

crosses this limit, the family member will encounter some regulatory mechanism. At times she will acquiesce; at other times she will challenge. There also are areas marked, "Entrance forbidden." The consequences of transgression in these areas carry the strongest affective components: guilt, anxiety, even banishment and damnation.

The individual family members thus know, at different levels of awareness and specificity, the geography of their territory. Each family member knows what is allowed, what counterdeviation forces there are, the nature and efficiency of the monitoring system. But because she is a lone voyager in the territory of the family and the larger world, the individual family member rarely experiences the family network as a gestalt. To a family therapist, however, the network of family transactions appears in all its complexity. She sees the total that is greater than the sum of its parts. The family as a whole seems almost like a colony animal—that entity composed of different life forms, each part doing its own thing, but the whole forming a multibodied organism which is itself a life form.

It is difficult for a student to look at this multibodied animal that is the family. Indeed, it is difficult for anyone reared in Western culture to look beyond the individual. We are trained into both an ethical and an esthetic preference for individual self-determination. To think of the individual as a segment of a larger social and biological unit is distasteful at best. Perhaps this is why those who attempt to come to grips with man's interdependence often resort to mystical or holistic philosophies connecting man with the universe. It is less painful to conceive of man as part of a universal intelligence than as part of the family network, a living organism closer to our experience. We can embrace man the cosmic hero, but we would prefer to turn a blind eye to his fight with his wife over who should have locked the front door.

Yet we know that the football player on a team, or the oboist in a quintette, somehow take on the excellencies of these more-than-human units. We experience the impulse that makes a stadium crowd of thirty thousand rise and yell in unison. And in therapeutic terms, any clinician can provide vignettes of the workings of the multibodied animal known as the family. There is even reason to believe that family "connections" go beyond the behavioral level to the physiological. In research with psychosomatic families, Minuchin and others found evidence which suggests that in some families, at least, stress between parents can be measured in the bloodstream of their observing child.¹

The student therapist does not have to accept the idea of a conjoined physiology. But she does have to look at the family as more than an aggregate of differentiated subsystems, as an organism in itself. For it is the family's pulse she will feel. She will experience its demands for accommodation, and will feel comfortable only when proceeding at its tempo. She will experience its threshold for the appropriate and the shameful, its tolerance for conflict, its sense of what is ridiculous or sacred, and its view of the world.

The problems of studying the family are exacerbated by Western languages, which have few words or even phrases for describing units of more than one. There is the term *symbiosis* to describe a two-person unit in circumstances that are pathologic in the extreme, where one of its members "feels totally as a part and has inadequate experience of himself as a whole," in Albert Scheflen's words, so that a psychotic episode may occur when there is a break of affiliation in the organism.² But this term ignores normal interactions. Although the mental health field has a vast array of studies of normal transactions between mother and child, it has no word to describe this complex two-person unit. One could coin a term, such as *mochild* or *chother*, but it would be impossible to devise terms for all the multiple units.

Arthur Koestler, addressing this conceptual difficulty, observed that "to get away from the traditional misuse of the words whole and part, one is compelled to operate with such awkward terms as 'sub-whole' or 'part-whole.'" He coined a new term "to designate those Janus-faced entities on the intermediate levels of any hierarchy": the word *holon*, from the Greek *holos* (whole) with the suffix *on* (as in *proton* or *neutron*), which suggests a particle or part.³

Koestler's term is particularly valuable for family therapy, because the unit of intervention is always a holon. Every holon—the individual, the nuclear family, the extended family, and the community—is both a whole and a part, not more one than the other, not one rejecting or conflicting with the other. A holon exerts competitive energy for autonomy and self-preservation as a whole. It also carries integrative energy as a part. The nuclear family is a holon of the extended family, the extended family of the community, and so on. Each whole contains the part, and each part also contains the "program" that the whole imposes. Part and whole contain each other in a continuing, current, and ongoing process of communication and interrelationship.

THE INDIVIDUAL HOLON

To view the individual as a holon is especially difficult for anyone brought up in Western culture. Take the Census Bureau's definition of a nonfamily: "a single unattached adult." Here is a striking example of our individualistic ideology. Nowhere among living organisms can one find "unattachment," yet it exists in our human typologies. The Constitution, tax and social security laws, health delivery systems, mental health and education services—even those expensive residential homes for senior citizens only—all express not only the concept but the desirability of the autonomous individual.

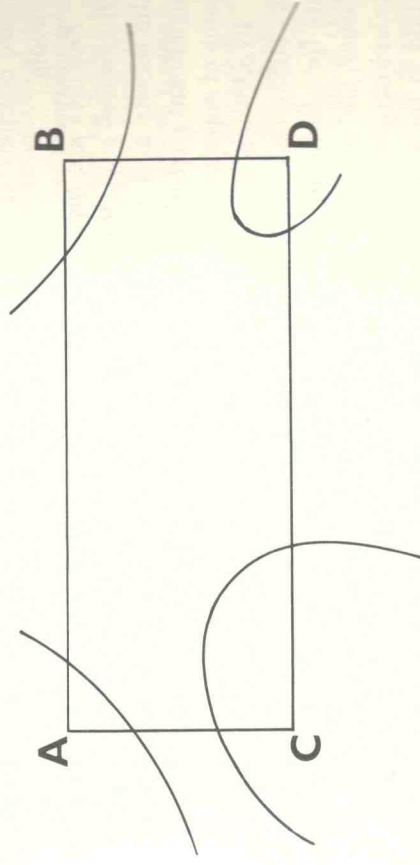
This bias has permeated the mental health field, extending even into the field of family therapy. Ronald Laing's concept of family politics demands that the individual be freed from his noxious family shackles (probably facilitating his inclusion in the census tract as an unattached single adult). Murray Bowen's "differentiation of self scale," used to estimate the degree that the "self" remains uninfluenced by relationships, similarly highlights the "struggle" between the individual and the family. When the individual is seen as being part of any larger whole, somehow she is seen as losing out.⁴

The student therapist may be particularly prone to focus on the constraints the family imposes. The odds are high that she grew up in a family, where she struggled with the processes of individuating within the family group. It is also likely that she is at a stage in her own life cycle of separating from her family of origin and possibly forming a new nuclear family, where the demands of creating the new holon may be experienced as a challenge to her experience of self. The student may therefore have to focus rather conscientiously on the realities of interdependence and the workings of complementarity.

The individual holon incorporates the concept of self-in-context. It includes the personal and historical determinants of self. But it goes beyond them to include the current input of the social context. Specific transactions with other people elicit and reinforce those aspects of the individual's personality that are appropriate to the context. The individual, in turn, affects the other people, who interact with her in certain ways because her responses have elicited and reinforced their responses. There is a circular, continuous process of mutual affecting and reinforcing, which tends to maintain a fixed pattern. At the same time, both individual and context have the capacity for flexibility and change.

It is easy to view the family as a unit and to see the individual as a

holon of that unit. But the individual includes other aspects that are not contained in the individual as a holon of the family, as shown here:



The rectangle represents the family. Each curve is an individual family member. Only certain segments of the self are included in the family organism. For C and D the family is more necessary than for A and B, who may be more related to colleagues, to their families of origin, and to peer groups. But the range of permitted behavior is still governed by a family organization. How wide a range of behavior can be included in the family program depends on the family's capacity to absorb and incorporate energy and information from the extrafamilial.

The constant interaction in different holons at different times requires the actualization of different segments of the self. A child interacting with her overinvolved mother operates with helplessness, to elicit nurturance. But with her older brother, she operates shrewdly and competitively, to get what she wants. A man who is an authoritarian husband and father within the family has to accept a lower hierarchical position in the world of work. A young adolescent, who is dominant in the peer group when in coalition with his older brother, learns to be polite when his brother is not there. Different contexts call forth different facets.

As a result, people are always functioning with a portion of their possibilities. There are many possibilities, only some of which are elicited or constrained by the contextual structure. Therefore, breaking or expanding contexts can allow new possibilities to emerge. The therapist, an expander of contexts, creates a context in which exploration of the un-

familiar is possible. She confirms family members and encourages them to experiment with behavior that has previously been constrained by the family system. As new possibilities emerge, the family organism becomes more complex and develops more acceptable alternatives for problem solving.

Families are highly complex multi-individual systems, but they are themselves subsystems of larger units—the extended family, the block, the society as a whole. Interaction with these larger holons produces a significant part of the family's problems and tasks as well as of its systems of support.

In addition, families have differentiated subsystems. Each individual is a subsystem, as are dyads, like husband and wife. Larger subgroupings are formed by generation (the sibling subsystem), gender (grandfather, father, and son), or task (the parental subsystem). People accommodate kaleidoscopically in these different subsystems. A son has to act like a child in the parental subsystem so that his father can act as an adult. But when he is left in charge of his younger brother, the child takes on executive powers. Within the family holon, three units in addition to the individual are of particular significance: the spouse, parental, and sibling subsystems.

THE SPOUSE HOLON

In family therapy it is useful to conceptualize the beginning of a family at the point in time when two adults, a man and a woman, join with the purpose of forming a family. This agreement does not have to be legal to be significant, and our limited clinical experience with homosexual couples with them as with heterosexual couples with children. Each of the new partners has a set of values and expectations, both recognized and unconscious, ranging from the value of self-determination to whether people should eat breakfast. These two value sets must be reconciled over time to make a life in common possible. Each spouse has to give up part of his or her own ideas and preferences, losing individuality, but gaining belonging. In the process, a new system is formed.

The transactional patterns that slowly evolve usually are not recognized as such. They are simply there, part of the underpinnings of life, necessary, but not really thought about. Many have evolved with little or no effort. If both spouses come from patriarchal families, for instance, they may simply take it for granted that the woman will do the dishes.

Other transactional patterns are the result of stated agreement: "It's your turn to cook." In either case, the patterns established govern the way each spouse experiences self and partner in the spouse context. Eventually behavior that differs from what has become accustomed will hurt. Deviance will spark a sense of betrayal, even if neither partner has any conscious idea of what the trouble is. There will always be points of friction, and the system will have to adapt to meet changed contextual demands. But at some point, a structure underlying the spouse transactions will have evolved.

One of the spouse subsystem's most vital tasks is the development of boundaries that protect the spouses, giving them an area for the satisfaction of their own psychological needs without the intrusion of in-laws, children, and others. The adequacy of these boundaries is one of the most important aspects to the viability of the family structure.

If the nuclear family is seen apart from other contexts, each spouse appears to be the other's total adult context. In our extremely mobile society, the nuclear family can in fact be cut off from other systems of support, resulting in an overloading of the spouse subsystem. Margaret Mead cited this situation as one of the stresses endangering the family in the Western world. The spouse subsystem is therefore a powerful context for confirmation and disqualification.

The spouse subsystem may offer its members a supportive platform for dealing with the extrafamilial world, and it may provide them a haven from outside stresses. But if the rules of the subsystem are so rigid that the experiences gained by each spouse in extrafamilial transactions cannot be incorporated, the "spouses-in-the-system" may be bound to inadequate survival rules by past contracts and allowed a more diversified use of self only when away from each other. In this situation the spouse subsystem will grow more and more impoverished and devitalized, ultimately becoming unavailable as a source of growth for its members. If these conditions continue, the spouses may find it necessary to dismantle the system.

The spouse subsystem is vital for the child's growth. It is her model for intimate relationships, as expressed in daily interactions. In the spouse subsystem the child sees ways of expressing affection, of relating to a partner who is stressed, and of dealing with conflict as equals. What she sees will become part of the child's values and expectations as she comes in contact with the outside world.

If there is any major dysfunction within the spouse subsystem, this will reverberate throughout the family. In pathogenic situations, a child

may be scapegoated, or possibly co-opted into an alliance with one spouse against the other. The therapist must be alert to the use of the child as a member in a subsystem to which she should not belong, as opposed to transactions that are legitimately related to the parental functions.

THE PARENTAL HOLON

Transactions within the parental holon involve the familiar child-rearing and socializing functions. But many other aspects of the child's development are also affected by her interactions within this subsystem. Here the child learns what to expect from people who have greater resources and strength. She learns to think of authority as rational, or as arbitrary. She learns whether her needs will be supported, and she learns the most effective ways of communicating what she wants within her own family's style. Her sense of adequacy is shaped by how her elders respond to her and by whether this response is age-appropriate. She learns which behaviors are rewarded and which are discouraged. Finally, within the parental subsystem, the child experiences her family's style of dealing with conflict and negotiation.

The parental holon can vary widely in composition. It may include a grandfather or an aunt. It may largely exclude one parent. It may include a parental child, who is delegated the authority to guard and discipline her siblings. The therapist will have to find out who the subsystem members are; it does little good to coach a mother if the child's real parent is her grandmother.

As the child grows and her needs change, the parental subsystem must change as well. As the child's capacity increases, she must be given more opportunities for decision making and self-control. Families with adolescent children should negotiate differently from families with younger children. Parents with older children should give more authority to the children while demanding more responsibility from them.

The adults in the parental subsystem have the responsibility to care for, protect, and socialize the children, but they also have rights. The parents have the right to make decisions that are related to the survival of the total system, in such matters as relocation, selection of schools, and the determination of rules that protect all family members. They have the right, and indeed the duty, to protect the privacy of the spouse subsystem and to determine what role the children will play in the family's functioning.

In our child-oriented culture, we tend to stress the obligations of the parents and pay less attention to their rights. But the subsystem that is given tasks must also have the authority to carry them out. And although a child must have the freedom to explore and grow, she will feel safe to explore only if she has the sense that her world is predictable.

Problems of control are endemic in the parental holon. They are continually being tackled and more or less resolved by trial and error in all families. The nature of the solutions will vary at different family developmental stages. When a family gets stuck in this area and comes to therapy, it is essential that the therapist pay attention to the participation of all members in the maintenance of the dysfunctional transaction and in the possible availability of resources for problem solving.

THE SIBLING HOLON

Siblings form a child's first peer group. Within this context, children support each other, enjoy, attack, scapegoat, and generally learn from each other. They develop their own transactional patterns for negotiating, cooperating, and competing. They learn how to make friends and deal with enemies, how to learn from others, and how to achieve recognition. They generally take different positions in the constant give and take, and the process furthers both their sense of belonging to a group and their sense of individual choices and alternatives within a system. These patterns will be significant as they move into extrafamilial peer groups, the classroom system, and later the world of work.

In large families the siblings organize themselves in a variety of subsystems according to developmental stages. It is important for the therapist to speak the language of different developmental stages and to be familiar with their different resources and needs. It is useful to create in the sibling context scenarios for the exercise of skills of conflict resolution in a number of areas, such as autonomy, competition, and competence, which may later be practiced in extrafamilial subsystems.

Family therapists tend to underutilize sibling contexts and overutilize therapeutic designs that demand an increase of parental diversity of functioning. But meeting with siblings alone, organizing therapeutic moments in which the siblings discuss certain issues while the parents observe, or developing "dialogs" between the sibling and parental holons can be extremely effective in creating new forms for resolving issues of autonomy and control. In divorced families, meetings between the siblings and the estranged parent are particularly useful as a mechanism to

facilitate a better functioning of the complex "divorced organism."

How the family carries out its tasks is not nearly as important as how well. Family therapists, the product of their own culture, must therefore guard against imposing the models that are familiar to them, as well as the rules of functioning that are familiar. Family therapists must guard against a tendency to punctuate around the nuclear family, dismissing the significance of the extended family—its communication with and impact on the nuclear. Younger therapists may find themselves sympathetic with the rights of children, not having experienced the complexities of parenting. They may find themselves judging parents guilty without understanding their efforts. Male therapists may tend to unbalance the spouse subsystem, understanding and supporting the male spouse's position. Female therapists, concerned about the constraints imposed on women by a patriarchal family, may support the differentiation of the female spouse beyond the possibilities that exist in a particular family. Therapists must remember that families are holons imbedded in a larger culture, and that the therapist's function is to help them become more adequate within the possibilities that exist in their own family and cultural systems.

DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

The family is not a static entity. It is in the process of continuous change, as are its social contexts. To look at human beings apart from change and time is solely a construct of language. Therapists, in effect, stop time when they look at families, like stopping a motion picture to focus on one frame.

Yet family therapy has tended not to explore the fact that families change over time. This is partly because family therapists are intensely oriented to the here and now, as opposed to psychodynamic therapy's exploration of the past. But it is also owing to the fact that a family therapist experiences the family structure's governing power with enormous impact. She has entered a living system that has its own ways of being, and powerful mechanisms for preserving those ways. In the immediacy of the therapeutic encounter, these stabilizing mechanisms are what is felt; the flexible elements of the structure rarely impinge so strongly. Change is going on in the present, but it gains salience only in the long view.

The family is constantly subjected to demands for change, coming from within and without. A grandparent dies; the whole parental sub-

system may need realignment. The mother is laid off from work; the spouse, executive, and parental subsystems may have to be modified. Change is, in fact, the norm, and a long-range view of any family would show great flexibility, constant fluctuation, and quite probably more disequilibrium than balance.

To look at a family from the long view is to see it as an organism evolving over time. Two individual "cells" join, forming a multibodied entity like the colony animal. This entity moves through stages of aging that affect each body individually, until the two progenitor cells decay and die, while others start the life cycle anew.

Like all living organisms, the family system has a tendency toward both maintenance and evolution. Demands for change may activate counterdeviation mechanisms, but the system evolves toward increasing complexity. Although the family can fluctuate only within a given range, it has an amazing capacity to adapt and change while maintaining continuity.

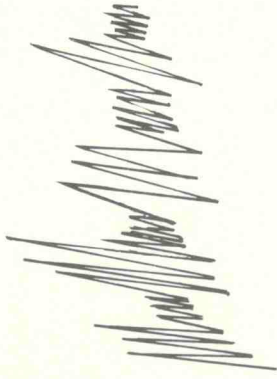
Living systems with these characteristics are by definition open systems, in contrast with the closed "equilibrium structures" described in classical thermodynamics. Ilya Prigogine explains the difference: "A crystal is a typical example of an equilibrium structure. Dissipative [living] structures have a quite different status: they are formed and maintained through the effect of exchange of energy and matter in nonequilibrium conditions." In a living system, fluctuations, occurring either internally or externally, take the system to a new structure: "a new structure is always the result of an instability. It originates from a fluctuation. Whereas a fluctuation is normally followed by a response that brings the system back to the unperturbed state, on the contrary, at the point of formation of a new structure, fluctuations are amplified." Classical thermodynamics, Prigogine concludes, "is essentially a theory of destruction of structure . . . But in some way such a theory has to be completed by a theory of creation of structure."⁵

For years family therapy emphasized the power of systems to maintain themselves. Now the work of Prigogine and others has shown that if a system is partially open to the inflow of energy or information, "the ensuing instabilities do not lead to random behavior . . . instead, they tend to drive the system to a new dynamic regime which corresponds to a new state of complexity."⁶

The family, a living system, exchanges information and energy with the outside. Fluctuation, either internal or external, is normally followed

by a response that returns the system to its steady state. But when the fluctuation amplifies, the family may enter a crisis in which transformation results in a different level of functioning that makes coping possible.

This view of the family as a living system suggests that the long-range study of any family would show the following development, in which periods of disequilibrium alternate with periods of homeostasis, and the fluctuation remains within a manageable range:



This model gives the therapist a base for moving quickly to the relationship between family developmental stage and therapeutic goals, because the therapeutic crisis follows a developmental blueprint. Unlike other models, this one is not limited to individual and context. It deals with holons, postulating that developmental changes in the individual affect the family, and that changes in the family and extrafamilial holons affect the individual holons.

Family development, according to the model, moves in stages that follow a progression of increasing complexity. There are periods of balance and adaptation, characterized by the mastery of appropriate tasks and skills. There are also periods of disequilibrium, which arise from either the individual or context. These result in a jump to a new and more complex stage, in which new tasks and skills are developed.

Consider a two-year-old who is sent to nursery school. Experimenting with new coping skills away from her mother, she begins to demand new relationships within the family. The mother, counting to ten in the crowded grocery store, has to allow her to select the school's brand of cookies. That evening the father has to comfort the mother with a joke about the "terrible two's." The truth is that all three of these family members must outgrow the stage of infant/parent-of-infant. The child, the mother-child dyad, and the family triad are in a dissipative structure. Fluctuation has amplified because of both internal and external

inputs, and the ensuing instabilities will move the system to a new complexity.

The developmental model posits four main stages, organized around the growth of children. These include couple formation, families with young children, families with school-age or adolescent children, and families with grown children.

COUPLE FORMATION

In the first stage, the transactional patterns that form the structure of the spouse holon are developed. The boundaries that govern the relationship of the new unit to the families of origin, to friends, to the world of work, and to the neighborhood and other significant contexts must be negotiated. The couple must work out new patterns of relating to others. They must maintain important contacts, while also establishing a holon whose boundaries are clear enough to permit the growth of an intimate couple relationship. Questions arise constantly. How often will they visit his twin sister? How do they resolve his dislike of her best friend? What do they do about the late hours at the lab that are part of her professional dream, but which leave him eating alone twice a week?

Within the spouse holon, the couple will have to reconcile their different styles and expectations and develop their own ways of processing information, relating, and dealing with affect. They must develop rules about closeness, hierarchies, areas of specialization and expertise, and patterns of cooperation. Each has to develop the ability to sense the other's vibes, evolving common associations and shared values, hearing what is important to the other, and reaching some agreement about how to handle the fact that they do not share all values.

Above all, the spouse holon must learn to deal with conflict, which occurs inevitably when two people are forming a new unit—whether the issue is closed or open windows in the bedroom at night or the family budget. The development of viable patterns for expressing and resolving conflict is a crucial part of this early period.

This stage is clearly a dissipative one. There is a high degree of information exchange both between holon and context and within the holon itself. There is also tension between the needs of the couple holon and the needs of its individual members. Rules that were previously satisfactory to each individual alone must be modified.

In the formation of a couple, the issues of part and whole are highly significant. Each spouse at first experiences him or herself as a whole in-

teracting with another whole. In forming the new couple unit, each must become a part. This can be felt as a ceding of individuality. In some cases the therapist working with a family at this stage may have to focus on complementarity, to help the couple realize that belonging is enriching as well as constraining.

As time goes by, the new organism will stabilize as a balanced system. This evolution to a higher level of complexity is anything but painless. But if the holon survives at all, the couple will reach a stage where, in the absence of significant internal change or external input, the system's fluctuations will remain within the established range.

FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

The second stage occurs with the birth of the first child, when new holons are instantly established: parental, mother-child, father-child. The spouse holon must reorganize to deal with new tasks, and new rules must be developed. The newborn is totally dependent on responsible care. At the same time, the newborn is demonstrating elements of her own personality, to which the family must accommodate.

This is another dissipative structure—to the point that the system itself may be endangered. The wife may be caught in conflicting demands for her time and loyalty. The husband may move for disengagement. A therapist may have to move the father toward the mother and child, re-engaging him in parental functions and helping him to build a more complex, differentiated view of himself in the spouse and parental holons.

If these problems are poorly resolved, cross-generational coalitions may form. The mother or father may unite with the child in a coalition against the spouse, keeping him peripheral or making him overcontrol.

While dealing continually with issues of control and socialization, the family must also negotiate new contacts with the external world. Relationships to grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins are formed. The family must cope with hospitals, schools, and the whole child-industry of clothing, food, and toys.

As the child begins to move around and talk, the parents must establish controls that give them space while maintaining safety and the parental authority. Adults who have established patterns of nurturance must now modify those patterns, developing appropriate methods of maintaining control while encouraging growth. New patterns must be explored and stabilized in all family holons.

As other children are born, the stable patterns established around the first child are disrupted. A more complex and differentiated family map, including a sibling holon, must develop.

FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL-AGE OR ADOLESCENT CHILDREN

A sharp change occurs when children go off to school, initiating the third developmental stage. Now the family must relate to a new, well-organized, highly significant system. The entire family must develop new patterns: how to help with school work and who should help; what rules to enforce about bedtime, homework, and leisure; and how to encompass the school's evaluation of their child.

As the children grow, they bring new elements into the family system. The child learns that her friends' families operate by different, and potentially fairer, rules. The family will have to negotiate adjustments, changing some rules. The new boundaries between parent and child must permit contact, while freeing the child to reserve certain experiences to herself.

With adolescence, the peer group gains strong power. This is a culture in itself, with its own values about sex, drugs, alcohol, dress, politics, life style, and the future. Now the family is interacting with a strong and often competing system, and the adolescent's increasing competence makes her better able to demand accommodation from her parents. Issues of autonomy and control must be renegotiated on all levels.

The children are not the only family members who are growing and changing. There are specific passages in adult life, which tend to center around decades. These stages, too, affect and are affected by the family holons.

At this stage, another source of pressure and demand may begin to impinge on the family: the parents' parents. Just when middle-aged parents are dealing with questions of autonomy and support with their growing children, they may have to negotiate a re-entry into their own parents' lives, to compensate for declining strength or bereavement.

A minor imbalance requiring adaptation is characteristic of families through much of this third stage. But dissipative conditions are evident at the time of school entrance and at various points in adolescence when sexual needs, school demands, and the competing appeals of the peer group disrupt the established patterns in the family.

Finally, the process of separation begins at this stage, and this change

resonates throughout the family. A second child may have had a relatively disengaged position within an enmeshed parental holon. But when her older sister goes off to college, she finds herself under increasing parental scrutiny. The tendency to recreate accustomed structures by drawing a new member into the previously established pattern is great. When this happens, it may represent a failure in adapting to the demands of family change.

FAMILIES WITH GROWN CHILDREN

In the fourth and final stage the children, now young adults, have formed their own commitments to a style of life, a career, friends, and ultimately a partner. The original family is once again a family of two. Although now the family members have a long history of changing patterns together, this new stage requires a clear reorganization around how parents and children will relate to each other as adults.

This is sometimes called the "empty nest" period, a term conventionally associated with the depression of a woman whose occupation is gone. But what is actually happening is that the spouse subsystem, once again, becomes the crucial family holon for both partners, although if there are grandchildren, these new relationships will have to be worked out. This period, often described as a period of loss, can instead be a period of great development if the spouses, both as individuals and as a couple, draw on their accumulated experiences, dreams, and expectations to realize possibilities that were unattainable while parenting was necessary.

This developmental schema describes only the middle-class family, with husband, wife, and 2.2 children. More and more, it is likely that the family will also form some sort of extended network or will experience divorce, desertion, or remarriage. In moving through such stages, people also face very complicated challenges. But whatever the circumstances, the basic flow remains: a family has to go through certain stages of growth and aging. It must cope with periods of crisis and transition.

What is significant for therapy is the fact that both change and continuity are the way of any living system. The family organism, like the individual human, moves between two poles. One pole represents the security of the known. The other is the exploration necessary for adaptation to changing conditions.

When a family comes to treatment, it is in difficulty because it is stuck in the homeostatic phase. Demands for the status quo constrain the fam-

ily members' ability to deal creatively with changed circumstances. Adherence to rules that were once more or less functional handicaps the response to change. One of the goals of therapy is, therefore, to move the family to a stage of creative turmoil where what was given must be replaced by a search for new ways. Flexibility must be induced by increasing the system's fluctuations, ultimately moving it toward a higher level of complexity. In this sense, therapy is an art that imitates life. Normal family development includes fluctuation, periods of crisis, and resolution at a higher level of complexity. Therapy is the process of taking a family who are stuck along the developmental spiral and creating a crisis that will push the family in the direction of their own evolution.