INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

AS PERCEIVED BY ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

by

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(ABSTRACT)

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether parental alcoholism significantly altered intergenerational relationship variables between parents and offspring. The intergenerational variables of fusion/individuation, intimacy, triangulation, intimidation, and personal authority were investigated.

One hundred and ninety five university undergraduates responded to a written questionnaire. Each participant signed a consent form, completed the Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (CAST), the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire Version C (PAFS-QVC), and a demographic questionnaire. Based on CAST scores, subjects were divided into 44 Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOAs) and 151 Adult Children of NonAlcoholics (NonACOAs).

Demographic data indicated that the overall sample was primarily composed of White, middle class, unmarried, undergraduates with a gender distribution of slightly more females

than males. The ACOA group was represented by a two to one ratio of females to males, the majority of alcoholic parents were identified as male, the mean age for the ACOA's first awareness of parental alcoholism was 11.22 years, and the majority of ACOAs recognized parental alcoholism as being disruptive to the home environment.

Multivariate analyses revealed that ACOAs differed from nonACOAs on the five dependent variables. Specifically, lower levels of intimacy and triangulation, along with an apparent trend towards lower levels of individuation were found within the parent-child relationship. The independent variables of offspring's gender, offspring's age at earliest awareness of parental alcoholism, offspring's perceived home effect of parental alcoholism, and nonalcoholics parent's perceived home effect of parental alcoholism did not have a significant impact on the intergenerational dependent variables.

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seemed to inherently understand the subtle balance between firm criticism and friendly support. Without his consistent and knowledgeable direction this project would not have been possible. Also I would like to thank

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and for their expert assistance and useful advise.

Throughout my graduate education and have remained trusted friends willing to provide encouragement and share burdens, thank you.

Finally, to my son who provided me with inspiration. Throughout your life time may you continually experience the joy of learning.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my parents who have provided unfailing love and support throughout my years. It was as a result of their nurturing that I was able to appreciate and understand the family experience.

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Chapter I

Introduction

In the past decade there has been a rapid growth of information regarding children of alcoholics. The size of this group is estimated to be approximately 28 million children of all ages (Naiditch, 1986). Based on 1980 census data 22 million children of alcoholics were age 18 or older (Ackerman, 1987; Russell, Henderson, & Blume, 1985). Clearly, the largest segment of this population falls within the adult age range and are commonly referred to as adult children of alcoholics (ACOAs).

When alcoholism is identified in a parent, it is frequently expected to have a deleterious effect on the relationships between parent and child; thereby, making the child "vulnerable to impaired psychological and social development" (Mayer, 1983, p. 1120). This has been the primary assumption guiding much of the research which has focused on children growing up with an alcoholic parent. This assumption appears to gain credibility by the over-representation of these children on medical and mental health caseloads, repeated involvement with the criminal, and juvenile justice systems (Chafetz, Blane, & Hill, 1971; Russell, Henderson, & Blume, 1985), frequent abuse of drugs and alcohol (Woodside, 1983), along with deficits in cognitive and emotional functioning (Bennett, Wolin, & Reiss, 1988) . In addition, attention deficit disorder (Morrison & Stewart, 1971), child abuse (Stewart, 1970), spouse abuse (Liepman, 1980; Roberts, 1988), incest (Browning & Boatman, 1980), sexual

assault (Wilsnack, 1981) depression (Rivers, 1989), anxiety disorders (Earls, Reich, Jung, & Cloninger, 1988), sexual compulsivity (Coleman, 1987b), and individual intimacy dysfunctions (Coleman & Colgan, 1986) have all been positively associated with alcohol abuse. Consequently, psychosocial issues pertinent to children of alcoholics seems to be an area which would warrant further investigation.

The popular press has recently drawn public attention to a number of distressing issues pertinent to adult children of alcoholics. It has been suggested that many of these individuals have difficulty in the following areas: experiencing unreasonable anger towards those they most love; being plagued by a sense of failure regarding their inability to control parental alcoholism; being drawn to turbulent relationships with troubled peers; and being unable to allow themselves to experience joy (Leerhsen & Namuth, 1988). Finally, it has been suggested that males with alcoholic fathers are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than their peers with nonalcoholic fathers (Blakeslee, 1984).

A large portion of the professional literature addressing adult children of alcoholics has assumed a clear and direct link between the individual's present emotional life and their previous experience in a home environment which is believed to have been dominated by parental alcoholism (Balis, 1986; Beletsis & Brown, 1981; Black, 1981; Cermak & Rosenfeld, 1987; Wegscheider, 1981; Woititz, 1983, 1985). Many of the observations, although

informative, appear to be either anecdotal in nature or based on the author's clinical experience. No systematic empirical work has been done to date which examines the adult child's perceptions of his family of origin, although a previous literature review (Nardi, 1981) has documented the need for such a study.

Purpose

The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate the effects of parental alcoholism on intergenerational family relationships as perceived by the adult child. The key concepts explored in the family system include: fusion/individuation, triangulation, intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, and personal authority.

Research Definitions

Nuclear family refers to parents and their children usually living in one household throughout the child's developmental period. The nuclear household may also include stepparents, stepchildren, relatives, or other persons with emotional bonds similar to those which are usually found between biologically related parents and children (Green, 1981).

Family of origin is identified as "the family in which a person has his/her beginnings physiologically, psychically and emotionally" (Hovestadt, Anderson, Piercy, Cochran, & Fine, 1985, p. 287).

Alcoholic refers to any individual whose alcohol intake is sufficient to damage physical health, impair either personal or social functioning, or when the individual's alcohol consumption becomes a prerequisite for normal functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 1968). Current knowledge regarding alcoholism is imprecise and in a state of flux. Definitions tend to be vague and rather broad. However, this definition is generally recognized as credible at this point in the field's development.

Alcoholic family refers to either the nuclear family or the family of origin which has one or more alcoholic members. In addition, specific behaviors related to alcohol consumption have come to play a significant role within morphogenetic (developmental) and morphostatic (regulatory) mechanisms of the family system (Steinglass, Bennett, Wolin, & Reiss, 1987).

Adult child of an alcoholic refers to any individual 18 years of age or older with one or both parents identified as being an alcoholic. The Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (CAST) (Pilat & Jones, 1984/85) was used for identification purposes.

Individuation refers to the extent a person, under relational pressure, functions in an autonomous and independent manner within significant interpersonal relationships (Bray & Williamson, 1986).

Fusion is conceptualized as being on a continuum with individuation at the opposite pole. It describes the degree to which individuals within a relationship are emotionally "stuck together", yielding a diffuse sense of self with poorly defined personal boundaries (Bray & Williamson, 1986).

Triangulation is defined as a process that results from the instability of an intense dyadic relationship which, in an effort to reduce interpersonal tension, engages a third person, thereby achieving relational stability (Bowen, 1978).

Intimacy is defined as voluntary closeness while maintaining clear personal boundaries (Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, & Phillips, 1976; Bray & Williamson, 1986).

Intergenerational intimidation is defined as the degree to which one is fearful of punishment or loss of parental protection (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1986).

Personal authority is defined as the ability to order, direct, and express one's thoughts and feelings while accepting responsibility for one's actions. Simultaneously, one also has the ability to initiate, receive, or decline to receive voluntary intimacy while maintaining clear self boundaries. Finally, one is able to relate to all significant others as peers. Williamson (1981) assumes that this experience, if and when it occurs, is appropriate during the fourth decade within the individual's life cycle. Personal authority as a construct is intended to represent a

synthesis between individuation and intimacy (Bray & Williamson, 1986).

Theoretical Rationale

Much of the previous research which has investigated psychosocial issues regarding children of alcoholics has lacked a clearly stated theoretical foundation (Nardi, 1981; Wilson & Orford, 1978). Without such a foundation it is extraordinarily difficult to interpret findings. It is believed that a study based on constructs as explicated by intergenerational family systems theory has provided a sharper focus for the dynamics of living within an alcoholic family. This theory recently explicated in the popular press by Kerr (1988) viewed the "family as a multigenerational emotional unit or system, made up of interlocking family fields: the nuclear family field and two extended family fields" (Titelman, 1987, p. 15).

Intergenerational family theorists (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Sparks, 1973; Bowen, 1978; Williamson, 1981) have developed a number of key concepts to describe both family relationships and the transmission of intergenerational patterns across the generations. These theorists essentially perceive relational patterns as "learned and passed down across the generations and that current individual and family behavior is a result of these patterns" (Bray & Williamson, 1986, p. 1). A fundamental concept in this process, with its origin in evolutionary development (Kerr & Bowen, 1988), is differentiation of self. The differentiation concept is believed to

be the cornerstone of intergenerational family systems theory (Bowen, 1978). Generally, differentiation of self appears to be synonymous with individuation. It refers to a process within the individual and simultaneously in one's relationship with others (Kerr, 1981). Differentiation "refers to the degree to which one is able to discriminate between thoughts and emotions, have control over one's own thoughts and feelings, respect one's judgement as an adequate basis for action, and take full responsibility for the consequences of these actions" (Bray & Williamson, 1986, p. 2). At the relationship level it describes basic human behavior represented by a continuum between "togetherness-sameness-belonging and individuation-separateness" (Meyer, 1987 p. 44).

Bowen (1978) further clarified differentiation by delineating low, moderate, and high levels within the individual. Basically, individuals with low differentiation experience reality as dominated by feeling states which results in their being emotionally dependent on others and frequently preoccupied with emotional relationships.

There is a striking similarity between Bowen's theoretical construct and Cermak's (1986) proposed diagnostic category of codependency, which has been clinically observed in adult children of alcoholics. Generally, codependency refers to an observable behavior pattern in the spouse or child of a chemically dependent individual which is believed to be the result of a dysfunctional family system. Coleman (1987a) has defined codependency as "an

easily identifiable (overt) or carefully disguised (covert) learned pattern of exaggerated dependency and extreme and painful external validation, with resulting identity confusion" (p. 15). Essentially, the primary features of codependency are a preoccupation with the needs of others, often to the exclusion of oneself, frequent anxiety and boundary distortion regarding interpersonal intimacy and separation, difficulty in identifying feelings, and enmeshment (fusion) in relationships with dysfunctional individuals (Cermak, 1986; Cermak & Rosenfeld, 1987). These observations would appear to indicate that at least some adult children of alcoholics are experiencing low levels of differentiation. They appear to seek the approval of others at the expense of personal gains. This may result in being overly concerned with relationship maintenance and the vicissitudes of emotional intimacy. They appear to be preoccupied with maintaining harmony in emotionally dependent relationships, which in turn, jeopardizes their own personal autonomy.

Triangulation as initially proposed by Bowen (1966, 1978) suggests that dyadic relationships are inherently unstable primarily because they have a low tolerance for anxiety. He proposed that a three-person configuration is the basic building block of the family emotional system. During times of stress, a third person or object (Fogarty, 1977) is frequently pulled into a dyadic relationship to decrease experienced interpersonal discomfort. This is a dynamic process which appears dysfunctional

when interactions among the threesome become rigid (Bray & Williamson, 1986). This process viewed from an intergenerational perspective usually involves various interlocking triangles spread between the nuclear and extended family systems. The atmosphere within the alcoholic family has been previously identified as tense with poor parental and marital relationships (Jacob, Ritchey, Cvitkovic, & Blane, 1981). It seems reasonable therefore to expect a pattern of dysfunctional triangulation between parents and offspring.

Intimacy has been defined as the ability to be close to another person while simultaneously maintaining clear boundaries of one's identity (Lewis, Beavers, Gossett, & Phillips, 1976). Williamson (1981) further developed this concept within intergenerational family theory. He suggested that a prerequisite for intimacy is the termination of hierarchical boundaries and intergenerational intimidation through the "radical renegotiation of power between the generations" (Williamson, 1981, p. 445). This requires the adult child, usually around 40 years of age, to work actively towards a more equitable relationship with both parents. True intergenerational intimacy appears to be the result of a peer relationship with both parents. Intimacy is further conceptualized as being composed of trust, love-fondness, self-disclosure, and commitment (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984). Some adult children of alcoholics have been identified as having intimacy difficulties in significant interpersonal adult relationships (Cermak, 1986) and

after physical separation from the family, they remain "psychologically attached and preoccupied with parental problems" (Beletsis, 1986, p.30). Also the renegotiation of generational boundaries has been identified as necessary in the successful treatment of children of alcoholics (Pilat & Jones, 1984/85). Consequently, intergenerational intimacy measures were expected to be lower among this population due to blurred generational boundaries and a pattern of unresolved authority issues with the parental generation.

Personal authority as developed by Williamson (1981, 1982) is defined as a life cycle stage usually occurring between 30 and 45 years of age "in which, the inherent tension between differentiation and intimacy is resolved in the biological family and in other significant personal relationships" (Bray & Williamson, 1986, p. 5). This concept builds on the issue of peerhood with parents and includes the "experiencing of one's own authority in intergenerational patterns of behavior" (Williamson, 1982, p. 309). Personal authority within intergenerational relationships should result in a more "basic self" very similar to Bowen's (1978) differentiated self or "solid self". Essentially this construct is intended to represent a synthesis between the issues of individuation and intimacy. As previously mentioned adult children of alcoholics were expected to have lower levels of individuation and intimacy when assessed on intergenerational measures. However, personal authority was not expected to occur

until approximately age 40. Consequently, it seems reasonable to expect no measurable difference in scores on personal authority.

Intergenerational intimidation is at the opposite end of the continuum from personal authority. There appears to be an inverse relationship between these two measures. Intergenerational intimidation was expected to measure the degree to which the individual is fearful of punishment or loss of parental protection (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1986). This includes such issues as the need to live up to parental expectations, along with an inability to assert oneself with parents. Since adult children of alcoholics, under 40 years of age, were expected to have lower levels of personal authority, it is therefore feasible that they will have higher levels of intergenerational intimidation. Frequently these adult children have had a long history of adapting and coping with parental alcoholism (Gravitz & Bowden, 1985). It is likely that this may have led to a nonassertive relationship between the adult child and parent, particularly in regards to behavior associated with alcohol use.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, formal hypotheses are not being tested. Instead, the following questions were examined. Essentially, these questions were drawn from the reviewed literature. However, two recent publications (Brown, 1988; Steinglass, Bennett, Wolin, & Reiss, 1987) have also been cited.

1. Adult children of alcoholics have been described as undifferentiated (Bowen, 1974) and unable to emotionally separate from their families of origin (Beletsis & Brown, 1981). Their families have been described as having blurred generational boundaries (Cermak & Brown, 1982) with developmental distortions within the family life cycle (Steinglass, 1985). Intergenerational family theory would suggest that these observations would indicate potential difficulty in negotiating intergenerational processes. Therefore, do adult children of alcoholics differ from adult children of nonalcoholics on the variables of individuation, fusion, triangulation, intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, and personal authority as measured by Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire Version C (PAFS-QVC)?

2. Gender of the alcoholic parent has been suggested as an intervening variable affecting personality characteristics of children (Ackerman 1987; Woodside, 1983). Therefore, is there an effect of the alcoholic parent's gender on the level of individuation, fusion, triangulation, intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, or personal authority in adult offspring as measured by PAFS-QVC?

3.Gender of the adult child has been suggested as an intervening variable which may be critical in determining the effect of parental alcoholism on offspring (Ackerman, 1987; Woodside, 1983). Therefore, is there an effect of the offspring's gender on the level of individuation, fusion, triangulation,

intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, or personal authority in the adult offspring as measured by PAFS-QVC?

4. Previous studies (Ackerman, 1987; Wilson & Orford, 1978; Woodside, 1983) have suggested that the gender of both the adult offspring and the alcoholic parent may be important when considering the effect of alcoholism on the family and individual development. Although the gender variable has yet to be studied empirically, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the gender of both the adult child and the alcoholic parent would affect one another. Therefore, is there an interaction effect between the gender of the adult offspring and gender of the alcoholic parent when examining levels of individuation, fusion, triangulation, intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, or personal authority as measured by PAFS-QVC?

5. Age of onset regarding parental alcoholism has been suggested as a significant variable affecting the family life cycle (Steinglass, Bennett, Wolin, & Reiss, 1987), personality characteristics of children (Ackerman, 1987), and developmental tasks of childhood (Brown, 1988; Wilson & Orford, 1978). Therefore, is there an effect of the offspring's age at onset (earliest awareness) of parental alcoholism on the level of individuation, fusion, triangulation, intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, or personal authority, in the adult offspring, as measured by PAFS-QVC?

6. The offspring's perception of the effect of parental alcoholism on the family environment may be a significant variable affecting intergenerational relationships between parent and offspring (Ackerman, 1987). Therefore, is there an effect of the offspring's perception of the home impact of parental alcoholism on the level of individuation, fusion, triangulation, intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, or personal authority, in the adult offspring, as measured by PAFS-QVC?

7. The nonalcoholic parent's perception of the effect of parental alcoholism on the family environment may be a significant variable effecting intergenerational relationships between parent and offspring. Therefore, is there an effect of the nonalcoholic parent's perception of parental alcoholism on the level of individuation, fusion, triangulation, intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, or personal authority within the adult offspring when measured by PAFS-QVC.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Empirical Research Regarding Alcoholic Families

Jackson (1954) conducted one of the earliest explorations of the effects of alcoholism within the family. Her findings have some clear implications for offspring. She interviewed approximately 100 women who were involved in an Alcoholics Anonymous Auxiliary. All were married to current or recovering alcoholics.

Jackson (1954) conceptualized alcoholism as "precipitating a cumulative crisis" (p. 585) within the family organization. Seven stages representing adjustment to this crisis were delineated. Initially the family denied or minimized the problem. When these efforts were unsuccessful various family members attempted to control the alcoholic's behavior. The family unit became socially isolated, the marital relationship deteriorated, and attention was focused on the drinking behavior. After further hardship and disappointment, efforts at control were abandoned and the family organization began to dissolve with clear signs of disturbed behavior in the children. This frequently resulted in the nonalcoholic parent assuming control and separating from the alcoholic which then resulted in a family reorganization. Occasionally, after gaining sobriety the alcoholic reentered the family and an effort was made to reorganize relationships once again. However, this frequently met with disappointment. Rarely were the family members able to give up the roles they had

previously developed. It would appear to take more then abstinence to bring harmony to the family unit. Jackson (1954) did not directly discuss issues regarding children of alcoholics. However, her family observations delineate a chaotic, tense, and preoccupied environment which would seem to negatively affect offspring.

Jacob, Ritchey, Cvitkovic, and Blane (1981) conducted a preliminary investigation which explored problem-solving interactions within alcoholic and nonalcoholic families. Interactions were videotaped and analyzed in an effort to identify problem-solving behavior and expression of positive and negative affect. Subjects were composed of eight alcoholic and eight nonalcoholic demographically matched families. Each family consisted of biological parents and at least two children between 10 and 17 years of age. In all cases the father was the identified alcoholic. Observations were made of all families in both drinking and nondrinking states. The primary focus of this investigation was the marital dyad. Analyses of problem solving marital interactions indicated that alcoholic couples expressed more negative affect and less positive affect than did nonalcoholic peers. It is significant to note that negative affect increased among alcoholic couples with the ingestion of alcohol. The data also revealed some interesting findings regarding relationships between parents and children. Essentially, Jacob et al. (1981) determined that alcoholic fathers tended to "exhibit less leadership, assertiveness, and problem-solving behavior than their nonalcoholic counterparts" (p. 477).

The picture that seemed to emerge from this study confirms a tense home environment with a parental subsystem which has an underfunctioning father and an overfunctioning mother. However, as the authors stated, this is preliminary data which is yet to be confirmed by more extensive investigations.

Barnes, Farrell, and Cairns (1986) investigated the relationship between parental socialization factors and adolescent drinking behaviors. The study focused on the family socialization process with specific emphasis on parental support and control. Structured in-home interviews were conducted with 124 families. Parent and adolescent drinking patterns were subdivided into six "categorical drinking variables" (Barnes, Farrell & Cairns, 1986, p.30). Essentially, they found that heavier drinking parents had heavier drinking adolescents who also experienced various alcohol related problems. Although support and control variable interaction did not reach statistical significance, there were some observational differences. Problematic adolescent drinking was more prevalent when support and control were low from mothers and when support was low and control was high from fathers. Barnes, et al., (1986) concluded that "children learn or imitate parental roles and behaviors throughout the socialization process" (p.34). This study provides further clarification as to the risks, specifically regarding alcohol abuse, faced by children with alcoholic parents. The findings are noteworthy because a representative general

population sample was used as opposed to the more commonly reported clinical sample.

The circumplex model developed by Olson, Sprenkle, and Russell (1979) has been used to investigate the relational dynamics of cohesion, adaptability, and communication within chemically dependent families. Olson and Killorin (1985) gathered a sample composed of 240 families with at least one parent being treated for alcoholism. A control group of 117 non-dependent families was used for comparison. The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES 3) was completed prior to treatment by all family members over the age of 12. Alcoholic families saw themselves as more extreme within the circumplex model. They were both more disengaged (cohesion dimension) and more chaotic (adaptability dimension) than nondependent families. However, it is important to note that this difference tended to vary within and between the observed families (Killorin & Olson, 1984). This observation appears to indicate that regarding family dynamics, alcoholic families are not a homogeneous group.

Preli and Protinsky (1988) explored the structural variables of cross-generational coalitions and hierarchy reversals among thirty-nine families with an alcoholic member, forty-four families with a recovered alcoholic member, and forty-two families with a nonalcoholic member. Their findings indicated that cross-generational coalitions and hierarchical reversals were significantly more common among families with an active alcoholic.

This study would appear to add supportive evidence confirming confusion of structural variables within the alcoholic home. It may also be inferred that length of recovery from active alcoholism may be an important intervening variable when examining structural variables within the family.

Empirical Research Regarding Children of Alcoholics

The first major work concerning children of alcoholics was completed by Cork (1969). The vast majority of children she interviewed identified feelings of being unloved and rejected by both parents along with their own lack of self-confidence. Furthermore, they described feelings of anger and disrespect toward the alcoholic parent and resentment towards the nonalcoholic parent. They perceived the nonalcoholic parent as being responsible for the alcoholic's drinking and thereby neglectful of their own needs. The parental relationship was primarily characterized as argumentative and hostile. This observation of parental anger was a primary concern of almost all the interviewed children. Cork (1969) provided a seminal study of 115 children 10 to 16 years of age from alcoholic homes. This study however, was based on only one interview and it lacked a control group. Consequently it is seen as a methodologically limited investigation (Kammeier, 1971).

A similar family atmosphere of hostility and tension was reported by Wilson & Orford (1978). They provided a small preliminary study which examined familial relationships in 11 families with one parent being treated for alcoholism. They

determined that parental abusive drinking patterns and the gender of the alcoholic was positively correlated with inconsistent and disruptive parental behavior. This behavior had a noticeable effect on the children. They frequently appeared to suffer from either anxiety or depression and had limited means of coping with emotional upset. "Family process" (Wilson & Orford, 1978, p.122) appeared to be significantly influenced by parental drinking patterns. There tended to be a strained atmosphere within the home which lead to reduced communication between nondrinking members and "in many families some or all may avoid communicating with the alcoholic parent while he or she is drunk" (Wilson & Orford, 1978, p.130). These same investigators also determined that the child's age at onset of problematic drinking was an important variable when considering long term effects on childhood. Only half of their sample however came from intact families which may limit the generalizability of their findings.

Wilson and Orford (1978) also had the children compare their homes with those of their friends. They found that children from an alcoholic environment were more likely to report that theirs was not a "real family" (Wilson & Orford, 1978, p.130) and that they rarely had fun or did things together. The majority of interviewed families indicated that they rarely participated in activities with one another. More specifically, it appeared that adolescent children with alcoholic fathers may identify more closely with peers in an effort to compensate for the social distance they feel

from their parents. These children appeared to be prematurely expelled from the family unit.

Chafetz, Blane, and Hill (1971) conducted a retrospective exploratory study of 100 offspring of alcoholics. Hospital case records were reviewed regarding children and family characteristics. The children's ages ranged from 2 to 19 years with a mean female age of 10.91 and a mean male age of 11.59. Using a clinical sample and control group they identified "distinct and deleterious social consequences" (Chafetz, Blane & Hill, 1971, p.696) as a result of being a child of an alcoholic. They noted a high incidence of school problems and frequent involvement with law-enforcement agencies. Also, their data indicated that there was significant "family disruption and economic marginality" (Chafetz, Blane, & Hill, 1971, p. 696) which appeared to result from parental alcoholism. Children from these families left home at an earlier age, often by midadolescence. Finally, children with alcoholic parents appeared less socially mature and more irresponsible than children in the control group.

Other investigators have explored the anticipated effects (expectancies) of alcohol use on the adolescent. Brown, Creamer, and Stetson (1987), as part of a larger longitudinal study, examined alcohol expectancies as a function of a familial history positive for alcohol abuse. They surveyed both adolescents and parents. Experimental and control groups were divided on the basis of parental alcoholism and adolescent alcohol abuse. They found

that adolescent children of alcohol abusers were more likely to expect enhanced cognitive and motor functioning as a result of drinking alcohol. Brown, Creamer, and Stetson (1987) suggest that adolescent children of alcoholics are at risk because of "parental drinking behavior, genetic predisposition to addiction, and acquired cognitions regarding alcohol's effects" (p. 121). This study provides further clarity regarding the subtle transmission of both behavior and learning between parent and child.

After developing the Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (CAST), which is intended to identify both children and adults who are offspring of alcoholic parents, Pilat and Jones (1984/85) conducted two empirical studies aimed at assessing the number of unrecognized children of alcoholics within the public school system and among helping professionals. The CAST was administered to 174 high school students from a predominantly lower middle class background. The investigators considered their sample representative of a metropolitan high school student body. The study findings indicated that 44 percent of the students were involved in a family system where parental drinking was clearly an issue. The investigators noted that none of these students had come to the attention of school authorities and their academic records did not appear to be negatively affected. Pilat and Jones (1984/85) concluded that children of alcoholics are often unnoticed and may be invisible to the professional. This same observation was previously made by Cork (1969) fifteen years ago.

Pilat and Jones (1984/85) conducted a second study with a sample composed of 81 experienced therapists, 47 social work and family therapy students, and 26 miscellaneous health professionals. All the subjects completed the CAST. The study results indicated that 26 percent of the students, 28 percent of the therapists, and 46 percent of the miscellaneous health professionals were adult children of alcoholics. Pilat and Jones (1984/85) speculated on the ramifications of their findings. Although no additional information was gathered, clearly, such a large number of adult children of alcoholics within the helping professions implies a need for more thorough study of this group.

Ackerman (1987) conducted a nationwide survey of approximately five hundred self-identified adult children of alcoholics. Although no clear theoretical base was specified, he was able to identify eight intervening variables which appear critical in determining the impact of parental alcoholism on the personality characteristics of the child. These variables are: 1) the degree of alcoholism experienced, 2) the type and kind of alcoholic in the family, 3) the child's resilience to stress, 4) the child's perception of the experience, 5) the gender of the alcoholic and the child, 6) the age at which the adult child was exposed to alcoholism, 7) positive offsetting factors while growing up, and 8) cultural considerations. Essentially, he suggested that the effects of alcoholism vary greatly among individuals and that the above variables may be critical in understanding this variance in effect.

Although this is the most extensive study of ACOAs, published material does not include a clear description of the investigated sample. Consequently comparisons with other investigations may be problematic. Also, only descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of data. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the generalizability of the study results.

Williams and Robbins (1987) conducted a study aimed at assessing role behavior in adult children of alcoholics. Self-report inventories were gathered from 120 subjects who were matched with an equal number of individuals from nonalcoholic homes. They were unable to confirm role behavior which had been previously documented by Wegscheider (1981) and Black (1981) in clinical observations. Wegscheider (1981) has suggested that children from alcoholic homes tend to develop specific "survival roles" (family hero, scapegoat, etc.) to cope with parental alcoholism. It was concluded that further research is needed to more thoroughly explore clinical and anecdotal observations regarding offspring from alcoholic families.

Summary of Empirical Research

Nearly 35 years of empirical research supports the notion that a dysfunctional family environment along with an inadequate childhood socialization process frequently results from parental alcoholism. This includes disrupted parent child relationships, an imbalance in the distribution of parental responsibilities, cross-generational coalitions, hierarchical reversals and peer

overidentification. However, there is also evidence to indicate that alcoholic families are not a homogeneous group. Therefore, there may be considerable variance between families regarding experienced difficulties. Several intervening variables may be critical in determining the impact of parental alcoholism. Some of these variables are the child's age at onset of alcoholism, gender of the alcoholic and child, offspring's perception of the experience, and cultural considerations. Empirical studies have just begun to focus directly on intergenerational family variables. Established knowledge in this area is rather sparse.

Nonempirical Articles Regarding Offspring of Alcoholic Parents

Bowen (1974) in a theoretical article based on clinical observations speculated on germane issues within the alcoholic family. He identified alcoholism as a symptom which would occur as a result of a high anxiety level within the family and it appears to represent "an imbalance of functioning in the total family system" (Bowen, 1974, p. 117). He further suggested that both the alcoholic and the family's offspring would be significantly undifferentiated and noticeably immature when compared to nonabusers of alcohol. He believed that the alcoholic family system tended to be composed of individuals who were emotionally isolated particularly from extended family, and perhaps underfunctioning in important family and peer relationships. Bowen (1978) uses the underfunctioning overfunctioning dichotomy to represent a functional imbalance in the family system's behavioral pattern.

This article represents one of the first applications of Bowen's family systems theory to the issue of alcoholism.

Nardi (1981) provided a comprehensive theoretical paper examining the application of role theory concepts as they apply to children of alcoholics. He suggested that alcoholism modifies traditional role definitions within the family system. This situation may cause children of alcoholics to experience conflict over parent child role reversals and inconsistent parental concerns. One central theme in the children of alcoholics literature is that the child frequently perceives confused and inconsistent expectations. Gravitz and Bowden (1984) described an "unpredictable, inconsistent, arbitrary, and chaotic" (p. 25) home life where children may assume parental responsibilities in an effort to control unpredictability within the family. These observations would appear to support the notion that children within this environment would experience difficulty regarding what is appropriate role behavior. After reviewing previously published material regarding children of alcoholics Nardi (1981) concluded that role concepts fit well with a family systems perspective and appear to be useful in both research and intervention efforts.

Wegscheider (1981) through extensive clinical observation has developed a number of "survival roles" which she believes are adopted by nonalcoholic parents and children to cope with familial alcoholism. These roles are "chief enabler, family hero, scapegoat, lost child, and mascot". She proposes that each family member

acquires a role to cope with alcoholic behavior thereby reducing stress and maintaining balance within the family system. In addition, it appears that these same roles remain with the individual upon leaving the family and, thereby, impact on all other significant relationships outside of the home. These "survival roles" appear to have profound effects on the development of intimate relationships outside of the family context.

Beletsis and Brown (1981) presented a comprehensive theoretical paper integrating issues unique to growing up in an alcoholic home with Eriksonian concepts of psychosocial development in children. Observations are based on four years of clinical experience, mostly within a group context, treating adult children of alcoholics. Essentially they believe that these individuals develop a "defensive coping strategy" in an effort to survive an intolerable home atmosphere which lacks parental warmth, clearly defined limits, and respectful treatment. They review the child's developmental needs regarding trust, autonomy, mastery, and identity within the context of the alcoholic family experience. They believe the child is unable to master appropriate developmental tasks primarily because of a family system organized around and distracted by parental alcoholism. The family's need to deny problems appears to indirectly encourage the child to develop a similar coping style. It is not uncommon for these children to deny feelings, thoughts, and in some cases even their personal identity. They frequently lack trust in others, confidence in

themselves, they have limited ability to differentiate emotionally, and may frequently possess an inadequate sense of initiative and mastery.

The primary issue addressed by Beletsis and Brown (1981) is the adult child's reluctance to trust both self and others. They attribute this difficulty to early role reversals within the home which result in the child being defended against being either a dependent child or the adult-parent to an out-of-control alcoholic. They suggest that the adolescent will often appear to be a "pseudo-adult". They frequently feel "helpless and frightened while appearing overly mature and capable" (Beletsis & Brown, 1981, p.195). This often results in an overly developed need to control both self and others creating intimacy difficulties in long term adult relationships. Even after leaving home many adult children of alcoholics report that they "have been unable to separate emotionally"(Beletsis & Brown, 1981, p.196). They experience a feeling of abandonment upon leaving the family. Clearly these observations imply that adult children of alcoholics appear to have difficulty resolving intergenerational issues relevant to adulthood.

Cermak and Brown (1982) provided clinical impressions derived from a three year pilot study of approximately 45 adult children of alcoholics ranging in age from 28 to 55. Generally, their sample had a three to two female to male ratio. The observations were made by a female-male cotherapy team while conducting group

psychotherapy. They documented the "existence of a recognizable pattern of conflicts carried by the children of alcoholics into their adult lives" (p. 385). The primary and pervasive clinical observation was related to issues of control. Frequently group members acknowledged an emotional facade which was used to control both intrapsychic processes and interpersonal relationships. In addition, issues of distrust of self and others, emotional vulnerability, hypervigilance, overassumed responsibility regarding the feelings and actions of others, and the blurring of generational boundaries between parents and offspring were all identified in adult children of alcoholics. Although these authors did not directly address intergenerational family processes their observations appear to support interpersonal difficulties in this area.

After completing clinical work with over 1,500 adult children of alcoholics Gravitz and Bowden (1985) identified six stages in the treatment process along with specific therapeutic issues which are frequently observed in this population. The six treatment stages are: 1) survival, 2) emergent awareness, 3) core issues, 4) transformations, 5) integration, and 6) genesis. They have concluded that often adult children of alcoholics possess both physiological and psychological vulnerabilities. Consequently, much of their work involved assisting the adult in the recognition and productive expression of previously denied feelings regarding their childhood experiences. It is their contention that unless the

individual associates his current psychological distress with issues related to familial alcoholism he will probably repeat the dysfunctional patterns previously created within the home. Specifically, they refer to both awareness and acceptance of coping strategies which were developed for survival. They believe that coping behaviors which were successful during childhood may frequently interfere in healthy adult relationships.

Steinglass (1985) explored theoretical family issues within a clinical model of alcoholism which he based on family systems theory constructs. He conceived the alcoholic family as a "behavioral system that is to a significant degree organized around alcohol and alcohol-related themes and behaviors" (p. 162). One result of this organizational process is that specific family regulatory behaviors frequently become "inadvertently or deliberately dependent on alcohol-related phenomena for their successful implementation" (p. 162). He contended that regulatory mechanisms within the alcoholic family appear to emphasize stability (morphostasis) at the expense of long term growth (morphogenesis) which then yields a developmental distortion within the family process. Although Steinglass (1985) did not address offspring directly, his observations appear to imply that adult children of alcoholics may have considerable difficulty in successfully negotiating issues related to individuation, intimacy, and personal authority within intergenerational family processes.

Summary of Nonempirical Literature

The nonempirical literature has a short history, however it does specifically address issues relevant to adult children of alcoholics. Essentially, it has been observed that they are often noticeably undifferentiated within themselves and from parents, frequently have an inordinate need to control self and others (peers), often have difficulty in both the identification and expression of internal emotional processes, and may struggle with separating from the parental home. Given the above difficulties, it seems reasonable to assume that these adult offspring may lack appropriate movement towards resolution of intergenerational family processes when compared with peers from nonalcoholic homes.

Chapter III

Research Methodology

Procedure and Sample

All 195 research subjects were drawn from two rural Southwest Virginia university summer school campuses. Selected university faculty from the Sociology Departments requested the participation of their students. The students were asked to be involved in a study exploring the effects of alcoholism within the family. Once participation was established, all subjects signed a consent form (see Appendix A), completed the Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (see Appendix B), the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire Version C (see Appendix C), and a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). No incentives were provided for involvement in the study.

The sample, which was both nonrandom and nonrepresentative, was composed of 195 subjects divided into two groups. The adult children of alcoholics (ACOAs) group represented 22.6% (n=44) of the total sample. The comparison group from nonalcoholic families represented the remaining 77.4% (n=151) of the sample. Previous research has indicated that approximately 9% of the United States population is composed of ACOAs (Russell, Henderson, & Blume, 1985). Therefore, the number of ACOAs in this sample is greater than what would normally be expected in a randomly drawn group.

Group membership was established by CAST scores. The CAST was used as a confirmatory measure since alcoholism is frequently denied (Beletsis & Brown, 1981) or ignored. Pilat and Jones (1984/85) have determined that this instrument can be reliably used to identify and confirm parental alcoholism. Only subjects who scored 6 or higher were included in the ACOA group. All other subjects were included in the nonACOA group. Demographic information, for the purpose of group comparison, was obtained from all subjects regarding age, sex, race, marital status, education, employment, personal income, and family income.

Instrumentation

Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (CAST)

The CAST was developed by Jones (1981) to aid in the identification of children of alcoholics. It is a self-report inventory composed of 30 items requiring a yes or no response. Pilat and Jones (1984/85) found that six or more positive responses reliably identified 100 percent clinically diagnosed and self-reported children of alcoholics. Consequently, a cut off score of 6 appears to reliably identify children of alcoholics. This instrument is intended to be appropriate for use with children as young as nine years of age or with adults. The total "yes" answers are tabulated to yield a score from 0 to 30. The higher the score the more experience with alcohol abuse and alcoholism. An empirical study (Jones, 1982, January) revealed a validity coefficient of .78

($p < = .0001$) for the instrument. A copy of the instrument can be found in Appendix B.

Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q,QVC)

The PAFS-Q developed by Williamson, Bray, and Malone (1982) is a 132-item self-report questionnaire. A 5-point Likert scale is used to rate responses. It was developed to assess intergenerational processes in the three-generational family system. Individuals rate their present relationships with both parents in their family of origin, spouse and children in their nuclear family, or significant other in an intimate dyadic relationship. The instrument is comprised of eight nonoverlapping scales: (1) Spousal Fusion/Individuation, (2) Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation, (3) Spousal Intimacy, (4) Intergenerational Intimacy, (5) Nuclear Family Triangulation, (6) Intergenerational Triangulation, (7) Intergenerational Intimidation, and (8) Personal Authority. Scales 1 through 4 along with Scale 8 have been designed so that larger scores indicate higher levels of individuation, intimacy, and personal authority. Scales 5 through 7 were developed so that larger scores indicate lower levels of triangulation and intimidation. There are two versions of the PAFS-Q designed for adults, Version A and Version B. Bray and Harvey (1987) developed Version C (PAFS-QVC) which is intend to be used with a young adult or college-aged population.

During the initial development of PAFS-Q three separate pilot-tests were conducted to assess validity and psychometric properties of this instrument. In the first study measures of internal consistency (coefficient alpha) were assessed. The mean reliability coefficients at two different time intervals were .90 and .89 respectively. The individual scales within the instrument demonstrated an acceptable level of internal consistency (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984). In addition, test-retest reliability estimates ranged from .55 to .95 with a mean test-retest reliability of .74. All reliability coefficients were within an acceptable range except for the intergenerational fusion/individuation scale. Generally, correlations between the Personal Authority in the Family System scales and the Social Desirability scale were low. The Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation scale, the Spousal Intimacy scale, and the Intergenerational Intimacy scale had correlations above .30 with the Social Desirability scale, however, this indicates that respondents tend to answer the questions in these scales in a socially desirable way. This issue should be considered when interpreting these scales.

A second study involved a factor analysis of the PAFS-Q. The conceptual scales within the instrument were generally confirmed by the factor structure. There was some overlap however between the Spousal Fusion/Individuation scale and the Spousal Intimacy scale. Bray, Williamson, and Malone (1984) concluded that this "finding

supported the conceptualization of intimacy as closeness with distinct boundaries" (p. 176). Also correlations among the eight scales within the instrument were moderate to low indicating that the individual scales were measuring different aspects of the intergenerational family process.

PAFS-QVC is essentially a modification of the original instrument. Like its predecessor, it is composed of scales which assess individuation/fusion, intimacy/isolation, personal authority/intimidation, and triangulation. A factor analysis generally supported the similarity between the two instruments and provided empirical evidence for the theoretically defined scales. However, PAFS-QVC examines two rather than three generations within the family system. The Nuclear Family Triangulation scale has been omitted. The Spousal Fusion/Individuation and Spousal Intimacy scales have been replaced by Peer Fusion/Individuation and Peer Intimacy scales. Bray and Harvey (1987) found this instrument to be a reliable and valid measure of family processes as experienced by young adults. Test-retest correlations for the seven scales ranged from .65 to .80. Tests of internal consistency (alpha coefficient) were computed for both nonclinical and clinical groups. The lowest coefficient for the nonclinical sample was .73 for intergenerational individuation with .75 for peer individuation being the lowest score for the clinical sample.

Data from the peer scales was not analyzed in this study. Scores were derived by the use of a standard scoring key as suggested by the authors. Finally, J. H. Bray (personal communication, August 20, 1987) stated that "you may not alter the original scales or use items from a single scale". Also, at his request, this instrument has been omitted from this document (see Appendix C).

Demographic Questionnaire

A ten item multiple-choice questionnaire (see Appendix D) was used to assess key demographic variables (age, gender, race, marital status, educational level, employment status, individual income, and parental income) for the purpose of defining sample characteristics and determining group comparability.

Four additional questions concluded the demographic questionnaire. An affirmative answer to question 105 verified kinship with an alcoholic relative, established the gender of that relative, and confirmed the ACOA status established by the CAST score. Question 106 determined the ACOA's age at the time of his earliest awareness of parental alcoholism. This information was gathered in an effort to address research question five. Questions 107 and 108 required a Likert-type scale response regarding a subjective judgement on the level of disruption within the home as a result of parental alcoholism. Question 107 assessed the ACOA's observation in order to assess research question six. Question 108 established the ACOA's opinion regarding how the nonalcoholic

parent would view the family situation. This information was used to address research question seven.

Data Analysis

In order to be assured that the two groups were comparable on demographic characteristics Chi-square tests of independence were computed on variables of age, sex, race, marital status, education, employment, personal income, and family income.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess the amount of variation in scores between the two categories (adult child of an alcoholic versus adult child of a nonalcoholic) of the nominal level independent variable (parental alcoholism) with or against the variation among members of the same category. This statistical method compared the dependent variable means within and between groups. A one-way MANOVA was used to determine whether the groups differed on the five dependent variables and in terms of each of the five intergenerational scales (Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation, Intergenerational Intimacy, Intergenerational Triangulation, Intergenerational Intimidation, and Personal Authority).

A second set of analyses was conducted on the adult children of alcoholics data only. Four sets of one-way MANOVAs were conducted on the five intergenerational scales by each of the four independent variables mentioned in the research questions (gender of the adult offspring, offspring's age at onset (earliest memory) of parental alcoholism, offspring's perceived home effect of

parental alcoholism, and nonalcoholic parent's perceived home effect of alcoholism). Research questions two and four could not be statistically tested with MANOVA due to insufficient sample size.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

As reported in Chapter III, the following data were gathered from 195 university summer school students. Questionnaires were completed by all participants and returned to the course instructor prior to the student leaving the classroom. Even though all participants were encouraged to complete all questions, a number of questionnaires contained missing data. Specifics regarding missing data have been reported for each statistical procedure when applicable.

In order to insure comparability between the study groups, 2 X 2 chi-square analyses were computed on six dichotomous demographic variables (gender, race, marital status, full-time employment, part-time employment, and unemployment) by the two levels (ACOA and nonACOA) of the independent variable family status. This procedure was used to determine the difference between what was expected on the basis of random chance (group equivalence) and what was actually obtained. As indicated in Table 1, with the exception of part-time employment $X^2(1, N=194)= 4.049$, $p<.05$), the two groups were shown not to differ significantly on the variables of gender $X^2(1, N=194)= 1.072$, $p>.05$, race $X^2(1, N=195)= 0.111$, $p>.05$, marital status $X^2(1, N= 195)= 0.326$, $p>.05$, full-time employment $X^2(1, N=194)= 0.026$, $p>.05$, and unemployment $X^2(1, N=194)= 3.145$, $p>.05$. Although statistical significance was reached for part-time employment, this finding was disregarded because there did not

Table 1

Chi-Square Values: Demographic Variables by ACOAs/NonACOAs

Demographic Variables	X^2
Gender	1.072
Race	0.111
Marital Status	0.326
Full-time Employment	0.026
Part-time Employment	4.049*
Unemployment	3.145

*$p < .05$

appear to be a confounding relationship with the intergenerational family variables. One subject did not respond to demographic questions regarding gender, full-time employment, part-time employment, and unemployment.

Demographic Data

Age. The overall study sample had a mean age of 21.65 with a range from 17 to 52 years. The vast majority of study participants 94.3% (n=181) fell between 18 and 25 years of age. The mean age for nonACOAs was 21.69 with a standard deviation of 3.63. ACOAs reported a mean age of 21.52 with a standard deviation of 2.50. The two groups appeared comparable on the age variable. Three subjects did not report this variable.

Gender. Regarding the distribution of gender within the overall sample, 58.2% (n=113) of the respondents were female, whereas 41.8% (n=81) of the respondents were male. Group distribution indicated that 56.3% (n=85) of the nonACOAs and 65.1% (n=28) of the ACOAs were female. The remaining 43.7% (n=66) of the nonACOAs and 34.9% (n=15) of the ACOAs were male. One subject did not report this variable.

Race. Regarding the distribution of subject's racial background, 85.6% (n=167) of the respondents were White/Caucasian, 8.2% (n=16) were Black, 3.6% (n=7) were Hispanic, and the remaining 2.5% indicated that they were either Native American (n=3) or Asian (n=2). Group distribution indicated that 86.1% (n=130) of the nonACOAs and 84.1% (n=37) of the ACOAs identified themselves as

White/Caucasian. The remaining 13.9% (n=21) of the nonACOAs and 15.9% (n=7) of ACOAs indicated that they were other then White/Caucasian. The two groups appeared homogeneous in race.

Marital Status. The majority of study participants, 86.7% (n=169), identified themselves as having never been married. Of the remaining subjects, 6.7% (n=13) reported that they were living with a significant other, while 5.6% (n=11) indicated that they were currently married. Group distribution indicated that 87.4% (n=132) of the nonACOAs and 84.1% (n=37) of the ACOAs identified themselves as having never been married. Of the remaining subjects, 12.6% (n=19) of the nonACOAs and 15.9% (n=7) of the ACOAs reported that they were living with a significant other, married, separated, or divorced. Marital status between the two groups appeared comparable.

Educational Attainment. As can be seen in Table 2, the study sample was primarily composed of undergraduate college students (n=171). This response was indicated by 86.76% (n=131) of the nonACOAs and 90.91% (n=40) of the ACOAs. The remaining 13.24% (n=20) of nonACOAs and 9.09% (n=4) of ACOAs indicated either completed college, some post-Bachelor degree, or advanced degree regarding their level of educational attainment. The two groups appeared comparable on this variable.

Employment. Three demographic questions addressed employment issues. Approximately half, 58.8%, of the study participants indicated that they were unemployed. This response was indicated by

Table 2

Educational Attainment Across Groups

		Some College	Completed College	Some Post-Bachelor Degree	Advanced Degree	Total
ACOA	*n*	40	3	0	1	44
	%	90.91	6.82	0	2.27	100
NonACOA	*n*	131	19	1	0	151
	%	86.76	12.58	.66	0	100
Total		171	22	1	1	*N*=195

62.7% (n=94) of the nonACOAs and 47.7% (n=21) of the ACOAs. As opposed to 33.3% (n=50) of the nonACOAs and 50.0% (n=22) of the ACOAs who indicated that they were employed part-time. The remaining 4.0% (n=6) of nonACOAs and 2.3% (n=1) of the ACOAs reported that they were employed full-time. Significantly more ACOAs compared to nonACOAs reported part-time employment. This difference was statistically significant (see Table 1). One subject did not report for each of the employment questions.

Individual Income. The majority of subjects (n=134) answering this question, 91.67% (n=99) of the nonACOAs and 100% (n=35) of the ACOAs, indicated that their personal income was $10,000 or less (see Table 3). Within the nonACOA group, 5.55% (n=6) of the respondents indicated a personal income between $10,000 and $19,999, with the remaining 2.78% (n=3) reporting an income in excess of $20,000. This variable was left unanswered by 43 of the nonACOAs and 9 of the ACOAs.

Parent's Income. Although the nonACOA group generally reported a higher parental income, this difference was not statistically significant. As can be seen on Table 4, 64.80% (n=77) of the nonACOAs and 46.90% (n=15) of the ACOAs indicated that their parent's income was $50,000 or more. This variable was left unanswered by 32 of the nonACOAs and 12 of the ACOAs.

Information on the following variables was gathered from only those respondents, 77.3% (n=34) of the ACOA group, who identified themselves as being from an alcoholic home. A portion of this group

Table 3

Individual Income Across Groups

		Less Than $10,000	$10,000 19,999	$20,000 29,999	$30,000 39,999	$40,000 49,999	$50,000 And Over	Total
ACOA	*n*	35	0	0	0	0	0	35
	%	100	0	0	0	0	0	100
NonACOA	*n*	99	6	2	0	1	0	108
	%	91.67	5.55	1.85	0	.93	0	100
Total	*n*	134	6	2	0	1	0	*N*=143

Table 4

Parent's Income Across Groups

		Less Than $10,000	$10,000 19,999	$20,000 29,999	$30,000 39,999	$40,000 49,999
ACOA	*n*	1	2	3	4	7
	%	3.1	6.3	9.4	12.5	21.9
NonACOA	*n*	1	8	9	11	13
	%	.80	6.70	7.60	9.20	10.90
Total	*n*	2	10	12	15	20

		$50,000 59,999	$60,000 69,999	$70,000 79,999	$80,000 89,999	$90,000 Or More	Total
ACOA	*n*	2	5	8	0	0	32
	%	6.3	15.6	25.0	0	0	100
NonACOA	*n*	19	23	9	9	17	119
	%	16.00	19.30	7.60	7.60	14.30	100
Total	*n*	21	28	17	9	17	*N*=151

22.7% (n=10) was identified by the CAST as having an alcoholic parent, yet they did not respond to questions regarding their family experience. Clinical experience has indicated that a substantial number of ACOAs are either not aware of or do not willingly admit to having an alcoholic parent (Gravitz & Bowden, 1985). Consequently, this lack of response by some ACOAs does not seem to be that unusual, but rather is to be expected when addressing a potentially embarrassing and sensitive subject like parental alcoholism. The underreporting of this experience was expected. It was for this reason that the CAST was used to identify parental alcoholism.

Gender of the Alcoholic Parent. The majority of ACOAs, 61.2% (n=27), identified their father as being an alcoholic, while considerably fewer, 6.8% (n=3), believed their mother was an alcoholic. Stepparents, who represented a much smaller portion of the ACOA sample 9.1% (n=4), included three alcoholic stepfathers and one alcoholic stepmother. Consequently, 68.2% (n=30) of the ACOA's identified their alcoholic parent as male, while 9.1% (n=4) of this group reported their alcoholic parent to be female. Ten of the ACOAs failed to report this variable.

Finally, it is interesting to note that 26.7% (n=52) of the total overall sample identified a grandparent as being alcoholic. This was an unexpected finding representing a surprisingly high incidence of third generation offspring with alcoholic grandparents. This intergenerational issue is just now being

addressed in the professional literature (Kohr, 1988). This was not an issue addressed in this study.

Gender of the ACOAs. Almost two thirds of this group, 65.12% (n=28), identified themselves as female, while the remaining 34.88% (n=15) identified themselves as male. This variable was not reported by one subject.

ACOA's Age at Earliest Awareness of Parental Alcoholism. The mean age of ACOAs indicating their earliest awareness of parental alcoholism was 11.22 years. As indicated on Table 5, half of this group 68.75% (n=22) fell between 6 and 16 years of age. The range of scores was between infancy and 21 years. Twelve subjects did not report this variable.

ACOA's Perceived Home Effect of Parental Alcoholism. These observations were reported on a seven point Likert-type scale (see question 107 in Appendix D). It can be clearly seen in Table 6 that the majority of respondents, 67.74% (n=21), perceived parental alcoholism as having a disruptive impact on the home atmosphere. This perception of disruptiveness was indicated by a scale response of five or above. This subjective view was followed by 22.58% (n=7) who perceived parental alcoholism as not disruptive to the home environment. A lack of disruptiveness was concluded from a scale response of three or below. Finally, 9.68% (n=3) of the subjects provided a noncommittal response. A noncommittal answer was indicated by a scale response of four. Thirteen subjects did not report on this variable.

Table 5

ACOA's Age at Earliest Awareness of Parental Alcoholism

	Infancy to 5 years	6 years to 8 years	9 years to 13 years	14 years to 16 years	17 years to 21 years	Total
n	4	8	10	4	6	32
%	12.50	25.00	31.25	12.50	18.75	100

Table 6

ACOA's Perceived Home Effect of Parental Alcoholism

Not Disruptive					Very Disruptive		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
n 1	4	2	3	7	4	10	31
% 3.23	12.90	6.45	9.68	22.58	12.90	32.26	100

Nonalcoholic Parent's Perceived Home Effect of Parental Alcoholism. This observation was also reported on a seven point Likert-type scale (see question 108 in Appendix D). The majority of ACOAs 67.74% (n=21), as seen in Table 7, perceived their nonalcoholic parent as identifying parental alcoholism as disruptive to the home environment. This perception of disruptiveness was indicated by a scale response of five or above. This view was followed by 19.36% (n=6) of the respondents who perceived their nonalcoholic parent as believing that alcoholism was not disruptive to the family atmosphere. A lack of disruptiveness was concluded from a scale response of three or below. A noncommittal response was reported by 12.90% (n=4) of the subjects. A noncommittal answer was indicated by a scale response of four. Thirteen subjects did not report on this variable.

Statistical Analysis

Two separate statistical procedures were used to assess sample characteristics. The first was a multivariate analyses to assess mean differences between the ACOA and nonACOA groups on the dependent variables (individuation/fusion, triangulation, intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, and personal authority). This analysis was followed by a second set of multivariate analyses to determine mean differences of ACOA characteristics (parent's gender, ACOA's gender, earliest memory, ACOA's perception, and nonalcoholic parent's perception) on the above mentioned dependent variables.

Table 7

Nonalcoholic Parent's Perceived Home Effect of Parental Alcoholism

Not Disruptive					Very Disruptive		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
n 1	2	3	4	5	3	13	31
% 3.23	6.45	9.68	12.90	16.13	9.68	41.93	100

Research Question One

The first research question asked: do adult children of alcoholics differ from adult children of nonalcoholics on the dependent variables of individuation, fusion, triangulation, intimacy, intergenerational intimidation, and personal authority? Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess the amount of variation in mean scores between the two categories (adult children of alcoholics versus adult children of nonalcoholic) of the nominal level independent variable (familial status) with or against the variation among members of the same category on the intergenerational family dependent variables.

As can be seen in Table 8, a significant Pillai's Trace (V=0.09889; approximated $F(5,146)=3.205$; $p<.05$) was uncovered. This finding indicates a significant difference on the five dependent variables between ACOAs and nonACOAs. Multivariate analysis was designed for discerning differences on several dependent variables, not for determining causality. Therefore, an appropriate summary statement for this research finding is that it can be generalized that in similar, larger populations, ACOAs differ from nonACOAs on the five dependent variables.

Table 8

Multivariate Tests of Significance:

Dependent Variables by ACOA/NonACOA Status

Statistic	Value	*F*	Num *df*	Den *df*	Probability of *F*
Wilks	.90110	3.205	5	146	.0089
Pillais	.09889	3.205	5	146	.0089
Hotellings	.10974	3.205	5	146	.0089
Roys	.10974	3.205	5	146	.0089

Note: *F* statistics are approximated.

Further univariate analysis revealed that the means of two dependent variables, (Intimacy and Triangulation), were significantly different in terms of familial status (see Table 9). Family status mean scores were: Intimacy--ACOA $\bar{X}$=86.00, nonACOA $\bar{X}$=92.40; Triangulation--ACOA $\bar{X}$=28.77, nonACOA $\bar{X}$=31.21. An analysis of the mean scores of the two levels of familial status revealed that being an ACOA is associated with decreased intimacy and decreased triangulation. Also, it is important to note that the individuation finding (ACOA $\bar{X}$=29.26, nonACOA $\bar{X}$=31.05) was approaching significance (see Table 9). This may imply a trend regarding lower levels of this variable within the ACOA group. The type III sum of squares was used for this analysis due to unequal group size.

These results indicate that ACOAs experience less intimacy and less triangulation with parents than nonACOAs. They are however, no more likely than their nonACOA counterparts to experience more intergenerational intimidation or less personal authority with parents. Also, there may be a trend indicating that ACOAs experience greater levels of fusion (lower levels of individuation) with parents than nonACOAs.

Intergenerational family theory (Bowen, 1978; Kerr, 1981), prior empirical research (Wilson & Orford, 1978), and previous nonempirical articles (Beletsis & Brown, 1981; Cermak & Brown, 1982) support less intimacy with parents when a dysfunctional alcoholic home is in evidence. Lower levels of intergenerational

Table 9

Univariate F-Tests:

Dependent Variables by ACOA/NonACOA Status

Dependent Variables	*df*	Type III *SS*	Mean Squares	*F*	Probability of *F*
Intimacy	1	1104.084	1104.084	5.55	0.020
Individuation	1	86.721	86.721	3.22	0.075
Authority	1	28.760	28.760	0.44	0.509
Intimidation	1	10.332	10.332	0.25	0.621
Triangulation	1	160.690	160.690	6.24	0.014

Note: (1,150)=*df*

intimacy were, therefore, a predictable finding. However, it would also be expected, within this same environment, to have higher levels of triangulation. The triangulation variable is intended to measure the extent to which individuals perceive themselves to be pulled between their parents (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984).

The finding of lower levels of triangulation between ACOAs and their parents was unexpected and contrary to intergenerational family theory. A dysfunctional family unit, frequently reported in the empirical (Jackson, 1954; Jacob et al., 1981; Wilson & Orford, 1978) and nonempirical alcoholism literature (Bowen, 1974; Gravitz & Bowden, 1985) would be expected to have higher levels of triangulation. According to intergenerational family theory (Bowen, 1978; Kerr, 1981) increased levels of tension within the family are generally believed to exacerbate levels of triangulation between family members. However, this was not the case in this study. A family life cycle issue unique to dysfunctional alcoholic families may represent an explanation of this unexpected finding. Early awareness of parental alcoholism, perceived to be disruptive to the home environment, appears to encourage offspring to prematurely separate from the family (Chafetz, Blane, & Hill, 1971). It appears that some children, in an effort to escape from a turbulent parental unit, will closely identify with peers and prematurely disengage themselves emotionally from the family. The majority of ACOAs 68.75% (n=22) in this study have reported an awareness of parental alcoholism by age 13 (see Table 5). A significant number

67.74% (n=21) also perceive parental alcoholism as disruptive to the home environment (see Table 6). Consequently, this group of ACOAs may reflect the Chafetz, Blane, & Hill (1971) finding. They may perceive themselves as emotionally disengaged from the parental unit and, thereby, report lower levels of percieved triangulation when contrasted with their nonACOA counterparts.This is not to say that the phenomenon of triangulation is absent, but rather, that young adults from dysfunctional alcoholic homes may systematically deny or ignore this experience.

Intergenerational theory indicates that issues related to personal authority (Williamson, 1981) should not be evident until approximately 40 years of age. Therefore, the lack of a significant difference regarding this variable, when examining a sample with a mean age of 21.65 years, would appear to support this theoretical construct. In other words, the subjects in this sample would not be expected to show any significant differences regarding personal authority issues due to their young age.

Intergenerational intimidation is intended to measure the degree to which the individual is fearful of punishment or loss of parental protection (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1986). It is also intended to be at the opposite end of the continuum from personal authority. Perhaps the lack of any significant difference regarding this variable is a reflection, once again, of the point in the life cycle reached by the respondents. The sample was composed of young adults who were probably in the process of separating from their

families of origin. This may contribute to their lack of intergenerational intimidation.

Research questions two through seven involved ACOA responses only. Four one-way MANOVAs were conducted on the five intergenerational dependent variables by each of the four independent variables mentioned in the research questions (offspring's gender, offspring's age at earliest awareness of parental alcoholism, offspring's perceived home effect of parental alcoholism, and nonalcoholic parent's perceived home effect of parental alcoholism). The research questions referring to the alcoholic parent's gender and the interaction effect between the parent's gender and offspring's gender could not be analyzed due to an insufficient number (n=4) of identified female alcoholic parents. Also, subjects must have completely answered all questions related to the five dependent variable scales, within the research questionnaire, in order to be included in the MANOVA procedures. Differences between the number of subjects used for MANOVA procedures and scales regarding levels of disruptiveness within the home are the result of missing data.

Research Question Two

The second research question asked: is there an effect of the alcoholic parent's gender on the level of the five dependent variables as reported by the adult offspring? Only parents of ACOAs were included in this analysis. The two levels of the independent variable (male and female) were represented by the gender of the

parent. Thirteen subjects did not report on this variable, leaving 31 observations for the analysis. Of this number, only four subjects identified a female alcoholic parent which provided an insufficient sample for a multivariate test of significance.

Although the issue of gender has generally been ignored by intergenerational family theorists (Layton, 1984), it has recently been addressed within the alcoholism literature. Ackerman (1987) in a large nationwide survey, found that alcoholic mothers generally had a more devastating effect within the family than alcoholic fathers. Gender does, therefore, appear to be an important intervening variable when addressing parental alcoholism. It is interesting to note that the surveyed ACOAs in the Ackerman (1987) study reported 20% of mothers, 60% of fathers, and the remaining 20% reported both parents as being alcoholic.

Perhaps this study's sample was too small to capture a sizable number of alcoholic mothers. The ratio of male to female alcoholics has been reported as 5½ to 1 (Freedman, Kaplan, & Sadock, 1972). Therefore, in order to capture a sizable number of alcoholic mothers a larger sample may have been required.

Research Question Three

The third research question asked: is there an effect of the offspring's gender on the five dependent variables? The multivariate test of significance of the dependent variables with gender revealed no significant effect (see Table 10). The two levels of the independent variable (male and female) were

Table 10

Multivariate Tests of Significance:

Dependent Variables by Offspring's Gender

Statistic	Value	*F*	Num *df*	Den *df*	Probability of *F*
Wilks	0.82565	1.183	5	28	0.343
Pillais	0.17435	1.183	5	28	0.343
Hotellings	0.21117	1.183	5	28	0.343
Roys	0.21117	1.183	5	28	0.343

Note: *F* statistics are exact.

represented by the gender of the adult offspring. There was approximately a two to one ratio of female (n=28) to male (n=15) offspring. Ten subjects did not report on this variable or on one or more of the dependent variable scales. Therefore, 34 observations were used in the analysis.

This result indicates that female adult offspring are no more likely to be intimate, fused, or intimidated with their parents than their male counterparts. Also, being a female child is no more likely to encourage triangulation with parents than being a male child. Finally, the gender of the adult offspring does not appear to have a significant effect upon the reported level of personal authority between parent and child.

Gender, as previously stated, has been ignored generally by intergenerational theorists and only recently has this oversight been acknowledged (Layton, 1984). However, in the alcoholism literature, Ackerman (1987) found clear gender differences when surveying ACOAs. Generally, female offspring reported that parental alcoholism had a greater negative impact on personality characteristics then their male counterparts. There appears to be a contradiction between the Ackerman (1987) findings and the results of the this analysis (see Table 10). Although both studies involved ACOAs and nonACOAs, Ackerman utilized a national survey sample of 1,000 adults of which half were from alcoholic homes. Perhaps the difference in sample size accounts for the contradictory findings. However, there is another consideration. Ackerman utilized a self-

identified group of ACOAs which may have introduced a selection bias in his sample. This study sample was gathered with the assistance of an objective instrument (CAST) which may have reduced the likelihood of a similar selection bias. Consequently, this finding may raise some question as to the validity of Ackerman's results.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question asked: is there an interaction effect between the gender of the adult offspring and the gender of the alcoholic parent when examining levels of the five dependent variables? As previously stated for research question number two, there was an insufficient number of mothers (n=4) reported as alcoholic parents. Consequently, a multivariate test of significance could not be conducted.

Previous researchers (Ackerman, 1987; Wilson & Orford, 1978) have suggested a relationship between these two variables, but as yet, this has not been confirmed empirically. Ackerman's (1987) descriptive statistical findings appear to indicate that the gender of the alcoholic parent has different implications for male and female offspring. Ackerman (1987) noted an apparent cross-gender effect indicating that paternal alcoholism had a greater impact on daughters while maternal alcoholism had a greater effect on sons. Therefore, the possibility of an interaction effect involving the gender variable in parental alcoholism does seem to be an important

area for exploration. A larger sample may have made such an analysis possible.

Research Question Five

The fifth research question asked: is there an effect of the offspring's age at onset (earliest awareness) of parental alcoholism on the levels of the five dependent variables? The multivariate test of significance of the dependent variables with the ACOA's earliest awareness of parental alcoholism revealed no significant effect (see Table 11). Fourteen subjects did not report on this variable, or on one or more of the dependent variable scales, leaving 30 observations for the analysis. Subject's age at earliest awareness ranged from infancy to 21 years with 65.7% (n=21) falling between 7 and 15 years (see Table 5). The group mean age at onset was 11.22 years. This group was divided in half at an approximate midpoint for the purpose of statistical comparison. The two levels of the independent variable were represented by one subgroup of all subjects 10 years and younger (n=19) contrasted by a second subgroup who were 13 years or older (n=13). No subjects reported being 12 years of age.

These results, shown on Table 11, indicate that adult children whose earliest awareness of parental alcoholism was at 10 years of age or younger were no more likely to be more intimate, fused, or intimidated than those adult children who were first aware of parental alcoholism at 13 years of age or older. Also, early

Table 11

Multivariate Tests of Significance:

Dependent Variables by Offspring's Earliest Memory

Statistic	Value	*F*	Num *df*	Den *df*	Probability of *F*
Wilks	0.74896	1.274	5	19	0.316
Pillais	0.25104	1.274	5	19	0.316
Hotellings	0.33518	1.274	5	19	0.316
Roys	0.33518	1.274	5	19	0.316

Note: *F* statistics are exact.

initial awareness (10 years or younger) of alcoholism is no more likely to encourage triangulation or discourage personal authority than later awareness (13 years or older).

Previous authors (Ackerman, 1987; Brown, 1988; Woodside, 1983) within the alcoholism literature have addressed the issue of the age at which the child is first exposed to parental alcoholism. They have generally concluded, without empirical support, that the earlier the experience of parental alcoholism the greater the potential damage to child. This conclusion was not upheld by the findings of this study (see Table 11). The reason for this discrepancy is not readily apparent. Perhaps the most likely explanation is the study's small sample size. This lack of a significant finding is further complicated by the fact that 67.8% (n=21) of the respondents did report a disrupted home environment (see Table 6). This disruption finding would appear, from a theoretical perspective, to support disrupted intergenerational relationships. Yet this variable (offspring's earliest awareness of alcoholism) did not prove to be empirically significant within the ACOA group.

A second issue indirectly exposed by the above discussion is related to the gender of the alcoholic parent and the offspring's earliest awareness of familial alcoholism. In this study, 79.4% (n=27) of the respondents identified their alcoholic parent as male. This same group indicated a mean age of 11.22 years for their earliest awareness of parental alcoholism. This finding confirmed

data reported by Ackerman (1987). He found that the offspring's mean age for earliest awareness of paternal alcoholism was 12.7 years. Consequently, this finding seems to support the notion that paternal alcoholism is identified prior to adolescents. Very little is currently known about the relationship between the alcoholic parent's gender and the offspring's earliest awareness of parental alcoholism.

Research Question Six

The sixth research question asked: is there an effect of the offspring's perception of the home impact of parental alcoholism on the five dependent variables? The multivariate test of significance of the dependent variables with the offspring's perception of the impact of parental alcoholism on the home environment revealed no significant effect (see Table 12). Subject observations were reported on a seven-point Likert-type scale with number one indicating no disruption and number seven indicating extreme disruption. Table 6 shows the group distribution of responses for this variable. Two levels of the independent variable were established by dividing group responses at the fifth point on the scale. One level was composed of all responses (n=10) indicated as four or less (nondisrupted home environment). The other level was formed by all responses (n=21) indicated as five or more (disrupted home environment). Twenty subjects did not report on this variable or on one or more of the dependent variable scales. Consequently, 24 observations were used for this analysis (see Table 12).

Table 12

Multivariate Tests of Significance:

Dependent Variables by Alcoholism's Effect on the Home

Statistic	Value	*F*	Num *df*	Den *df*	Probability of *F*
Wilks	0.85181	0.626	5	18	0.682
Pillais	0.14819	0.626	5	18	0.682
Hotellings	0.17397	0.626	5	18	0.682
Roys	0.17397	0.626	5	18	0.682

Note: *F* statistics are exact.

These results indicate that adult offspring who perceive their home environment as negatively impacted by parental alcoholism are no more likely to be more intimate, fused, or intimidated than adult children who do not perceive their home as being similarly affected. Also, perceiving the home environment as disrupted by alcoholism is no more likely to encourage triangulation or discourage personal authority than perceiving alcoholism as not disruptive to the home environment.

The degree of reported disruptiveness of parental alcoholism in this study supported previous findings. As shown on Table 6, 68% of the ACOA respondents, as opposed to 78% of the subjects in the Ackerman (1987) study, reported parental alcoholism as disruptive to either self or family. The two studies seemed to reflect a similar distribution of ACOA beliefs regarding the disruptiveness of parental alcoholism within the home. The lack of a significant finding regarding the intergenerational dependent variables is, once again, difficult to explain and contrary to what would be reasonably expected given previous empirical studies (Chafetz, Blane, & Hill, 1971; Jackson, 1954; Wilson & Orford, 1978) or intergenerational family theory (Bowen, 1978).

Research Question Seven

The seventh research question asked: is there an effect of the nonalcoholic parent's perception of parental alcoholism on the five dependent variables? The multivariate test of significance of the dependent variables with the nonalcoholic parent's perception of

parental alcoholism's impact on the home environment revealed no significant effect (see Table 13). The adult offspring were asked to rate their view of how their nonalcoholic parent would perceive the impact of alcoholism on the home environment. Once again, a seven point Likert-type scale was used with number one indicating no disruption and number seven indicating extreme disruption. Subject responses were divided at point five to establish two levels (disrupted and nondisrupted home environment) of the independent variable. Twenty subjects did not report on this variable, or on one or more of the dependent variable scales, leaving 24 observations for the analysis (see Table 13).

This result indicates that, as perceived by the adult offspring, the nonalcoholic parent's perception of the destructiveness of alcoholism on the home environment is no more likely to engender more intimacy, fusion, or intimidation in adult offspring than a perception of a nondisruptive effect regarding parental alcoholism. Also, the nonalcoholic parent's perception of disruptiveness in the home is no more likely to encourage triangulation or discourage personal authority with parents than a perception of nondisruptiveness within the home. This finding, similar to the situation in research question number six, is contrary to what would be reasonably expected given intergenerational family theory. Bowen (1978) theorized that excessive drinking resulted from, and was a cause for, high levels

Table 13

Multivariate Tests of Significance:

Dependent Variables by Alcoholism's Effect on the Home,

Parent's Perspective

Statistic	Value	*F*	Num *df*	Den *df*	Probability of *F*
Wilks	0.83488	0.712	5	18	0.622
Pillais	0.16511	0.712	5	18	0.622
Hotellings	0.19777	0.712	5	18	0.622
Roys	0.19777	0.712	5	18	0.622

Note: *F* statistics are exact.

of anxiety within the family unit. This, in turn, reduced levels of individuation and intimacy while increasing levels of fusion and triangulation.

This variable was not directly or indirectly addressed in the reviewed literature. However, as can be seen on Table 7, according to the majority of sampled ACOAs 67.74% (n=21) of nonalcoholic parents would see parental alcoholism as a disruptive influence on the home environment. Apparently, this ACOA perception did not transfer through to impact on the dependent variables. Previous empirical (Jackson, 1954; Jacob et al., 1981; Wilson & Orford, 1978) and nonempirical alcoholism literature (Bowen, 1974; Gravitz & Bowden, 1985) has frequently asserted high levels of disruptiveness within the home. However, no previous study has examined this issue in terms of intergenerational effect.

Summary of Statistical Analysis

The omnibus MANOVA test contrasting ACOAs and nonACOAs on the five dependent variables indicated a significant group difference. Specifically, according to the univariate analysis, ACOA's experience less intimacy and less triangulation with their parents. Decreasing levels of individuation for the ACOAs was not empirically supported. However, there did appear to be a trend towards a significant difference between the two groups on the individuation variable.

The offspring's gender, the offspring's age at earliest awareness of parental alcoholism along with perceived levels of disruptiveness within the home, noted by the offspring for both self and nonalcoholic parent, did not significantly affect the levels of the five dependent variables.

Chapter V

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

The primary objective of this study was to determine whether parental alcoholism significantly altered the parent-child relationship. In an effort to address that issue, 195 university undergraduates responded to written questionnaires designed to examine intergenerational relationship variables between parents and offspring. Each participant signed a consent form, completed the Children of Alcoholics Screening Test (CAST), the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire Version C (PAFS-QVC), and a demographic questionnaire. Based on CAST scores, subjects were divided into 44 Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOAs) and 151 Adult Children of NonAlcoholics (NonACOAs). Intergenerational relationship variables of fusion/individuation, intimacy, triangulation, intimidation, and personal authority were assessed by the PAFS-QVC. Demographic data indicated that the sample was primarily composed of white (85.6%), middle class (see Table 4), unmarried (86.7%), undergraduates (87.7%) with a gender distribution composed of slightly more females (58.2%) than males (41.8%).

Specific observations applicable to the ACOA group were that there was approximately a two-to-one ratio of female (65.1%) to male (34.9%) offspring, the majority of alcoholic parents were identified as males (68.2%), the mean age for the ACOA's first

awareness of parental alcoholism was 11.22 years, and 67.7% of the ACOAs recognized parental alcoholism as being disruptive to the home environment. A majority of ACOAs, 67.7%, thought that their nonalcoholic parent perceived parental alcoholism as disruptive to the family environment.

As can be seen in Table 8, ACOAs differed from nonACOAs on the five dependent variables. Specifically, lower levels of intimacy and triangulation, along with an apparent trend towards lower levels of individuation, were found within the parent-child relationship (see Table 9). The independent variables of offspring's gender, offspring's age at earliest awareness of parental alcoholism, offspring's perceived home effect of parental alcoholism, and nonalcoholic parent's perceived home effect of parental alcoholism did not have a significant impact on the intergenerational dependent variables.

Research Findings Related to Intergenerational Theory

The ACOA finding regarding intergenerational intimacy and the trend regarding individuation appeared to support intergenerational theory as explicated by Bowen (1978) and Kerr (1981). In other words, dysfunctional alcoholic families would be expected to yield offspring with lower levels of intergenerational intimacy, along with lower levels of individuation (higher levels of fusion). Bowen (1978) viewed parental alcoholism as a "common human dysfunction" which tends to produce an imbalance in emotional relationships affecting the total family unit (p. 262). This imbalance typically

results in high levels of emotional reactivity (fusion), feeling overly responsible for significant others, and reduced interpersonal intimacy. These experiences are transmitted to the offspring by the family projection process which tends to remain constant over time (Kerr, 1981). High levels of emotional fusion reducing intergenerational intimacy is, thereby, transferred between the generations within a dysfunctional family unit. Therefore, these findings appear to support family systems theory as explicated by Bowen (1978) and Kerr (1981).

The finding regarding lower levels of triangulation was contrary to what would be expected given intergenerational family theory. Low levels of triangulation have been associated with reduced levels of fusion and higher levels of individuation in intergenerational relationships (Bray & Harvey, 1987). Perhaps this finding can be understood as a unique life cycle phenomenon of dysfunctional alcoholic families. This observation was addressed by previous alcoholism investigators (Chafetz, Blane, & Hill, 1971). Another more plausible explanation, however, is that this was not a representative sample, and this finding may not be generalized to any other ACOA group. It is possible that the design of this study did not gather a large enough number of ACOAs to adequately sample this population.

Research Findings Related to the Alcoholism Literature

The major finding of this study regarding lower levels of intimacy and a trend towards lower levels of individuation (higher levels of fusion) is generally supported in both the empirical (Chafetz, et al., 1971; Wilson & Orford, 1978) and nonempirical (Beletsis & Brown, 1981; Bowen, 1974) alcoholism literature. Parents in dysfunctional alcoholic homes are generally believed to be emotionally unavailable to their children (Beletsis & Brown, 1981; Black, 1981; Woititz, 1983). This is primarily due to the reported pervasive and disruptive influence of parental alcoholism to the family experience (Jackson, 1954). In addition, the issue of parental alcoholism as being disruptive to the family atmosphere was confirmed, within this study, by the ACOAs' observations (see Table 6). The majority of ACOAs, 67.7%, identified a home environment that was disrupted by parental alcoholism.

Lower levels of triangulation found among ACOAs are more difficult to understand and explain. Generally, this finding appears to contradict the issue of a disrupted home environment frequently reported in the alcoholism literature. Since 67.7% of the ACOAs identified a disrupted home environment, higher triangulation levels would be expected. However, this was not the case. The Chafetz, et al. (1971) observation of offspring being expelled prematurely from the dysfunctional alcoholic home may be a possible explanation. It is speculated that adolescents who experience high levels of familial conflict may separate

prematurely from the family unit. They, in turn, may perceive lower levels of triangulation with their parents. They essentially see themselves as emotionally cutoff from their parents. According to intergenerational theory, this is a common mechanism to deal with unresolved fusion within the family of origin (Kerr, 1981). Since a trend regarding lower levels of individuation (higher levels of fusion) was apparent, perhaps this would explain the low levels of triangulation observed between ACOAs and their parents.

An unexpected and interesting discovery was that 26.7% (n=52) of the overall sample identified a grandparent as being alcoholic. This finding appeared to highlight an intergenerational issue that is, as yet, absent in the empirical alcoholism literature and is only now being mentioned in clinical observations (Kohr, 1988). Essentially, the negative behavioral patterns identified in the grandparent's alcoholic home are believed to be passed down to the grandchildren. This may be an example of the family projection process described by Bowen (1978). In any event, grandchildren are often unaware of the potentially destructive legacy they may have inherited (Kohr, 1988). Consequently, this observation seems to raise an important intergenerational issue that would warrant further study.

Limitations of the Study

The most obvious limitation of this study was the small sample size. Research question two could not be addressed because of an inadequate gender ratio of alcoholic parents. Research question four could not be addressed because of an insufficient number of identified alcoholic mothers. The issue of the small sample size was exacerbated by data that were omitted by respondents. This reduced the number of subject responses available for analysis in research questions three, five, six, and seven. Perhaps, the small sample size issue alone might account for the lack of a significant difference between the ACOA independent variables and the intergenerational dependent variables.

Several other issues also may have contributed to reducing the efficacy of this study. The sample's homogeneity presented several limitations. The vast majority of respondents 94.3% (n=181) fell between 18 to 25 years of age. This age range represents a developmental transition period between adolescence and adulthood. Levinson (1978) has referred to this developmental phase as the Early Adult Transition. Individuals in this age range often are negotiating the establishment of adult roles while simultaneously separating from the family of origin. Due to the unique developmental features of this age group, caution is advised if these findings are generalized beyond this cohort. Similarly, valid generalization regarding this study only can be made to white

middle-class undergraduates. Sample characteristics may have been skewed by these homogeneous group features.

Generally speaking, the interpersonal dynamics between parent and offspring are poorly understood (Kagan, 1984) as is the relationship between the family and the effects of alcoholism. Steinglass, et al. (1987) have suggested that there is a far more complex relationship between these two issues then is usually thought or has been previously indicated in the professional literature. The impact of alcoholism within the family may not always be clearly negative or dysfunctional. Only a portion of alcoholic families appear to experience dysfunctional dynamics as a result of alcoholism (Steinglass, et al., 1987). This particular study sampled a sizable number of offspring from dysfunctional homes. This conclusion was made because 67.7% of offspring identified alcoholism as disruptive to the home environment. Recent alcoholism literature (Kress, 1989; Steinglass et al., 1987) has suggested that not all ACOAs are impacted negatively by familial alcoholism. If this assertion is correct, this sample did not appear to provide a representative sample of ACOAs. Perhaps ACOAs from less dysfunctional alcoholic homes would have yielded significantly different findings.

Finally, this was a study sample of convenience. Subjects were not randomly selected. Consequently, this was a nonrepresentative ACOA sample. Therefore, it may not be justified statistically to extend the results beyond this investigation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research regarding the alcoholic family along with studies pertaining to the offspring of alcoholic parents are now well established in the professional literature. However, there are still several issues, highlighted by this study, which need considerably more examination.

It was speculated that a unique life cycle phenomenon resulting in lower levels of triangulation due to premature expulsion (emotional cutoff) of adolescent offspring may exist in dysfunctional alcoholic homes. Do dysfunctional alcoholic families with teenagers tend to report lower levels of triangulation between parent and offspring? What would be a reasonable theoretically sound explanation if, in fact, that was the case? Can empirical evidence be found to support the premature expulsion hypothesis discussed in this investigation?

This study unexpectedly uncovered the presence of a sizable number (n=52) of alcoholic grandparents among the overall sample of respondents. This observation raises the issue of how alcoholism among grandparents effects first and second order offspring. Are intergenerational relationship variables altered in succeeding nonalcoholic progeny when alcoholism is present in grandparents?

Family researchers (Olson & Killorin, 1985; Steinglass et al., 1987) have observed that alcoholic families tend to be a heterogeneous group. This same observation has been made of ACOAs (Ackerman, 1987). In addition, some ACOAs may actually be more

resilient as a result of living in an alcoholic family (Kress, 1989). Using descriptive statistics 22.6% (n=7) of ACOAs, within this study, indicated the belief that parental alcoholism was not disruptive to their home environment. Of this group, 67.7% (n=21), indicated that the home environment was disrupted by this variable (see Table 6). Does that mean there are empirically verifiable differences regarding levels of disruptiveness within the alcoholic home? If such differences do exist, what variations in intergenerational processes can be uncovered between alcoholic families with varying levels of disruptiveness? A larger, more representative sample may detect greater individual differences than were apparent in this investigation.

Finally, as mentioned in Chapter one, current knowledge regarding alcoholism is imprecise and in a state of flux. Ackerman (1987) has suggested that parental alcoholism may have varying degrees of severity. Other researchers (Wallace, McNeill, Gilfillan, MacLean, & Fanella, 1988) have differentiated adult alcoholics by levels of social stability. This study did not attempt to qualify alcoholism by either degree or type. Future investigations, exploring the impact of parental alcoholism on family relationships, may provide more definitive results if this variable was more clearly defined and carefully controlled.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

I do willingly give my permission to participate in a research project exploring the relationship between intergenerational family processes and alcohol abuse. My answers will provide valuable information which will aid in the interpretation of this research. The project has been developed through the Department of Family and Child Development at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. I understand that the information I provide will be completely confidential and I maintain the right to refuse to participate at any time. This consent form will be detached from the accompanying questionnaire to insure confidentiality. Any questions, concerns, or comments regarding this study should be directed to Steve Ecker at the Virginia Health Center, 2203 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23223, phone number (804) 643-0003.

Subject's signature----------

Date----------

APPENDIX B

(Children of Alcoholics Screening Test)

Please check the answer below that best describes your feelings, behavior, and experiences related to a parent's alcohol use. Take your time and be as accurate as possible. Answer all 30 questions by checking either "Yes" or "No".

Yes No

--- --- 1.Have you ever thought that one of your parents had a drinking problem?

--- --- 2.Have you ever lost sleep because of a parent's drinking?

--- --- 3.Did you ever encourage one of your parents to quit drinking?

--- --- 4.Did you ever feel alone, scared, nervous, angry, or frustrated because a parent was not able to stop drinking?

--- --- 5.Did you ever argue or fight with a parent when he or she was drinking?

--- --- 6.Did you ever threaten to run away from home because of a parent's drinking?

--- --- 7.Has a parent ever yelled at or hit you or other family members when drinking?

--- --- 8.Have you ever heard your parents fight when one of them was drunk?

--- --- 9.Did you ever protect another family member from a parent who was drinking?

--- --- 10.Did you ever feel like hiding or emptying a parent's bottle of liquor?

--- --- 11.Do many of your thoughts revolve around a problem drinking parent or difficulties that arise because of his or her drinking?

--- --- 12.Did you ever wish that a parent would stop drinking?

--- --- 13.Did you ever feel responsible for and guilty about a parent's drinking?

--- --- 14.Did you ever fear that your parents would get divorced due to alcohol misuse?

--- --- 15.Have you ever withdrawn from and avoided outside activities and friends because of embarrassment and shame over a parent's drinking problems?

--- --- 16.Did you ever feel caught in the middle of an argument or fight between a problem drinking parent and your other parent?

--- --- 17.Did you ever feel that you made a parent drink alcohol?

--- --- 18.Have you ever felt that a problem drinking parent did not really love you?

--- --- 19.Did you ever resent a parent's drinking?

--- --- 20.Have you ever worried about a parent's health because of his or her alcohol use?

--- --- 21.Have you ever been blamed for a parent's drinking?

--- --- 22.Did you ever think your father was an alcoholic?

--- --- 23.Did you ever wish your home could be more like the homes of your friends who did not have a parent with a drinking problem?

--- --- 24.Did a parent ever make promises to you that he or she did not keep because of drinking?

--- --- 25.Did you ever think your mother was an alcoholic?

--- --- 26.Did you ever wish that you could talk to someone who could understand and help the alcohol related problems in your family.

--- --- 27.Did you ever fight with your brothers and sisters about a parent's drinking?

--- --- 28.Did you ever stay away from home to avoid the drinking parent or other parent's reaction to the drinking?

--- --- 29.Have you ever felt sick, cried or had a "knot" in your stomach after worrying about a parent's drinking?

--- --- 30.Did you ever take over any chores and duties at home that were usually done by a parent before he or she developed a drinking problem?

APPENDIX C

(Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire Version C)

This instrument encompassed questions 31 through 95 on the study questionnaire. However, the authors of the PAFS-QVC did not give permission to reprint the instrument in this dissertation. They request that those who are interested in the scales purchase the instrument and manual at this address:

James H. Bray, Ph.D.

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APPENDIX D

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions about yourself and your family.

96. What is your current age? ---------- YEARS

97. What is your sex? (circle number)

1.MALE 2.FEMALE

98. Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic identification? (circle number)

1.BLACK

2.SPANISH OR MEXICAN HERITAGE

3.NATIVE AMERICAN (AMERICAN INDIAN)

4.WHITE (CAUCASIAN)

5.ORIENTAL OR PACIFIC ISLANDER

6.OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) ----------

99. What is your current marital status? (circle number)

1.NEVER MARRIED 4.MARRIED

2.DIVORCED 5.SEPARATED

3.WIDOWED 6.UNMARRIED LIVING WITH SIGNIFICANT OTHER

100. What is the last grade in school that you completed? (circle number)

1.LESS THAN 12TH GRADE

2.12TH GRADE

3.TECHNICAL SCHOOL

4.SOME COLLEGE

5.COMPLETED COLLEGE (SPECIFY DEGREE) ----------

6.SOME POST-BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDY

7.COMPLETED ADVANCED PROGRAM (SPECIFY DEGREE)------

101. Are you presently? (circle number)

1.EMPLOYED FULL TIME (SPECIFY OCCUPATION) ---------

2.EMPLOYED PART TIME (SPECIFY OCCUPATION) ---------

3.UNEMPLOYED

4.RETIRED

5.FULL TIME HOMEMAKER

102. Are you presently? (circle number)

1.FULL TIME STUDENT

2.PART TIME STUDENT

103. If you were employed in 1987, what was your approximate income before taxes? (circle number)

INDIVIDUAL INCOME

1.LESS THAN $10,000	6.$50,000 TO 59,999
2.$10,000 TO 19,999	7.$60,000 TO 69,999
3.$20,000 TO 29,999	8.$70,000 TO 79,999
4.$30,000 TO 39,999	9.$80,000 TO 89,999
5.$40,000 TO 49,999	10.$90,000 TO 99,999

104. To the best of your knowledge, what was your parent(s) approximate income in 1987 before taxes? (circle number)

PARENT(S) INCOME

1.LESS THAN $10,000	6.$50,000 TO 59,999
2.$10,000 TO 19,999	7.$60,000 TO 69,999

3.$20,000 TO 29,999 8.$70,000 TO 79,999

4.$30,000 TO 39,999 9.$80,000 TO 89,999

5.$40,000 TO 49,999 10.$90,000 TO 99,999

105. In your opinion, were any of the following relatives in your family alcoholic? (circle number, if appropriate please circle more than one)

1.MOTHER 6.FATHER

2.STEPMOTHER 7.STEPFATHER

3.MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER 8.MATERNAL GRANDFATHER

4.PATERNAL GRANDMOTHER 9.PATERNAL GRANDFATHER

5.NONE OF THE ABOVE

106. If you answered yes to either parent or stepparent in question number (105) please respond to the following. To the best of your recollection, what was your youngest age when you were aware that your parent(s) was an alcoholic? -------- YEARS

107. If you answered yes to either parent or stepparent in question (105) please respond to the following. To the best of your recollection, what effect did your parent's alcoholism have on the overall family atmosphere within the home? (circle number)

NOT DISRUPTIVE VERY DISRUPTIVE

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.

108. If you answered yes to either parent or stepparent in question number (105) please respond to the following. What is your impression of your nonalcoholic parent's view of the effect of parental alcoholism on the overall family atmosphere within the home? (circle number)

NOT DISRUPTIVE VERY DISRUPTIVE

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.

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