumed for the divorced, even those with children. This finding is possibly due to the difficulty of returning after having established one's own household, and to the possible competition which may occur for parenting children of returnees.

A question not asked but worthy of research lies in the area of sexual preferences. As homosexuality is receiving more attention because of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic, it is feasible to conjecture that many other homosexuals are living lives of non-sexual activity. With the added risk of AIDS infection, other formerly more sexually active persons may be limiting their physical contacts. Sexual lifestyle is not equivalent to sexual identity; sexual behavior may range from chaste to promiscuous regardless of sexual preference. It is possible that more of these people are attempting to maintain a meaningful lifestyle by living and interacting more with their parents in lieu of a significant other relationship. The shelter of the parental home may indeed be welcome and supportive within a society which offers little acceptance and support.

Another issue worthy of exploration is that of "extended adolescence." With the values and expectations of immediate gratification and increased voice in family decisions, often combined with few expectations to produce work or economic aid, it is not difficult to see the problems that many young adults face when confronted with the reality of living on their own. Perhaps an extension of family dependency is partially a product of longer life expectancy. Young people have more years to devote to achieving adulthood, and

parents have more healthy, productive years in which to support their children.

Intergenerational theory suggests that adult children may remain home to protect their parents from the realities of parental marital/familial difficulties, or from loneliness of being single or in an unsatisfying relationship. Some suggest that a prime reason is that of "invisible loyalties" or multigenerational "accounts of justice." This process could be researched with a population like that in this research.

Limitations of the Study

While this study has examined important issues in the area of adult offspring in the parental home, there were many areas which were not addressed because of the limited scope of the study. One limitation is that it did not utilize a larger and more representative population. Additional questions could have been addressed, such as the use (or abuse) of alcohol and other addictive substances in the home by either parents or adult children, and how chemical dependency affects the desire or ability to leave home. The formation of intimate relationships with significant others outside the family is an area this study did not examine, but which would be valuable in the understanding and extension of intergenerational theory.

Exploration of the effects of ethnicity were not

addressed. As various cultural mores and expectations are likely to affect the timing and success of leaving home, the interplay of minority cultures within the larger society may challenge the intergenerational loyalties of young adults; this needs to be examined. Finally, conflict resolution within this family context was not studied. This would have been helpful, particularly in relation to inter-generational variables such as intimidation, fusion, and triangulation.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Part A

The first six questions inquire about your specific living circumstances. Please CIRCLE the number of your answer.

1. With whom do you live?
 1. BOTH PARENTS, MARRIED
 2. MY MOTHER, REMARRIED
 3. MY FATHER, REMARRIED
 4. MY MOTHER, SINGLE (NEVER-MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED OR SEPARATED)
 5. MY FATHER, SINGLE (NEVER-MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED OR SEPARATED)

2. Have you lived in the home continuously or returned after a period away from home?
 1. CONTINUOUSLY SINCE CHILDHOOD
 2. CONTINUOUSLY SINCE CHILDHOOD, EXCEPT FOR COLLEGE AND/OR MILITARY SERVICE
 3. FOR THE LAST YEAR OR MORE, BEFORE WHICH I LIVED AWAY FROM MY PARENTS' HOME (NOT IN COLLEGE/MILITARY)

3. How many consecutive years have you been living at home since the age of 22? (Write number of years) _____ Years

4. What are your contributions to your expenses?
 1. I PAY RENT AND/OR GROCERY MONEY TO MY PARENTS REGULARLY
 2. I PAY RENT AND/OR GROCERY MONEY TO MY PARENTS SOMETIMES
 3. I DO NOT PAY RENT AND/OR GROCERY EXPENSES
 4. I PAY OTHER HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES (PLEASE SPECIFY)

5. Are you satisfied with and willing to continue the present living arrangement?
 1. SATISFIED, JUST AS IT IS
 2. SATISFIED, WITH MINOR CHANGES
 3. SATISFIED, BUT WITH GREAT CHANGES
 4. NOT SATISFIED, BUT WILLING TO CONTINUE AS IT IS NOW
 5. NOT SATISFIED, NOT WILLING TO CONTINUE

6. Do you believe your parents are satisfied with and willing to continue this living arrangement?
 1. SATISFIED, JUST AS IT IS
 2. SATISFIED, WITH MINOR CHANGES
 3. SATISFIED, BUT WITH GREAT CHANGES
 4. NOT SATISFIED, BUT WILLING TO CONTINUE AS IT IS NOW
 5. NOT SATISFIED, NOT WILLING TO CONTINUE

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire Part B

PAFS-Q

(Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire)

The authors of the PAFS-Q do not give permission to reprint the instrument. They request that those who are interested in the scales purchase the instrument and manual at this address:

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APPENDIX C

Questionnaire Part C

The final questions deal with general information needed to describe survey participants as a group. Again, please answer by CIRCLING the number of the response which best describes you.

1. How old are you? _____ years
2. What is your gender (sex)?
 1. MALE
 2. FEMALE
3. What is your marital status?
 1. NEVER MARRIED
 2. CURRENTLY MARRIED
 3. SEPARATED
 4. DIVORCED
 5. WIDOWED
4. Do you have any children?
 1. I DO NOT HAVE ANY CHILDREN
 2. I HAVE CHILDREN WHO LIVE WITH ME
 3. I HAVE CHILDREN WHO DO NOT LIVE WITH ME
5. How much education have you obtained?
 1. LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
 2. HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR GED
 3. SOME COLLEGE OR VOCATIONAL TRAINING (PAST HIGH SCHOOL)
 4. 4-YEAR COLLEGE DEGREE
 5. POSTGRADUATE DEGREE
6. What is your race?
 1. BLACK
 2. WHITE
 3. OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____
7. What is your current employment status?
 1. EMPLOYED FULL-TIME, OVER 35 HOURS PER WEEK
 2. EMPLOYED PART-TIME, 20-35 HOURS PER WEEK
 3. EMPLOYED PART-TIME, 1-20 HOURS PER WEEK
 4. UNEMPLOYED, LOOKING FOR WORK
 5. UNEMPLOYED, NOT SEEKING WORK

8. What is your annual income from your employment?
1. LESS THAN \$5,000
 2. \$5,000-9,999
 3. \$10,000-19,999
 4. \$20,000-29,999
 5. \$30,000 OR MORE

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. If there is any additional information which you would like to offer, please use the space on the next page to do so.

PLEASE RETURN THIS BOOKLET IN THE STAMPED, PRE-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE AS SOON AS YOU HAVE COMPLETED IT.

APPENDIX D

COVER LETTER

P. O. Box 20962
Roanoke, VA 24018
March, 1988

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your participation in the Adult Children Residing with Parents study. Your responses are of great importance to this study, as this topic has been much publicized but largely unresearched.

This is not a study to discover why adult children are living at home. Rather, it is an attempt to learn what things work well with two adult generations in one household, and what things are presenting difficulties. Many popular and well-respected magazines have published articles about the adult child who lives at home, but they typically base their information on the opinions or the experiences of a small number of people.

You are one of a select sample of adults who qualify for the study. Every response is valuable. You are being asked about your personal views and your own experience. You are asked particularly about the relationships you have with your parents.

Your responses are entirely confidential. The return envelope has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so that your name is taken off the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire.

Results of this study will be made available for professionals in the fields of family studies, population research, and counseling, as well as to the local media. If you are interested in receiving a summary of the results, please note this on the back of the return envelope.

It will take about twenty minutes to respond to the questionnaire. Please return it immediately in the stamped, pre-addressed envelope enclosed.

I am most happy to answer any questions you may have. Please

write or call. The telephone number is (703) 989-4119. You may leave a message for me to return your call.

Thank you again for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Audra Seagle
Project Director

APPENDIX E

FIRST FOLLOW-UP: TELEPHONE CALL

(ONE WEEK FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE MAILING)

(Introduce self) I am telephoning to be sure you received a copy of the Adult Children Residing with Parents survey. (If not, get address so it may be sent again). If so, I want to thank you personally for your participation and urge you to complete and return it right away, if you have not already done so.

APPENDIX F

SECOND FOLLOW-UP: LETTER

(TWO WEEKS FOLLOWING MAILING)

P. O. Box 20962
Roanoke, VA 24018
April, 1988

Dear Participant,

Almost two weeks ago, I mailed you a questionnaire about Adult Children Residing with Parents. I have spoken to many participants on the telephone since, thanking them for their participation. I want to repeat those thanks to those who have completed the study and returned it. The information is already being processed and evaluated.

There are still a small number of participants who have not yet responded. I encourage you, if you have not done so, to take a few minutes and complete the questionnaire, then return it immediately. If you have misplaced your copy, please call me so that I can send you a new one by return mail.

Because you are one of a select group chosen for the study, your response is extremely important. The information you offer is crucial to gaining a better overall picture of how adult children are getting along while living with parents.

I am glad to answer any questions you may have and/or to send you a new copy of the questionnaire. You may write or reach me at (703) 989-4119.

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Audra Seagle
Project Director

APPENDIX G

THIRD FOLLOW-UP: POST CARD

(THREE WEEKS FOLLOWING MAILING)

P. O. Box 20962
Roanoke, VA 24018

You were recently mailed the Adult Children Residing with Parents questionnaire. Follow-up telephone and mailed responses have been made thanking you for participating and encouraging you to return responses if you have not already done so. This is a brief reminder that you may still respond.

Your response is most important to the understanding of the experience and needs of young adults in the parental household.

If you did not receive the questionnaire or it was misplaced, please call me right away at (703) 989-4119 so that I may get your new copy in the mail immediately.

Sincerely,

Audra Seagle
Project Director

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