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CASE STUDIES ON PROBLEMS IN THE JEWISH FAMILY

by

Earl L. Kaplan

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

June, 1975

Professor Robert Katz, Referee

DEDICATION

To Martin Goldberg and Dr. Robert Katz for your insight and encouragement.

To all the kids from TOP in the hope that your dreams become your way of life.

To Linda for being there when I needed you.

DIGEST

Case Studies on Problems in the Jewish Family is a phenomenological analysis of the lives of six families. The cases were drawn from the files of the Cincinnati Jewish Federation's "Teen Outreach Program" (TOP), a combination counseling-referral service for adolescents and their families. These cases were selected because they illustrate trends that may be typical of the more than one hundred cases in TOP's files. Names and other information were changed to preserve the confidentiality of the families involved.

The thesis begins with a brief case study, showing how teenage problem behavior manifests the existence of a larger family problem. TOP's role as an agency that makes family, not teenager, interventions is described so the reader has an understanding of the source and dynamics of the research. Finally, a hypothesis is offered to test aspects of Jewish family life. The hypothesis claims that Jews deny the existence of "family problems" because of a belief in the myth of an inherent cohesiveness that stems from mere religious identification.

Next, the theoretical aspects of the hypothesis came under scrutiny. Terms such as myth, Jewish identity, conflict, and problems are described and their implications for the family are explained. An extensive model of a Jewish family system, the dynamics of a family's conflict and the more specific dynamics of a problem family's conflict follows the theoretical explanation. The fourth chapter, then, ties together the hypothesis and model and provides the reader with an introduction to the six case studies

it precedes. The reader should look for the existence of the Jewish family myth, the extent of family Jewish identity, the level of interpersonal conflicts, and the nature of communication, homeostasis, role, and reinforcement problems for each of the six vignettes.

The studies themselves began with short introductions and factual information about the families. Case histories are then described. Following this comes descriptions of the phone contacts made to arrange follow-up interviews, along with the researcher's pre-interview expectations. Each follow-up interview receives an extensive presentation. The studies conclude with analyses of the family situation, the applicability of the hypothesis, an indication of the families' Jewish identities and the implications involved, and short summaries of the total observations.

The last chapter makes a general analysis of all six cases, any common trends and behavior patterns which emerge from the studies. A thorough test of the hypothesis is made, with conclusions drawn from its strengths and shortcomings. A description of additional Jewish identity factors follows the results of this test. The next section considers the traits which can be found in all the cases and their applicability to Jewish families in general. The thesis closes with a number of conclusions about problems in the Jewish family and with a final thought from the author.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A Case in Point: The Steinbergs

It seemed like a typical call to Cincinnati's Jewish Community Center (JCC). The lady wanted to speak with "the men in charge of the teenagers," so the switchboard transferred the call to a JCC social worker, George Feldman, the JCC Program Director. This wasn't to be a typical telephone conversation. The voice on the other end of the telephone sounded tense and frantic. She identified herself as Mrs. Lila Steinberg, mother of two teenage daughters who came each day to the Center's Teen Gameroom. Mrs. Steinberg wanted George to "do something for Sally and Lisa (ages 14 and 12-1/2 respectively). He asked what help he could provide. Mrs. Steinberg suddenly blurted out, "Those girls, they're no good. They won't obey me. They scream at me and my husband. They constantly fight with each other. They stay out at all hours of the night. They don't do their homework. They don't even wash their faces. My husband is sick, he buys them gifts and they treat him like dirt. We're a good Jewish family, but these girls...oh! Can you make them obey me?"

Mrs. Steinberg was beside herself. George assured her in calming tones that the Center would do what it could. After putting down the receiver, George called me into his office. As a gameroom worker, I knew both girls and had spoken with them on occasion. George suggested I try to convince Sally and Lisa to go for counseling at Jewish Family Service (JFS). We both knew that the girls had no real companionship other than each other. They always appeared dishevled, unhappy and angry. Considering Mrs. Steinberg's call and our own knowledge, we felt a

referral to JFS would be the right move.

I went back to the gameroom and approached Sally and Lisa. Just asking them, "You look kind-of down, what's wrong?" was enough. The girls responded by telling me how unhappy they were at home. As they saw it, Mom nagged all the time and Dad didn't seem to care about anything. I suggested that it might be a good idea to tell their side of the story to an elder person who not only would listen to them, but who also would explain their feelings to Mom and Dad. Sally and Lisa seemed skeptical of this idea, but they said they would try. An appointment was arranged for the girls to see a social worker at JFS.

The worker's investigation over the next few weeks disclosed that the situation was more complex than had been realized. Sally and Lisa weren't causing problems in the home. The home situation was causing problems for Sally and Lisa. Mom shouted constantly, giving the girls a stream of orders, Dad tried to buy their good behavior with presents and cash. He took no active role in resolving the conflicts between his wife and his two daughters. For their part, the girls began to "turn off" their parents. Sally and Lisa ignored Mom's orders, took Dad's gifts, and stayed away from home as often as possible. They fought between themselves and did as they pleased around the house.

The social worker concluded that Mr. and Mrs. Steinberg needed help as much as the girls. The family had a shared, chronic problem and an ongoing set of interpersonal conflicts. He brought them all in for counseling <u>as a family</u>. Nonetheless, Mrs. Steinberg kept insisting that they were good Jewish parents who wished to have a good Jewish family. "My husband and I have no problems. Just make these girls obey me."

In the end, the problems and conflicts were never resolved, and the family unit disintegrated. Sally ran away from home and got married. Lisa was arrested for robbery and sent to an adolescent girl's institution run by the State. To this day, Mrs. Steinberg remains convinced that she acted in a blameless manner. The girls brought about their own demise and caused their parents great pain.

The Implications of the Steinberg Case

The problems of the Steinbergs reflect a rapidly emerging pattern in Jewish family life. In general, it has become increasingly clear that the problem of any family member reflects some kind of shared family problem, Jewish families notwithstanding. Just as with Sally and Lisa, almost every instance of ongoing adolescent misbehavior gives a warning sign that the family has either been unwilling or unable to deal with interpersonal tensions. These tensions lead to conflicts that retard the communication, understanding and growth of the entire family. Should the conflicts and problem behavior continue unabated, the family faces a threat to its very existance. A family can handle a problem like this in any of ~~three~~ ways. First, they may confront, define and realistically solve the difficulty. This entails recognizing the problem, believing the problem can be solved, and making the necessary changes in behavioral patterns. Second, they may contain the problem to allow for more time. The solution is postponed without allowing the problem to grow. Third, they may not even contain the problem. The family may act out with impulse, ill-judged, self-defeating harmful behavior. They choose a scapegoat inside or outside the family. Eventually, these defenses break down. Then the family goes through

emotional disintegration which can result in the disorganization of the family ties.[1]

Compared to the first two modes for solving family problems, the third is a deviant methodology, not conforming to acceptable social standards for resolving family difficulties. Thus when a family like the Steinbergs exhibits inappropriate behavior that can lead to a family dissolution, the family is said to exhibit deviant patterns of behavior.

A large segment of the Jewish community tends to believe that these kinds of problems occur in other families, not theirs, and certainly not in Jewish families. They adhere to a general belief that by its very nature the Jewish family is a strong, viable institution. These people contend that only the minutest percentage of Jewish teenagers do drugs, run away from home, engage in frequent sexual activity, consume large quantities of alcohol, commit crimes like theft and vandalism, and do poorly in school (e.g., cut classes, fail to do homework). Naturally, this segment would find it even harder to conceive of the Jewish home as being the source, not the solution, for these adolescent problems.

Community-wide skepticism such as this reflects a myth about the innately cohesive quality of the Jewish family. This myth is a series of well-integrated beliefs which go unchallenged, despite the reality distortions they conspicuously imply. According to the myth, every Jewish family has immutable aspects of stability and solidarity by its very nature of being Jewish. The Jewish family unit is always a tightly knit group. Individual families have been known to cling to this myth as well. However, contrary to the myth, psychologists and social workers

around the country point to the rapidly growing number of Jewish families who behave in deviant patterns. A family may perceive itself of "good Jewish stock," but that does not preclude the existence of problems. The Steinbergs case exemplifies this idea.

The "Teen Outreach Program" (TOP)

A new type of Jewish communal program has emerged to deal with family problems. Called "Outreach," this program attempts to resolve the family problems that can manifest themselves in adolescent difficulties. Outreach workers provide whatever counseling and referral assistance a family might need to work through its conflicts. The program gets its name from the active role it plays in the community. People not only come to the workers for help but the workers "reach out "to troubled people as well. Outreach personnel identify potentially troubled individuals and families and "informally" intervene in their problems. (A typical informal intervention was made in the lives of Sally and Lisa Steinberg that day in the gameroom.) The intervention can be unsolicited as well as solicited. Client families often act hesitant or resistant about being approached. Thus, the duty of the Outreach worker is to allay their fears, and begin an active process of counseling and referral.

Normally Outreach intervention leads to referral to a community agency that can handle the problem in depth. After referring his client(s) to the right person, the worker provides secondary counseling. By contacting the individual or family at regular intervals to "see how things are going," the outreach person reinforces the role of the primary counselor. This kind of informal reinforcement, along with

periodic meetings with the primary counselor, makes outreach intervention an ongoing process, not a one-shot affair.

My own background in the field of family deviance comes from first-hand experiences with the "Teen Outreach Program" (TOP) of Cincinnati's Jewish Federation. Supervised by JCC and JFS, TOP has intervened in over 150 family problems over the past three years. The Steinbergs were TOP's first client family.

Originally, TOP began in the teen gameroom as an expansion of regular supervisory duties. The new duties included the development of a motivational program for disaffected teenagers. The program began modestly with art classes and field trips, but with no intention of counseling and referral. All of that changed in February 1971 when Mrs. Steinberg contacted George Feldman. Working closely with JFS, Marty and I realized that TOP had the ability to provide help to the troubled teens who frequented the gameroom, and to their families.

Informal intervention would begin by talking with the identified teen and some of his/her friends in a group setting. This would lead to a private conversation. The teens felt comfortable speaking with us and trusted our judgment when it came to family contact and referral to an agency. They began telling their friends about TOP, and the program grew. By April, teens started approaching us with their troubles, seeking advice and help.

That summer the Jewish Federation closed down its "Teen Coffee House" and directed its efforts to expanding TOP. Extra workers were hired, the gameroom was opened to all teens in the community, and TOP widened its target area to include families who were not members of

the JCC.

Initially, "Coffee House people" stayed away from the gameroom. TOP workers reached out to the parks, the bowling alleys, the streets, and other hangouts to convince those teens that the gameroom was an "okay" place to be. Towards the end of the summer, the teens came to the gameroom in droves. The number of informal interventions, solicited and unsolicited, increased dramatically.

The success of outreach programs like TOP and similar programs in other Jewish communities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and Boston, indicates that ~~deviant~~ problem families can be helped. People like the Steinbergs have an identifiable place to turn for help in solving problems.

The Goal of the Project

Outreach workers continually ask themselves an important question. What casual factors spawn anti-social behavior in the family? Scientific studies on the topic, especially regarding Jewish families, have proven inconclusive. A noted expert on the Jewish family, Samuel Glassner, conceded that there never has been an all encompassing attempt to measure both the good side and the not-so-good side of Jewish family life. He finds that what little data exists ranges from probability statistics to highly impressionistic opinions.[2]

Despite this lack of data, a viable answer to the question of causality may be possible. Inductive reasoning, based on social theory and case studies of actual deviant families could lead to new insights about Jewish family relationships.

This thesis will explore the area of ~~deviance~~ problems in the Jewish family. The goal will be to determine if these causes are common to

all problem families, or if they have some uniquely Jewish quality. A wide range of literature on family processes and case studies from TOP will provide the foundation for the investigation.

To conduct the right kind of explanation the following hypothesis will be tested:

> "Jewish families exhibit problem behavior in typically American modes with one addition. The added component is their belief in the inherent goodness and solidarity found in every Jewish family. Any problem faced by the Jewish family comes from a source eternal to it. Any problem can be solved within the family itself. Such a belief is a myth and a totally false perception.
>
> Clinging to this myth, problem Jewish families have a disposition to use denial as a defense mechanism. Only when they can recognize this myth of the Jewish family can they begin to resolve their chronic problems and conflicts."

Testing this hypothesis will allow for a better understanding of Jewish family dynamics, and may provide another means for discovering the sources of problem behavior in the Jewish family.

A Concluding Thought

The ancient Rabbis spoke highly of Shalom Bayis, peace in the home and family compatability. This kind of peace stems from the highest level of familial relationships. Like so many Jewish parents, Lila Steinberg wanted peace in her home, but she didn't know how to achieve it. Naively, she believed her Jewish home was automatically a good home. Two problem daughters just happened to live there.

Many other troubled Jewish families live with equally muddled self-perceptions. Their conflicts and problems worsen as each day passes, and they face eventual disintegration as a family unit. To ~~restate~~ restore a state of Shalom Bayis for them, the sources of their behavior should be ascertained. This thesis, "Case Studies on Problems in the Jewish Family" will investigate the behavior patterns that have strained the ties of today's Jewish families.

Chapter 2: Myth, Reality and Jewish Family Problems

The Theoretical Aspect

The last chapter glimpsed into the life of a troubled family, the Steinbergs. Mr. and Mrs. Steinberg considered themselves the parents of a good Jewish family that had problem teenagers. Their daughters, Sally and Lisa, thought their parents mistreated them. A growing conflict developed, manifesting itself in bickery between the mother and the daughters, fighting between the sisters, and antisocial behavior by the girls in the general community. All parties denied any responsibility for the difficulties. In the end, the total interpersonal problem led to a fracturing of the family ties.

A case like this illustrates many general traits found in problem families. Aggravated conflicts have no resolution. Troublesome behavior presents itself in the community as well as in the family. Family members deny the existence, the severity and/or their own responsibility for the problem. This denial represents a defense mechanism that prolongs and worsens the difficulties.

According to our hypothesis, a Jewish component of this problem is the belief in the myth of the Jewish family. (Not only Jews, but Christians as well, have often expressed that Jewish families "just seem to be a lot closer than other families of other religions.") Indeed, some Jewish families cling to a perception of themselves as a cohesive unit with innate strengths and close knit ties. They perceive the source of all conflicts as coming from "outside agitators" (i.e., bad friends). They feel the conflicts will subside of their own accord because of some innate, subjective "goodness." In order to test the validity of this hypothesis, actual case studies will be reviewed and analyzed.

An understanding of the theoretical aspects of the hypothesis aids in achieving this goal. The key aspects include: (1) The nature of a myth, (2) The religious component of American Jewish family identity, and (3) The phenomenon of family problems. This theoretical understanding heightens the awareness of family behavior and dynamics. In this light, the Jewish family appears in a realistic setting; a clearly defined system of interaction and interrelationships among all its members.

The Myth of Jewish Family Life

> "The family that prays together stays together."
> "The family is the backbone of the Jewish community."
> "...and they lived happily ever after."

Despite the constant praise, glorification of the family does not always have a basis in reality. The concept of the family is so unique that the word itself has no synonym. In addition, each individual family system has unique strengths and shortcomings that makes it unlike any other.

To speak about any family unit as typical of a general category perpetuates a myth. Some myths can be harmful to a family system, while others are not. For example, a family which calls itself "cohesive like other Jewish families" but can also cope with problems will not be affected by the myth. However, the family which adheres to the myth and refuses to recognize a potential strain may be adversely affected. For Jewish families, the two most widely held myths are the "average family" and the "close knit" family.

The term "average family" came into being as a yardstick for measuring the relative merits of the group.[1] "Above average" connotes a set of stable relationships. "Below average" hints at a perception of unresolved difficulties.

Still, the term had no definite meaning because a problem family or a problem-free family could see themselves in either light. Thus, for a problem family the myth of being "average" can distract attention away from resolving real difficulties. The myth of the "close knit family" is a corruption of the traditional Jewish value of Shalom Bayis. Shalom Bayis meant "family harmony." In order to achieve this end the Jewish family should provide for the growth of each person and for the entire group. Individual potentials had to be coordinated. Strong feelings of family identity were to be maintained. Physical resources belonged to all and were to be shared by all. These actions would lead to a healthy sense of family pride and "close knit" ties.[2] When families declared Shalom Bayis to be an inherent attribute, rather than a group process, the myth became a substitute for the real need to work together.

Thus, when a Jewish family with real problems adheres to a myth of being "average" or "close knit," that adherence can obstruct resolution of the difficulty, and perhaps even aggravate them. Denial manifests itself as the family attempts to bar confrontation with external pressures or internal realities.[3] In the end, the defensive or protective function of the myth provides the family with escape and not a solution.

The "Jewish" Characteristic of Family Identity

Disregarding myths, many people have often wondered how "Jewish" the American Jewish family really is. Starting with the SCREP components (social, cultural, religious, economic, educational, and political)[4] of any social system, they wanted to know which of these components had particularistic Jewish characteristics for the family, which had universalistic American characteristics, and which had both. By combining all the factors the Jewish

characteristics of any individual family's identity might then be determined.

Regarding the particularistic Jewish elements, four qualities stand out. First, the Jews have a distinct culture that obviates any geographical or national distinctions.[5] The notion of Klal Yisrael (world Jewish community) allows the Jews to share a set of values (i.e., Torah) with fellow Jews in all corners of the globe. Second, the religious nature of the Jew has its own special distinction. Heschel describes a Jew as "a person who knows how to keep alive what is Holy from the past and to cherish the promise and vision of redemption in days to come."[6] These notions find expression in ritual and liturgy. Third, the social system of Jewish family life evolves in a framework of history and tradition. The celebration of life cycle events and the various holidays greatly influence the family social patterns. Fourth, Jews always felt a historical threat to their existence from the forces of anti-Semitism. This "survival mentality" has created strong ties among Jews everywhere; that the fate of the individual is the fate of the whole community.

Although these Jewish characteristics still play a role in family life, they seem to have a secondary prominence. The universalistic characteristics of secular American society have become the dominant feature of family life.[7] In mamage patterns, child rearing and many other ways, the Jewish middle class family has become indistinguishable from other middle class families. Basic economic, political and educational needs are satisfied within the secular environment. With the rapid mingling of many ethnic groups in present day America, distinctive cultures have given way to a mass, monogenized culture. The assimilation of dress, language, behavior and customs has extended to the American Jewish family, putting their stress on the "American" qualities.[8] Differences of religion among individuals are downplayed.

Dr. Jacob Marcus once told a group of rabbinical students that "90 percent of everything in an American Jew's life is American." Whether or not his statistic is accurate, the Jewish component of family identity certainly has lost the importance it held generations ago. Today's stress is on the characteristics of the universalistic, secular components of family life.

The Phenomenon of Jewish Family Problems

Many different types of situations can develop into family problems. Two individuals may have trouble communicating with each other. Individual family members may resist progressive change that would better the entire family. Family alliances may form to place other family members in uncomfortable positions. Even such external factors as economic pressure or the physical handicap of an individual can catalyze the problem situation.

The main symptom of any problem within a family system is conflict between its members. A conflict relationship arises when one person demands immediate change from another and the other does not comply.[9] Unlike disagreements or rivalries, both parties in a conflict seek to hurt each other, as well as change each other.[10] The hurt can be physical, emotional, or both. Family members take on the roles of attacker, victim, and also healer."

The sequence of a conflict usually follows a seven step process:

1) Initiation - The first spark of tension between two individuals.
2) Build-up - The growth of interpersonal strain over time.
3) Actual Conflict - An overt clash between the individuals with covert meanings.

4) Accommodation - The end of the overt phase of the conflict.

5) Conciliation - A formal phasing out of covert conflict.

6) Reassessment - Evaluation of the relationship after the conflict ceases.

7) Aftermath - The status of the interpersonal relationship and its new pattern of development.[11]

The chronic conflicts for problem families occur when enduring personality characteristics provoke the conflict.[12] Either an accommodation never leads to honest conciliation, or reassessments fail to erradicate the sources of the conflict. Denial often adds to this failure. The inability to resolve the conflict can lead to a progressive family disorganization.[13]

Any family can have a conflict. The important aspect for the continuation of the system is whether or not the family can resolve the conflict and erradicate their basic problem.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the three main theoretical aspects involved in the hypothesis of Jewish family problems. The applicability and potential danger of myths, especially the "average family" and the "close knit Jewish family" were ascertained. The notion that Jewish components of American Jewish family identity have secondary importance also added to an understanding of the hypothesis. Finally, the development of conflict within a family system often follows a defined sequence.

CHAPTER 3: IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM JEWISH FAMILY

An Overview

"A family is a unit composed not only of children, but of men, women, an occasional animal, and a common cold."[1]

"All happy families resemble each other. Each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."[2]

These thoughts from Ogden Nash and Fyodor Dostoyevski introduce the next phase of this research project. Knowledge of Jewish family systems should go beyond the level of speculation and literary hyperbole. To improve on this knowledge a working model of the configurations and dynamics of Jewish family life, especially during conflict situations, will be developed. This model, combined with the understanding of terms like "myth", "Jewish", "denial", and "conflict" as presented in the last chapter will be of assistance in identifying the sources and symptoms of family problems. Naturally, they also increase the efficiency of testing the hypothesis about adherence to the myth of the Jewish family.

Developing the Model

R. H. Rodgers defines the family as a "semi-closed system of individuals, occupying interrelated positional roles. The role content changes over time as the family grows and interacts with the greater societal system to which it belongs."[3] A Jewish family system can be defined in this same dynamic sense with one addition. The family has chosen to adopt certain Jewish beliefs and practices.

With this definition in mind, three steps will be taken to build this model of the Jewish family. First, family configurations and family systems will be outlined. Second, the dynamics of family conflicts will be explained. Third, the types of conflicts which represent chronic family problems will be specified.

Family Configurations and Family Systems

Family configurations are formed by the interrelationships of the members. Social scientists list three categories of configurations. Nuclear families include the marital partners, their offspring, and any household resident (i.e., relative, servant). When one of the marital partners leaves the household through death, divorce, or marital separation, the family becomes a "single-parent" nuclear unit. Should two single parents remarry, the joining of their households becomes a combination family. Unlike the horizontal plane of this combination family, the extended family exists on a vertical plane. United by a parent-child relationship, the extended family may include parents, grandparents, other close relatives, and offspring.[4]

For any of these families, the key functions include union and individualization, care of the young, cultivation of affection and identity, reciprocal need satisfaction, training for tasks of social participation, creative fulfillment of the members, and the providing of economic necessities.[5] People and resources from the greater society may assist in the task fulfillment, but the family unit retains the primary responsibility.

In a Jewish family system, these functions parallel the obligations encompassed by the principle of Shalom Bayis. For previous generations, the extended Jewish family accepted these responsibilities. However, a majority of today's nuclear Jewish families assume full responsibility for themselves. Kinship ties have greatly weakened over the years so that extended relationships have secondary importance for most people.[6]

Within the family system, each member has a unique position and set of functions to perform. For example, the duties of the husband-father are anchored to his occupational life as he provides for his family's economic necessities and luxuries.[7] Although spending much of his day at work, he does assume a dominant role in the home, alongside his spouse.[8] He offers his children a male role model for love, self-esteem and the ability to interact in society. He also shares in the major decisions of the family, and fulfills sexual and reproductive needs with his wife.

The functions of the wife-mother complements the duties of her spouse.[9] In addition to providing a female role model for love, self-esteem and societal interaction, as well as fulfilling sexual and reproductive needs, she has a specialized task. She becomes a skillful mediator who assures perpetration of emotional security and family solidarity. With rare exception, she also becomes the most significant adult in the life of her children.[10] This indicates that her duties are anchored to her home life.

Together, the marital pair becomes the cornerstone of the family. In a process of mutual accommodation, the couple develops patterned

transactions, each spouse influencing the behavior of the other. These transactional patterns form a web of complementary demands that regulate many family situations. This includes primarily the sharing of authority for family decisions, and the providing of social and emotional companionship for each other and their children.[11] However, even with today's call for women's rights, the ideal of full equality has yet to be realized in most family systems.

In previous generations, the father dominated the Jewish home. Nowadays, the Jewish family can be viewed as an extension of the mother's personality, relative to the father's.[12] This shift occurred as the men spent increasing amounts of time in the work world, and women took on new power managing the democratic household.[13]

Similarly, in the Jewish household of bygone days, offspring had a duty to uphold the traditional commandment of honoring the father and the mother. The rabbinic writings never emphasized the psychological and emotional needs of the young because they were implicit in normal family life.[14] In these times, both adolescents and younger children seemingly receive more honor than they give.

An adolescent has an ambiguous position within the family system. On one hand, the teenager has certain adult self-perceptions, while on the other hand retaining certain childlike qualities. Erik Erikson recognized that technological advances put more time between early school life and the young person's final access to specialized work. Thus, the stage of adolescence has become a way of life between childhood and adulthood.[15] An overt sexual awakening emerges. Bodily and emotional changes occur. The adolescent searches for identity values

and social orientation, simultaneously dependent and independent of the parents.[16]

Younger children have a more defined position in the family. They are almost totally dependent upon the parents for basic physical and emotional needs. On an informal level or through example, the children learn how to perform societal, family, and personal tasks, how to cope with the environment, how to communicate, and how to express emotion.[17] Depending upon the situation, the learning can stress conformity to or diversity from established social patterns.[18] Unconsciously, the child may emulate many of the parents' personal traits. The term used to describe this transmission of learning from the parent to the child is called socialization.

Jewish tradition placed a high value on this socialization process, teaching children both secular and religious norms.[19] Much of that has now changed, regarding the socialization of religious values. Both adolescents and younger children have been "tuned-off" to deepening their Jewish identies because their parents have "assigned" and not socialized the Jewish way of life. While parents have achieved exemption by virtue of adulthood, they expect their children to practice Judaism in the Religious School, worship services, and community activies.[20] This double standard has weakened the growth of Jewish values in many homes.

All family members interact in complex, interdependent patterns within the family system. Their social relationships form a network, and not an organized group.[21] These networks consist of ties between

family members that shape the system's interactional process (see Appendix I). Subsystems and alliances between subsystems develop with the network as some ties become naturally stronger than others. Typical subsystems include parents, children, males, and females, but other subsystems exist as well. Family members involve themselves in a variety of these subsystems. Social boundaries appear, indicating who participates in the subsystem and how (see Appendix II).[22] In the best of situations, frequent interaction occurs across the boundaries (i.e., father and mother discuss plans to take boys to baseball game and girls to the zoo).

Just as individuals participate in a family system, individual families share a wide range of interactions with the functional subsystems of society (see Appendix III). The family system accommodates itself to a culture, and transmits the cultural values. Thus, families should be understood with reference to the values, geographic settings, and subcultures of the surrounding social system.[23] For the Jewish family, the social values of the environment often influence and conflict with ethnic and religious values.[24]

Family systems and configurations represent three interrelated levels of family life. These include: (1) Multiple interaction patterns between family members, beginning with the central relationship of the marital pair, (2) The personal development of each family member, and (3) Interaction of each family unit with outside community.[25]

Dynamics in All Family Conflicts

No family has a 100 percent perfect pattern of interaction. Problems arise at various occasions and the surest symptom of a problem surfaces when family members engage in conflict. Three areas in which conflicts most frequently occur include communication between individuals, the adaptation of roles and their reciprocal nature, and the change and growth of the family system, known as homeostasis. Depending on a family's self-awareness, reinforcements in any of these areas can promote either the resolution or continuation of the conflicts.

a. Communications

"Whatcha doin' Dad?"

"You can have it, Tom."

"I don't need it."

"So why ask?!"

"What's the use!!" [26]

This dialogue between Tom and his father typifies a conflict in communication. Tom wants his father to chaperone a Temple Youth Group retreat, but he doesn't make this clear. Assuming Tom wants the car, Dad responds. By failing to understand the other person, father and son grow angry, separating without resolving the conflict.

Communication requires the ability to transmit and receive thoughts, ideas, wishes, feelings, beliefs, values, longings and aspirations.[27] A properly congruent message requires a leveled balance of verbal and non-verbal inputs.[28] The sender of the message should succintly relay

his thoughts while the receiver must balance what was said with the way in which it was said. Since this interaction occurs rapidly, both people should attempt to clarify any obscurities. For example, Tom might have told his father, "I'm not sure I understood you. I just wanted to ask if you'd chaperone on the retreat."

Conflicts occur on two levels. First, Virginia Satir maintains that parents and children alike live under the delusion that others see and hear only what they want them to see and hear. They deny the existence of double level messages.[29] A father who acts irritable on an early Sunday morning will have difficulty convincing his son to have a good attitude about getting up and going to Religious School. Second, people who fail to clarify their messages will only promote mutual antagonism. Tom and his father could have avoided needless animosity by making sure they understood each other's vague comments.

b. Roles

In any family system, the members perform tasks and functions, and behave in certain ways. When this activity transpires in an ordered or recurrent pattern, the member has adopted a role.[30] An individual has both family and society roles to fill that function interdependently and interchangeably. (See Appendix IV.) For example, male adult can be husband, father, employer, and disciplinarian. Female adult can be wife, mother, household manager, Sisterhood member and comforter. Teenager can be child, older sibling, employee, student, and family prankster. Younger child can be dependent, Little League first baseman, "model child." The number of roles any person might adopt has no limit.

Since people interact in dynamic fashions, roles exist in interactional sets.[31] Parents need children, harmonizers need combatants, employers need employees, and so on. As families grow and relationships mature, individuals continually shed old roles and adopt new ones. Roles that have mutual viability and functional effectiveness and which individuals feel are proper and gratifying are said to be reciprocal.[32]

Role conflicts develop when strain replaces reciprocity. Role sets may be incompatible. A typical example of incompatibility are the roles of the nagging mother and the resentful adolescent. Certain organization of roles may lead to a structural strain. A young adult who happens to be the "baby of the family" often resents that role. In any case, the strain occurs as a person feels an unwanted role has been forced upon him. Until that unwanted role can be shed and a new role set can be established, the conflict continues. No flexibility exists in functional and behavioral role allocating.

C Homeostasis

The process of change and rebalancing a family's equilibrium, homeostasis, refers to the vital principle that preserves the continuity of the human organism; the capacity for maintaining effective coordinated functions under the constantly changing conditions of life.[33] Family therapy expert, Nathan Ackerman, insisted that change, growth, learning,

adaptation to new conditions and creative evolutions of interchange are essential elements of family life.[34] To promote homeostasis, any family must be sensitive enough to distinguish and encourage constructive changes.

When family systems resist homeostasis, tensions build and conflicts emerge. Alliances form between those resisting change and those who desire it. Until a concensus arises on the direction of growth, the system's viability begins to deteriorate. An example of this is the family that always attended Rosh Hashanah services together. One year, the seventeen year old daughter chooses not to attend. Do the parents insist on her participation, or do they allow for individual choice? Until a decision is made which reestablishes a new equilibrium of relationships, the conflict strains family ties and retards homeostasis.

d. Reinforcement

When considering the emergence of conflicts in a family system one should recognize the effect of reinforcing stimuli. Positive reinforcements such as praise, attention, rewards, smiles, and a human touch can promote healthy behavior. The opposite actions, insults, inattentions, undue punishments, frowns, and physical coldness are the kinds of negative reinforcements that promote deviant behavior. Naturally, the withdrawal of reinforcements has the effect of indicating displeasure with behavior patterns and encouraging change. As behavior patterns continue over time, only periodic and/or partial reinforcements become necessary as follow-ups for the initial reinforcements.[35]

A family can easily slip into the habit of reinforcing the conflicts and strains which result from inadequate communications, role strain, and retarded homeostasis. They must constantly determine if the type of reinforcement being used fits the mode of behavior desired to be encouraged or changed. Also, the reinforcer should deal with the behavior and not the personality of the individual.

For example, a father can positively reinforce good communications between his wife and daughter by calmly saying, "Let's sit down and discuss the matter rationally." A negative reinforcement would be to scream, "Stop all of this yelling, I can't stand it." From this simple illustration, one can see the far reaching effect that reinforcement has on conflict situations.

Dynamics in Problem Family Conflicts

Thus far, a number of areas have been investigated as sources of family conflicts. Family problem behavior when conflicts in any of these areas are either left unresolved, or prolonged to chronic conditions. In many instances, the denial of the severity or the very presence of the trouble can heighten the difficulty.

Returning to the conflicts of communications, roles, homeostasis and reinforcement, the roots of this problem behavior can be determined.

a. Communication

Between any two people in any given situation, absolutely clear communication is impossible. Nevertheless, there are degrees of incompleteness. In most ongoing problems, the chronic conflict normally results

from dysfunctional messages, poor socialization, interference from a third party, or prolonged defensiveness.

Dysfunctional messages can occur in a variety of ways. Senders and receivers tend to overgeneralize, misuse words, use vague expressions and omit important items.[36] Coincidentally, they fail to seek clarifications. No leveling occurs between non-verbal and verbal transmissions. As the dysfunctions continue family members tend to rebuff, attack, evade, placate, blame and/or distract one another, but they don't communicate in a proper sense.[37]

Poor socialization can be another source of conflict. Parents have been known to implant indirect, vague, and unrealistic values and social patterns to their offspring. A marital pair with low self-esteem will transmit this deficiency to the child as well. Thus, the child grows up with incomplete, incorrect or ambiguous personal conclusions about proper social behavior.[38] He may integrate low self-esteem, lack of personal trust, and faulty emotional control into his own personality.[39] When this poor socialization manifests itself in later years in the form of anti-social teenage behavior, the parents cannot understand how they may have caused part of the difficulty.

Other problems may arise when one family member interferes in the communication of others. The interfering agent ignores the social boundaries of a family subsystem, inhibiting the growth of that subsystem and creating tensions and conflicts between those in the subsystem and the troublemaker outside of it. A good example of this is the mother who obstructs a relationship between father and son. Still

the continuity of any type of interference becomes a real problem for any family.

Defense mechanisms may be one of the chief trouble spots for problem families. Although appropriate in short term situations; i.e., cocktail gossip, a prolonged defense can only worsen the interactions of a family system. Some of the common defense mechanisms include rationalizations, displacements, projections, and regressions. The most common defense, however, is denial.[40] Needing to maintain a self-image, the family defense supports that image, even if it is a fantasy or a myth. In the event of a problem, the defensiveness becomes a threat to the vitality of the family.

b. Roles

In a problem family, role sets often become diffuse and uncomfortable. As role strains develop, opportunities for personal growth become stifled. The three basic types of role strains are lack of reciprocity, self-fulfilled prophecies, and scapegoating.

The lack of reciprocity indicates a lack of sensitivity by family members. Conflicts can reach chronic levels as they fail to adopt compatible role pairs and shed retarding ones. Parents who expect adolescents to act in set behavioral patterns are a typical problem source.

A self-fulfilled prophecy occurs when family expectations unwittingly help to shape a specific mode of behavior. For example, two teenagers may constantly berate their mother, telling her, "You spend more time playing bridge than you do helping us. You don't love us, you just want to give us orders. You're a horrible mother." The teens keep communicating this idea in various forms over a period of time. This

generates hostility and a self-defeating attitude in the mother. Eventually, she refuses to believe she is a horrible mother and she disciplines her children even more. Thus, the teenagers have helped to engender a personality trait, that of disciplinarian, in their mother.

The role of the family scapegoat emerges in many problem families. One person becomes a kind of "lightning rod" for family frustrations and anxieties. All problems of the family system are attributed to and identified in this individual. He or she is made to suffer for all the woes of the household, and is "sacrificed" for the good of the rest of the family. Conflict occurs when the scapegoat tries to shed the unwanted role.

A good illustration of scapegoating occurs when a problem family forms an alliance against one teenage child. The boy internalizes the family conflict and acts out (displaces his frustration and anger) in the community, perhaps by taking drugs or shoplifting. The family members seize on this behavior as proof of a "problem teenager" and assign the role of the scapegoat to him.

c. Homeostasis

Problems in homeostasis occur in one of two forms, both of which include a good deal of conflict. The most common trouble results from extended indecision about family growth. Some members desire a change, some resist it as detrimental to the family system. A conflict arises between the two factions and continue unabated. No new equilibrium can be established and the family system faces a serious threat.

A lesser source of trouble, but even more serious, arises when the family grows in a retarded fashion. With a dysfunctional role applied

to the family scapegoat or the object of a self-fulfilled prophecy, the subsystem develops a warped sense of unity at the expense of their victim. The longer this pseudo-homeostasis continues, the larger the potential conflict. Once the victim tries to throw off the inhibiting role, the retarded homeostasis crumbles, leaving the family system in shambles.

d. Reinforcement

Problem behavior can be reinforced as easily, if not easier, than appropriate. Nagging, scolding, personal attacks, other disdain, and the like do nothing to resolve any of the aforementioned problems. These actions only heighten the tension and the existing conflicts. Each person who remains unaware of his own ability to reinforce problems can disable the family unit he considers so vital to his life.

e. The End Result of Problem Behavior

Should any problem and conflict be allowed to continue unabated, the family system may encounter irreversible strains in the ties between member, permanent disabilities of function and growth, or even the total collapse of the family system. Nathan Ackerman points out malignant behavior trends, dominant focus on self-destruction and the breaking of long established defense mechanisms as just a few of the indications that foreshadow the demise of a family system.[41]

A problem family does have two resources for problem resolution. First, they can rely on their own strengths and assets to cope with the difficulty. Second, they can enlist the aid of a family therapist. As an outside objective voice, the family therapist helps a family to:

(1) Recognize the existence and extent of its problem, (2) Realize that the problem may still be resolved, (3) Learn the appropriate manners of behavior that promote harmony and growth, and (4) Change the dynamics of the family to encourage homeostasis.[42]

Conclusion

The working model of the Jewish family shows the total dynamics of the unit. Configurations and systems explain how each family member is an interdependent part of the total scheme and how each family is an interdependent part of the general society. Family members interact in a wide range of subsystems that help form a network. The individual family system has dealings with the functional subsystems of the society.

Tensions and conflicts arise for any family system since perfect modes of interaction are impossible over time. Difficulties stem from poor communications, faulty role adaptation, insufficient homeostasis and improper reinforcement of behavior. The problem family acts in ways that promote chronic aggravation of these conflicts, leading to permanent harm for the family system; and in extreme cases, leading to its demise.

This model of Jewish family dynamics shows how any family system functions in the best and worst of situations. Combining it with the theoretical understanding of the hypothesis, real life cases can be surveyed to determine the source of individual family problems and to test if the myth of innate Jewish family cohesiveness adds an extra factor to problem behavior in the family.

Appendix I- Types of Family Networks

Taken from Turner's Family Interactions
(John Wiley and Sons, NewYork, 1970, p. 122)

F=father A= adolescent B= young boy

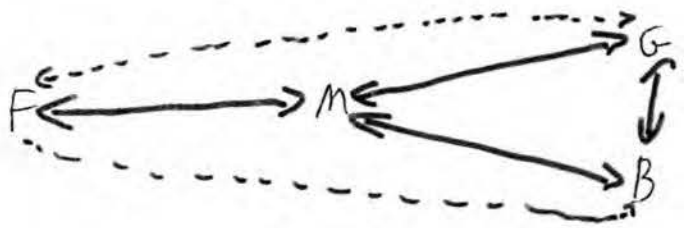
M= mother G= young girl

---------= strong communication links

- - - - -= weak communication links

(Note: These are only two of many possible networks)

①



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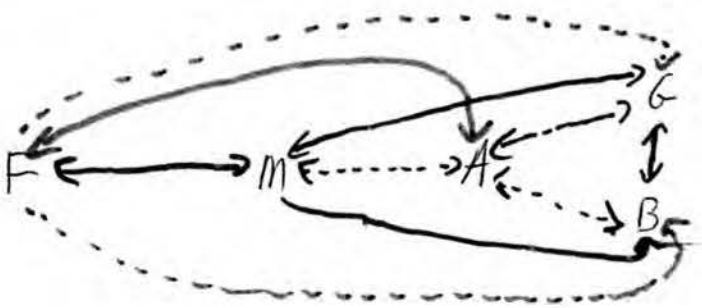
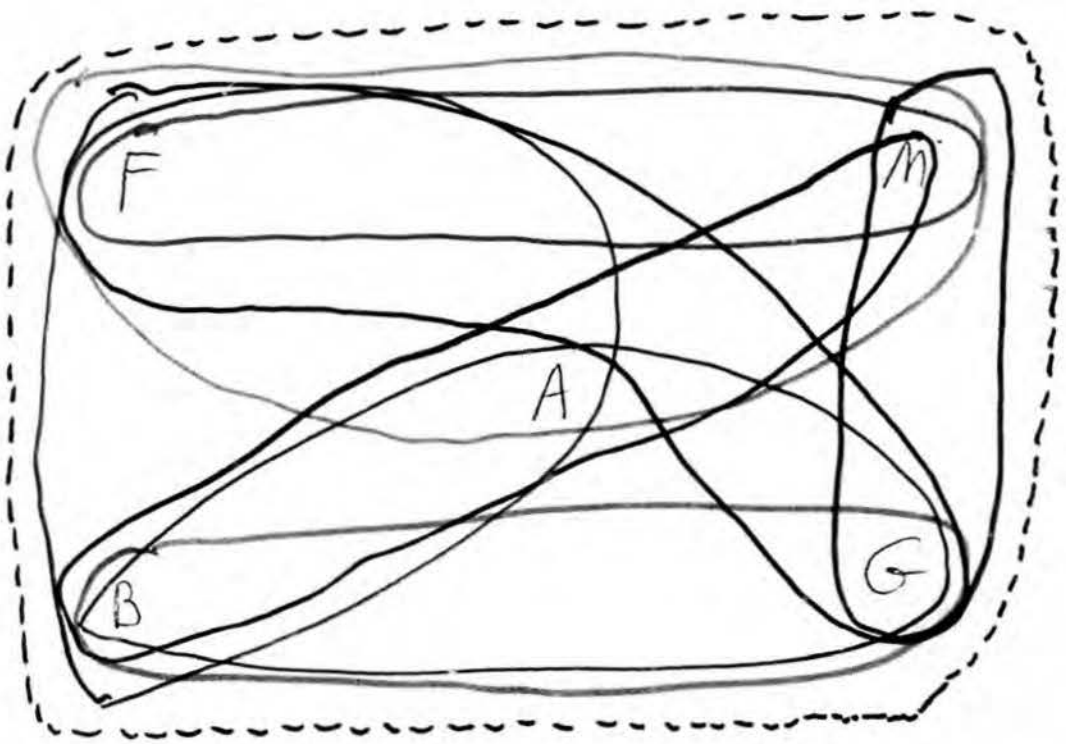


Appendix II- Varieties of Family Subsystems and Boundaries

Developed by Earl Kaplan

F = Father M = Mother A = Adolescent Male B = Young Boy G = Young Girl



Father- Mother

Children

Younger Children

Males

Females

Father- Daughter-

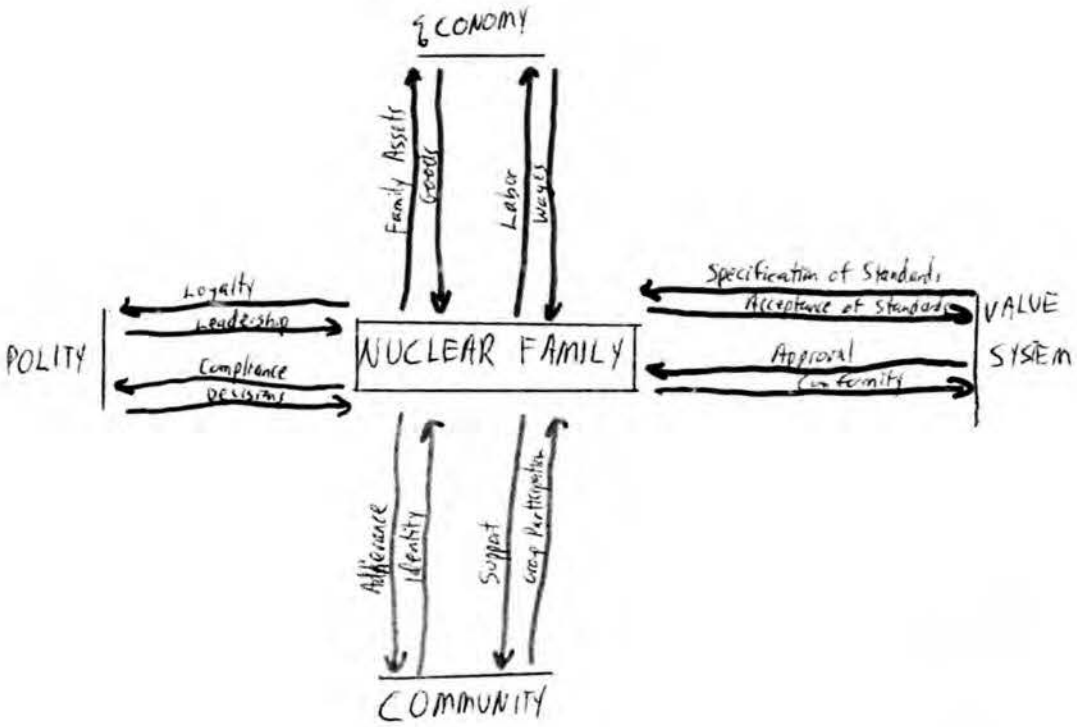
Mother- Sons

Parents- Older Child

-- = Total System

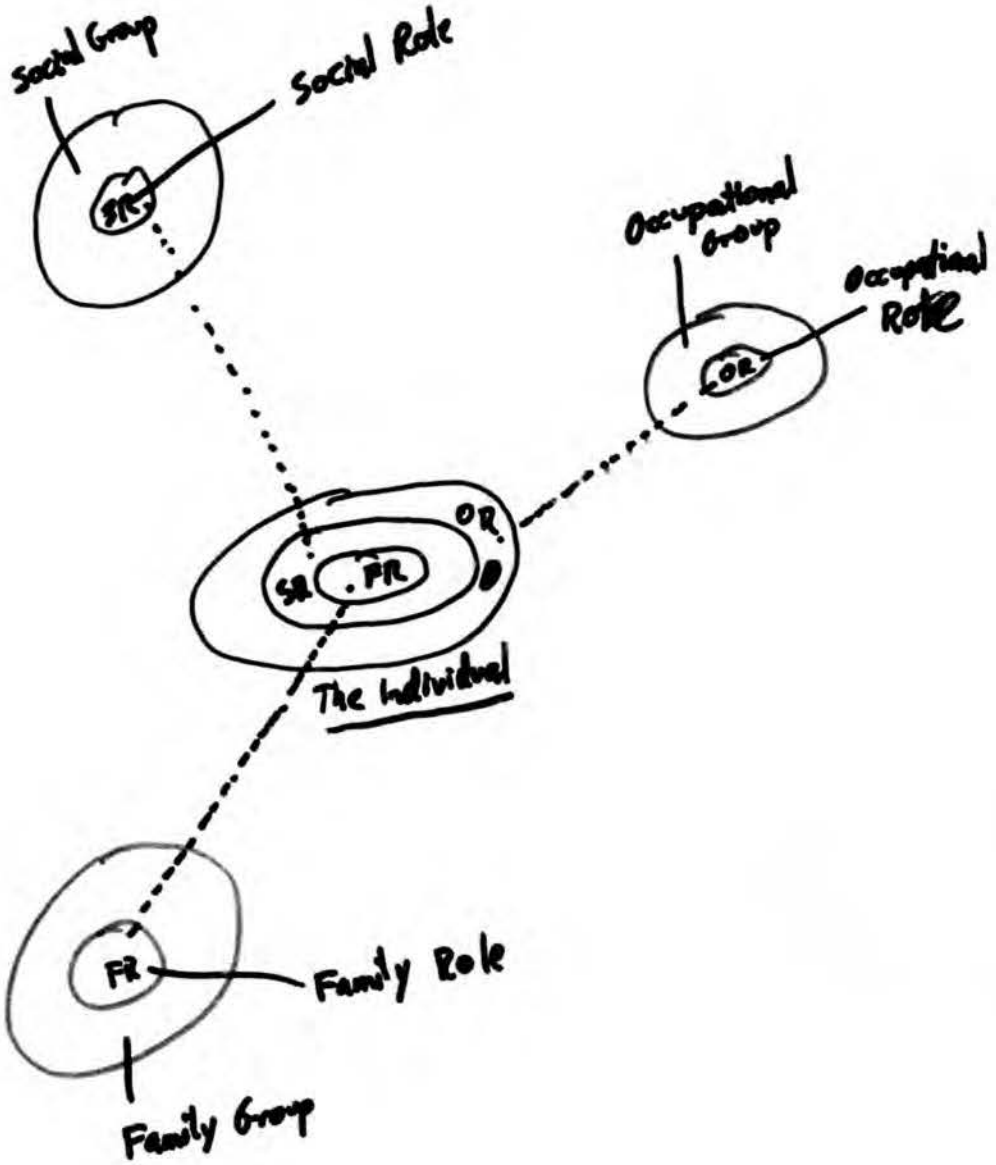
Appendix III- Interchanges Between Family and Society

Taken from Bell and Vogel's Introduction to the Family
(Free Press, New York, 1968, p. 10)



Appendix IV- Identity as Totality of Roles

Taken from Ackerman's Psychodynamics of Family Life (Basic Books, New York, 1958, p. 56)



Chapter 4: METHODS FOR RESEARCH ON JEWISH FAMILY PROBLEMS

Introduction

Thus far, this project has considered the important aspects of myths, conflicts, Jewish identity, and denial, and it has presented a model of Jewish family system dynamics. Now actual cases will be considered to test the hypothesis that problems in Jewish family life may in part result from the family's failure to take therapeutic action to resolve their difficulties; the inhibitions stemming from a persistant belief in the myth that Jewish families have an inherently cohesive quality.

Determining the Facts

To obtain the empirical facts needed to evaluate the hypothesis, two steps were taken. First, many cases from the TOP files were reviewed. Six of the cases were selected because of their wealth of information and because they typify general classes of Jewish family situations. Second, each family consented to a follow-up interview to discover the sources of problem behavior and to investigate if previous behavior patterns had been altered or not since the last contact.

An interview schedule was devised to maximize the amount of information that could be obtained from the families under study within a period of forty-five to sixty minutes. Desired information included the character of family communications and conflicts, the role structure in the family, abilities of each member to function in the overall

system, the potential for homeostasis, the nature of Jewish identity in the home, and the self-evaluation of the family's strengths and weaknesses. This information would pinpoint the sources and development of family problems, and examine the viability of the hypothesis.

The schedule included the following questions:

1. What has happened in your family since the last contact?
2. What things do you like about your family? Is anything missing?
3. Is there anything special for you about being a Jewish family?
4. How do you celebrate Shabbat?
5. Do you all have dinner together? What did you talk about at the last family dinner?
6. What are the qualities of a good husband-father? A good wife-mother? A good son? A good daughter?
7. What would you like to see improved in other family members?
8. Was TOP helpful to your family?

During the interview-discussions, the researcher was alert to the data regarding group associations and memberships, since these are important in determining Jewish identity.

Once the schedule had been finalized, the interview process began. Each of the selected families received a phone contact. Both the nature of the thesis and TOP's need for follow-up information were explained to each family member. The families were told this would be an informational interview, and not an intervention. Also, their confidentiality would be preserved.

During the interviews themselves, the careful planning did not obstruct the spontaneous atmosphere of the discussion. Set at ease by the informality of the sessions, all six families responded freely and openly. One family member would begin talking about recent events, and almost immediately the others would add their own impressions. Questions from the schedule were weaved into the conversation at natural moments. One person would be questioned, and then other family members would be asked for any additions or corrections. This method revealed the necessary information as well as new information not covered by the schedule. Families tended to reenact interpersonal arguments or pleasant chats that had already occurred. Both verbal and non-verbal patterns emerged.

What Should the Facts Show

With the combination of the past history and the recent interviews, new information about myths, conflicts, and their role in Jewish family life should be uncovered. Using inductive logic, similar behavioral traits might be noted in other Jewish families. The plausibility of the hypothesis will be determined, and thus, we might come to a better understanding of the nature of Jewish family systems.

CHAPTER 5 - "IT'S NOT US, IS IT?" - THE COOPER FAMILY

Introduction

A family system in trouble can reach a critical stage if their problems go unchecked. At this "point of no return," they either begin correcting the improper behavior or else the difficulties can cripple or disorganize the system. The Cooper family came quite close to suffering this kind of damage. A two-part unit with an older daughter and two younger sons, they allowed problems to fester in an unaltered pattern over a period of years.

Seymour Cooper, age 55, owns a furniture store. A short (5 foot, 5 inch), introspective man, he devotes much of his free time to the Boy Scouts as an advisor, and to his synagogue study group. Mrs. Harriet Cooper, age 52, an outspoken, gregarious woman, serves as a full time psychiatric social worker for the County, and participates in Hadassah. Lucy, age 18, is a freshman at UCLA. While in high school, the attractive girl received academic honors, in addition to being a cheerleader and a mainstay in the school's theatrical productions. Rick, age 16 and a high school junion, has a powerful physique and a loud voice, both of which he frequently used. A below average student, his two main interests are photography and automobiles. Tim, age 12, is a below average, seventh grade student. A roly-poly youngster, Tim's main social outlet is the JCC gameroom.

The Cooper family has membership in a conservative synagogue and in the Jewish Community Center. The parents' social activities are from synagogue-sponsored groups, while the children's activities take place at the JCC, except for Religious and Hebrew schools, which are

offered by the synagogue. All the children attended regularly since kindergarten. Lucy became Bar Mitzvah, Rick a Bar Mitzvah, and Tim will be a Bar Mitzvah this May. The family attends High Holy Day services, but rarely attends other worship services.

The Coopers found the means to adopt appropriate behavior patterns which checked the growth of the family problems. They did so without ever consciously admitting the severity of the problems. This case illustrates one way in which a family can eliminate harmful behavioral modes before passing the "point of no return."

The Case History

Tim Cooper stood at the drinking fountain near the gameroom. Happy-go-lucky Tim, who's major social outlet was the Jewish Community Center, usually had some kind of greeting or friendly insult, but this time he looked agitated and said nothing. Replying to a hello and an inquiry about his noticeable silence, Tim responded, "Things aren't too good. Rick is picking on me. He slugs me all the time." Twelve year old Tim, the youngest of three children, went on to describe how his seventeen year old beother, Rick, harrassed him around the house. According to Tim, the sequence of events were the same. His older brother would insult him verbally, Tim would return the insult in kind, and Rick would hit him on the arm with a clenched fist. Other times, Rick would hit him without provocation. Asked if he sometimes didn't throw the first insult, Tim remarked, "not as much as Rick does. And I don't hit him...those punches really hurt. My folks yell at him to stop, but he doesn't listen to them. Lucy (the elder sister) used to

yell at him, too, but he'd just yell back. I just wish Rick would leave me alone!"

This incident was another in a series of incidents that had occurred over a five year period. TOP workers had been approached by Rick Cooper and his parents, Seymour and Harriet Cooper, on frequent occasions to talk about "Rick's problems." Tim's complaint only added to these.

Rick Cooper exhibited two sets of personality traits. At times he acted like any other teenager, doing fairly well at school, acting somewhat boisterous at times, getting along well with his peers and his parents. He took part in JCC trips, and even joined such normative activities as the Junior Basketball League. He also mentioned enjoyment of Sunday School classes. At other times Rick seemed greatly troubled. His acting boisterous became obnoxious and insulting to both his peers and to the TOP workers. He would pick fights in the gameroom, cut classes, and either scream at his parents or totally ignore them (at which point the Coopers would call TOP for help). Rick's actions also caused consternation in the community. The school had suspended him on a number of occasions, and truant officers frequently contacted Mrs. Cooper to determine Rick's whereabouts. Once he had been taken to court on an assault and battery charge, the case being dismissed for lack of evidence. Another time he and three friends ran away to South Carolina for three weeks. (Rick came home on his own, the others were arrested and brought home later).

One general trend had emerged that linked these two sets of traits. When Rick had a part-time job he appeared self-satisfied and content.

Then, a moodiness would overcome him, affecting his job performance. Eventually, his employees either laid him off, or fired him. With no job he appeared edgy and unhappy. A glazed look covered his face, usually the result of drugs or heavy drinking. Aggressive actions would soon be forthcoming. At the time of the water fountain conversation, Rick had been unemployed for almost three months.

During these five years of ups and downs, Rick felt comfortable discussing his problems with a TOP worker. Possessed of a powerful physique, he would always challenge the worker to a test of strength or get into a friendly insult match before bringing up a personal matter. Subduing his usually loud, harsh tone, Rick might speak about school, girls, jobs, or friends. Generally, Rick sought out a TOP worker when bored and/or unhappy, and he would repeatedly mention how he wanted to do something to better himself.

Only once, at age fourteen, did Rick ever speak about his family as a source of problems. At that time, he claimed his parents idolized Lucy, his older sister, and favored young Tim. Rick felt his parents did not give him enough attention and affection, but the recipient of undue amounts of orders and punishments. As he grew older, Rick still came to talk about problems and self-betterment, but he never again complained about his family to a large degree.

During Rick's moody streaks Seymour and Harriet Cooper would grow worried. Observing their son's behavior, extremely lethargic, or extremely angry, they would contact TOP for help in determining the source of this behavior. Inquiries about the home situation would elicit replies that the family was not the source of the problem. On the contrary. Rick had been making the family suffer for his problems.

Tim and Rick engaged in "the usual sibling rivalries," and Lucy tried to act as peacemaker between Rick and her parents. At times she and Rick would yell at each other, but only when Lucy felt Rick had been hurting the senior Coopers. Mrs. Cooper always insisted that the problem had to be school, friends, the lack of a job, or "something inside of Rick." Mr. Cooper echoed her sentiments.

Much of the Cooper's reasoning that extra-familial forces caused Rick's troubles stemmed from their personal backgrounds. Seymour Cooper, Boy Scout advisor, once bemoaned that he could "relate to a hundred other boys, but not to my own son." Harriet Cooper, based on her professional abilities, felt she always showed great concern for her children, both in word and deed. Thus, despite the Cooper's disclaims of family responsibility, they still felt frustrated over their inability to correct Rick's recurring problems.

During one of Rick's roughest times, TOP decided to make a personal family intervention. For a three month period, Rick had been cutting classes on a large scale, doing drugs almost every day, and fighting incessantly with people in the gameroom. With Rick's permission, a home interview was arranged for the following week. Again Rick had said, "I'll do it if you think it will help me improve myself."

As we entered the clean, modest Cooper home that evening, Mr. Cooper came to greet us. Mrs. Cooper was busy in the kitchen. Offering us seats, Mr. Cooper stretched his 5'5" frame out on an easy chair and foot stool. He relit a half-smoked cigar while a classical record

continued playing in the background. Rick walked in, quietly said hello, and took a seat in the middle of the sofa, opposite his father. Finally, Mrs. Cooper came in with a tray of coffee and cake. She profusely apologized for staying so long in the kitchen and urged us to make ourselves at home. Mrs. Cooper took a seat on the sofa next to Rick, between the teenager and her husband.

Mr. Cooper turned off the stereo and asked the purpose of the visit. Told about Rick's poor behavior and his express desire to better it, Mr. Cooper nodded his head. "Rick's been through a lot these last few months," he said. "If he'd just stop the clowning and do something about it, he'll be okay. His mother and I encourage him all the time." Mrs. Cooper interjected that she, too, was proud of Rick, and she just wished he would change his present mood. Mr. Cooper then added in a stern tone, "Rick tells us that the family situation is pretty good. The problem isn't here at home. It's not us, is it, Rick?" Rick slowly nodded his head in agreement with his father, saying only, "Yeh, things at home are okay."

Rick said almost nothing for the rest of the discussion. His mother acted as an advocate for the entire family, often repeating that "the worst is over; Rick will start doing better." Mr. Cooper, too, refrained from speaking unless a question was directed to him. Even then his answers were brief and Mrs. Cooper would fill in the rest of the answer in detail.

As the conversation progressed, Mr. and Mrs. Cooper mentioned outside sources of trouble, such as bad friends, poor attitude toward

school, the lack of a job or a hobby. Another factor became apparent, however. While Mr. Cooper was analyzing Rick's personal life, as much as he expressed care and concern for his son, the two had few common interests. Mr. Cooper was a quiet man who liked to read. He spent a great deal of time with the Boy Scouts and the synagogue study group. Rick, an extroverted teenager, liked sports, photography, and auto mechanics. At a recent field trip to a hockey game, Rick had mentioned, "My Dad never takes me to spots stuff. He's not into that. I go with you or my friends."

In addition, Mrs. Cooper spoke of how she wrung her hands with worry every time the phone rang. "I tried to tell Rick what he could do to help himself, but he kept turning me off. I just gave up talking about it." Rick had mentioned once in the gameroom that he felt his mother nagged him too much.

Throughout the visit, the Coopers directed a number of sensitive, empathic comments to Rick. They told him they loved him and that they only wanted the best for him. It did appear that a great deal of this love in the Cooper household went unexpressed, so we suggested that a few words of affection or an occasional kiss and a hug might make everyone feel better. Mr. Cooper appreciated the suggestion, but added, "You see, our home life is alright. We'll help Rick get a job or join the wrestling team." Mrs. Cooper chimed in, "he's a good boy and it's a new quarter at school. The worse is over."

A month later, a large supermarkert hired Rick as a stock boy. Rick's behavior started to change noticeably for the better. His grades

improved, he acted less aggressive in the gameroom and he reduced his intake of drugs and liquor. However, when the supermarket laid him off a couple of months later, the old behavior pattern returned. And again, the Coopers contacted TOP for help and advice.

This evolution of Rick's behavioral shifts and the Cooper's phone contacts continue to the present. Just recently, Tim mentioned that the situation had improved. "Rick has a job down at the hardware store. He doesn't have time to pick on me anymore."

Phone Contact and Initial Expectations

Although Seymour and Harriet Cooper both agreed to a follow-up interview, the tone of their voices sounded hesitant. Assured that this was not another intervention, but just an informational discussion, the Coopers felt less skeptical. Mr. Cooper was busily engaged in finishing an article for a Boy Scout magazine, so no meeting could be arranged for three weeks.

With Rick still working at the hardware store, I expected the family to be in a positive mood. Mr. and Mrs. Cooper would probably use this calm to reinforce their opinion of the extra-familial nature of Rick's problem. Both would most likely insist that their practice of Judaism made the family strong, not just their belief in the religion. They would probably add that TOP had done fine work for other Jewish families, but that TO had made a mistake in looking at their family as the source of any difficulties.

Rick, who should be at the hardware store, will have to be contacted individually. I suspect he will feel very good about himself now that he is working again. He may not be able to pinpoint any causes for his past actions, but he should be mentioning his self-improvement desires again.

Tim will probably praise his family life and his personal life, fixing responsibility for any household problems on Rick. He, too, will support the view that a family strength comes from the practice of Judaism in the home.

Lucy, away at college in California, will be unavailable for personal contact.

The Follow-up Interview

Surprisingly, Rick attended the interview, but Tim never showed up. I had stopped by the hardware store before the session to discover that Rick would be finished early that evening. He had agreed to come along for the discussion. Ricks' hair had grown quite long, the beginnings of a beard outlined his face, and he sounded cheerful as we got into the car. Flexing his muscles and patting his recently well-fed stomach, he spoke excitedly about this new job. In addition, Rick mentioned a renewed interest in photography and plans to rebuild a broken motorcycle.

As we entered the Cooper living room, Mr. Cooper rose from his chair and told Rick to throw the garbage out. In a loud voice, Rick angrily replied that Tim had the responsibility for that day.

Mr. Cooper disagreed. The two argued back and forth for a few moments. Although their decibel level was high, each Cooper had a certain sparkle in the eye and half smile on the face that showed approval for this kind of open communication. Unlike the past, they disagreed over a job assignment, not over personality traits. Finally, Mr. Cooper went to the kitchen to check the family job list. Seeing Tim's name under "Garbage," he acknowledged that Rick was correct. Rick smiled, knowing that he had successfully proved a point.

Once this matter ended, Mr. Cooper seated himself in the easy chair, Mrs. Cooper took a seat on the sofa, and Rick straddled a dining room chair. Rick immediately continued talking about his plans, this time in regard to school. He intended to spend his senior year in a technical school for advanced training in auto mechanics and body work. Mrs. Cooper interjected that Rick had even given thought to college. (Throughout the discussion, Mrs. Cooper did most of the talking, occasionally interrupting or answering a question intended for someone else. Both Coopers also kept focusing the discussion on their children, trying to deflect any personal questions).

The conversation went on to explore a variety of things. Remarking about the constqnt bickering between her two sons, Mrs. Cooper felt that except for a rare fist fight, most of the boys' arguments were typical sibling rivalries. Rick chimed in that Tim "bugged him" and Mrs. Cooper agreed that Tim did start the conflicts as often as Rick. She added that recently Tim had been more of a problem for the family than Rick. His grades in school had gone down, and he just did not seem to care.

Mrs. Cooper admitted that she had been "nagging" Tim to do his schoolwork, but that proved useless. After about three days of no nagging, Tim became uneasy. He thought his mother had become angry with him. As Mrs. Cooper said, "he begged me to nag him again, so I did. He says it helps him get his work done."

When asked how if he "nagged" his children, Mr. Cooper said that he acted in a "non-directive" manner. "I'll only give advice when it's wanted. I try to be objective about the situation." Mr. Cooper explained that he used a silent treatment to indicate displeasure. "When I'm upset," he said, "I don't even talk to them. The kidgs get fidgety, they take the hint that I'm mad, and they come to me to find out what's wrong."

Speaking about Lucy's role in the family, Mrs. Cooper spoke of how well she did in school and how much she enjoyed cheerleading. She had taken an active part in JCC theatrical productions. The only time she ever became angry was if she felt Rick's behavior was hurting her parents. Then, she would talk harshly to her brother. "She only did it because she worried about us," Mrs. Cooper concluded.

Talking about Judaism in the home, the Coopers used Shabbat dinner as a reference point. Every week they light candles, make Kiddush and say the blessing over the bread. During the meal, the family sits around the table and "shmooses" (Yiddish term meaning to engage in a lively conversation). Only rarely did they attend Shabbat services at the conservative synagogue to which they belonged. Rick mentioned that

the family argues also, but his mother quickly reminded, "Not on Shabbos we don't." Rick nodded in agreement. Mrs. Cooper went on to describe a lively discussion about Israel from a previous Shabbat when Luch was home on vacation. "I've never seen Lucy and Rick sit down and talk like young adults in years. Things between those two have certainly improved."

Continuing about Jewish families in general, Rick felt religion did not act as a differentiating factor. He felt that "people are people." Mr. Cooper agreed that religion itself made no difference. For him, Judaism had become a "cognitive, not affective" religion. Explaining his terminology, he said that people had emphasized knowledge of religion (cognitive) and de-emphasized the emotional, experiential level (affective). Mrs. Cooper added that she had seen enough problem children at the County Home to know that Jewish families had troubles like anyone else. "There's just not that neighborhood feeling of Judaism any more. Things are mixed up; all kinds of people. You have to do something with religion in the home, like we do with Shabbos. Judaism was special for us, but not for Rick's generation."

Another bit of family by-play occurred about the generational differences. Using this interaction as a lead-in, I asked Rick what he might do to better his parents. He smiled broadly and said, "I would like my Dad to stop yelling when I get up late. It's hard to get up that early." In response Mr. Cooper spoke of the merits of getting a good start on the day. Asked about the reason for the anger,

Mr. Cooper was cut off by his wife, "We're promptness oriented," she said, "and we expect our kids to be prompt as well. It's just the way we were brought up." Mr. Cooper added that this tardiness at school was the only complaint he heard from Rick's teachers on "Parents Night." Compared to the past, Rick had vastly improved.

When questioned about the roles of a good husband and wife, the Coopers spoke only of the roles of father and mother, again relating their approach to raising and communicating with their children. One personal sidelight did come out. The Coopers regretted buying a home years ago, instead of renting their present town house. Mr. Cooper spoke of his "two left hands", while Mrs. Cooper talked about the cost at that time and the world's lack of awareness about present day inflation.

As I left, the Coopers again reiterated their pleasure with Rick. His behavior had improved even before getting the job at the hardware store. "The better he did, the more relaxed we became. It just kept building," said Mrs. Cooper with a satisfied tone. Mr. Cooper nodded his assent. Rick had finally begun to do something for himself as he spoke of doing so often.

I saw him in the gameroom a few times after the interview, but he always avoided sitting down to talk. The first time he claimed he couldn't come because he had "things to do." These other times, the excuse was a good game, a forgotten book or the simple retort, "I can't talk now, maybe later."

Analysis

The Cooper family situation involved a complex set of problems. At the core of these problems were a combination of difficulties involving roles. The other family members treated Rick as a scapegoat, consistently referring to Rick as a "problem" individual, and comparing him to Lucy. At times, this scapegoating took on aspects of a self-fulfilled prophecy. The family's continual criticism and chastisement of Rick created a hostility in him that caused the teenager to adopt roles that would only anger them further. This was Rick's retaliation. Most important, Rick and Mr. Cooper ahd a definite role strain. Both in terms of physical stature and personal interests, the two shared few similarities. Neither showed willingness to change behavior and each grew more stubborn over time.

The central conflict which emerged from these role difficulties developed between Rick and his father. As their role strain progressed, communications between the two rapidly deteriorated. Shouting matches and silent treatments took the place of open dialogue. Other family members joined with Mr. Cooper in an alliance against Rick. Mom "nagged" him, Lucy reprimanded him, and Tim baited him. Rick fought back, trying to shed the unwanted role. Eventually, Rick started acting out in the community with his aggressive behavior, drug taking and poor work at school.

Three factors account for these chronic conflicts. First, after actual, overt conflicts arose, the family members would reach a modicum

of accommodation. However, they infrequently moved ahead to achieve any conciliation and the cycle of initiation, build-up and actual conflict would recur. Second, even on those occasions when conciliations could be achieved (as during the time of the TOP intervention), the family reassessment proved insufficient. By focusing on outside sources of Rick's acting out, rather than their own personal inputs, the elder Coopers failed to correct those important elements that would lead to the recurrence of conflict. This element of denial prevailed in the family system for years. Third, the rate of conflicts increased as each family member reinforced the behaviors that clashed. The combination of Mr. Cooper's misguided objectivity, Mrs. Cooper's overbearing nature, Lucy's critical posture, Tim's mischievous nature and Rick's acting out served to fuel the conflict for years.

As in any family system with ongoing alliances and scapegoating, the growth of the Cooper family evolved into homeostasis that included everyone but the identified "problem teenager." The subsystem of Mr. and Mrs. Cooper, Lucy, and Tim allied at the expense of Rick, developing closer knit ties in their effort to "go on with their own lives despite Rick's problem." Whatever new equilibriums arose benefitted everyone but Rick, and he began to feel more isolated. Until the TOP intervention, his parents' love for him had never been properly communicated, as it had been to his brother and sister, thus reflecting that change in the family occurred without Rick's involvement.

A significant element in the Cooper case is that the family did manage to begin altering the problems that threatened its demise. The catalyst was Lucy's going away to college. As a family unit of four,

and not five, automatic homeostasis had to occur for everyone. New roles were slowly adopted. Mr. Cooper began treating Rick in the manner of a responsible older son, and Rick responded by improving his social behavior, both inside and outside the home. Mrs. Cooper's nagging changed to praise. Rick and Tim still bickered, but because this was not the central conflict, it did not greatly hinder the family's new behavior patterns. Indeed, as Mrs. Cooper mentioned in the follow-up interview, every positive aspect in the family began to spawn new ones. A level of positive reinforcement had been established. Criticisms were made about actions, not people (i.e., the garbage incident).

Two factors emerged as the Coopers continued to modify their behavior patterns. First, the parents still denied that they were the source of Rick's manifest behavior. As they saw it, Rick just straightened himself out. Nevertheless, their own behavioral changes, such as the role reciprocity between father and son and their improved communication, facilitated noticeable improvement in the family's interactions. Second, Tim became the new scapegoat of the family. The parents were worried about his problems at school and his social behavior. However, the lines of communication between Tim and Mrs. Cooper ("Mom, please nag me to do my homework") has the strength to obviate any major threat of renewed conflict.

As can be seen from both the follow-up interview and the analysis of the case, the Coopers had finally made the proper reassessment of their chronic conflicts. Rather than revert to behavior patterns that initiated conflict, they subconsciously chose to modify behaviors, accommodate one

another, and reinforce the positive aspects of their family life. The family system became stronger as role reciprocity emerged, communications improved, and true homeostasis allowed for normative growth.

About the Hypothesis

Although the Coopers practiced denial, this denial stemmed from sources other than a belief in myths. Even with the parents' strong identification with the religion and the youngsters' positive attitude towards it, they did believe that Jewish families had no innate strengths. According to the senior Coopers, Jewish families had problems similar to other religious denominations. Rick and Tim both mentioned that "people are people," religion not playing that important a part in shaping their lives or behavioral patterns. Mrs. Cooper specifically regarded the decline of Jewish neighborhoods as a source of the declining priority for Jewish identity in the home. Thus, the Coopers made an active effort to make Jewish rituals and associations an important part of their family system.

Interestingly, the Coopers' practice of Judaism and their affiliations with Jewish organizations did bring a certain strength to the family system, even when suffering through the worst of its problems. Lucy, Rick and Tim used the JCC facilities (e.g., gym, game, pool, art room, theater), and took part in normative activities such as drama groups, field trips, and athletic teams. Rick and Tim also spoke favorably of their Religious School classes. Mr. Cooper devoted time

to his synagogue's study group and Boy Scout troop. Mrs. Cooper had an active role in Haddassah. In addition to these positive, individual pursuits, the home rituals, especially Shabbat dinner, served as a "true period where the family focused on its happier aspects." The Coopers communicated love and understanding through words, facial expression, and human touch (e.g., kiss, hug). Rather than argue, they searched for common interests that would promote an enjoyable family experience. These evenings may have cooled down the chronic conflicts and prevented problems from further damaging the family system.

Conclusion

Just as the Coopers made an active effort to keep Judaism alive in the home, so did they make an active effort to resolve their interpersonal problems. Obscured by the denial of any responsibility causing these difficulties (a denial not caused by a mythical perception of the Jewish family) the family still modified the behaviors that had led to troubles and conflicts for so many years. Mr. Cooper and Rick shed their roles as combatants and developed reciprocity by beginning a healthy father-son relationship. With this central conflict having been resolved other changes took place.

The family alliance against Rick dissipated. He ceased to act out in the community. No longer was he the family scapegoat. Family members communicated with each other in normative fashion. They also established

a level of positive reinforcement, praise and love being openly expressed, constructive criticisms replacing personal attacks. The practice of Jewish customs and the association with Jewish institutions added a strength to the family system. With Lucy leaving the household to attend college, a new homeostasis emerged, one centered on dynamic growth functions for all family members and for the family system as a whole.

The study of the Cooper family, although negating the hypothesis, does exemplify a family altering its negative aspects and promoting Shalom Bayis, family harmony, for the entire household. The attitude of the Coopers that brought this about was that people make their own changes, for better or worse.

CHAPTER 6 - "WE'RE A RELIGIOUS FAMILY" - THE WOLF FAMILY - [redacted]

Introduction

A key factor in prolonging family difficulties is the denial of trouble. In the instance of the Wolf family, denial promoted conflicts that strained and broke ties among them all. The parents refused to allow for their possible implication in the childrens' emotional problems. They could not cope with the daughter's abnormally rapid physical development, or the son's anti-social behavior during his formative years. The children blamed their parents for creating tensions in the home. Later on, none of them would accept the fact of Mrs. Wolf's terminal illness and death.

The Wolfs, originally a two-parent family system with an adopted teenage son and an adopted teenage daughter, has undergone a radical transformation. Melvin Wolf, age 60, a friendly person, owns an auto parts store. Working long, hard hours, his only two interests are being with his family and taking an active part in his Orthodox synagogue. Bertha Wolf died eighteen months ago at the age of 56, leaving her husband as the head of a single-parent household. While alive, Mrs. Wolf spent her time cleaning house, raising her children, and attending to their needs. She perceived herself as a loving mother and wife. Like her husband, she maintained an active involvement in the synagogue. Bobby Wolf, age 20, a very likeable young man, works as a clerk and stock boy in a grocery. A high school dropout, Bobby served in the National Guard and has an obligation to attend training sessions one

weekend a month for the next four years. He and his father live together in the family residence. Michelle Wolf Angelo, age 15-1/2, lives with her husband, Tony, and their infant son, Micah, in a slum area of town. A grade-school dropout and a frequent runaway from home, Michelle became pregnant by Tony fourteen months ago. The two chose to marry and begin a family. Michelle has the physical appearance of a girl in her early twenties.

The Wolf case offers an example of how denial can aggravate interpersonal conflicts to the point of crisis. If the conflicts reach chronic proportion over long periods of time, the family system faces a total disorganization.

The Case History

On a cold March evening in 1973, two girls rushed excitedly into the JCC gameroom. They moved from one pool table to the next, sharing a story that caught the immediate attention of their listeners. The girls told everyone within earshot that they had seen Michele Wolf at a local shopping center, begging for change. Thirteen year old Michele had run away from home four days earlier, and this was the first time since then that anyone had seen her. A quick trip to the shopping center proved fruitless, as did a drive through the neighborhood. Michele could not be found.

A few days later, Melvin Wolf, Michele's father, called TOP. He spoke about Michele's disappearance and asked if anyone at TOP knew of her whereabouts. Mr. Wolf sounded extremely tense, mentioning

that he and his wife, Bertha, had gone "out of their minds with worry." Further questions disclosed that Michele had run away many times previously, returning home after a night or two. But now, she had been gone for almost a week. Regretfully, the Wolfs called the police, something they had never before done.

That evening Bobby Wolf, Michele's eighteen year old brother, entered the gameroom in a very hurried manner. Hearing that his sister had been seen at the shopping center, he asked if any new information had surfaced. When told that nobody had any recent news, Bobby went into an agonized rage. Yelling at no one in particular, he revealed that Michele had been a source of aggravation to his mother and father. Bobby perceived himself as "the glue that holds the family together." The tension between parents and daughter had grown so great that he dropped out of school in order to help the family to a fuller extent. As a senior, Bobby feared that he might not graduate, but he felt a responsibility to maintain the family unit.

Before these events took place, TOP had identified Michele as a potential problem teenager. Informal intervention had already begun, but no contact had yet been made with the parents. Melody Rosen, the TOP worker, assigned to make the intervention, had known Michele from summers at Jewish camp. With the physical appearance of a girl five years elder, but without the accompanying emotional maturity, Michele did not integrate well into cabin activities. She acted toward her counselors in a hostile manner, resenting being told to fulfill the normal cabin responsibilities. She participated to a limited extent

in the activities of the camp. Michelle had no friends because she made a transparent effort to use people for her own personal satisfactions.

In the gameroom, Melody noticed that the behavior patterns from camp reported themselves, especially the attempt to use people. In their conversations, she spoke to the young girl about this, but Michelle claimed the others were just "too straight" for her.

Michelle claimed to take large quantities of drugs including marijuana, L.S.D., and amphetimines. She also bragged about having frequent sexual liasons with a variety of partners. According to her peers and a few corrobating young males, Michelle exaggerated the quantity of drugs and sex. However, they insisted that she was a heavy drug user and that she had engaged in periodic sexual intercourse since age twelve.

Other information came from these conversations as well. Michelle frequently told Linda about the late hours she kept. This she attributed to her parents, who "don't discipline me ever. I just do what I want. When they hassle me, I stay out late." Nonetheless, she never spoke about running away. Also, Michelle told of doing poorly at school only because the classes "bored" her. She confided to Melody that she might be placed in a boarding school.

Bobby had been a JCC gameroom regular long before the creation of TOP. Workers had found the eighteen year old boy to be a positive, likeable person. He spent most of his time with four close buddies, he did well at school, and he held down a part time job at Mr. Wolf's auto parts store. With this background, Bobby's extreme tension and his

decision to leave school caught everyone by surprise.

On the Saturday night following Michelle's disappearance, the runaway episode came to a close. At TOP's community dance, Michelle and another runaway companion, walked through the door around 11:00 P.M. It had rained hard all evening and both shivering girls were soaked to the bone. After gulping a hot drink in the office, they talked about their reasons for leaving home.

For almost two hours the girls spoke about personal freedom, resisting any suggestion of returning home. Michelle felt her parents had become a "real pain." Now, she would become a "free spirit on the road to peace and freedom." However, the girls finally broke down. Toni, Michelle's chum, insisted that the Wolf home wasn't so bad compared to her home. At least Michelle had a father around, in addition to a sober mother. Going back had to be better than another sleepless night in the rain.

The runaways weighed the pros and cons. Then Toni said, "Look, if I go home, will you go home?" After another twenty minutes of ambivalence, the girls called home. By 2:30 A.M., Melody and I were escorting Michelle to her front door.

Melvin and Bertha Wolf were overjoyed to see their daughter. They greeted her with long hugs and kisses. Immediately, they called the police and the juvenile authorities about her return. The authorities allowed the girl to remain home for the balance of the weekend, but she would have to appear at Juvenile Court on Monday morning with her parents. With that completed, Michelle went to the washroom to clean up. At that point, the Wolfs spoke their hearts out. "We're a religious

family," said Mr. Wolf. "I don't understand why she hurts her mother by being disrespectful and running away." Mrs. Wolf continued that they, "Only wanted the best for Michelle, but all she does is bring us shame and heartache." Mr. Wolf added, "She really is a good girl." The Wolfs also mentioned that for more than a year Michelle had been receiving treatment at Children's Psychiatric Clinic. The Wolfs also received counseling there, the Clinic having a rule about not treating a child without treating the parents as well. Melvin and Bertha said they only went for Michelle's sake, and they felt the counselor was a nice girl who didn't understand that Michelle was the problem, not them.

The day before the court hearing, I contacted Michelle's therapist who completed the picture of the family's problem for me. Melvin and Bertha Wolf, married for almost forty years, had been unable to have children of their own. Through private lawyers in 1954 and 1959, they arranged to adopt Bobby and then Michelle. Mr. Wolf and Mrs. Wolf heaped great amounts of love and affection on their children. As the years passed, they failed to balance this lovingkindness with limit setting and natural discipline. Bobby had terminated a long therapy only recently and much of his problem resulted from the Wolfs inability to relate to their son. In addition, the therapist told me that Michelle's "boarding school" was actually Children's Home, an adolescent rehabilitation village run by the County.

Considering the ongoing nature of the family problem, Clinic officials had decided to place Michelle in a psychiatric foster home. Of course, they needed the Wolfs permission, but they deemed this action

necessary, even more so after the girl's recent delinquency. The therapist urged me to share this information with the court, so its influence could assist the Clinic in facilitating the placement.

That Monday, Juvenile Court released Michelle without a hearing, pending the meeting at the Clinic later that afternoon. The proposal for foster home placement shocked the Wolfs, but the urging of the therapist and the advice of the court weighed heavily on their minds. Offering only minimal resistance, the Wolfs agreed to the plan. By the end of the week, Michelle went to live with the Johnson family in another part of town.

A few days after the placement, Bobby walked into the gameroom with a disconcerted look about him. Flicking a lighter on and off, he spoke of becoming "a Nazi without killing the Jews." Bobby liked the idea of wearing a uniform and solving problems in a military fashion. Nervously he added, "You don't think I'm crazy, do you?" Once Bobby left, I called the therapist at the Clinic. Hearing this latest detail, she agreed to find Bobby a counselor.

Life for the Wolfs calmed considerably in the intervening months. With Michelle no longer at home, Melvin and Bertha admitted they felt more relaxed. Still, they insisted that the family wasn't the same without Michelle. Bobby, too, appeared much more at ease. He moved into an apartment with his friends and began working full time for his father. He planned to re-enroll in the fall in order to get his high school diploma. Michelle, in a visit to the gameroom one evening, raved about her new life with the Johnson's. They were "cool," unlike

her parents. At the beginning of the evening Michelle couldn't wait to see all of her "friends." In actuality, she sat alone for two hours and left quietly with Bobby when the gameroom closed.

TOP didn't hear from the Wolfs again until November. Bobby called me at home and begged me to meet with him and Michelle in the gameroom. He said it was an emergency. Upon arriving, I saw the two of them playing pool. Michelle asked me to wait until they completed their game. Obviously, there was no real emergency and I felt manipulated much like Michelle's former "friends." Still, I insisted they come into the office right away, as I had another appointment.

Once inside the office, both teenagers looked at me with dour faces. "I don't know if you heard," said Bobby, his eyes fixed on the floor, "but Mom died of cancer last month." Doctors had discovered a malignant tumor in Mrs. Wolf's body some nine months before. The spread of the tumor could not be checked and she had only those months to live. Mr. Wolf had kept this from his children until a week before his wife's death, when her condition had become hopeless.

However, the young Wolfs had come to discuss another matter. Michelle, who had been taken from the Johnsons and placed in Children's Home, had now run away from there. By her account, she did so for two reasons. First, she wanted to be with her father. Second, her building supervisor at the Home hated her, and tried to get her in trouble for stealing. I advised her that I would call the Home the next day to verify her story. Meanwhile, I suggested Bobby return her before he

became involved in contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

The next day, Michelle's counselor at Children's Home told me what had transpired since my last contact with the Wolfs. The Clinic had ended the placement with the Johnsons because the Wolfs had undermined the experiment. Tired and agitated by the Johnsons' "orders" (reminders to fulfill personal promises and household obligations) Michelle called home frequently. Now, she wanted to come back. The Wolfs promised her that she would be out of "that Jounson house" soon. Thus, the Clinic reassigned her to Children's Home.

At the Home, Michelle began her pattern of trying to manipulate the other girls. She also began breaking into their suitcases, stealing various items. This recent incident marked the third time she ran away. As it happened, she ran away a fourth time, two weeks later.

I called on the Wolfs later that day to offer condolences. Mr. Wolf spoke about his wife as if she were still alive. His mind seemed to wander back to past days. Occasionally, his words trailed off and his eyes watered. Mr. Wolf had known for seven months that Bertha had cancer. However, he told nobody, not even the children, until three days before Bertha died. Even though Mrs. Wolf went to the hospital for five long stays during those seven months, he didn't want anybody to know she was dying. Mr. Wolf made up a variety of flimsy excuses which the children believed.

Bobby felt as badly as could be expected, but he was determined to continue his life. Although he had not re-entered high school, he did join the National Guard. There he would learn auto maintenance and work towards the diploma. Basic training would begin in early January.

The day Bobby left for Ft. Bragg, Mr. Wolf drove him down to the train depot. After a long hug, Mr. Wolf returned to his car and went home alone. He looked very sad. His wife was dead, his son had left home, and his daughter's disappearance reached the two month mark. This was TOP's last contact with the family.

Phone Contact and Initial Expectations

When phoning the Wolfs to arrange for the follow-up interview, I heard happy voices on the other end of the receiver. Mr. Wolf was pleased that I was coming to visit. He mentioned that Michelle, now 15-1/2 years old, had married and given birth. Bobby finished training and returned home. Picking up the receiver, he spoke at length about his new job at a local grocery.

I felt the myth of a Jewish family solidarity would be present in all three Wolfs. Mr. Wolf and Bobby had always spoken highly of their family, and Michelle's new family would be a factor in reinforcing old parental values for her. A further expectation was that Mr. Wolf would picture himself and his wife as ideal Jewish parents with good children who had some problems. The proof would be that both Bobby and Michelle had settled into respectable modes of life. The younger Wolfs would reinforce this view, Bobby by relating another large scale plan for his personal future and Michelle by comparing her new family life to her former one.

The Follow-Up Interview

The panel truck, parked in the driveway, announced that the Wolfs were at home. Bobby greeted me at the door with a strong handshake and a broad smile. He had gained almost thirty pounds since completing basic training. We sat down in the living room. The furniture was dishevled, with clothing and dust on chairs, tables and floors. Pictures of Mrs. Wolf had been placed everywhere. A large photograph of Michelle rested atop the television set. In the photo, Michelle looked like an ingenue. Mr. Wolf did not come out of his bedroom. He lay in bed watching television. Michelle, who lived in an apartment with her husband, did not come for the interview.

Bobby told me about experiences with the National Guard. The plans for auto mechanics and the diploma had not materialized. Instead, the Guard placed him in the infantry. Soon, however, he would enroll in night school. Also, he and some friends from gameroom days planned to rent a house and begin an auto interior decoration company. At present he worked full time at the grocery to save some money.

Without any prompting, Bobby began talking about Michelle. Two months after she left the Children's Home she became pregnant. Tony Angelo, twenty and non-Jewish, the father of the baby, wanted to marry her and start a family. Michelle liked this idea. Mr. Wolf, however, greatly resisted at first. He swore he would never sign the marriage papers that a minor needs under a state law. However, he changed his mind. Tony and Michelle were joined in wedlock by a local judge in September. Two months later Michelle gave birth to Micah.

At this point, Mr. Wolf had not yet joined the discussion, although he knew I had arrived. I asked Bobby to invite his father to talk with us. A few minutes later, Mr. Wolf walked out of the bedroom. With a warm smile, he offered his hand, making no mention of his reasons for remaining in bed even though he had agreed to the interview. Once he entered the room Bobby's buoyancy changed to a quiet moodiness. Sitting on the sofa opposite his son, Mr. Wolf described his "lonely" life. Although he had his store and his involvement in the synagogue (including his saying Kaddish at twice daily prayer services, long after the end of the Jewish mourning period), he greatly missed his wife. He reached out to show me some of the photographs in the living room. "This one," he said, holding a picture taken of Mrs. Wolf in 1943, "I kiss every morning when I wake up and every evening before I go to sleep."

Mr. Wolf portrayed Bertha as the ideal wife. Some of the more descriptive adjectives he used were "loyal, honest, loving." Bobby offered that he felt his mother's presence with him at Ft. Bragg. Mr. Wolf continued on the theme of the loving mother. He spoke of how Mrs. Wolf worried every time Michelle got into trouble or brought home a bad report card. When the doctors discovered Mrs. Wolf had a malignant tumor, her husband kept the news from the children. "I didn't tell them until three days before she died," Mr. Wolf said with a self-righteous tone. "I didn't even tell my wife. We were going to have a normal family. Even when she was in the hospital, my wife acted like the perfect wife and mother. Oh! She was terrific!" The more he spoke of his wife the more it seemed that he placed low value on his present existence.

Sharing his thoughts about Michelle, Mr. Wolf related how his daughter was a good girl who had lapses of bad behavior. In the most recent difficulty, he had initially refused to allow Michelle to marry. He first heard about her pregnancy from a family friend which made him determined to have the baby placed for adoption---when and if Michelle returned home. She did return, four months into the pregnancy. At first, she met resistance when asking her father to sign the parent release form that allows a minor to marry. But within a month, Mr. Wolf acquiesced because he "wanted that baby to have a family."

Mr. Wolf felt that families, especially Jewish ones, were "stronger, more closely knit." Bobby said they had good points and bad points "like Catholics, Protestants or anybody else." When asked what improvements he would have made in his own family, Bobby's buoyancy returned. With a blush and a wide grin, he said in a much louder tone of voice, "Well, Michelle and I fought a lot but we're older now. I'd rather not say about my folks. Things are better now than they were."

Regarding the last family "get together," Mr. Wolf described a recent Shabbat dinner. They all sat around the table (Tony, Michelle, Micah, Mr. Wolf and Bobby) to "make Kiddush and light candles." He went on to describe his grandson's bris, remarking how important these Jewish rituals were to his life. He also mentioned that Bobby kept kosher in his presence out of respect. (At that point I realized that Mr. Wolf had been trying to answer questions directed at Bobby. At first Bobby would remain silent, but then he would interrupt his father and state his views). At these "get togethers", Mr. Wolf said the

conversation was just "usual talk." Bobby affirmed this, but neither seemed willing to go into specifics.

Commenting on improvements in the home situation, Mr. Wolf admitted that they still argued on occasion. Almost immediately, he and Bobby re-enacted an angry discussion over Bobby's latest all night drinking adventure. The tones of voice sounded harsh, but each gave the other warm, loving looks and smiles.

At the door, Bobby showed me his uniform. He said he enjoyed wearing it so people would think he was "something special." Asked if he could be special without it, Bobby shrugged his shoulders and quietly said, "Oh, who knows?" Shaking hands, Mr. Wolf reminded me, "I was pretty comfortable watching television in there. I only got up for you."

The Second Follow-Up

I went to visit Michelle the following day. She and Tony rented the second floor of an old, weather-beaten house in a poor area of town. Now fifteen and a half years old Michelle appeared at the door in a bathrobe, her hair a total mess. She tried to straighten her tangled locks as she walked directly to the bed. Picking up Micah, she held him close to her bosom. She sat this way throughout the conversation. Tony was away at work.

Immediately she asked, "Don't you like my baby? Isn't he handsome? And I'm going to be a good mother. You'll see!" Michelle liked her new role as a mother and wife. Her face brightened when she described

herself cleaning the apartment, making dinner for Tony. Michelle opted for marriage after learning of her pregnancy because she "loved Tony and wanted to have a family." She spoke of her father "hassling" them by delaying to sign the marriage papers. "I wasn't going to take his crap," she said of her father. "I made him sign!"

Asked about the Shabbat dinner and the bris, Michelle said they participated "in order to get a good meal." At present, they were low on funds. That night with Mr. Wolf and Bobby was spent "doing Jewish stuff and listening to Dad talk about Mom like she was alive." Michelle insisted that her new family would have no religion, just "a lot of love and happiness." Talking about the fighting in her parents' home, she hoped her new situation would be better.

Michelle began to draw the conversation into reflection on old times in the gameroom. Her voice carried a heavy air of nostalgia. She claimed she had never been happier since her marriage and the birth of her son, but she said so with reservation. Looking at Micah, Michelle smiled and said, "Yeah, I miss the old days, but I'll work hard so Micah can be happy. Pretty soon I'm going to hire a sitter and get a job."

Walking to the door, still holding the baby, Michelle called out, "Come back for dinner sometime, okay? I'm learning to be a real good cook!"

Analysis

A family which practices denial to extreme levels may refuse to establish the homeostasis that nurtures growth. The Wolf family

suffered for exactly this reason. The combination of the inability to deal with potential trouble (i.e., not helping Michelle cope with her rapid physical development) and the refusal to accept reality (father and son acting as if mother were still alive) reflected an ongoing resistance both to change and the establishment of new equilibrium after crisis.

Conflicts emerged as a natural result of this resistance to change. The frustrations from the lack of growth creater interpersonal tensions. The parents and children argued incessantly. Bobby and Michelle went at each other beyond the normal realm of "sibling rivalry." However, the central conflict developed between the senior Wolfs and Michelle. Failing to understand the problems involved in their daughter's physical maturation, the Wolfs expected her to act in behavior patterns similar to other girls her age. When she acted out, they either yelled at her or totally ignored the behavior. They had no concept of setting limits. Michelle responded not so much in words as in anti-social actions that she knew would hurt her parents. The use of drugs, the poor work at school, the sexual liasions, and finally the runaway incidents were her form of retaliation. Eventually, this behavior manipulated the parents. Out of fear of another crisis, they tried to smooth over the problem through appeasement, denying to themselves the severity of the situation and the relationship of one incident to the next.

Bobby found himself caught in the middle of this conflict and internalized it. At times he would ally himself with his parents. At

other times he would side with his sister against them. In later years, he tried to act as a peacemaker, but lacked the sensitivity to bring both sides into a compromise that could be reinforced. Eventually, he too, suffered, as manifested in his dropping out from school, the discussion of the "Nazi style" of solving problems, and his persistent failure to achieve self-stated goals.'

In looking at the progression of these chronic conflicts, one can see the effect of the denial and the inability to grow on the family system. The Wolfs had the ability to reach temporary levels of conciliation, but two factors ended any further progress. First, they failed to make any proper reassessments of the conflicts. As a "religious family," their innate cohesiveness would end any further recurrence of problems. Obviously, this proved to be falst. The made no positive changes, and old conflicts re-emerged. Second, the senior Wolfs and Michelle unconsciously entered into a pact of negative reinforcement. Every time Michelle acted in an anti-social manner, her parents would try to appease her, rather than set limits. When appeasement changed to anger, greater anti-social behaviors would elicit new appeasements. Michelle had the manipulative power over her parents to destroy any conciliations if she did not get her way. (This appeared in the Wolf home, in the Johnson home and also at the County adolescent village.) Even after Mrs. Wolf died, Michelle and Mrs. Wolf continued the conflict sequence.

Role taking and communication patterns also suffered from the ongoing problems and the conflicts. Regarding roles, Michelle could be

scapegoat, manipulator, or loving daughter. The parents would respectively be scapegoat creators, victims, or loving parents. The major reinforcements occurred in the first two sets of roles and not the last. Bobby suffered from role confusion. He wanted to become a healer during the scapegoat or manipulation situations, but he would always inappropriately adopt the same role as the faction with which he would ally. He could help scapegoat Michelle, and be scapegoated himself (as during his years in therapy). He could both manipulate and be manipulated.

Communication in the home transmitted anger or myth, but never promoted dynamic growth. Arguing among family members became a constant feature of the family system. Words were bitter and tones were loud and harsh. Fantasy emerged every time Michelle completed a sequence of acting out (the family's insistance that "everything will be better from now on"). The greatest fantasy was the denial of Mrs. Wolf's illness and death. Where family members could nave grown closer in their grief, individual attempts to live in the past only separated them further. This adherence to myths reflected the chronic inability to deal with the realities facing the family system and thus, reflected the resistance to change.

One other communication problem took years to develop, but when it emerged it had a devastating effect. Mr. and Mrs. Wolf had imbued their offspring with learning models that would not help them interact on a normative level of society. Both children copied their parents' low self-esteem. They also never learned how to cope with crisis situations. Michelle never developed a method for building solid

friendships. Bobby did not know the satisfaction of fulfilling a personal goal. Bobby had poor self-esteem and a tendency to disregard reality that closely paralleled his father's personality traits. Michelle never learned the proper social patterns to deal with her physical maturity. These troubles were pinpointed during their therapy sessions as pre-adolescents at the Clinic. Indeed, many of the aforementioned problems (e.g., running away, leaving school) of the two teenagers resulted from poor socialization and the parents' inability to cope with the problems when they materialized.

The resistance to change, the inability to achieve new homeostasis patterns and the resulting conflicts had a devastating effect on the Wolf family system. Mrs. Wolf died, but the other family members, especially Mr. Wolf, did not adjust to becoming a single parelt family. The ties between Michelle and her father and brother became almost totally severed, except for those times when she manipulated them to her own advantage (i.e., free meals). All that remained were father and son, tied together out of emotional dependency. Even then, Bobby still had that rooted feeling to leave home and live his own life, a feeling that had never been fully realized. Bobby's low self-esteem restricted his realization of personal aspirations.

About the Hypothesis

The Wolf family maintained a chronically defensive denial of their problems that reached crisis proportions. According to the parents, the family had no troubles, just an occasional difficulty with two "basically

good children." This lack of recognition had an ethnic input. Seymour and Berta Cohen strongly identified with traditional Jewish values and customs. They played an active role in their synagogue. They practiced Jewish rituals in the home. In their mind, this made them parents of a "good religious family" whose religious identity knitted them closely. So, Mr. and Mrs. Wolf's adherence to the myth of the innately cohesive Jewish family added to the denial which crippled the family system.

Bobby and Michelle also treated crises with denial, but for them it did not stem from the myth. Bobby found no unique qualities about Jewish families. However, his desire for a harmonious family led him to practice rituals that would please his parents and avoid family conflicts. This failed to work. Except for visiting the JCC gameroom, he had no Jewish affiliations apart from family obligations (i.e., going to services with his father). For her part, Michelle rejected all Jewish practices and affiliations except those she needed to elicit favors. For example, her decision to have a bris for her son was done to appease her father, not to fulfill any personal religious obligation. She insisted that her parents "hassling" her had been the initial cause of all family problems.

A gap appears between the generations. The parents' denial stems in large part from their belief in the myth. The teenagers' denial stems from other sources and needs.

Michelle could not accept responsibility for any family problems since they had restricted her "freedom". Bobby need a harmonious family life to quell his own internal conflicts. On a similar level, the parents practice of Judaism and their affiliation with the synagogue

occupied a central place in their lives. The teenagers felt little or no sense of a Jewish identity. Thus, the negative effect of the Jewish family myth, although affecting all family members, was shared only by the senior Wolfs.

Conclusion

The Wolf case depicts a family who could not develop progressive levels of homeostasis. As the years passed, the senior Wolfs resisted any effort that might bring about new equilibriums. They could not envision their "parental care" being a source of the children's psychological problems, problems which necessitated clinical attention for all family members. Fantasies upon the mother's death blocked the establishment of stronger ties between remaining family members.

This stifling of growth led to tensions throughout the household. This stifling of growth led to tension between Mr. and Mrs. Wolf and overall effort to promote family harmony. For him, Jewish ritual was a means to an end. Neither Michelle nor Bobby had any Jewish affiliation other than the JCC gameroom and TOP.

This case illustrates that denial can take on multiple forms in a family system. For the parents, it stemmed from a belief in the Jewish family myth. For the teenagers, it stemmed from Michelle's total disclaimer of responsibility for family troubles and Bobby's longing for family solidarity. Thus, the entire family need not promote the myth of the Jewish family in a situation where the myth has an effect upon the family system. A pattern of conflict emerged. The parents appeased, the daughter manipulated them. The parents grew angry from these

manipulations, the daughter acted out (i.e., running away) until the anger again reverted to appeasement. This mutually reinforced conflict led the family system into a crisis. Bobby, who internalized the conflict, could not avert the crisis because he tended to ally with his parents at times and with his sister at times. He did not have the ability to bring both sides into compromise that could be positively reinforced.

Much of the parents' denial stemmed from a strong Jewish identity and the belief in the myth of the inherently cohesive Jewish family. In their minds, any change, even if potentially constructive, threatened the family system. Their children, with their tangential Jewish identities and the need for change and growth, suffered from this lack of new homeostasis levels. They, in turn, denied that they had any responsibility for the family problems. As a result of this denial, the family system deteriorated into a father and son clinging to the fantasy that they had successfully maintained the "happy household."

Chapter 7 - "Billy!" - The Goldfarb Family

Introduction

A family needs homeostasis, change and new levels of homeostasis in order for family members to grow and the family system to mature. The case of the Goldfarbs family points to just such a need. Originally, a two parent family, the father abruptly died of a heart attack. The mother and her two children evolved into a system of conflicts and tension. In the nine years following the father's death, the Goldfarbs family system made many changes which led to successively heightened problems, but no homeostasis. As a result, the family deteriorated into a system of adversary alliances, reflecting a real crisis.

At present, the Goldfarb family is a one-parent system with two teenage children. Frieda Goldfarb, age 45, looks almost ten years older. She never remarried and avoids dating. Extremely overweight and sickly, she has not worked for four years. Her days are spent resting and housekeeping. She belongs to a Conservative synagogue but took no part in its activities. Donna Goldfarb, age 19 and a college freshman, lives at home. A physically unattractive girl, she overcompensates with a loud, authoritarian personality. Donna has few friends and rejects any association with the synagogue or the JCC. Billy Goldfarb, age 16 and a high school freshman, is a physically imposing teenager. He lost two years of school because of excessive truancy and suspensions. According to a psychiatric social worker, the lack of a male model in Billy's life has had a negative effect on his personality. The worker feels that Billy needs an extensive battery of psychological tests to evaluate his status. Billy's only Jewish affiliation is an occasional visit to the JCC gameroom.

The Case History

The band had just finished its last number. They began packing up their equipment. Another successful TOP dance had drawn over 150 teenagers, thanks in no small part, to the effort of Donna Goldfarb. Donna, a seventeen-year-old high school senior, had almost singlehandedly organized the entire event. She hired the band, passed out the fliers, promoted the ticket sales, and had her hand in every other phase of the operation. She felt this was her dance and said so many times.

Needing the money to pay the band, Donna came over to the TOP worker guarding the cash box. Earlier in the evening, the two had argued over extending the length of the dance. Donna had screamed, "I'm in charge. You don't tell me what to do. I just can't get anyone to cooperate!" Now she ordered, "You just give me the cash, I want to pay the boys." The worker gave her half the receipts, holding the other half for TOP's program fund. "Give me all the money!" she shouted, her eyes bulging. "It's mine. I'm keeping it. I still haven't seen the profits from the last dance. George Feldman (Director of TOP) probably took his wife to dinner with that money." The worker demurred and Donna's rage increased. "You God damn son of a bitch. All you assholes are the same; trying to cheat the band because they're black. You want to take credit for what I did. Fuck you, you asshole!" She ran out to the parking lot, simultaneously crying and swearing.

Donna had been part of both the Coffee House and TOP programs all through high school. Except for JCC membership, she had no other Jewish affiliations. Her grades were fairly good, and she served as manager of

the swim team. Extroverted to the point of being irrating, she incessantly chattered about other people and always name-dropped to indicate she had many friends.

Her high school peers insisted Donna had few close friends, if any. Her loud, pushy behavior; e.g., shouting "Oy Veis Mir", ordering people around) had alienated many other teens. They called her "Big Mouth Donna" or "Snagglepuss" (in reference to her unattractive facial and physical characteristics). Although Donna tried to make herself the constant center of attention, she was by no means popular.

Thirty minutes after the outburst, Donna came back into the gameroom, looking downcast and quiet. Three workers invited her for a cup of coffee. Once seated in a restaurant booth, she began to pour her heart out. "I didn't mean to yell like that," she said in a heavily apologetic tone. "I'm really sorry. Things have been so rough at home and school. Now, I run another successful dance, and nobody cares. It's just all been building up, and I finally exploded.

Donna went on to explain that, for her, the home situation had grown tense and frightening. Her widowed mother and fifteen-year-old brother, Billy, had been at odds for months. In Donna's opinion, only she nerself could keep peace in the family, and even she had been unsucessful. Billy had been physically attacking both women. Only a week before he had broken down the door to his mother's bedroom in retaliation for her invading his privacy (Mrs. Goldfarb would enter Billy's room without knocking). In addition, the young man had been arrested for possession of marijuana and had been truant from school for over two months.

"He's driving us crazy," Donna tensely remarked. "I'm so worried that I can't get my schoolwork done. I flunked two courses this quarter. I may not graduate with my class. If that happens, I'll never be a special education teacher, and Ron won't marry me." (This shocked the workers, who had no inkling that Donna had a boy friend, let alone a fiance). "Oh that Ron, he's so screwed up. He dropped out of school and joined the Air Force. He needs me to help him, like a wife should. Oy veis mir! I don't know what I'm going to do about Ron, about Billy, about school, about everything. Even the lady at the agency can't help."

The "lady at the agency" turned out to be Nadine Chester of JFS. We visited her the following Monday. Nadine told us that the problems in the Goldfarb household had been building for many years. Mr. Goldfarb had had died nine years before, and since that time Billy's behavior had grown progressively more anti-social. His moods ranged from sullen to violently aggressive. Neighbors complained about the constant shouting that could be heard outside the home. The cry of "Billy!", either from Donna or Mrs. Goldfarb indicated the climax of the argument. As Nadine saw it, Mrs. Goldfarb wouldn't accept the existence of the problem in its infancy, and now she had no control whatsoever. Billy needed an extensive battery of psychological tests to determine the causes of his agressiveness. The family needed a "cooling off period" from the constant interpersonal tensions. So Nadine urged that Billy be placed in an adolescent clinic for an indefinite period of time. She suggested TOP work in tandem with her agency by intervening with the teenagers in the gameroom.

TOP workers made contact with Billy, and eventually with Mrs. Frieda Goldfarb, too. Billy, a tall, quiet teenager had been in and out of trouble. As his sister said, the truant officers had contacted the mother, and Billy had been making weekly visits to a probation officer as a result of the marijuana arrest. Having only one close friend, Billy spent much of his time alone in his bedroom, playing guitar or reading. When at the gameroom, he strongly resisted discussing any personal matters. The JCC was Billy's only social outlet.

One TOP worker, Jeff Simon, frequently took Billy to hockey games or fishing, at which time Billy would show rare flashes of excitement and interest. The two would talk about general things; i.e., types of rods and reels, when Billy would suddenly ask Jeff a personal question about his wife or his job. Jeff would speak freely, encouraging Billy to do the same about his home life. However, Billy would grow very quiet and avoid the question by saying, "Things are okay" or some similar brushoff. Further questions would be greeted with stony silence.

When picking Billy up, Jeff had the opportunity to see the family system in action. One afternoon, Jeff entered the house to find Donna yelling at Billy and Mrs. Goldfarb yelling, "listen to your sister. Clean up that mess!" He ignored his mother and went into his room. "Billy!" she screamed in a shrill voice. "You listen to what I say." Billy did not answer.

Jeff knocked at the door, telling Billy to gather up his fishing gear. Keeping the door locked, Billy said, "get lost, Jeff. I'm not going with you anywhere. Go away."

On his way out, Mrs. Goldfarb started crying, and begged Jeff to stay for dinner. Through her tears she forced a smile and whimpered, "We're having stuffed cabbage, vegetable soup, and kiddesh. Won't you stay?" Jeff declined dinner, but sat down to talk.

Frieda Goldfarb wiped her eyes. An obese, extroverted woman, she had spent the nine years of widowhood raising the children alone. Both her physical condition and a negative attitude toward meeting single men had precluded any thought of dating and remarriage. A former nurse, she had been unable to work for four years, because of a heart condition. The family's income came from insurance, savings and a trust fund. Her days were spent housekeeping and resting.

"That Billy," she bemoaned, "I just don't understand him. At times he won't talk at all, and then he comes out screaming like a maniac. Sometimes he even gets physical! You know, he broke down my door last month. He said I invaded his privacy so he was going to invade mine. But it's a mother's right to go into her son's bedroom, isn't it?)The tone asked for reassurance). "What makes him do things like this?"

"And Donna! It seems like she and Bill yell at each other all day long. It's a miracle the neighbors haven't called the police again. Oh what can I do?" She sounded bewildered and confused, tears again filling her eyes.

Jeff urged Mrs. Goldfarb to follow Nadine's recommendations. Mrs. Goldfarb replied that "I do everything I can. I listen to her. But Billy is so stubborn. Nobody can make him do anything. Poor Donna, she suffers the most from all this. I'll do what I can."

A meeting with Nadine two weeks later disclosed that the family had not altered its behavior to any significant degree. Again, Nadine urged outside placement for Billy, but he adamantly refused. Nadine spoke further about the home situation. She felt that all the Goldfarbs had never been able to cope with the death of the father, and that the present deterioration of the family system could only be destructive to Billy and vice versa. The two women had formed a strong alliance, and the ensuing conflict had reached crisis proportion.

That summer, a change did take place in the family. Before graduating from high school, Donna had become pregnant. Both mother and daughter became greatly depressed. Donna chose to have an abortion and that decision only heightened their depression. During this time, Billy acted in a very supportive fashion; helping maintain the house, running errands, showing kindness and love to both women. Despite an occasional argument, neighbors mentioned that no shouts of "Billy!" had been heard for months.

Phone Contact and Expectations

Donna answered the phone with a cheery voice. She had enrolled in a local college and enjoyed her studies very much. Asked if the family might be available for a follow-up interview, she replied, "I'll be here!" Reminded about the others in the family she put down the receiver and shouted (audible to the listener), "Mom, it's Earl. He wants to come over and talk to us about TOP. Okay?" She picked up the receiver and said, "It's alright with Mom. We'll see you tomorrow." No mention was made of Billy.

I suspect that the unwanted pregnancy will have caused a new level of homeostasis to emerge. Stronger patterns of communication and higher degrees of interpersonal awareness should be evident. Now that the crisis of the pregnancy has passed, Billy may again feel stifled by his mother and sister. Although he should be at the interview, he will probably say very little, and try to leave in the middle of the discussion.

Jewish identity should be an important factor in the family system designs of Mrs. Goldfarb and Donna. I expect they will speak of their attempts to become a cohesive Jewish family, and Billy's improved behavior as an added factor in reaching that goal. Billy should be non-committal on the subject.

The Follow-up Interview

Donna opened the door of the Goldfarb apartment, cuddling her pet cat. She gave me a loud bubbly welcome, took my coat, and offered me a seat in their sparse, comfortable living room. Just as I sat down, Billy entered the room. He looked totally different from the teenager of a year ago. The long hair had been cut very short, he had grown five inches to a height of six feet and 30 pounds of muscle had been added to his chest and upper arms. Most important, a wide smile covered his face, something no TOP worker had ever seen before. He shook my hand and warmly said, "Hi, Earl. You ya been?"

The two teenagers sat down on the couch and started talking about school. Donna spoke about her special education classes, and Billy related that he really enjoyed his studies for the first time. (Not

only did the smile remain on Billy's face, but he talked more freely and openly than ever before.) As he spoke, Frieda Goldfarb came in, seating herself on a dining room chair opposite her children. Appearing tired, her eyes puffy and her forehead creased with deep lines, she managed a smile and offered some tea and her "special" pound cake.

After passing around the pound cake, the teenagers were asked about the previous summer. Billy told about his trip to visit cousins in Miami Beach. "I never saw the ocean before. They captured a shark and everything." It was pretty neat. Donna talked about her trip to Spain, avoiding any mention of the abortion. While describing this trip, Mrs. Goldfarb interrupted to remark that she would have rather had her children spend the summer in Israel. "I wanted to take them, but they wouldn't go. There's so much of a better Jewish identity there." (Throughout the discussion, Mrs. Goldfarb would frequently interrupt one child or the other.)

Explaining what she meant by "Jewish identity," Mrs. Goldfarb gave a long discourse on how it related to "being part of a community." The JCC did not offer the right kind of community atmosphere because too many non-Jews held memberships. Commenting on his mother's statement, Billy said he may sound bigoted, but he, too, thought that Jewish people were better than other people. Donna remarked that she had grown apart from the religion, that the Jewish community offered her nothing of great importance. Mrs. Goldfarb then added that Shabbos was an important time in their household, even though the youngster found little Jewish

identity elsewhere in the community. The three light candles, make Kiddush and chant the blessing over the bread every Friday evening. Mrs. Goldfarb beamed with pride, describing how Donna bakes challah for the occasion. Donna shyly said, "Yeah, I like doing that. Shabbos in the home is nice." Billy added that the rituals gave their family a good feeling. All three insister, however, that there was no special quality of Jewish families. Mrs. Goldfarb reflected the family sentiments by stating, "A good family is a good family, no matter what the religion." (Obviously, my expectations about the Goldfarb's religious attitudes had been mistaken.)

Asked if Shabbos made them a better family, Billy responded that it brought them closer together. Donna smirked, and shook her head in disagreement. Mrs. Goldfarb interjected, "We try not to argue, though. We want to make our Shabbos something nice." Referring back to the arguments, Donna angrily stated that her mother questioned her constantly about her social life and her friends. This interrogation made her quite angry. Mrs. Goldfarb defended her own position loudly insisting that Donna should have a better balance of Jewish and non-Jewish friends. "That's Donna's main problem," she insisted. "Now Billy has other problems."

When I asked, "What kind of problems?" a jolt of electric-like tension went through the living room. Billy lowered his head and exhibited the small, nervous smile so familiar in the past. Donna smirked again and shot quick, repeated glances at both her mother and brother. Mrs. Goldfarb's eyes began to water. Her voice became softer and shaky, as she tightly

gripped the chair. "If Billy...wants to say...That's up to him. It's not for me to say." Staring off into the distance, Billy said, "I just have to improve myself in a lot of ways."

Suddenly, Donna blurted out, "The main problem in this house is conflicts. My mother and I get along real good. But Billy and I have just drifted further apart. We really don't get along at all. And the two of them (nodding at mother and brother)...whew!" Billy softly said, "We talk a lot. It's just that nobody understands anybody." Stammering, Mrs. Goldfarb interrupted, "When a person has a problem...and they won't do anything for themselves, what can you do? Especially when that person insists I'm the problem. I do what I can. You can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." As Mrs. Goldfarb spoke, she stared directly at Billy.

Asked how she felt raising children as a single parent, Frieda Goldfarb responded, "like hell!" Her voice was loud and sounded like a plainted cry. "When my husband was alive, the world revolved around his children. Anything they wanted, they got. I did the disciplining and I didn't like it. Then when my husband died, the whole burden was on me. My relatives haven't helped much at all. A child will say things to the mother that he just won't say to the father. Billy has always been impulsive, headstrong, and stubborn; ever since he was little. I won't say I've done things to harm him, but I tried too hard to do certain things for him. I'm not perfect. I may have made mistakes."

Out of nowhere, Billy diffidently interrupted, "This is starting to get like a psychiatric counseling session. Can't we talk about

something happier?"

"We're not hiding anything," his mother responded. She adamantly reiterated many of the opinions she had given only minutes before. She added one other thought. "Billy missed having a male around. He loved talking with Jeff about hockey and fishing, but that wasn't enough."

Asked if this tension was felt on Shabbos, the family insisted that, if anything, the rituals brought them closer together. "I wish we could be this close all the time," Donna sighed. "Yes," Mrs. Goldfarb agreed, "religion does bring us together, but it won't make problems go away by itself."

After a brief silence, Donna gestured with her head in a "get away from me" motion. "You can go, Mom," she ordered. Docile and quiet, Frieda Goldfarb went back to her bedroom to watch television. Asked if she had something private to say that required her mother's absence, Donna sternly replied, "No! I just felt like it."

Billy then inquired, "So Earl, how's your life going?", the same question he always asked to deflect the focus from his own personal life. I told him things were good and mentioned that he looked rather happy, especially when compared to the past. "Yeah," he said, the wide smile returning, "I'm learning to drive now. The driver's ed class is cool. All kinds of people getting smashed up; blood everywhere. People leave the room to go throw up," he laughingly recalled.

Returning to the living room, Mrs. Goldfarb offered more edibles. I declined and said my good-byes. Frieda Goldfarb thanked me for visiting, and Billy asked me to call on him. Donna had gone outside, ostensibly

chasing the cat. Walking with me to the car she said, "Billy just put on some act. He just got back from jail. They caught him making obscene phone calls. He's not doing drugs any more, but he drinks like crazy. And he still attacks us. Just last Sunday, he pushed Mom and bruised her hip pretty badly. He slugged me the other day, too. We want him to go for psychiatry tests, but he just refuses. Mom needs a vacation, alone, real bad. But I'm afraid to stay alone with Billy. I just don't know what he'll do. Please, call him. Help him!"

As I started my car, I felt depressed, expectations shattered. I could only sumise that the Goldfarb's problem had become more serious than ever.

Analysis

When a family's difficulties go unchecked for years, the system undergoes a crisis that threatens its very existence. In the nine years following Mr. Goldfarb's death, Frieda, Donna and Billy Goldfarb created this kind of situation for themselves. They never achieved the homeostasis necessary for a family system's growth. As Nadine Chester had mentioned, the initial interactions for the one-parent family had a definite imbalance. Frieda Goldfarb dominated almost every phase of her children's lives, stifling their growth. Billy and Donna displaced their frustrations at school and among friends. Billy's actions were especially problematic.

As years of this interaction pattern continued, the children's frustrations changed to resentment and then to outright challenges of

authority. Billy and Donna stopped complying with all of their mother's wishes. Mrs. Goldfarb did not understand their feelings, and therefore did not change her behavior patterns. Eventually, the problems reached the crisis stage. Billy's anti-social behavior led to trouble for him in the community; i.e., at school. Donna suffered from a lack of friends as she tried to dominate others much as her mother dominated her.

Finally, Frieda Goldfarb recognized a need to change in order to end the problems and establish a true family homeostasis. However, she did not have the capability to bring about the changes. Nine months of mounting problems, strained interpersonal interactions, and strong resistances on the part of the children had led to a serious deterioration of the family system.

Conflicts arose from this repressed family growth, as Donna pinpointed in the follow-up interview. The central conflict pitted mother and daughter against son. The two females would verbally assault the teenage boy, often on a personal level. He would respond by ignoring them or physically attacking them. This conflict also served as a source for Billy's need for escape; i.e., drugs, obscene phone calls. After nine years of this pressure, Billy did need personal psychiatric help in addition to being part of a total family counseling scheme.

Other conflicts emerged as well. Donna admitted that her once close relationship with Billy had been strained. They often argued about Billy's personal behavior, especially towards their mother. These arguments brought Donna into the alliance with her mother against Billy. Another conflict arose between Mrs. Goldfarb and Donna. The re-enactment of a

past argument about Donna's social life showed that they still had strong differences about the direction of change for the family system and the level of homeostasis that should evolve from that change. It also reflected that Frieda had not lost the tendency to dominate her children. Had Mrs. Goldfarb been more sensitive to the needs of her children over these nine years, the family system would have grown, and the interpersonal ties would have been stronger.

In the evolution of these conflicts, a general pattern emerged. Frequent irritations and build-ups led to frequent overt conflicts; e.g., the broken down door, the physical attacks. That overt conflict would lead to a temporary cessation, but never to a conciliation that might initiate problem resolution. Due to the long term nature of this conflict pattern, family members did not have the means to alter problems and negative reinforcements. Even regular Shabbat dinners and the trauma of Donna's unwanted pregnancy could not catalize stronger ties and actual homeostasis. The family always returned to its negative behavior patterns. (It should be recalled that Nadine Chester felt that only the radical solution of removing Billy from the household could initiate problem resolution that might better the family system.)

The inability to establish homeostasis had other ramifications for the Goldfarb family. Over the years, communications became a vehicle for transmitting tension, anger and ill feelings. Billy strongly felt that the family "talked" with each other, but never understood each other or even tried to understand. This indicated a defensiveness that each family member exhibited. Somebody else was always the source of family

trouble. Billy and his mother placed total blame on each other for causing tensions. Billy felt stifled, while Mrs. Goldfarb felt physically threatened. Both were correct as evidenced by Mrs. Goldfarb's frequent interruptions and "suggestions" and Billy's pleasure talking about sharks and bloody accidents. Donna blamed both of them for creating stresses that affected her school work and social life.

Another ramification of the absence of homeostasis was a continual role strain among the family members. Although the family had the capability to shed dissatisfying roles, the new roles they adopted often proved more dissatisfying. For example, after Mr. Goldfarb's death, Frieda tried to be both mother and father for her son. Billy resisted both this and her overbearing nature. He also gave indications of being severely disturbed by his father's death. At any instant he could change emotional pitch from withdrawal to rage and vice versa. The physical attacks on Mrs. Goldfarb and Donna had become dangerous. Still, they ignored the cause of Billy's behavior and tried to merely stifle the behavior itself.

The two Goldfarbs developed a role set of adversaries. Billy was the victim of Mrs. Goldfarb's verbal attacks and she was the victim of his physical attacks. Never could they achieve the reciprocity of a sensitive mother and an adolescent son in need. Similar role strains developed in the other family relationships. Donna tried to shed the role of compliant daughter to become a semi-independent daughter, but Mrs. Goldfarb would not adopt the reciprocal role of understanding mother. Billy and Donna became mother's attacker and mother's protector,

where previously they had merely developed commonplace sibling rivalry. Thus, the Goldfarb's inability to achieve family equilibrium emerged in their failure to achieve role reciprocity.

An additional indicator that homeostasis could not be achieved was the constant use of a scapegoat. Two family members often achieved some growth at the expense of the third. The females treated Billy as a problem teenager with deep-seated psychological problems. However, when mother and Donna had a conflict; i.e., over Donna's social life, the siblings formed an alliance to protect themselves against their "domineering" mother. Likewise, during Donna's unwanted pregnancy and abortion, she became the family problem. Billy and Mrs. Goldfarb became highly supportive of each other in order to cope with the situation. They were not equally supportive of Donna.

Thus, without homeostasis for nine years, the Goldfarbs had a problem of crisis proportions. Family interactions promoted tensions and not growth. Family members reinforced conflicts, poor communications, role strains and scapegoating that led to severe damage for the family system.

About the Hypothesis

Despite the severity of the Goldfarbs' problems, no connection can be made between them and a belief in the myth of the Jewish family. Frieda, Donna, and Billy all made statements to the effect that being Jewish did not prevent troubles from arising. Frieda, who placed a high importance on "Jewish identity," felt that religion was only one determinant of a family's strengths. Donna insisted that she had grown apart from the religion. Billy said he found something special about Jewish people, but

he could not articulate his reasons. Thus, although the Goldfarbs denied any personal responsibility for the family problems, they did not deny the existence of problems. Further, these denials stemmed from the conflicts, poor interaction and defensiveness within the family system, and not from a belief in the myth of the Jewish family.

Frieda Goldfarb felt that "Jewish identity" meant being a part of the general community. By her estimation, the community had weakened the family's Jewish identity. The JCC had allowed too many non-Jews to become members, thus becoming a "Neighborhood" center, but not a "Jewish" center. Further, her extended family of sisters and a brother had offered her no help. The males never became supportive figures for Billy, and none of the extended family seemed to care about the nuclear family's severe problems.

Frieda, herself, belonged to no Jewish activitives, Billy only visited the JCC gameroom, and Donna rejected synagogue and JCC activities. All of them spoke harshly about the JCC's "inability" to foster a strong Jewish community (and therefore, a strong community identity).

Contrary to these statements, the Goldfarbs did maintain some semblance of a Jewish household. Identity may have been weak in the community, but it had stronger roots in the home. Shabbat dinners became a temporary period of shared joys and normative communications, even though they did not form a foundation for ongoing positive reinforcement and family growth that could lead to homeostasis. Donna enjoyed making khallah. "Oy veis mir" was an integral part of her vocabulary. Billy

felt an appreciation for the religion, especially the rituals. Mrs. Goldfarb did her utmost to maintain a Jewish home life through food, through rituals and through encouraging her children to participate in Jewish groups and to make Jewish friends.

If anything, Jewish identity made the Goldfarb family stronger, not weaker. They did not adhere to a myth, but made an effort to cultivate a Jewish way of life. Still, the family had severe problems which even positive Jewish practices could not lessen.

Conclusion

The Goldfarb family suffered from a problem which steadily worsened over a nine year period. After Mr. Goldfarb's death, the family never achieved a level of homeostasis. Every change in the family's interactional patterns brought on heightened conflicts, including physical attack. The family could achieve conflict cessation, but never the conciliation needed to prevent any resumption. As a result of this lack of homeostasis, communication levels deteriorated, role strains emerged, and family members created scapegoats so that two individuals might grow at the expense of the third.

Despite the problems, the family did have a positive Jewish identity in the home. This did not extend to identity in the community, but it did serve as one positive interaction for the family system. The Goldfarbs never used their Jewish identity as a myth that they had no problems. They knew difficulties existed, but they blamed other family members as the cause.

Failing to achieve homeostasis and reinforcing stress-producing conflicts, the Goldfarb family system faces a potential disintegration. They recognize the existence of problems, but nobody has the ability to rectify them. The family's denial level has become so great that even outside counseling is futile. Without an extensive "cooling-off period", the family system may soon disorganize.

Chapter 8:

"There's Nothing Really Wrong at All" - The Davis Family

Introduction

A properly functioning family system should allow for the growth of each household member, and the unit as a whole. When inflexibilities stifle this growth, interpersonal strains develop and conflicts emerge. The longer the problem goes unresolved the more the family system suffers from debilitating stress. The Davis family presents a vivid illustration of this kind of situation. In the Davis home, father ruled the roost. Everyone was expected to comply with his decisions. One daughter adamantly refused, and their conflict affected the entire family system.

Bernard Davis, age 49, owns a large contracting firm. A stern disciplinarian, he lays out the values and norms to which others in the family must comply. In his family, these values and norms are rooted to traditional Jewish customs and beliefs. Mr. Davis' social life revolves solely around his Orthodox synagogue. Gloria Cooper, age 51, complements her husband as a housewife and mother. Originally a Reform Jew, she accepted her husband's wishes to maintain a traditional home life. Mrs. Cooper suffered from a severe case of diabetes that almost killed her two years ago. Only recently has she returned to a fully active life. Mary Ann Davis, age 25, works for an advertising firm in New York. Until approximately six months ago, she lived at home. At that time she moved into an apartment with friends, but still maintained close contact with

the family. Vicky Davis, age 16, now lives in Boston with cous ns. Unlike her sister who enjoyed the traditional home life and the synagogue community, Vicky rejected them, and resented her father's attempts to dominate her social life and choice of friends. She moved to Boston in an attempt to become more self-responsible. A very attractive girl, Vicky has had a string of short-term dating relationships with a variety of teenage boys.

The Davis' family held membership in an Orthodox synagogue. Both Mary Ann and Vicky went to Hebrew school there, with only Mary Ann becoming Bat Mitzvah. The family terminated its JCC membership in 1973, but Vicky still frequented the gameroom.

The Case History

A counseling session had just ended in the gameroom office. Bryan McDonald, severely beaten by his father only hours before, had been entertaining notions of running away from home. Two close friends, Marty Little and Vicky Davis, brought Bryan to TOP to talk things over and find other alternatives. Marty and Bryan walked briskly out of the office but Vicky lagged behind. "Could I talk to you about my problem?" she quietly begged.

Sitting near the desk, lighting a cigarette, fifteen-year-old Vicky sat silently for a few seconds. Slowly, she started to speak. "Well, there's some trouble at home...but it's not too bad." A nervous giggle and a lowered head indicated otherwise. Asked to explain what she meant, the attractive teenager began talking about her family. "Umm, Mom is okay. She and I get along pretty good. My sister, Mary Ann is nice,

but we're really different. She's serious and I like to have a good time, you know. But my dad (her voice level increased and she despondently shook her head). I hate him!"

Vicky expressed a strong resentment for the way Mr. Davis seemingly favored the other of the two girls. As Vicky saw it, her father had nothing but praise for Mary Ann, and nothing but criticism for her. She complained about disparaging remarks about friends, grades, and personal appearance. "He even forced me to go to shul with him on Saturday so I'd be friends with the kids who hang around there. I wouldn't do it. They're not my type." The soft voice had grown louder and angry. She added, "Dad even blames me every time Mary has a diabetes attack. He says I'm killing her. If he'd just leave me alone, I wouldn't upset anybody."

TOP had known about the Davises for almost two years. At that time, a local agency informed us that they had terminated Vicky's counseling sessions. The teenager refused to say anything of substance. She denied any problems, blaming her father for everything. She also showed no willingness to modify behaviors that included violation of family curfews, use of drugs, missing school, and periodic sexual intercourse. (TOP workers knew Vicky had a stream of "steady" boy friends over the two year period, but none of the relationships lasted very long. She spoke frequently of going steady and breaking up. Many of the boys referred to her as a "sweet kid, but an easy lay."

The worker at the agency asked TOP to facilitate Vicky's return to the counseling sessions on condition her attitude improved. As the

conversations continued over the next six weeks, I encouraged her to be more open with me, and praised her when she did. This worked well. A turning point came one afternoon when Vicky remarked, "Why should I go for counseling if Dad doesn't?" Promised that the new counselor would make his suggestion to Mr. Davis, Vicky agreed to resume the sessions.

A month after this resumption, Mr. Bernard Davis called TOP. Concerned about his daughter and desiring to help her, Mr. Davis arranged to stop by for a chat. A few nights later, he came into the gameroom office. Slumping into a chair, he looked tired and haggard. He explained that he and Mrs. Davis sent Vicky to the first counselor because, in his words, "She was too rebellious and it hurt Mrs. Davis a great deal. Every time Vicky misbehaved, Mrs. Davis had severe diabetes attacks. Twice she almost died. But I was foolish to blame Vicky. I was angry and I didn't know what I was saying. I know now it must have hurt her."

Told of Vicky's "favoritism" allegation, Mr. Davis again replied in a brusk tone that had a pleading ring to it. "It's true," he admitted. "Mary Ann was everything a parent dreamed of. She did well in school and graduated with honors. She had nice friends. She always tried to help her mother and me. She also was active in my synagogue. She tried to be nice to Vicky, too, but Vicky rejected her. Yes, Vicky was just the opposite of Mary Ann, never doing what anybody asked of her.

"I must admit that I was very stubborn. I tried to force Vicky to meet new friends, better friends at the shul. She just wouldn't mix with them. I can see now where my pressuring her might have made her rebel. That wasn't too smart of me. I guess my stubbornness hurt, but I

just wanted to do what was best for my daughter. But those curfew violations and those friends of hers, ach!"

At the end of the two-hour conversation, Mr. Davis left with a renewed will. Sounding convinced, he said he would try to rebuilt the relationship with Vicky. Mr. Davis remarked that he still wouldn't tolerate cutting classes or staying out too late, but he would try to be more understanding in other areas, such as Vicky's social life.

These efforts appeared successful. In subsequent visits to the gameroom, Vicky told how she and her father had grown a bit closer. "I still think he favors Mary Ann," she surmised, "but he says nice things to me now instead of ordering me. And would you believe that my Dad doesn't say bad things about my friends?"

Life in the Davis household showed signs of improvement. By the Fall, Gloria Davis's condition improved and she returned to a semi-active life as housewife and mother. After a summer at a camp in Minnesota, Vicky had made many new friends with whom she corresponded by mail. Plans had been made to exchange visits. She also enrolled in a private school. Vicky would cheerfully come into the gameroom and talk about how much she enjoyed classes and the other students. Meanwhile, Mary Ann had moved into her own apartment.

However, as the months progressed, Vicky's ebullence changed to silence. The bright face now looked as downcast as it had during our first conversation. Asked if something troubled her, Vicky would reply, "Things are okay," and then she would grow quiet and walk away. A call to her counselor at the agency revealed that Vicky had become less communicative over the months. She spoke of leaving the private school

because "classes are hard and the kids are snobs." The letters to camp friends also ceased. In mid-winter, Vicky abruptly terminated the counseling sessions.

One Sunday afternoon, Gloria Davis came to the gameroom looking for Vicky. The teenager had been out all night and the parents had no inkling where she might be. When told Vicky had not been to the gameroom for over a month, Mrs. Davis went into a rage. She screamed at several of the teenagers, calling them "liars, dope addicts, and punks." She chastised a TOP worker, insisting the program was "a terrible influence on Vicky, keeping her from making decent friends." Then Mrs. Davis stormed out of the premises.

A few weeks later, I saw Bernard Davis at a drug store. He grabbed me by the arm and pleaded, "Vicky has gotten bad again. Please come to the house and speak with her." I replied that I'd like to speak with the whole family. Mr. Davis agreed and promised to call later in the week to arrange a time. He never called back.

The following March, Vicky walked into the gameroom for the first time in three months. After some general talk, I asked about the relationship with her parents. With a nervous giggle, similar to our first talk she smilingly said, "Fine. There's nothing wrong at all. I gotta run. Bye!"

Phone Call and Initial Expectations

Mr. Davis answered the phone in his usual stern manner. When I mentioned TOP, he sounded even more gruff. However, after I identified myself, he warmed considerably. Readily consenting to the follow-up

interview, he mentioned that Vicky would not be there. "She moved to Boston to live with a cousin," Mr. Davis explained. "She had a small problem at school, but since the move, she had been doing fine." We arranged for an interview the following week.

I expected the Davises to try to minimize their family problems. They might be friendly on the outside, but secretive and non-committal when it came to personal matters. For them, Vicky would never change, b ut they would love her with all her failings. I also felt that Mary Ann's move would stem from her realization that she had a personal life to lead, and that she could not be family peacemaker.

Regarding Jewish family life, I suspected the Davises would praise their family as having typical close-knit ties. Vicky had a problem with which the family had to cope. Mary Ann might disagree with this evaluation and explore the real nuances of the family system.

The Follow-up Interview

Bernard Davis invited me into the den of the family apartment. His wife sat on the sofa, knitting. Both greeted me with warm smiles and handshakes, offering me a seat on the lounge chair. Mr. Davis sat next to me on a recliner. Asking about Mary Ann, Mr. Davis beamed. "I forgot to tell you. She got a job with a big advertising firm in New York. She's been there for six weeks already." As he described Mary Ann's job in detail, I noticed a large family portrait hanging over the bookshelf. All four Davises had happy smiles, and the outward appearance of a contented family. Remarking about the picture, I asked about Vicky. Immediately, the Davis's smiles turned into concerned frowns.

"Things are bad," sad Mrs. Davis, shaking her head from side to side. "She went to Boston after the 'Yam Taren' (Yiddish expression for the Jewish High Holy Days) to live with my cousin and his wife. At first she did well, making friends and getting good grades. She had a boy friend, too, a nice Jewish boy. Then she came home for vacation and it started all over again. She lied to us where she was going. She kept seeing those filthy friends. The night before New Year's Eve, she stayed out all night. I grounded her for New Year's Eve, and she returned to Boston the next day."

Asked if there had been trouble in Boston since then, Mrs. Davis replied, "Vicky has been doing the same things to my cousins that she did to us. She broke off the relationship with the nice boy. Then, lies, broken curfews, all the rest. My cousins can't take it. She says she misses her friends here, but she doesn't want to come home. They may send her back any day. What are we going to do?"

Bernard Davis looked downcast while his wife spoke. Suddenly he exploded. "It's those shagotzes (non-Jewish boys). All she wants to do is go out with shqgotzes. She did it here, she's doing it in Boston. Gloria's cousin has been putting up with the same stunts Vicky pulled here. Her grades have dropped, she won't talk to them, she goes into dangerous neighborhoods. I'm telling you, that girl has a real problem.

Asked about Vicky's counseling sessions of the past year, Mr. Davis continued shouting. "She quit; said that Miss Telman didn't care about her. She just didn't want to hear the truth. We even took Vicky to a child psychiatrist, but that was a waste of money. The psychiatrist said

we had a family problem. I don't care if Gloria and I go the first couple of times, but Vicky's the problem, not us." Mrs. Davis firmly nodded in agreement.

Again looking at the picture, I asked how Mary Ann had felt about this. Mrs. Davis forlornly said, "Oh, she doesn't want to have anything to do with Vicky. She tries to make us happy but she has her own life to live." Mr. Davis added, "Even she's dating shagetzes now, but when it comes to boys, Mary Ann knows the difference."

Remarking about his dislike for "shagetzes," I asked Mr. Davis why he felt so strongly. "Don't get me wrong," he retracted, "I have nothing against the boys. I'm a very traditional person. Jews should date their own kind. I made my wife a traditional Jew. All she knew was that Reform garbage. Mary Ann came to shul with me all the time and sat there like an angel. But Vicky, she wanted no part of it."

Talking about Jewish practice in the home, Mr. Davis proudly explained how he performed the traditional prayer rituals every day. So traditional was he that he objected to Marry Ann's Bat Mitzvah, but his wife's insistence prevailed." Maybe if Vicky had a Bat Mitzvah it would have helped her," he surmised. "But who knows?"

Both Davises also insisted that Jewish families had closer knit ties than non-Jewish families. However, they felt that the strengths weren't as great as they had been years ago. "How many kids read these?" he said, pointing to a shelf of English translations of Talmud. "How many kids go to Kheder (Orthodox Hebrew School) or davan (pray) every day? Not many I'll tell you that! You Reform Jews will never have the strong

families we traditional Jews have. If these kids would only appreciate what we try to do for them!"

Before I left, Mrs. Davis said to me, "please write to Vicky. She thinks the world of you. She says she's confused and I know she is. She hates Boston and she hates home. We're her parents, but if she comes back...I just don't know."

Analysis

The Davis family's interaction pattern appeared unique for this day and age. It had a strong patriarchial orientation, much like the Jewish family in the East European shtetl where the father literally ruled his household. Bernard Davis firmly believed in the traditional Jewish way of life and he intended to have his family conform to it. For his part, Mr. Davis adopted the roles of provider, active member of synagogue (especially when it came to services and ritual celebration), husband, father, and transmitter of Jewish values. In addition, he also adopted the role of family authority who would personally determine the roles of other family members. At his insistence, Mrs. Davis became a traditional Jew, keeping a kosher home, becoming active in an Orthodox synagogue, fulfilling the duties of a housewife. At his insistence, Mary Ann became the "model" Jewish child, compliantly following her parents' wishes, attending synagogue services on a regular basis with her father, showing appreciation for his daily prayer rituals, making friends of whom Mr. Davis approved.

The main problem in the Davis family arose when Mr. Davis assumed he could determine Vicky's roles much as he had done with the other two women. Mr. Davis had changed his wife from a Reform Jew to an Orthodox Jew. She became a kosher housewife. Her husband acted as though he had married a convert. Mary Ann, in turn, received a strong, traditionally Jewish, socialization which she passively accepted. Strong in her own way, Vicky resisted her father's demands and adopted unique roles of her own. The more her father criticized and castigated her, the more Vicky sought to adopt roles and practice behaviors of which Mr. Davis would disapprove.

The difference of role expectations between the eldest and youngest Davis became the main source of conflict in the household. Mrs. Davis allied with her husband to put additional pressure on Vicky to conform t o the family norms of traditional Judaism. From the information at TOP's disposal, it is unclear whecher May Ann Davis allied with her parents, if she tried to act as a conciliator between the two factions or if she, on her own violition, tried to persuade Vicky to follow her father's dictates. Vicky felt no animosity toward her older sister, but she did feel added animosity toward her father who held up Mary Ann as a role model to be exemplified.

Out of her frustration and anger from this pressure to change, Vicky began acting out in the community. Late hours and staying out all night became a habit for the teenage girl. As she told friends, "I won't go home. It's awful. I hate being there." The drugs, truancy, and sex added to the escape motif, but they also became Vicky's form of retaliation. Her parents hurt her and this was her method for hurting back.

As this teenager progressed over the years, Vicky became the scapegoat for the role conflict. As her parents frequently claimed, Vicky was the problem child in the good Jewish family. No matter how she tried to shed this role, her parents kept reinforcing that she kept "hurting" the other family members. The most significant example came when Mr. Davis blamed Vicky for her mother's diabetes attacks. Thus, not only did the parents reinforce this scapegoat notion, but they personally attacked their daughter. As a mutual reinforcement, Vicky acted out in the community and personally attacked her parents (to a limited extent).

Tracing the sequence of conflict, a general trend emerges. After an overt conflict, the family reaches a tentative accommodation and occasionally, a tentative conciliation. This falls apart when Bernard Davis's reassessment concludes that Vicky act like Mary Ann. For him, there can be no other solution.

Once, when he came to visit the TOP gameroom, Mr. Davis made a different kind of reassessment. He concluded that he had been wrong to force Vicky to be what he wanted her to be. Thus, he began to encourage the positive aspects of her independent nature. Kind words and approval reinforced better community behavior and vice versa. The mutual reinforcement became positive. Both the summer at camp and the enrollment in private school gave Vicky the opportunity to make a fresh start. She had freedom to be her own person, but she adopted roles which the parents could accept.

However, something took place within the system that caused the family to revert to the previous roles. Father again became authoritarian,

Vicky again became scapegoat. Mother allied with father, but Mary Ann moved out of the house, unable to tolerate the conflicts and needing to develop a personality independent of her father (as exemplified by her dating non-Jewish boys). Neither the counselor nor TOP knew what caused this reversion, as Vicky became highly uncommunicative.

A possible answer for this reversion arises when one compares the first reversion to the recent one in Boston. Again, Vicky gets a fresh start. Again, mutual reinforcement takes place, this time with Vicky and her mother's cousins. Again, the family reverts problem behavior and parental scapegoating. But one other factor comes out. Before the stresses re-emerge, Vicky loses a relationship with her teenage boy friend. Although this is speculation, in the first instance she may have broken up with a boy friend from the private school or from camp. She may have become moody and lackadaisical about homework. Instead of trying to understand the reasons for the change, the parents again start to criticize the behavior. Vicky becomes more moody and distrustful of her parents and the mutual improper reinforcements escalate anew.

Considering Vicky's case history, another factor adds weight to this speculation. Vicky always had a series of "steady boy friends." She could never maintain the relationships longer than a couple of months. During the high points of the relationship she appeared happy and carefree. When the relationships ended, she would become moody until the next one began.

Thus, the reversion to role strains and conflicts, both in the private school period and the Boston period, may have come from a combination of Vicky's unhappiness in finding a satisfying relationship with a male and her parents' inability to empathize with her change in moods. To speculate a little further Vicky's relationships with boys may have been hampered by her disillusionment of males, a disillusionment that stems from the chronic conflict with her father.

No matter what the reasons for a return to conflict, the tensions manifest themselves in other family interactions. Communications tended to do little else but reinforce the bad feelings between Bernard Davis and Vicky. He transmitted fixed orders, she responded with resistence. Mr. Davis also indicated a strong favoritism for his elder daughter, Mary Ann, that only heightened the conflict. Anything Mrs. Davis said was interpreted by her daughter as support for the father. As the conflict progressed both Vicky and the parental alliance became extremely defensive. Whatever one side did was considered proper, whatever the other side did was considered blatantly wrong. Vicky's defensiveness extended to escaping the problem situation. The heavy use of drugs, the self-deceit ("everything's okay") exemplified this. Finally, Mary Ann, who's communications tried to bring about compromise, went unheeded due to the rigidity of the defenses evolving from the conflict.

The subsystem of Mr. Davis, Mrs. Davis, and Mary Ann, lived the life of the traditional Jewish family, as defined by the father. Vicky, rebelling against this mode of living, found herself isolated, scorned, and blamed for causing problems. In fact, this subsystem developed a

homeostasis of its own as it tried to preserve a fixed identity despite Vicky's need for change and growth. The family system had become so inflexible that a member of the household had no choice but to go along with Mr. Davis's interpretation of family harmony or else face his wrath. Only Vicky chose the latter action, and the resulting conflict affected everyone.

Thus, the tension role between Bernard Davis and his daughter, Vicky, became the source of a severe family problem. Mr. Davis, a stubborn man with strong traditional Jewish leanings, demanded that Vicky be a compliant daughter who followed his dictates. Vicky, an equally stubborn teenager who wanted more self-responsibility, demanded that her father modify the strong patriarchial orientation of the family system, and adopt a less dominating role. With neither of the two being able to accommodate the other on an ongoing basis, the Davis family had to live with ever increasing tensions, and strained interpersonal ties.

About the Hypothesis

One of the most significant events of this case occurred when the child psychologist told Bernard Davis that the entire family had a problem, not just Vicky. Mr. Davis and his wife, as well, firmly refused to accept this analysis. Their denial stemmed directly from their belief in the Jewish family myth. Mr. Davis prayed every day, his wife maintained a kosher kitchen, both brought positive Jewish values into the home. Both insisted that Jewish families were stronger by nature than non-Jewish families, although this difference was less apparent than in previous

generations. As further proof to the parents that their actions had been proper, Mary Ann had matured into an upstanding Jewish woman. Vicky had problems of her own, caused by rebelliousness and bad friends. For Bernard and Gloria Davis, a proper Jewish family, steeped in tradition, could never be a problem family.

Vicky also practiced denial, but not from a belief in the myth. As she perceived the family situation, her father was the source of all problems. He forced her to be what she wasn't. In her mind all of the anti-social behavior; e.g., heavy drug use, truancy, sex, curfew violations) did no harm. This was just her way of living. She couldn't recognize the hurt it brought to her parents. Added to this denial was an element of self-deceit. She avoided the existence of the family problem whenever possible, let alone her own complicity. Nonetheless, Vicky Davis did not live with a myth that all Jewish families had inherent strength. If anything, she hated her traditionally oriented family system and found it a source of personal pain.

Jewish affiliations and acceptance of home ritual lended much to either the belief or denial of the myth. For the senior Davises, the synagogue was their whole life. There they worshipped, socialized with friends, took an active involvement in the community. At home, daily prayers, personal study, observing the dietary laws, and celebrating the holidays became a family way of life for all but Vicky. Vicky rejected the synagogue community and her rejection increased as her father forced her to attend services and meet new friends. Her only Jewish outlet was

the JCC gameroom, and that was not to identify with a Jewish organization, but rather, to be with her friends.

Regarding Mary Ann, one can only surmise that she enjoyed the traditional practices of the synagogue and the home, but that she did not let her pride in Jewish family life blind her to the existence of problems. Her father's statement that "she wanted to help but she had her own life to live" reflected that she alone in the household did not defensively deny interpersonal trouble. However, her strength at achieving compromise could not match her father's and sister's strength for maintaining an adamant position as self-righteous combatant.

Thus, a gap exists in the Davis family. The parents deny any responsibility for problems due in large part to their belief in the Jewish family myth. Vicky denies any responsibility as well, defensively placing all blame on her father because of his stubborn, forceful nature. Mary Ann recognizes the existence of a family problem, but cannot obviate the reinforcements that both prolong and magnify the difficulties.

Conclusion

The Davis family system was an inflexible system. That inflexibility stifled growth and led to severe consequences. Both Bernard Davis and Vicky Davis never reached a sense of reciprocity in their roles as father and daughter. Both stubbornly insisted that they had no need to modify their behavior patterns. This role strain led to a family alliance against young Vicky. She became the scapegoat for all family tensions. Conflict emerged and was reinforced. Had Mr. Davis encouraged freedom rather than conformity and balanced tenderness with his stern demeanor, this problem

may never have reached crisis proportion.

As a further difficulty, family members denied any complicity in the problem itself. Parents blamed youngest daughter for causing the trouble and she blamed them. The eldest daughter, Mary Ann, who recognized the problem, could not imitate its resolution. Only the parents' denial stemmed from their belief in the inherent cohesiveness of the Jewish family. Their belief in this myth heightened the conflicts and further reduced the possibility of eliminating the crisis that had severely strained the family ties and brought the system nearer to collapse.

Chapter 9:

"He May Kill Me The Next Time" - The Jacobson Family

Family Roster

Louis Jacobson - Age 45 - Father - Executive of Cosmetics Company
Esther Jacobson - Age 42 - Mother - Housewife
John Jacobson - Age 22 - Married
Ruth Jacobson - Age 20 - Junior at out-of-state college
Lenny Jacobson - Age 18 - College freshman
Al Jacobson - Age 16 - Family scapegoat
Susie Jacobson - Age 13 - Retarded child
Mark Jacobson - Age 12 - Possible "problem child"

Introduction

Family disintegration can be brought about by any combination of interpersonal factors that go unresolved over time. When the disintegration occurs, not only the family unit decays as a whole, but individual family members receive emotional scars. The Jacobson family typifies this condition. Parents constantly battling, the children suffered for their conflict. Three children left the home, ostensibly forever, and two had to be placed outside the home. The problems could have been resolved, but nobody in the family knew how to effect the harmony that was required.

The Jacobson's might be considered an oddity in the Jewish community. Most Jewish family systems have one or two parents and two or three children. The Jacobson family was a two parent system with six children. Louis Jacobson, age 45, a slim frail-looking man, had been a highly successful sales representative for a cosmetics firm, supervising regional sales offices. A heart attack three years before and concern for his family caused him to seek reassignment in the local

office of the company. With six children to raise, Esther Jacobson, age 42, devoted almost all her energies to household maintenance. Much of this time was allotted to Susie, their thirteen year old retarded daughter. Although able to function to some degree, Susie needed constant supervision. By this time, John, age 22, had graduated from college and married. He and his wife lived in another city. Patti, age 20, attends school in North Carolina. Lenny, age 18, has just started college in New York. An interested, bright young man, Lenny did well in high school and had a part time job at a restaurant. He has a strong dislike for his father. With these three moving out of the house, Esther felt she now had time to participate in Hadassah activities. Al, age 16, dropped out of school in the eighth grade. A disheveled, unwashed teenager, he spends much of his time dealing narcotics on the streets. Occasionally, he attended a private school run by a psychiatrist. Although quiet and introverted, Al has many friends. He now lives in a state adolescent institution, having been placed there by the courts after a drug arrest. Mark, age 12, is a bubbly pre-adolescent. Until a year ago he had been a happy-go-lucky boy. Within the last year, he has taken to doing drugs and engaging in petty vandalism. Mr. and Mrs. Jackbson placed Mark in a military academy in the hope of re-orienting his problematic behavior.

The Case History

Six teenagers approached me in the JCC parking lot. The look on their faces showed an anxiousness to talk about something. "Earl," said

Jill Kallick, acting as spokesperson for the group, "You've got to help Al Jacobson. He's going to kill himself at the rate he's going." Asked for the specifics, all six started talking at once. The worried tone of their voices indicated a great deal of urgency. Jill quieted them and continued. "Al is in pretty bad shape. You know, he's an asthmatic and he won't quit smoking. We don't even give him cigarettes any more. The doctor said he could get lung cancer any day. And he's doing hard drugs more than ever. We do acid once in a while, but not like Al. He trips almost every day. Please, do something for him before he O.D.'s or does something worse to himself." The other five vigorously nodded their heads in support of Jill.

"Sorry, everybody," I replied. "I offered to help Al when he came to the office last month. He said he wouldn't deal (sell drugs) in the gameroom again, but he broke the trust. If he comes to talk with a straight head (not under a narcotic influence), I'll see what I can do and that's it. I'm not a missionary. I can only help people who want to help themselves and all of you know that!" I hoped Jill and her friends would try to bring Al back. Meanwhile, despite the rough words, I planned an intervention for the Jacobson family.

Since TOP's earliest days, Al Jacobson had been a regular and unwelcome face around the gameroom. His presence only meant that he needed to "score a drug deal." Frequently, he was thrown off the premises and twice he received one month gameroom suspensions. Nevertheless, he walked into the office in March, looking quite sobered and said softly, "I want to talk to you about something. My friends said you can be okay, but I gotta come in straight. Well, here I am."

In the office, slumped on a folding chair, Al spoke about troubles at home. The problem was that his father antagonized him and beat him with a belt without provocation. As a result, Al stayed away from the family home, sometimes until the early morning hours, sometimes for days at a time for fear of being beaten. He did drugs to escape the problem. Now he wanted help. I urged the teenager to see a counselor as he had done two years previously. He agreed, and mentioned that he would resume attending a special school run by Dr. Judy Roberts, a local psychiatrist. I also offered to speak with his father, provided Al remain straight. He made the promise, gave me a headshake and sheepish grin and left.

The following evening, a red-eyed Al Jacobson entered the gameroom and started to sell a vial of cocaine. Immediately I pulled him outside. "I don't know if you can understand me inside that spaced-out brain of yours, Al, but you broke the trust. There's no counselor and no call to your dad. Now, get out."

In the past, others had "broken the trust" just like Al. They would return to the office a few days later, apologize profusely, and beg us to continue the intervention. After a long discussion, we normally did, provided the teen live up to his end of the agreement; i.e., no drugs. However, Al Jacobson never returned and TOP terminated its efforts on his behalf.

The pleading of Jill Kallick and her friends induced us to reopen the case. It truly appeared that Al Jacobson was on a self-destructive course, perhaps even suicidal. The intervention began with a call to

Dr. Judy Roberts. Dr. Roberts briefed us on what she considered a volatile home situation. Not only did Mr. Jacobson chastise and beat Al, but Al had been acting up himself. He stole money from his mother's purse, threw a lamp at her when she discovered him once, and recently threatened his father with a bread knife. The mother, who recently underwent a radical mastectomy, couldn't deal with the tension. She would alternately scream at the other children or break down and cry. But she fastidiously avoided any contact with Al. The other Jacobson children, Lenny, Susie and Mark, suffered a lack of attention and felt an extreme tension as their parents tried to cope with Al. Two other children, Jon and Patti, made a point of staying away from the home. They told Dr. Roberts that Mr. and Mrs. Jacobson had made their lives miserable and now they were "destroying" Al and Mark.

Judy Roberts felt that Al's drug problem and family problem had grown so severe that he needed placement outside the home in order to have any hope of self-improvement. She had been urging him to either move into an adolescent halfway house or spend the coming summer at a drug-abuse "drying out" farm in Wisconsin.

With this information in mind, I contacted Louis Jacobson and his wife, ~~Mildred~~ Esther, to arrange for an intervention meeting in their home. Over the phone, Mr. Jacobson sounded hostile and resentful. However, hearing Dr. Robert's suggestion and the pleadings of Al's friends slowly changed his mind. "If you really think you can help Al, come over tomorrow night. Mrs. Jacobson and I will be here."

The next afternoon, Al Jacobson walked into the gameroom with a facial expression that showed he was not under the influence of drugs. "My friends tell me you want to talk about something." Hearing about the beginning of the intervention, he smiled and shyly said, "Jill said you'd talk to my folks if I came in straight. Thanks for helping. I hope it works. Anyhow, in a couple of weeks, I'm gonna hitchhike around the country with some friends." I suggested that hitchhiking around the country with a head full of personal trouble might not be much fun. If anything, he ought to give the farm a try. "Maybe a couple of weeks in Wisconsin might be okay," he thought out loud. "Out, just to try it out. I'll still hitchhike...the guys can meet me in Wisconsin."

That evening as I drove up the driveway of the spacious Jacobson home, Lenny greeted me. Lenny, who stopped by the gameroom at infrequent intervals, always acted quiet and introverted. Now he seemed eager to talk. "Hey, I'm glad you're here," he said, extending his hand. "I wish I could stick around, but I'm late for work already. Whatever you do, don't believe a word my old man says. He's a real S.O.B."

Thinking about Lenny's strong feelings, I rang the doorbell. Louis Jackbson greeted me with a cool air and led me into a comfortable den. Seated on a sofa, I could gaze at the spacious patio and backyard through a plate glass door. Mr. Jacobson sat on a large recliner, while Esther Jacobson busied herself in the kitchen. Before we had begun talking, she entered the den, introduced herself, and relaxed in a

rocking chair. She picked up some knitting near the chair and began working on a shawl while we talked about the family situation.

Hearing about Al's actions in the gameroom, Mr. Jacobson disdainfully said, "That boy is hopeless. There's just no use reasoning with him any more." Immediately, Mrs. Jacobson interrupted. "We wouldn't have had any trouble if you knew how to be a proper father. All you do is give orders, scream, and hit with a belt." He sarcastically replied, "Yes, I know. You always have the right answer." (This pattern of conflict between the parents continued theoughout the conversation.)

As the intervention continued, two diverse opinions about Al were heard from each parent. Louis Jacobson had given up hope of establishing any rapport with his son. To him, young Al was a frustration. He did not understand why his son took drugs, dropped out of school, stayed away from home. "We tried to do what was best, but he doesn't care about us," Mr. Jacobson rationalized. "Why should we care about him?"

Mrs. Jacobson described Al in a contradictory fashion. On one hand, she referred to a learning disability the teenager had as a factor that made him "a psychological problem." On the other hand, she couldn't understand why he didn't "act normal" around the house as the other children did. Al would take no part in the family chores, nor would he show any appreciation of the gifts and money his mother constantly gave him. She hoped these gifts would change his anti-social behavior, but they proved to be useless.

The Jacobson's could only agree on three items. First, they both had begun to fear for their own physical safety. The lamp throwing

incident and the knife wielding incident had shaken them up greatly. "He may kill me the next time," Mrs. Jacobson suggested with a frightening ring. Second, they felt that Al was destroying himself with the drug taking and the cigarette smoking that affected his asthmatic condition. The parents wanted to help Al, but all their efforts had been rebuked. Third, they indicated that Mark was adopting personality traits similar to his brother. He, too, had become dishelved and went for long periods without bathing. Mark and his friends smoked grass (once a friend's parents found them in a cellar), they became truantfarm school, and had gone on a vandalism spree. After one escapade of breaking windows and stealing a cassette tape recorder, the police arrested the boys. The courts placed them on house arrest. Louis and Esther Jacobson greatly worried that Mark would "end up like Al."

(Later that summer, a TOP worker took Mark fishing. The boy had a good time and all through the day, he begged to be taken on another trip. Asked about his family, Mark spoke freely about the problem he saw. The parents constantly argued with one another. Both parents gave all their attention to Al and Susie. Mark understood that Susie, as a retarded child, needed the attention, but he felt the parents should ignore Al and spend more time with him. Mark also spoke about his father's whippings with the belt and Al's two assaults on them.

When visiting the Jacobson home to pick up Mark, the TOP worker found the parents arguing, just as they had during the intervention.

As I was about to leave, Al walked into the house. He joined us in the den at which point I shared his feelings with the parents and

their feelings with him. From the looks on all their faces, they realized an element of love still remained among them. Each said they wanted a change in the household situation, and would do whatever possible to bring it about. Mr. Jacobson offered to scream less and "leave his belt in his belt loops." Al said he would attend Dr. Robert's school on a regular basis, come home at a reasonable hour, and stop smoking cigarettes. Mrs. Jacobson realized a need to cease chastising her husband and both parents agreed to devote more attention to Mark and Lenny. Finally, Al and his father said they would do their best to communicate directly with each other and try to be more understanding.

A few days later, Lenny drifted into the gameroom. He mentioned that things at home had calmed considerably. All seemed to be improving. However, by the end of the summer, the peace had been shattered. Al had been arrested for possession and sale of drugs. The court sent him to a state institution for wayward adolescents. The Jacobsen's sent Mark to a military academy in the hope that he could improve his behavior in a totally new environment meeting new friends. Lenny graduated from high school and went away to college in New York. Only Mr. Jacobsen, Mrs. Jacobsen, and Susie remained in the large, opulent home.

Phone Call and Pre-Interview Expectations

Louis Jacobson picked up the phone. When he heard my voice he offered a curt hello and said, "Here, talk to my wife." Esther Jacobson cheerily took the phone and engaged me in some idle conversation. Asked

to participate in the informational interview, she replied, "Oh Earl, we don't need any help any more. The court sent Al away and Mark just loves his school." Told that they were needed to help me, she invited me to visit the next week. In the background, I could hear Mr. Jacobson reluctantly consent to the interview. He grumbled, "Oh, what the hell. Esther this is ridiculous. You want him here? Okay, have him over."

I wasn't certain if Lenny, Mark, or Al would be at the interview, but I expected the parents to speak in their behalf. All would be depicted as the problem child who almost singlehandedly wrecked the family. He aggravated his parents, set a bad example for Mark, and made life tense for his brothers and sisters. Since Al had been placed by the court, a sense of normalcy had slowly returned for the family.

I also suspected the parents would speak of religion as a minor part of the family routine. They may mention that Al and Bobby had prevented them from reaching fulfillment as a family, Jewish or otherwise.

The Follow-up Interview

Lenny opened the door to the Jacobson home and escorted me into the living room. Seeing the shock on my face he replied, "I'll bet you're surprised to see me. I had some time off from school so I came home for a visit. Anyhow, somebody has to tell you the truth about this family." We sat down on a plush sofa and Lenny told me

how much he enjoyed the college, his new-found friends, and living out East. As we spoke, the Jacobson's came in and sat down in chairs that faced one another.

Mrs. Jacobson immediately reiterated what she told me on the phone. For her, the home situation was excellent. Asked for his opinion, Mr. Jacobson snapped, "Ask my wife." The look on his face was angry and he seemed intent on ignoring the entire interview. Mrs. Jacobson snapped back, "Louis, you can't treat Earl like you treated Al." He looked away from her and sighed, "For God's sake, Esther...," his voice trailing off. Lenny interjected, "Things aren't so perfect like my Mom says. Sure it's better, but this was a crazy house for a while. My folks fought all the time, and Mom kept bribing Al. I had to do his jobs around the house, but he got paid for them, not me. It's still hard to talk to Dad. Just ask John and Patti. Mr. Jacobson shot back, "Well, I try my best." Mrs. Jacobson interrupted to insist that he didn't try hard enough.

Asked about Jewish life in the home, Mrs. Jacobson beamed, "Well I have the time for Hadassah that I always wanted, now that the kids are grown up, but these two (pointing at her husband and son) couldn't care less about Jewish things. We don't even attend Rosh Hoshanah services any more." Mr. Jacobson quipped, "It's a lot of mumbo-jumbo. Religion is what you feel inside. We had Hannukah for our kids, but they liked the Christmas tree in the den, so we gave it up. It doesn't matter." Lenny added that Jews were just like any other people so why look for differences. Mr . Jacobson interrupted, "That's right.

I've met some pretty miserable Jews. Who needs'em?" Mrs. Jacobson retorted, "There you go again, Louis, always something nasty. I think being Jewish is something special. You don't find ladies like my Hadassah group in every part of this city. I just wish the rest of this family wanted to be more Jewish. Maybe we would have had fewer problems. Well, who knows? Al did have a mental disability, the reading problem, you know. He just couldn't overcome it."

All of a sudden, Mr. Jacobson sat up straight in his chair. "You know, speaking of Jews, your gameroom wasn't much help. Al never changed. We made those agreements that night you came. Well, Al never lived up to his end of the bargain. Ach, I'm glad he's gone." Angrily, Lenny replied, "Earl tried to help, but you never listened either. Nobody ever listened around here. You still don't sometimes."

"Quiet," Mrs. Jackson snapped. "Al's gone and now we're the happy family we always wanted to be. That's enough. Earl, you'll have to go. I forgot to mention that we're going to visit friends tonight. I'm sorry."

Lenny walked me to the car. "I'm sure-glad I don't live here any more," he said, heaving a sigh of relief. "Who needs the hassles? I may just spend vacations at John's place from now on. Coming home is a real pain."

Analysis

The Jacobson case illustrates the disintegration of the family system. In a two parent family with four sons and two daughters, all that remain are the parents and a retarded child. Five of the offspring have either moved away from home or been placed outside the home to correct behavioral problems. None of them feel any warmth toward their parents, nor do they have any desire to return home even for a visit. Contact with Mr. and Mrs. Jacobson has become almost non-existent. Of those still at home, the Jacobson's still continually bicker with each other, and little Susie is incapable of caring for herself.

A key variable of the family problem could be detected in their inability to communicate on a normative level over a long period of time. The parents' arguments (personal attacks, usually about failure to fulfill parental responsibilities), which undermined their integrity in the minds of their children, initiated the pattern. Out of the frustrations from this lack of compatibility, they displaced resentment and insecurities onto the children. Mr. Jacobson consistently screamed at, ordered and beat his three boys, but rarely shared any understanding of their needs and wants. Mrs. Jacobson tried to escape the situation by caring for her two "problem children." Supervising Susie, of course, was a necessity. The mother reacted to this traumatic shock of raising a retarded child in an admirable fashion. Although exasperated at times, she provided a loving environment in which the girl grows as

much as possible. Indeed, this was one difficulty with which Esther Jacobson could cope. Al, however, may have been made a "problem child" by his mother's actions. She treated him both as a normal and an abnormal boy. The double message confused the teenager a great deal and made him uncertain about his identity, in regard to both family and society roles.

As a direct result of these communication inadequacies, a chronic set of conflicts disrupted the family system. The central conflict emerged between the parents. Although not as intense as some of its spin-off conflicts, this altercation initiated them. Had Mr. and Mrs. Jacobson been satisfied with each other, they might have taught satisfaction to their youngsters. However, almost all of their examples were anger, escapism, undercutting and disrespect. John and Patti refused to involve themselves in the conflict. Lenny withdrew into himself and felt agonized that his family was a source of pain. Mark, lacking attention, starting emulating Al out in the community (drugs, vandalism) in the hope that he might be noticed by his parents. Al, however, engaged in direct conflicts with his parents, in addition to his self-destructive behavior in the community.

The resulting conflicts between Al and his parents each reflected the nature of the parents' communication with the boy. A quiet teenager, Al responded not in word but in deed. For example, Mr. Jacobson showed his son authoritarianism and anger. Not only did he disapprove of the teenager's behavior, but he also displaced the wrath caused by conflicts with his wife. Al responded with physical attack, the knife incident just one of many. Mrs. Jacobson treated her son in a contra-

dictory manner, both as a normal and abnormal child, using both scolding and bribes. Out of frustration, Al lashed back by either ignoring her (which hurt the mother) or by physically attacking her. Also the self-destructiveness served as a further retaliation. (This was the reason TOP intervened without Al's consent. He showed a suicidal tendency with the parents being the direct object of his suppressed anger). Al often tried to escape the pressure through staying away from his parents or drugs, but he was always drawn back into conflict once he came in contact with them. Naturally, these conflicts only heightened the previously mentioned reactions of the other family members.

Looking at the sequence of conflict, one can pinpoint the breakdown in resolution. Between the parents, an ongoing level of accommodation had been reached, even though overt conflicts might emerge. However, neither Louis or Esther Jacobson could achieve a sense of conciliation. They tolerated one another, but never shared a feeling of love and mutual support that could generate growth for the whole family. They seemed resigned to living with each other. The conflict between Mr. Jacobson and Al had frequent cessation points, but only once did they reach a level of accommodation, conciliation and reassessment that encouraged positive changes in both. This occurred during the intervention and it had no lasting effect. The parents returned to their marital conflict which retriggered the other family problems. Al and his mother had a desire for a good relationship, but neither knew how to build it. Any time they reached a level of conciliation, mother's bribes or Al's acting out

would reinstitute the interpersonal tension between them.

As these conflicts developed over time, a degree of mutual reinforcement acted as an integral factor in their growth. Father and mother showed each other disrespect. Al and his father attacked each other verbally and physically. Mrs. Jacobson and Al acted in ways which showed a lack of trust and interpersonal frustrations between the two. After a while, the conflicts only needed a periodic reinforcement to keep them alive.

The most interesting reinforcement developed in the relationship between Mark and his mother. When Mark acted in a normative manner he received no attention. When he acted out in the community, his mother showed a great deal of love and concern. This illustrates how one mode of improper behavior received reinforcement within the family system. Other modes were reinforced in other ways.

The continuation of problems and conflicts for the Jacobsons spawned other problems as well. Role adaptation, for example, became a difficult process. Reciprocity led to interpersonal tension and not growth. The parental relationship and the relationship of Mr. Jacobson and Al took on an adversary quality. Mrs. Jacobson simultaneously expected Al to act as a normal teenager and a psychologically handicapped teenager, which caused a great deal of frustration in him. Mark took on the role of "problem child" so he could be an integral part of the family system, never realizing the deeper implications involved. Other children chose to shed the primary role of family member due to the

extreme tension in the household. Alliances formed, using scapegoats to bring them together. Al, of course, became the scapegoat of the parental alliance. In a more subtle manner, Mr. Jacobson became the scapegoat of a sibling alliance. The young Jacobsons perceived their father as the primary source of the family's interpersonal ills. Sadly, the only healthy role set was between the retarded girl, Susie, and her sympathetic, helpful mother.

The reinforcements and conflicts became so strong that homeostasis was all but impossible. Equilibrium could be shattered at any moment by a cross word, acting out, withdrawal, or physical attack. The Jacobson family changed, but the changes were so volatile and so debilitating, that no stability (and the accompanying positive reinforcement) ever evolved. Thus, the family system disintegrated into combative husband and wife sharing living space with little Susie.

About the Hypothesis

The Jacobson's were a family with little or no Jewish identity, and thus nobody believed in the myth of the Jewish family. Only Mrs. Jacobson hinted at the desire for a Jewish home life, but she readily admitted that such a life style could never be an "end all" solution for family problems. Denial did exist in this family system. However, this denial was a defense mechanism to avoid responsibility for family problems. Eventually, the defense changed from denial to despondency and incompetency, especially for the parents. No matter what any family member did, the problems would always exist. Finally, Mrs. Jacobson

returned to this denial defense. For her the absence of problems indicated family harmony, not family disintegration.

Jewish affiliation and home ritual for the Jacobson's were minimal. They belonged to no synagogue and only the youngsters had any contact with the JCC. Even that was just in terms of infrequent appearances at the gameroom. Hannukah was celebrated only through the distribution of presents. Other celebrations went almost totally ignored. The only family link to the Jewish community was Mrs. Jacobson's participation in Hadussah. Family members interacted with friends of all faiths in non-structured settings; i.e., parties.

It should not be assumed that this lack of Jewish identity provided any strengths or weaknesses for the family system. For the Jackbsons, religious identity was only conspicuous by its absence.

Conclusion

The case of the Jacobson family does not support the hypothesis of the Jewish family. However, even without belief in the myth of innate Jewish family cohesiveness, they were beset by problems which led to an eventual family system disintegration, and personal problems for individuals in the system. Spawned by the example of the marital pair, communications in the home reflected a variety of negative interpersonal factors. Conflicts were unconsciously promoted and reinforced. No role reciprocity could be achieved unless the roles stifled

growth. Finally, the volatile relationships in the family network obstructed any long lasting, positive homeostasis from emerging that might benefit the entire household.

The Jacobson's were struck by three emotionally devastating blows. A retarded child was born into the family. The father suffered a heart attack at an early age (42 years old). The mother underwent the anguish of a radical mastectomy. Where other family systems might have rallied in support of the stricken individual and developed a stronger equilibrium, the Jacobson's let these problems add to their sense of futility. Family ties had disintegrated and just could not be restored, even at times of crisis.

Chapter 10:

"I Pick My Own Friends" - The Albert Family

Family Roster

Ted Albert - Age 47 - Father - Jewelry salesman
Martha Albert - Age 44 - Housewife
Judy Albert - Age 17 - High school senior
Lisa Albert - Age 16 - High school junior
Vera Albert - Age 8 - Third grade student

Introduction

In the Albert family system, the marital pair lived with an ongoing tension that affected everyone in the household. Mrs. Martha Albert felt bitter about her husband's job as a traveling salesman. Despite the material luxuries he provided, she still felt lonely and bitter. Thus, a chain reaction developed from this marital strain that ended in conflict between Mrs. Albert and her daughter, Lisa; the result of loneliness and a need for an outlet to ventilate frustrations.

Ted Albert, age 47, works for a wholesale jewelry distributor. The broad scope of his sales territory keeps him on the road five days a week. A quiet man, Mr. Albert devotes all of his free time to his family and his wife. Martha Albert, age 44, spends her weekdays managing the family's spacious, elegant home and raising their three daughters. A strong-willed woman, she raises them with a firm hand. To fill the gap of her husband's absences, she reads a great deal, and plays bridge and mah-jongg with friends. Judy Albert, age 17,

is a senior in high school. An attractive girl and a bright student, she has a large number of friends. She takes part in JCC dramatic productions, but that is her only formal affiliation. Other free time is spent after school with friends. Lisa Albert, age 16, bears a striking resemblance to her older sister. There the similarity ends. A poor student, Lisa spends her free time on the streets or in the JCC gameroom. Most of her friends are non-Jewish and many are high school dropouts. Lisa now lives at a private girls boarding school, sent there at her mother's insistence. Vera Albert, age 8, is a precocious little girl. Although she has the face of a cupie doll, she has the ability to cause trouble between her mother and Lisa (which she often does). She attends the JCC summer day camp.

The family belongs to a Reform Temple and the JCC, both of which they use infrequently. The girls attended religious school. (Judy was confirmed and Lisa dropped out), and the family attends only High Holy Day services. Home ritual consists of Passover Seders and a small Hannukah observance.

Case History

Driving back from the dentist one afternoon, I realized that my route left me only a few minutes away from the hospital. Earlier that week, someone had mentioned that Lisa Albert had been admitted for cosmetic plastic surgery. With her long, jet black hair and attractive appearance, Lisa did not seem in need of a nose job. However, she had been begging her parents, and they finally granted her wish. I decided to pay her a visit.

In the elevator, I reflected on my previous encounters with the teenager. A brash, outgoing girl, Lisa had a close circle of friends with whom she spent a great deal of time. When she wanted, she could manipulate them quite easily; using them for rides, cigarettes, or bans. However, one person whom Lisa could not manipulate was her mother, Martha Albert. Every time Lisa wanted to attend a TOP field trip, Mrs. Albert demanded to know the nature of the trip, the names of the others going, and a personal assurance that the trip would be closely supervised. Invariably, this meant a TOP worker would call Mrs. Albert at Lisa's behest. After these calls, Lisa would complain that her mother didn't like her coming to the gameroom because she disliked the teenager's friends.

Once, Lisa had a TOP worker call Mrs. Albert so Lisa could attend an art class in the gameroom. Mrs. Albert asked the usual questions and received a satisfactory answer. Lisa stayed for ten minutes, left for a joy ride with friends and never returned. After this manipulation, TOP workers informed Lisa they would no longer call her parents. Lisa argued, but the workers held firm. Occasionally she attended other programs, but without TOP assuring her mother of her whereabouts.

Inside the private hospital room, Lisa looked dazed. Bandages covered a swollen nose, and red color filled the corners of her eyes. In a weak voice she asked about her friends, and thanked me repeatedly for coming to visit. Again she mentioned that she would like to attend more TOP events, but her mother prohibited this. "Won't you talk to

my mom?" Before I could open my mouth to say no, Lisa continued. "She's over in the next room."

Sure enough, Mrs. Albert lay in the bed of the adjoining private room. She, too, had just come out of plastic surgery, in her case to correct a serious sinus blockage. With the bandages, swelling, and redness in the eyes, Martha Albert looked like a middle-aged Lisa. I started laughing, and so did they. "Just like the cereal commercial, right?" Mrs. Albert joked. We all laughed even harder.

After a few pleasantries, Mrs. Albert asked her usual questions about TOP and received the usual assurances with the addition that TOP is only in loco parents for field trips, not gameroom activities. Mrs. Albert remarked, "I wouldn't mind Lisa going to the gameroom if she would only make some new friends."

"Oh, Mom, there's nothing wrong with my friends. You just don't understand them."

"Honey, I know what kind of people I like to see you with. When you bring that trash into our beautiful home, I get sick. We'll talk about the gameroom when you get home, though. Maybe, I haven't been completely fair, especially now that I've had a chance to meet Earl in person. Who knew from Earl's?"

"Ladies with bad noses should know better," I joked.

"Yeah, mom!" said Lisa.

"And so should their daughters," I finished.

Again we all laughed. I could see from the smiles on their faces that the Alberts could disagree and retain a sense of mutual respect and understanding.

A couple of months later, TOP planned a trip to a shopping mall. Knowing that Lisa loved these shopping forays, I called to invite her. Mrs. Albert picked up the phone and informed me that Lisa had been "grounded" (not allowed social activities, a parental-imposed house confinement) for staying out past curfew. "That trash has been keeping her out all hours of the night."

"They're not trash," came a frenzied scream. "Oh, I hate you so much."

"That's Lisa," Mrs. Albert said with surprising calm, "acting like an animal when she doesn't get her way. She's been hitting her sisters without cause. She even sprang at me and dug her nails into my arm."

"Could I talk to her?" I asked.

"Somebody has to. Lisa!" she screamed with a nasty, authoritarian tone. "You get over here this minute and talk to Earl."

"I don't want to talk to that shit head or anybody else," she screamed back.

Realizing that Mrs. Albert had conveyed the words of the message but not the tone of the message (she substituted her angry tone for my calming tone) I unwittingly allied myself with the mother. Needing to clarify my position, hearing the screams and of physical mayhem, I thought of making a crisis intervention. Mrs. Albert agreed. "Please, Earl, come over! Do something! Do anything! This girl is going wild!" The tone indicated urgency.

Arriving at the mansion-like Albert home, I said hello to Lisa who answered the door. At least I thought it was Lisa. "Sorry," she said, "I'm Judy, Lisa's older sister." Dumbstruck, I recognized that

the two teenagers, dissimilar in age, could have passed for twins. Now at least, with Lisa having a new nose, the girls had a distinguishing facial feature. (Lisa's plastic surgery, therefore, had not been a lark. There had been a strong family sentiment to have her look different from Judy.) "I hope you can do something for Lisa," Judy said. "She's going to kill somebody or maybe herself. Look at the teeth marks on Vera's arm." The eight year old Albert girl came over and showed me a deep set of teeth marks on her right bicep.

I walked over to Lisa's bedroom and knocked at the locked door. "Get out," she screamed. "I don't need any of you fucking bastards. Ohhhh! I'm running away!" Sobs could be heard in the background.

"Lisa, it's Earl. I came to talk. I was worried about you. Can I come in?"

"Go away. Nobody cares in this house. Just leave me alone." The screams had given way to loud crying. After another few minutes of gentle coaxing, she opened the door. Eyes red with tears, Lisa buried her face in the pillow. The bedroom lacked no material comforts. Stuffed animals and electric gadgets; e.g., cassette tape recorder, hair dryer, stereo, had been strewn about. A half-opened closet revealed a rack full oc clothing and a shelf of sweaters.

Raising her head from the pillow, Lisa took my handkerchief and blew her nose. "Nobody cares about me. She grounded me again. It's like being in prison. All I can do is go to school. No weekends, no evenings, no nothing. She checks over my friends like a policeman. I pick my own friends. Nobody tells me what to do."

The sobs under control, Lisa explained the circumstances that led to the grounding. The previous weekend, Mrs. Albert refused to allow her to go for a drive with some friends. Lisa ran out of the house and didn't return home until 3:00 A.M. Her mother grounded her for a month, the following morning.

Lisa said Mrs. Albert tried to "rule her!" Again she spoke of running away after school one day soon. Asked about the attacks on other family members, Lisa felt badly. "I don't know why I hit them. But everybody either bosses me or teases me. That little Vera gets away with everything, and Judy is Miss Perfect as far as my Mom is concerned." I told Lisa to relax for a while, while I went to present her side of the situation to Mrs. Albert.

Martha Albert and her husband, Ted, were seated in Ted's workroom. Martha had a tense, angry look on her face. Ted seemed haggard and drawn. "Well, what did she say?" Mrs. Albert snapped. I related Lisa's words and my own impressions that every conflict has two antagonists. Mrs. Albert replied, "Well, I'm sorry Earl, but I disagree with you. Lisa is a terror around here. Look what she's doing to us. My husband's getting an ulcer from the whole thing. (Mr. Albert's doctor had discovered an ulcerated intestine during a checkup the month before). We just ought to send her to that boarding school. She just can't live here and destroy us."

Mr. Albert went on to explain that his job as a jewelry salesman kept him on the road five days a week. Every time he called home his wife complained bitterly about Lisa's behavior. "It felt frustrating. I was there, unable to stop the trouble here. She fights with my wife

even on the weekend when I'm here." Despondently, he concluded, "We give that girl everything. I just can't take much more of it."

Martha Albert added, "Lisa thinks I'm too strict, but I'm really not. I just don't want her bringing those disgusting kids here. There are so many other, nicer kids. Why does she bring us the dregs?" Observing that she sounded forceful, I received a guide retort. "That's a mother's prerogative. What suggestions do you have that might be better?"

Gathering the whole family together, I commented that the conflict had made an innocent victim of Mr. Albert (whom neither Mrs. Albert nor Lisa desired to hurt). The man ensconced the women in the lap of luxury and now their fighting was giving him an ulcer. Mrs. Albert and Lisa would have to work out a compromise, taking the same understanding attitude I had seen that day in the hospital. For the sake of their father, two strong individuals would have to bend a bit. Lisa promised to stop the yelling, observe the curfews, and cease the physical attacks. Mrs. Albert offered to have a party in the home where could meet Lisa's friends.

As I left, Mr. Albert told me, "if these two would stop fighting, it would sure take a load off of my mind. Being on the road like this is hard enough."

A month later, Lisa told me how the home situation had improved. "Mom lets me go out and I come home on time. TOP terminated the case and little was seen of Lisa from then on. Friends mentioned that troubles had begun anew between mother and daughter. Then, ten months after the crisis intervention, Lisa was placed in a private girl's school.

Phone Call and Pre-Interview Expectations

Mrs. Albert answered the phone in a pleasant voice. She mentioned that family life had improved for them. Lisa enjoyed the private school, Mrs. Albert liked her new friends, and Mr. Albert's ulcers had healed. We both felt the best time for a follow-up interview would be on a weekend when both Lisa and her father were at home. A date was arranged for a Saturday, six weeks later.

I expect the parents will talk about the peace in the household at great length. They may even make comparisons between Judy and Lisa, showing how the former's behavior pattern brought happiness and the latter's brought sorrow. To them, for the sake of the family, Lisa had to be sent away. Little Vera may add to this with some unkind words about Lisa.

The Alberts should talk of their desire to be a better family, not necessarily a better Jewish family, as the reason for sending Lisa to the boarding school. With household tensions eased, everyone should feel better about being a part of the family system.

Follow-up Interview

Lisa met me at the door on the unseasonably warm winter afternoon. She had lost weight and a wide smile covered her face. "Earl!" she yelled, throwing her arms around my neck. "Good to see you! Wait till I tell you about my new school." We walked into the plush living

room where the other Alberts were sitting. Ted and Martha sat at opposite ends of a sofa. Vera lay on the floor, working on a color-by-number art set. Mrs. Albert smiled and said hello, Vera kept on coloring, and a tired looking Mr. Albert got up to shake hands. Judy was off on a skiing weekend.

Seated on a cane rocking chair, Lisa began talking about the private school. "At first I didn't like it. All the girls seemed like snobs. But then I made a couple of friends and I felt like I'd been there forever. We do a lot of stuff with this private boy's school and those guys are gorgeous. I've been sort-of dating this one guy from Indianapolis for the last few months. You ought to meet him."

Remarking that she sounded happy, I asked how Lisa felt about these visits home. Answering for her daughter, Mrs. Albert remarked that the household had become "calm and peaceful." Even when Lisa comes home we get along much better. If she just behaves, everything will be alright."

"I do behave and I behaved before I left," Lisa snapped back. "Don't tell Earl we don't argue. We're arguing now. We just don't do it as much because we don't live together. I have my own life at the school and you don't get on me there."

"Of course not," her mother replied. "That's one of the finest girls' schools in the midwest, and your new friends are very nice."

All this time Mr. Albert kept slumping deeper and deeper into the soft sofa. "C'mon you two," he said with a hurt look and a hurt tone in his voice.

"Yes, Lisa," Mrs. Albert jumped in, "your father is home." Lisa looked angry, but remained quiet. Vera looked up and gave Lisa a mischievous look, intended to incite some trouble. I asked her why she tried to tease her sister and she said in a sweet voice, "I was just looking out the window. Mommy, can I go out and play?" Mrs. Albert excused her daughter from the room, and Lisa relaxed a little.

"That Vera gets away with a lot. She tried to make me scream at her, but I held back," Lisa proudly stated. Her mother recalled the beatings Lisa had inflicted upon the little girl, but Lisa said that was all in the past. Mrs. Albert had to admit that the girls did get along better since Lisa moved away. (Ted Albert again slumped into the sofa, this time saying nothing.)

Asked about her relationship with Judy, Lisa was again interrupted by her mother. This time I said, "Mrs. Albert, let's hear what Lisa has to say." Giving her mother a sidelong glance, Lisa described an improving relationship. "We don't see each other so much any more, so why fight? There's a lot to talk about...I guess we have a lot more in common now." Mrs. Albert cut in to say they finally acted like "sisters should act. Helping each other, not fighting."

"Oh man," Lisa groaned, "don't tell me you didn't go at it with Uncle Fred when you were little."

"Well, we did," the mother replied, "but that was different. Anyhow, I'm just glad you and your sister get along. Your father feels the same way." He nodded affirmative but said nothing.

When asked about the conversation at last night's dinner (which was

Shabbat), Mrs. Albert said that they just talked about Lisa's school and other family news; just the usual talk. Lisa added that her mother inquired about her friends "but not like the old way." The family mentioned nothing about observing the Shabbat rituals, and when I brought up the subject, Mrs. Albert replied, "Well, we're not very religious. We're Reform Jews and I guess we just never took the time. All the girls went to religious school and Judy was confirmed. Lisa quit after the eighth grade. We should have made her go on, but anything to stop the screaming. Nobody like religious school but you have to go." Asked why, Mrs. Albert retorted, "to learn about Judaism. I mean you have to know a little something."

Solicited of his view, Mr. Albert said, "Well, I like religious things. I was active in my synagogue back in Boston when I was the girl's age. I'd like to join B'nai Brith, but with all my traveling, it just wasn't worth it...I mean it's a good organization, but I don't have the time. I like to spend my weekend seeing my friends and spending time with Martha and the girls." Mrs. Albert added, "that's why I do, too. Most of my friends are Jewish. We play Mah jongg and bridge. I really don't need a Temple Sisterhood or a Ladies' Club."

Speaking about Jewish families in general, Mrs. Albert said she liked Jewish people, but their families weren't necessarily better." Lisa related that sometimes they seem worse," flaunting their money and stuff." Mr. Albert added, "Well, you can't generalize, in any case."

I asked Lisa what she liked about the JCC and she spoke wistfully about her old friends. "I guess it was hard for Mom to drive me there

all the time. We live so far away and Dad's not here on weekdays." Immediately, Mr. Albert slumped into the sofa but this time his eyes gazed at the thick rug. "I wish I could have been home. I wanted the best for everyone, and that meant travel. Maybe if I'd been home more...well no, why second guess." Mrs. Albert interrupted, but very softly. "I'm a weekday widow. It's very hard on me. But Ed is such a good father." Turning to her husband she said, "Don't blame yourself, dear. That JCC was a bad influence on Lisa. At least they had a boy like Earl there who cares a little. And now, Lisa is great. No, things are going to better, just like they have been. Right, Lisa?"

Lisa looked at her father for a long time. She walked over to the man, sat next to him and put her head on his shoulder. "Smile, Daddy. Things <u>are</u> better!" She may have been outwardly trying to convince her father, but inwardly I sensed she was trying to convince herself as well.

Driving home, I saw Vera playing with friends. I called to her and she came over. "Let me ask you a question, Vera, okay?" She nodded. "How come you tease your sister and try to get her angry?"

"I don't do that," she insisted firmly.

"Oh, yes you do," I replied, equally firm.

"Well, she hits hard. At least she used to."

"I bet it's fun to see how easy it is to make Lisa mad," I suggested.

"Yeah, sometimes," she said, now sheepishly. "But I don't mean it. Bye, I gotta home."

I thought to myself, "Dennis the Menace with braids. She does get away with murder in that house." Laughing, I drove on. At least, the crisis in the Albert home had passed. Now the rebuilding of relationships had to begin.

Analysis

The problems in the Albert household stem from a strain between the marital partners. In a chain reaction of causes and effects, it spreads throughout the family system. The father's needs to travel in order to provide for the family's economic well being. With her mate gone all week long, Mrs. Albert has the burden of being the sole parental authority. Added to that burden is the loneliness of being separated from her mate, a "weekday widow" as she calls it. Both the responsibility and the loneliness make her frustrated and angry, and she develops into an authoritarian parent. One daughter, Lisa, rebels against the authority. The two women, similar in temperament, stubbornly fail to adopt reciprocal roles and become ongoing combatants; strict mother and insolent daughter. This lack of role reciprocity, stemming from the chain reaction of causes and effects became the central problem for the Albert family.

This role antagonism was not the only basis of tension between Lisa and her mother. Lisa also became the scapegoat for Mrs. Albert's

frustrations. Rather than deal with the unhappiness from her husband's frequent absences, Martha Albert displaced her feelings on Lisa, both through stern orders and constant criticism about her friends. For Mrs. Albert, Lisa became a "problem child", even though her problem resulted from the loneliness of the marital pair.

The conflict between the Albert women took on many dimensions. Constant verbal arguments took place. Mother would mete out stiff punishments for minor anti-social behaviors. Lisa would do things around the home; i.e., not help with chores, that would irritate her mother. Mrs. Albert severely criticized Lisa's choice of friends. Lisa could retaliate by acting out in the community. Adding to the conflict young Vera would either incite her sister's anger; i.e., the taunting looks at the follow-up interview, or tell her mother exaggerated stories of how Lisa had harrassed her (physically or verbally) which would incite her mother's anger. Judy chose to avoid the conflict as much as possible. However, Lisa's physical attacks upon her drove her into a limited alliance with her mother. Ted Albert might have been a healer, but his absences and his quiet nature made this unfeasible in an interpersonal strain between two strong figures. Thus, in addition to the mother's use of Lisa as a scapegoat, a loose alliance among all family members reinforced the scapegoat role and helped heighten the conflict.

Tracing the conflict sequence, one can see that Martha and Lisa Albert were not only capable of accommodating one another, but also of

showing many conciliatory gestures. At the hospital, they showed themselves capable of disagreeing in a cordial fashion. They argued over an issue (the gameroom) without angry tones and personal insults. However, the household situation became worse when the reassessment of both women reflected stubborn inflexibility rather than empathic understanding. Both of them firmly believed in the correctness of their actions and blamed the other for causing problems. The real victim of the conflict was Ted Albert, who felt the mental strain and developed a case of ulcers.

As the problem and conflict grew, interpersonal communication within the Albert family system deteriorated. Lisa and Mrs. Albert increased their angry exchanges and rarely repeated the lively discussion of the hospital bedroom. Vera communicated exaggerated or messages or teasing comments and looks that aggravated the existing tensions. Both Judy and Mr. Albert (when he was home) avoided the conflict as much as possible. Judy just tried to lead her normal life, and not let the family trouble affect her activities outside the home. Mr. Albert's avoidance was more serious. He wanted peace in the house, but he didn't realize that he had to do more than repeat "please stop fighting" over and over. Rather than deal with symptoms he needed to root out the causes and resolve the problems. Instead, he withdrew into himself.

With father constantly gone, and mother and middle daughter constantly fighting, the status quo could only lead to a family disintegration, and not to an equilibrium. Prompted by Mrs. Albert's

urgency, the parents chose to send Lisa (the scapegoat) to a private boarding school. Although this did not resolve the central interpersonal conflict, Lisa's absence did provide for an extended "cooling off" period which the family sorely needed. It is possible that when Lisa returns home from the boarding school, she can reintegrate into the family without the friction that prompted her being sent away. However, the tensions evidenced in the follow-up interview shows that the conflict between Martha and Lisa still needs a proper reassessment and resolution.

About the Hypothesis

Members of the Albert family used the defense mechanism of denial in an attempt to escape responsibility for interpersonal problems. Additionally, they showed each other a lack of empathy and distrust, and the projected their own fears and inadequacies onto others in the household. Their denial did not stem from a behief in the Jewish family myth, but rather, from a stubborn conviction, held especially by Lisa Albert and Martha Albert, in the correctness of their actions. Martha felt she had to screen Lisa's friends. Lisa insisted she had a right to an open social life. Both blamed the other for restricting their freedoms.

Religious identity in this Reform Jewish family did not have a major priority for the individual members. Neither parent belonged to any Jewish organization, the girls went to Sunday School and the JCC, and the family rarely set foot in the Temple outside of the

High Holy days. Mrs. Albert liked having Jewish friends; the children didn't seem to care about the religion of their friends. Thus, one might classify the Alberts as a highly assimilated family, whose lives centered around American cultural aspects with few Jewish inputs (none including a belief in inherent Jewish family solidarity).

Conclusion

The problems and conflicts of the Albert family system resulted initially from a strain between the marital partners. Ted Albert's job kept him traveling five days a week, leaving his wife with a family to raise and a deep-seated feeling of frustration, anger, and loneliness. Despite the material comforts of their house, the family needed the father more. Only he could act as male role model and conflict healer, but without his presence, the family system practically evolved into a one parent network; filled with distrust, but devoid of understanding.

Lisa received the brunt of Mrs. Albert's displaced unhappiness. Stern orders and punishments increased throughout the years. For her part, Lisa's behavioral traits;(e.g., choice of friends, physical attacks) served as a retaliatory defense against her mother. Each of them reinforced this lack of role reciprocity until Lisa was finally sent away. This decision turned out to be less harsh that its intent. Lisa liked her boarding school, and the family system had time to cool down and evolve into a new homeostasis, which they did. Problems were accommodated, but not truly resolved.

The myth of the Jewish family did not add to the problems of the Alberts. Deeply assimilated into an American cultural life style, they found nothing special about Jewish families that made them "better" than non-Jewish families. Mr. Albert became so involved in his role as provider that he neglected his role as father, the traditional backbone role of the "good Jewish family" from bygone generations. The parents liked being with Jews, but that was the only strong indication of any positive attitude towards the religion. Jewish affiliations in the community and Jewish ritual in the home had only minimal effect on the family system.

Chapter 11:

The Results of the Study - Analysis and Conclusions

A. Introduction

The case studies of this thesis typify a broad spectrum of Jewish problem families with whom TOP intervened. Beginning with informal conversations and building up to family counseling or family referral to a counseling agency workers helped families to: (1) recognize the existence, severity and source of problems (not just the symptoms), (2) realize that they had the ability to overcome their troubles and to promote stability and growth, and (3) actually make the changes which effect Shalom Bayis, a harmony among family members. In the six case studies, in the opening presentation about the Steinberg's, in instances of divorce-split families like the Harpers, combination families like the Cohns where step parents clashed with step-children, distraught parents like the Bachrachs who could not cope with their emotionally disturbed teenage daughter and in over one hundred other family situations, TOP tried to promote compromise and positive feelings where only conflict and discord existed.

Looking closely at these six households and others like them, one can see where any family system with adolescent children has unique characteristics and qualities. Still, all these families have much in common, structurally and interactionally. First, each family is a dynamic system with its members linked in a network of subsystems and ties. Second, the marital pair forms the basic relationship of this network.[1] Third, growth is indicated by the maturation of the family

system and the family members' ability to achieve personal goals and develop personal skills. Fourth, the family system has an open-ended nature, having a number of interchanges with the greater society (see Appendix III of Chapter 3). Fifth, every family system undergoes periods of strains and tensions. These can lead to conflicts where family members not only disagree with each other but also try to hurt each other emotionally and/or physically. The conflicts of problem families go unresolved for long periods of time which cripples the system and threatens its disorganization. Six, the general feeling among social scientists is that most Jewish families have a relatively weak religious identity as compared to secular identity.

With these common factors in mind and by use of inductive reasoning, these case studies form the basis for an analysis of Jewish family life. (It should be understood that these cases are vignettes, not social histories, and they provide the information necessary for a phenomenological study.) Initially a hypothesis can be tested. This test seeks to determine if troubled Jewish families deny the existence of, the severity of, or their own involvement in, family problems (insisting that problems are individual centered and caused by forces external to the family system) because they believe a myth that religious identification itself provides their family with an innate cohesiveness. Also, the analysis might uncover certain behavioral patterns for any Jewish family affected by ongoing problems and conflicts. Finally, the methodology of this analysis might serve as a pilot project for studies of greater depth.

Thus in studying these cases of Jewish problem families, three questions arise:

1. Do the facts of the cases prove or disprove the hypothesis?

2. What general trends emerge from these cases?

3. What conclusions can be drawn from these cases that may illuminate Jewish family life in the middle class U.S.A. today?

B. The Hypothesis and Its Implications

A review of the six vignettes reveals that the two behavioral symptoms, as outlined in the hypothesis, did exist. Each family had members denying the realities of the problem situation.[2] As a complement to this denial, each family had members who blamed societal forces for initiating the problem.[3] If this denial stemmed from the myth of the Jewish family, then these individuals would have alluded to an innate solidarity (the consolidation of interests and responsibility) and an innate cohesiveness (the tendency within the group to form close ongoing ties among themselves) within the family system that did not exist in reality. Essential constituents of this purported solidarity and cohesiveness would include the intensity of these ties and a sense of group loyalty.[4] The myth would serve as a defense mechanism, preserving the status quo of the system and obstructing change and the formation of a new equilibrium.[5] If this denial did not stem from the myth of the Jewish family, then other reasons for its presence should become apparent.

An analysis of the six cases (and an added input from other cases in the TOP file) disproves the hypothesis. In no instance did an entire

family system maintain the myth. Most parents and all the offspring rejected the notion that Jewish families had an inherent cohesiveness.[6] Their exhibited denial, acting as a defense mechanism, stemmed from a personal need to avoid facing the full impact of the problem situation, and/or to protect the family system from any pain. It had no religious overtones. Further, not all family members looked to extra-familial conditions as being the cause of troubles. Parents tended to blame forces external to the family for corrupting their children (especially the teenagers) which in turn caused tensions in the home.[7] However, teenagers in conflict with one or both parents, tended to blame their antagonist for initiating the upheaval and maintaining the tension-filled atmosphere.[8] Other siblings tended to ally with the parents and blame their brother or sister for causing problems.[9]

The only people who acted within the parameters of the hypothesis were Bernard and Gloria Davis, and Melvin and Bertha Wolf. Both marital pairs considered themselves to be proper Jewish parents who raised good Jewish children. In their estimation, the family was threatened by problem teenage members whose anti-social behavior created troubles and conflicts within the home. These parents denied any responsibility for causing this behavior, citing instead outside influence such as bad friends, drugs, etc. This denial resulted from their firmly stated belief that all Jewish families had a natural cohesiveness which would prevent the arising of any family-wide problems. Careful analysis of these two cases shows that the Davis and Wolf families did not have the close knit ties, consolidated interests and firm group loyalties the parents thought they had. This

inability to perceive the reality of the situation prevented the resolution of family problems.

Interestingly, the Wolfs and the Davises maintained strong, active affiliations with Orthodox synagogues and they practiced almost all Jewish rituals.[10] Parents in the other cases, who did not believe in the myth, stressed their religious identity to a lesser extent.[11] Similarly, the Wolfs and the Davises used the belief to maintain a rigid status quo for the family system ("Why change what's good?" Bernard Davis remarked), while the other parents recognized a need for change and growth, even though they did not have the capability to effect the change or to pinpoint the areas in need of change. This comparison suggests that believers in the Jewish family myth only tend to be parents with a strongly traditional Jewish life style.

Thus, the hypothesis must be rejected for two reasons. First, most members of problem Jewish families deny the existence of, the severity of, or their complicity in, family problems because of a personal need to avoid appreciating reality and taking responsibility, and not because of a belief in the inherent cohesiveness of every Jewish family. Second, only parents seem to blame external forces for causing strife within the family. Teenagers in conflict with their parents frequently blame the parents. Other siblings blame some or all of the antagonists of the conflict. However, the hypothesis holds true insofar as few members recognize the family-wide scope of a problem situation, focusing instead on individuals' troubles.

Two factors (one well known, one not well known), emerge from the case studies and the TOP files, which have relevance for the entire Jewish community. The well known factor is that religious identity (reflected by group affiliations and ritual practices) has weakened for the majority of Jewish families and that majority may be increasing. No longer is the Jewish community the closed system of which Mrs. Cooper spoke in her description of the "Jewish neighborhoods" of a previous generation. Interaction with the greater society has led to a strengthening of secular identity at the expense of religious identity.

The manifestations of this factor appear in a variety of forms. The synagogue is no longer the center of the community. Worship and educational pursuits have declined in scope and in number of participants. Social contacts are more frequently made outside the synagogue community (e.g., ghrough business, parties or secular organizations) than inside it. The rabbi has ceased to be a primary authority for counseling and advice. Jews now turn to others with whom they have a greater rapport and whom they perceive to be more empathic.[12] These societal practices have been communicated from one generation to the next. Receiving a non-verbal message from their parents, the younger generation has not only emulated the adults, but developed an even stronger secular identity, again at the expense of religious identity.

This weakening of Jewish identity has deprived families of a viable means for building family unity and strengthening family ties. The lesser known factor which emerges from the test of the hypothesis and the review of other cases, reveals that the actual practice of Jewish

rituals and the affiliation with Jewish organizations can and does benefit the entire family system. As evidenced in the cases, this notion holds true for Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jewish families alike. Ritual practices (e.g., Shabbat dinner, holiday celebrations) produce harmony and alleviate troubles. The family shares a feeling of happiness which strengthens their ties. For the problem families, the rituals have the added benefit cooling down conflicts and providing a potential basis for better understanding for all concerned.[13] Likewise, individual affiliations (e.g., teenagers at the JCC, women in Jewish organizations, parents involved with synagogue activities), can reinforce and be reinforced by the positive aspects of home rituals, thus adding another religious dimension to the Jewish family. It is also noteworthy that within modern American society, the mother often assumes the primary responsibility for bringing these positive Jewish values into the home.[14] Finally, it appears that Jewish identity can only have a negative effect on a family system when family members try to face one mode of religious practice upon individuals who feel more comfortable with alternative modes (as exemplified by Mr. Davis trying to force Vicky to become an observant Orthodox Jew).

Thus, in addition to the knowledge gained from the testing of the hypothesis, analysis of these cases shows that, in general, Jewish identity as traditionally understood is weakening for most family systems. However, Jewish rituals, if practiced, and affiliations can build family cohesiveness.

C. General Trends of Jewish Family Problems

1. Overview

A family can deal with problems in any of three ways (as mentioned in Chapter 1). They can resolve the problem, they can contain the problem until reaching a viable solution or can allow the problem to grow and harm the family system. In the six cases of this study, the families chose (consciously or unconsciously) the latter alternative. Their inability to resolve or contain the difficulties led to conflicts that threatened the very existence of the system.

This section will show the general trends of these families' failure to cope with problems. This includes problems with sources external to the system and with sources within the system. Also, consideration will be given to certain strengths which each of these families exhibit despite their troubles.

2. Problems from External Sources

As open ended systems, all families influence and are influenced by the greater society to which they belong. Thus, no study of Jewish families would be complete without a consideration of external variables. Each family in the case studies felt the effect of changes in the SCREP forces (the social, cultural, religious, economic, education and political variables) of society. But perhaps the two most important pressures on today's families are occupational roles overshadowing parental roles because of societal economic strain and the emerging adolescent sub-culture of the 1970's. A family needs to reduce these pressures to continue the

growth and harmony of the system. However, in the six vignettes the families either couldn't or wouldn't deal with these exegencies.

Regarding the economy, inflation and recession have made occupational roles more critical. In order to maintain the family's standard of living a man may need to devote more time to his job and less time to his duties as husband and father. The wife-mother may have to assume many of her husband's family obligations, adopt an occupational role of her own, or do both. In any case the focus shifts from a family's emotional needs to its economic needs, and that can produce a strain.[15]

The adolescent sub-culture of the 1970's poses a more subtle challenge. Expectations become confused as parents and teenagers misinterpret others' intentions. Teens living in this decade clammer for more responsibility and independence than in decades past. Some parents consider this posture a symbol of rebelliousness and they stifle the young person's growth. Tensions and conflicts result from parents' failure to understand the teenager's needs.[16] Simultaneously, as teenagers take advantage of this new found independence, they often undergo frustrations and rejections. This anger with the outside world can be displaced upon the parents.[17] Likewise, parents and teenagers seek to suppress objectionable behaviors rather than root out the causes. For example, many parents fail to realize that drug use, alcoholism, sexual acting out, school truancy, over-aggressiveness, or even "talking back" are symptomatic of a deeper problem.[18] Many teenagers, engrossed in their own search for

a comfortable identity, forget that their parents are human beings, capable of error and needing love, respect and attention.[19]

In the life history of any family, outside influences periodically present difficulty for the system. To prevent any long term problems, the family needs to recognize these external sources of trouble and change their behavior patterns to accommodate the pressure.

3. Problems from Internal Sources

Just as some family problems can be traced to societal causes, others can be traced to interactional strains with the family system itself. From the case studies, three complementary sets of internal difficulty produced a total problem. First, each problem family had trouble establishing a level of homeostasis that promoted growth. Some individuals desired a change, others resisted change. Until a concensus could be reached, strains grew with the family system. Second, each problem family had difficulty establishing satisfying roles. Some individuals refused to modify obsolete roles, others insisted that family members maintain obsolete roles against their wishes. Often family members settled into roles as combatants or adversaries that promoted discord. At times, individuals became scapegoats for the family. The scapegoat absorbed the family tensions as others blamed him/her for causing a problem for which all family members had responsibility. Third, each problem family found itself unable to communicate in a constructive fashion. Billy Goldfarb described this as "lots of talking with little understanding." Family members communicated a great deal of anger and disdain, but only a small amount of love and understanding. Transmission

of unclear messages, failure to clarify these unclear messages, interfering in others' communications (as in follow-up interviews where people interrupted each other or answered questions intended for somebody else) and defensive responses to non-threatening comments only added to the family's "communications gap." Also, poor socialization (parental transmission of social norms, values and models) created a sense of confusion and/or low self-esteem in the child that became troublesome in later years.

A significant pattern emerged in each of the case studies. A problem would develop in one of the three areas, grow unchecked, and then spill over into the other two areas. This pattern held true for other families in the TOP files. For example, a family might have a problem with role expectations or scapegoating. This can create tensions that would be communicated throughout the family network. No homeostasis can be achieved until each member has a satisfying role to fill.[20] Another family might be unable to achieve a process of normative growth. Those who promote change would ally against those opposed to change. Tensions between the factions would lead to communicated hostility. Family members might lock themselves into adversary roles, or else scapegoat a weak individual.[21] Still another family might have such a long period of improper communications that frustrations and resentments could slowly build into a major problem. Angry words and unclear messages might escalate to prolonged silences, heated arguments, or even physical attacks. Family members settle into combative roles which furthers the communication breakdown. Scapegoats can be singled out as the sole source of the

of the breakdown. Homeostasis becomes impossible because the simplest cross word or angry look can shatter an equilibrium and lead to a heightened problem.[22]

No matter what the progression of problems might be, the main symptom of these troubles was interpersonal conflict between family members. As mentioned in Chapter Two, conflicts differ from disagreements and the like by the attempt of the antagonists to hurt each other physically, emotionally or both. Every family has periodic conflicts following the sequence of initiation-build-up-actual conflict-accommodation-conciliation-reassessment-aftermath. The conflicts can only be resolved when reassessment leads to elimination of the actual problem.[23] However, in the situations reflected in the case studies, conflict resolution failed (except at the end of the Cooper case).

This breakdown of the resolution sequence occurred at a variety of levels. In some instances, family members never moved to an accommodation of one another after a conflict, but only to a cessation of hostilities.[24] Other families achieved an atmosphere of accommodation, but could never compromise enough to create a conciliatory atmosphere. This led to stagnation; spawning frustrations and tensions which renewed the conflict situation at the slightest initiation.[25] Still other families reached a conciliation where positive feelings could be shared. However, faulty reassessments simply reestablished the old forms of conflict producing relationships.[26]

In analyzing the conflicts, six distinguishable characteristics can be traced. First, just as a central problem emerged, a central conflict

emerged, usually developing between a parent and an adolescent.[27] Alliances formed as family members took sides in the conflict. Parents usually headed one subsystem. The "problem teenager" usually headed the other.[28] Third, no family member could fulfill the task of healer. Ideally, the marital pair, the backbone of the family system, would have initiated a climate of understanding. Instead, the parents in these cases forged the nucleus of an alliance, thus obstructing any viable compromise.[29] Fourth, a mutual reinforcement of antagonistic feelings escalated the conflicts. As the conflicts progressed over time, only the slightest reinforcement (e.g., a comment, a passing glance) could initiate a new conflict. Part of a crisis intervention included the reinforcement of positive behavior patterns and the breakdown of family reinforcements that led to antagonisms.[30] Fifth, each side of the alliance denies responsibility for causing the problem and conflict (as mentioned previously). Sixth, even family members who did not participate in the conflict suffered from the problems brought on by the antagonists.[31]

Another pattern emerges from these cases regarding the eldest child. In each of the six vignettes, the oldest sibling in residence received preferential treatment from the parents (except for Lenny Jacobson). Even in Cooper household, Rick became the favored child when Lucy moved away to attend college. However, other cases in TOP's files show that many an elder child became locked in a central conflict with one or both parents.

To summarize, the analysis of the case studies shows that problems occur in three areas of the family system, communications, role adaptation,

and establishment of homeostasis. The problems normally originate in one area and then spread to the other two. The primary symptom of family problems is interpersonal conflict. The conflicts reach chronic proportion as breakdowns occur in the resolution sequence. Within every problem family, six distinguishable characteristics emerge in every conflict. Only when a family makes a proper reassessment of the family situations can conflicts be resolved and problems begin to dissipate. Otherwise, the family system becomes partially or totally disintegrated.[32]

3. Family Strengths

Analyzing these cases, one observes that even problem families can exhibit certain strengths and positive interactions. Three general types of these strengths include the recognition of a need to end conflicts, the restoration of the family system through Jewish practices and affiliations, and family receptivity to outside suggestions.

Even though individuals frequently denied the reality of problem situations, all families recognized the need for occasional "cooling off" periods. These periods became times of either conflict accommodation or conflict cessation. Tensions eased and family members acted in a harmonious fashion. They could have been the initial phase of actual problem resolution, but this did not occur in the six case studies. "Cooling off" periods might consist of a family celebration, sending one family member out of the household for an extended period of time on an outside intervention from a community agency to form a family contract (a behavioral compromise agreement among family members).[33]

As mentioned elsewhere, the practice of Jewish rituals and the affiliation with Jewish organizations restored some cohesiveness to these problem families. For example, the Coopers and Goldfarbs spoke of family harmony at the Shabbat dinner table. Even a disintegrated family like the Wolfs temporarily restored their ties at Micah's bris. The absence of Jewish inputs in the Albert and Jocobson households did not harm the family systems, but neither did it help them. Only the Davises suffered for their Jewish identity because Mr. Davis kept forcing his religious life style on an unreceptive Vicky.

Finally, each of the families were receptive to the suggestions of outside agencies such as TOP. The agency workers had to go about defusing problems which had building for years.[34] These families needed long term conjoint counseling (the family being treated together) from a trained therapist in order to check the deterioration of the system and effect the changes needed to rebuild ties and promote growth.[35]

D. Conclusions

1. Jewish families as a whole do not believe themselves to be a motely cohesive group simply by virtue of religious identification. Strong ties, consolidated interests and group loyalties within a family system must be developed by the family members themselves. The only people who may believe this myth of innate cohesiveness are adults with very traditional Jewish life styles.

2. Most members of problem Jewish families deny the existence of, the severity of, or their own complicity in, causing the tensions and conflict found within the system. This denial represents a need to avoid

reality and/or a desire to protect the family system from pain. Problems are considered to be individual focused, not family oriented. Most parents blame bad influences, external to the family system, for creating problems in their children. Teenagers in conflict with parents tend to blame the parents for creating interpersonal tensions. Other offspring in the household tend to blame one or both of the antagonistic factions.

3. As evidenced by other cases from TOP's files as well as the case studies, religious identity, consisting of affiliations and ritual practices, is weakening for most Jewish families, and the number of these families is growing. Nevertheless, ritual practices and religious affiliations do make the Jewish family more cohesive because of their group building potential and because of the positive attitude they instill.

4. The Jewish family faces the pressure of all SCREP forces from the society to which it belongs. The two most significant pressures today are the problems of the economy and the growth of a unique adolescent sub-culture. Many problem families are unwilling or unable to cope with these realities, causing interpersonal tensions and strains within the family system.

5. Problem areas within a Jewish family system include communications, role adaptation, and the ability to change and establish new levels of homeostasis. Normally, problems begin in one area and then spill over into the other two.

6. Chronic conflicts are the main symptoms of problems. This

chronic condition results from breakdown in a seven step conflict resolution sequence and represents family members' inflexibility in changing problem producing behavior patterns.

7. General characteristics of chronic family conflicts include:

   a. The existence of a central problem and a central conflict (often between a parent and an adolescent).

   b. The formation of alliances around the main antagonists.

   c. The lack of a family member's success in promoting compromise (especially when the marital pair communicates resistance to compromise).

   d. A mutual reinforcement of tensions between the antagonists which escalates the intensity of the conflicts and the severity of the problems.

   e. The affixing of blame for the problems and conflicts on others, and:

   f. The suffering from the consequences of the problems by all members of the family, even those who do not participate in the conflicts.

8. Jewish families with ongoing problems exhibit elements of strength. They recognize the need for "cooling off" periods. They take advantage of Jewish ritual practices to restore a temporary semblance of harmony. They show receptivity to suggestions from community social agencies, even though they may be unable to implement them because of deep rooted feelings of discord within the system. Long term problems need the help of long term counseling of which the best source is the family therapist.

To eliminate problems, a family must recognize the total scope of their problems, realize that they have the ability to make changes that would better the group, and then actually go about making those needed changes.

Reviewing a number of studies about the Jewish family, Jack Balswick surmised, "Even though the data is inconclusive, it appears that the Jewish family is a close-knit group."[37] Based on my survey, I would have to disagree with that sweeping generalization. Cohesive Jewish family systems are those whose members actively promote the well-being of the group, and those in which the group assists individual members to attain personal goals and develop personal skills. Today, a surprisingly large number of Jewish families have become "problem families", where ties are strained, not "close-knit."

E. A Final Thought

On a recent television interview, actor-producer-writer Warren Beatty remarked, "Some people are uneasy about my new movie, Shampoo, because it attacks the permanance of the nuclear family."[38] Beatty may be correct about the uneasiness, but his reasons for it appear incorrect. Shampoo attacks the stagnation of many nuclear family systems, not their permanance. Family members become discomfited when they realize:

1. Their failure to grow, change, and establish increasingly more mature equilibriums within a dynamic family system.

2. Their inability to communicate on a straightforward, empathic basis.

3. Their stubbornness in shedding outmoded roles and in failing

to adopt satisfying roles for this modern time. Indeed nuclear families should be progressive systems which interact with an ever-changing society. Their form may not be permanent, as Talcott Parsons suggests,[39] but the essentials of the system can remain viable for future generations.

This thesis, a phenomenological analysis of Jewish family life, does not claim to offer surefire solutions to solve the problems of every unique Jewish family system. However, it does indicate where the sources of problems might be found for any Jewish family system, and it lays out some general guidelines on how to begin resolving these troubles. This can prove helpful to the counselor or therapist who works with the Jewish family. Further, the thesis provides a framework for more extensive studies of Jewish family life, for which a number of social scientists often express a need.

In my mind, one finding from the thesis stands out in its importance for the Jewish community.B Belief in a myth does not give a family any strength. Rather, those families who practice their religious values in the home, combining the traditional with the modern, provide themselves with a means for perpetuating Shalom Bayis, family system harmony. Ritual observances and Jewish affiliations initiated within a positive family atmosphere can and do promote a measure of cohesiveness.

The interviewed families make this idea apparent. Seymour and Harriet Cooper remarked, "Just being Jewish doesn't make a family strong. You have to do something with religion." Frieda Goldfarb realistically said, "Religion can bring a family together, but it won't make problems

go away by itself." Thus, based on the six vignettes and other cases from TOP's files, one can assume that positive religious practices can help to better a Jewish family with ongoing problems and that they can also help to better a relatively problem-free Jewish family.

In closing, let me leave the reader with a personal hope. If the observations and insights from these case studies can benefit other Jewish families in coping with their problems, this thesis will have fulfilled its purpose.

FOOTNOTES

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18 Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy. Palo Alto, California, Science and Behavior Books, 1967, p. 4.

19 Ralph H. Turner, Family Interactions, Op.Cit., p. 164.

20 Norman Lenzer, Op. Cit., p. 76.

21 Saul Hofstein, Op. Cit., p. 7.

22 Elizabeth Bott, Op.Cit., p. 276.

23 Salvador, Minuchin. Families and Family Therapy. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, p. 53.

24 Martin Grotjahn, Op.Cit., p. 47.

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28 Feldman and Sherz, Op.Cit., p. 249.

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31 Taken from a lecture by Professor Shalom Schwartz, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, October 16, 1966.

32 Ralph Turner, Op.Cit., p. 258.

33 Ibid., p. 215.

34 Nathan Ackerman, Psychodynamics of Family Life, p. 68.

35 Ibid., p. 91.

36 Frederick Godkin. "Reinforcements and Interpersonal Relationships" (Journal of Psychology Vol. 62, January, 1966) New York, p. 108.

37
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Salvador Minuchin. "Conflict Resolution Family Therapy" in Erickson and Hogan, p. 215, op. cit.

Chapter 11

1
In the case of single parent families, the basic relationship becomes the tie between the parent and most mature child. This does not obviate the family's need for a parent of the opposite sex to provide companionship for the other adult and to provide the children with familial learning models of both sexes.

2
For example, Vicky Davis tried to deceive herself and others by maintaining that her family had no real problems. Seymour and Harriet Cooper admitted that their family had troubles, but they adamantly denied causing them or adding to them.

3
As an illustration, Martha Albert felt the "bad influences" from her daughter's friends caused Lisa to become disobedient and uncooperative.

4

Both solidarity and cohesiveness, although separately discernable, are closely intertwined, often used together and interchangeably. These terms and their definitions can be found in Stanley Brau's Jewish Family Solidarity (Vicksburg, Mississippi, Nogales Press, 1940).

5

Antonio Ferreira. "Family Myth and Homeostasis" in Bell and Vogel, p. 546.

6

Only Bill Goldfarb, among all the teenagers, specifically mentioned that Jews were "better" than non-Jews. However, he could not articulate his feelings. Still, he insisted that religion in and of itself, did not make one family better than another. In the Cooper, Goldfarb, Jacobson, and Albert families, the parents discounted any notion of Jewish family superiority. For them, every family had its own strengths and weaknesses.

7

The Coopers frequently spoke about school, friends, and the lack of a job as being Rick's troubles, when they called TOP workers for advice in resolving problems. This proved to be typical of many parents.

8

With the exception of Rick Cooper, all of the "problem teenagers" (e.g., Billy Goldfarb, Al Jacobson, Lisa Davis) stated just that opinion.

9

These siblings could and did shift their allegiance from parents to brother or sister and back again to the parents. However, the alliances with the parents were far more lasting than the alliance with the sibling. The actions of Donna Goldfarb and Bobby Wolf bear this out.

10

The men "davened" (participated in prayer services) daily. Both parents took an active part in the social, educational and charitable activities of the synagogue community. In the home, the families "kept kosher" (observed the Jewish dietary laws) and celebrated all Jewish holidays.

11

Frieda Goldfarb, and Seymour and Harriet Cooper felt positive about their Jewish identity, but worshipped only occasionally and practiced a few home rituals(i.e., Shabbat dinner blessings). Their affiliations were of a Jewish cultural nature (e.g., the synagogue Boy Scout troop, Hadassah). The Albert and the Jacobsons felt different about Jewish identity. They rarely went to worship services or practiced home rituals, and they had no Jewish affiliations.

12

In a study made by the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati in 1972 less than 3 percent of those sampled mentioned the rabbi as the one to whom they would turn with a serious personal problem. Over 60 percent mentioned friends, close relatives, and psychiatrists.

13

For example, Shabbat in the Goldfarb, Cooper, and Wolf households were occasions when the family could forget their troubles and enjoy being together. Thus, what may be a cooling-off period for a problem family might also be a growth experience for a problem-free family.

14

In five out of the six case studies, mothers devoted a great deal of energy to this task. Seymour Cooper and Melvin Wolf supported their wives' efforts. Bernard Davis was the only male who had the dominant influence in his family's religious identity.

15

In the Albert and Jacobson households, the fathers worked as traveling salesmen. This brought economic comforts but also created a great emotional need for the offspring and the wives.

16

Martha Albert's strict disciplining of Lisa helped create tension in the Albert home, for example.

17

An unhappy Donna Goldfarb engaged in constant shooting matches with her mother. During the follow-up interview, she even ordered Mrs. Goldfarb to leave the living room.

18

Al Jacobson's drug taking, overt aggressiveness, and self-destructive represented his frustrations and anger from being the victim of displacements growing out of the strife between his parents. For their part, Mr. and Mrs. Jacobson attacked Al's behavior, rather than resolving their own interpersonal conflict.

19

Rick Cooper exemplified this notion. He found difficulty adjusting to new situations and in his preoccupation with adopting and shedding roles, he ignored his parents' messages of love and understanding.

20

In the Cooper household, Rick and his father failed to adopt reciprocal roles. A conflict arose as each chose to maintain the untenable position. Other family members allied with the father and scapegoated Rick. Angry words and acting out became the primary form of communications. The father's alliance achieved an equilibrium, but only at Rick's expense. Thus, overall homeostasis became impossible.

21

For the Wolf household the parents found themselves unable to adopt to Michelle's rapid physical maturation, or Bobby's anti-social behavior. Similarly, the entire family could not cope with Mrs. Wolf's illness and eventual death. Desiring change, the child clashed with their parents. Communications deteriorated to bribes, lies, and outright anger. The parents tried to scapegoat each child as the "problem in the family." In an effort to shed the scapegoat role, Michelle and Bobby became adversaries with their parents, roles which were never completely shed.

22

In the Jacobson family the initial communications difficulty arose between the parents. Rather than resolve their troubles, each in their own way displaced frustrations and anger upon Al. Al lashed back at them in a variety of ways. Adversary roles evolved. The parents scapegoated Al. The other children scapegoated Mr. Jacobson. No homeostasis could exist for very long because the family did not know how to communicate the love and empathy which leads to growth.

23

Once Rick and Seymour Cooper settled into a satisfying father-son relationship, the tensions of the household began to diminish. Until then, all other reassessments had been that Rick alone would have to change. When Seymour changed with his son, resolution began to take root.

24

In the Goldfarb home, arguments would cease and renew constantly. No family member had enough empathy to accommodate the others, let alone foster a conciliation.

25

The Jacobsons went through long periods of time without overt conflicts. However, this was more of an unstated truce. One cross word from Mr. Jacobson or one bit of acting out by Al was enough to escalate tensions and renew the conflict sequence.

26

The Davis family reached the conciliation stage when Mr. Davis realized his own shortcomings and tried to better himself. However, in his full reassessment he primarily blamed Vicky for causing troubles and only secondarily blamed himself. Eventually, a new conflict arose between the two.

A similar situation occurred in the Albert household. A tentative family contract was arranged. Mrs. Albert would be less of a disciplinarian and Lisa would be less disobedient. However, both made a reassessment that the other person had failed to abide by the agreement. The aftermath of this reassessment was a resumption of conflict.

27

Coopers - Rick and Mr. Cooper had a role conflict.
Wolfs - Michelle and her parents had a conflict from lack of change in the family.
Goldfarbs - Billy and Mrs. Goldfarb had a conflict because changes only heightened tension.
Davises - Vicky and her father conflicted when neither would modify roles to accommodate the other.
Jacobsons - Mom and Dad conflicted as communications broke down. Each, in their own way, then initiated a conflict with Al, displacing anger felt toward the other.
Alberts - Mrs. Albert felt lonely with her husband gone so often. She displaced her anger on Lisa who became the woman's scapegoat. A conflict ensued.

28

Coopers - Rick vs. rest of family.
Wolfs - Parents vs. Michelle with Bobby shifting allegiance back and forth.
Goldfarbs - Mrs. Goldfarb vs. Billy with Donna shifting allegiance back and forth.
Davises - Parents vs. Vicky; Mary Ann refusing to participate.
Jacobsons - A number of interlocking conflicts existed for this family including Father vs Mother, Parents vs Al, Father vs Children.
Alberts - A tension existed between Mr. and Mrs. Albert that had not emerged into a conflict. Alliances pitted parents and Vera vs Lisa; Judy refusing to participate.

29

Mary Ann Davis, Bobby Wolf, Lucy Cooper, and Donna Goldfarb all failed at various times to restore harmony for the family system. A TOP worker initiated tentative family contracts for the Jacobsons and the Alberts, but these failed because the sources of conflict were stronger than the families' ability to change.

30

Examples of mutual reinforcements from the cases:

Coopers - Parents nag and make personal attacks - Rick becomes silent, hits his brother, acts out in community.

Wolfs - Parents scold, bribe and threaten - children threaten and act out in community.

Goldfarbs - Mother and daughter make personal attacks - Billy withdraws, physically attacks, acts out in community.

Davises - Father blames Vicky for causing problems - Vicky disobeys his orders and acts out.

Jacobsons - Father beats children; mother deprecates children; Al withdraws, physically attacks parents, manifests self-destructive behavior.

Alberts - Mother overly disciplines and makes personal attacks; Vera teases and baits; Lisa yells, physically attacks siblings, acts out in the community, disobeys mother's orders.

31

For example, Lucy Cooper became agitated, feeling that Rick's actions were deeply hurting their parents. Bobby Wolf, internalizing his family's problem, became nervous, dropped out of school, gained a great deal of weight, and tried to act as family peacemaker. Although often participating in conflicts, Donna Goldfarb suffered from the main conflict between her mother and brother. She acted manipulative among her peers, did poorly at school, and became highly emotional and tense. Mary Ann Davis sacrificed much of her personal life to comfort her parents, but eventually she moved out of the house. Even then, her father's domination left her quiet and withdrawn. The elder Jacobson children, John, Patti, and Lenny, couldn't wait to graduate from high school in order to leave him. Throughout his senior year, Lenny boiled inside, hating his father's discipline, his mother's favoritism, and his brother Al's physical violence. Young Mark, lacking parental attention, became a "problem child"; doing drugs and committing acts of vandalism. Sadly, these actions brought him the attention he needed. Julie Albert tried to steer clear of her family's conflict, but perceived as a favored child, received physical blows from Lisa.

32

Examples of present family situations:

Coopers - Problems controlled and resolution has begun. Family now has cohesiveness.

Wolfs - Problems not resolved. Family consists of father and son in a mutually dependent relationship.

Goldfarbs - Problems not resolved. Family system on brink of total disintegration.

Davises - Problems not resolved. Both daughters have left the family system.

Jacobsons - Problems not resolved. Children have left home. Family consists of embittered parents and retarded child.

Alberts - Problems not resolved. Lisa has been sent away from home. Family sub-system growing at Lisa's expense. No threat of disintegration at present.

33

The Coopers, Goldfarbs, Davises, and Wolfs used celebrations such as Shabbat, Hannukah, and Pesach as "cooling down" times. The Davises, Jacobsons, Alberts, and Wolfs received respites by sending their troubled teenagers away from the volatile household. The Jacobsons, Alberts, and Davises all agreed to family contracts which eased tensions until they were broken.

For example, the Coopers did not succeed in communicating love and understanding, despite TOP!s intervention. The Wolfs would avoid the realities shown them at weekly therapy sessions. The Goldfarb family system had deteriorated too far for the family counselor to be of any effective help. Mr. Davis adamantly rejected a psychiatrist's opinion that the family, not just Vicky, had a problem. The Jacobsons and Alberts could not maintain the family contracts arranged by a TOP worker.

35

TOP worked on teen approaches with many trained therapists from a variety of local agencies. This pooling of resources aided the families and set a precedent for interdependent cooperation among social agencies in the Cincinnati area. The Cincinnati Jewish Family Service has a compendium of the agencies which work together to help families solve their problems. Ms. Linda Stein compiled this volume and JFS makes it available to any interested party.

36

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