

Family Boundary Diffusion, Individuation, and Adjustment among Young Adults: An
Investigation of Gender and Family Structure Effects

by

Marei Bindi Perrin
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2002
M.A., University of Victoria, 2004

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Abstract

Drawing on structural family systems theory, this study investigates the relations among family boundary diffusion experienced during adolescence, psychological individuation, and adjustment, from the perspective of older adolescents and young adults. Previous research suggests that boundary diffusion, such as triangulation and parentification, are linked to a variety of negative outcomes for adolescents and young adults (e.g., Buchanan et al., 1991; Hetherington, 1999; Jacobvitz & Bush, 1996), although not uniformly so (e.g., Arditto, 1999; Rosenberg & Guttman, 2001). Theorists have argued that diffuse family boundaries may hinder the psychological individuation process (Jurkovic, 1997; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1989), which in turn may be related to low psychological well-being among young adults (Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Mattanah et al., 2004). However, the consequences of some types of boundary diffusion, in particular parentification, may vary depending on the contextual fabric in which they occur (Jurkovic, 1997). Hence, this study explores the extent to which family structure (young adults with married parents versus young adults with divorced, single parents) and gender may impact the relationships among boundary diffusion, individuation, and adjustment. Four-hundred-and-four older adolescents and young adults drawn from the community

and a university setting participated in the study. Roughly equal numbers of men and women from both married and divorced family backgrounds were recruited. Participants were asked to reflect back to their adolescence (ages 14 to 17) and completed questionnaires assessing triangulation and parentification experienced by mothers and fathers during this time period. Current psychological individuation from mothers and fathers as well as current general and relationship-specific adjustment were also assessed via self-report measures. As expected, results indicated that participants with divorced parents experienced more boundary diffusion than participants with married parents. Overall, boundary diffusion was reliably associated with poorer adjustment and less psychological individuation irrespective of gender and family structure. Within this general pattern of findings, one notable exception existed: parentification by the same-sex parent among participants with divorced parents appeared not to be related to adjustment, which stood in contrast to findings for participants with married parents. Triangulation, on the other hand, emerged as a consistent and reliable predictor of psychological individuation and adjustment irrespective of family structure and gender. Lastly, as hypothesized, psychological individuation fully mediated the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment for the overall sample. This model was also fully supported for women and partially supported for men. Intervention implications arising from this research, including the importance of addressing triangulation dynamics in families and the potential fruitfulness of attending to individuation themes for young adults with histories of boundary diffusion, are highlighted.

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Introduction

Overview of Study

This study draws on structural family systems theory, which emphasizes the importance of clear, hierarchical boundaries for optimal family members' development (Minuchin, 1974). Families that demonstrate diffuse boundaries are at risk for involving their children in potentially unhealthy roles, such as parentification or triangulation. Indeed, such family dynamics are linked to a variety of negative outcomes for adolescents and young adults (e.g., Buchanan et al., 1991; Hetherington, 1999; Jacobvitz & Bush, 1996), although not uniformly so (e.g., Arditto, 1999; Rosenberg & Guttman, 2001). Theorists have argued that diffuse family boundaries may encourage the older adolescent and young adult to remain emotionally over-involved with the family, limiting psychological separation and extra-family pursuits needed for the psychological individuation process (Jurkovic, 1997; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1989; Minuchin, 1974). Low levels of psychological individuation among older adolescents and young adults are, in turn, related to poorer psychological well-being (e.g., Hoffman, 1984; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Mattanah et al., 2004). This study investigates whether psychological individuation mediates the relationship between diffuse family boundaries, such as triangulation and parentification, and adjustment among older adolescents and young adults. More specifically, it is hypothesized that retroactively reported boundary diffusion during adolescence may inhibit or impede older adolescents' and young adults' current psychological individuation, which in turn is negatively related to adjustment among adolescents and young adults.

Some types of family boundary diffusion, such as parentification, have not always been associated with negative outcomes and may, in fact, foster positive adjustment under certain circumstances (Hetherington, 1999; Mattanah et al., 2004). Theorists have suggested that the consequences of parentification vary depending on cultural norms and contextual factors in which parentification occurs. For example, parentification may be less problematic if it is of moderate intensity, time-limited or, if prolonged, normative for the cultural context, or recognized and supported by others in the community (Jurkovic, 1997). Parentification characterized by these elements may be found in divorced single parent families. For example, in these families, parents may turn to their children for additional support in a time-limited fashion as a reaction and adjustment to an acute crisis. Furthermore, as Guttman (1993) emphasized, divorced single parent households should be conceptualized as having their own norms regarding boundary regulation and exchange/reciprocity patterns. Given these different norms seen in the context of single parent families, it is feasible to suggest that the experience of parentification may differ qualitatively for older adolescents and young adults raised in divorced, single parent families compared with two-parent married families. The current research explores to what extent the implications of parentification and triangulation are similar or different for older adolescents and younger adults raised in divorced single parent families versus intact families. Finally, the role that gender plays in the aforementioned relationships is examined.

Structural Family Theory & Its Application to Research and Practice

Structural family systems theory provides a framework for understanding individual functioning and development in the context of relationships within the family. It emphasizes the interdependence among family members, viewing each member as influencing other members of the family. Family systems theory, originally conceptualized for clinical application, highlights that some dysfunction originates and is maintained at the level of the family, rather than the individual. The role that each family member plays in contributing and/or maintaining the dysfunction needs to be examined in order to understand the dysfunction and to intervene successfully (Minuchin, 1974).

Although the family is conceptualized as a “whole,” each family consists of several subsystems including the marital, parent-child, and the sibling subsystems (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1995; Minuchin, 1974). These subsystems are delineated by boundaries, which refer to the subsystem’s rules about who participates in each subsystem as well as when and how. Thus, boundaries regulate relationships among family members and may be viewed as the operating rules by which a family functions, permitting or inhibiting certain interactions among the subsystems (Minuchin, 1974). For example, in families that exhibit these boundaries, physical or sexual intimacy is permitted in the marital subsystem but not in the parent-child or sibling subsystem.

In addition to having clear boundaries, the subsystems are organized hierarchically, such that in healthy families, the marital subsystem is placed hierarchically above the sibling subsystem (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973; Minuchin, 1974). This means that parents are in charge of raising and nurturing the children and assuming executive roles within the family. In healthy families all family members may contribute

in some ways to some family decisions, but it is the parental subsystem that determines when and how this participation takes place. Thus, the parental subsystem is ultimately in charge of setting the rules and limits for the family. According to family systems theory, hierarchically organized subsystems, which demonstrate clear boundaries among each other, are crucial for optimal family member's development and healthy family functioning. Clear boundaries define suitable family roles, acknowledge developmental differences among family members, and allow individuals the opportunity to meet their emotional needs in developmentally appropriate ways (Kerig, 2005).

In families who do not demonstrate clear generational hierarchies and/or develop diffuse boundaries, children and adolescents are at risk for engaging in potentially unhealthy family roles. For example, in families who have lost generational boundaries between the parent and child subsystem, the child may act in a peer-like or spousal relation to the parent, or take on the caregiving role to the parent. This phenomenon has been referred to as "parentification" in the literature (e.g., Jurkovic, 1997). In other families, where the integrity of the marital subsystem has been compromised by frequent parental conflict, for example, children may be drawn or "triangulated" into the marital subsystem by acting as mediators between fighting parents. In families who show parentification and/or triangulation dynamics, who is the "parent" and who is the "child" appears unclear (Kerig, 2005). Experiencing triangulation and parentification, and attempting to cope with this boundary diffusion, may burden the child with responsibility beyond their developmental abilities and needs. Parentification and triangulation, and their psychological consequences for children and adolescents, will be elaborated in an upcoming section.

Over the past 30 years, structural family systems theory has had a profound impact on clinical practice with children and families. This theory has expanded our understanding of child development and psychopathology by challenging practitioners and researchers to reach beyond considering just parent-child relationships and instead encouraging investigation of the family as a whole. With its emphasis on interdependence among family members, family systems theory introduced a new level of analysis and conceptualization for understanding individual development. Many clinicians, who had been disappointed with the limitations of individual treatment and individually-focused conceptualizations of mental health, readily embraced the systems perspective in their practices. This theory's popularity may be due to its real world complexity and its utility in making sense of family-related problems. Family clinicians seem to relate easily to the family systems concepts, such as triangulation, and these constructs often fit well into conceptualizing complex clinical cases. By carefully observing repeated interaction patterns of family members, clinicians are able to discern information about the spoken and unspoken rules that regulate how, when, and to whom family members relate.

In the past 20 years, a growing number of researchers have turned to family systems theory to guide new research programs. Researchers are appreciating the richness of the theory's notions and have discovered the predictive and explanatory power of some of this theory's concepts. However, overall, the theory's impact on empirical research appears to have been more limited and gradual when compared to its recognition in clinical practice. Its acceptance by researchers has been slower for at least two reasons. First, most family system constructs were introduced and referred to by Minuchin (1974) only by their clinical descriptions without defining or clearly operationalizing the

constructs in behavioural terms. This created considerable confusion in the literature, as researchers operationalized the same construct differently, or even defined different constructs similarly. Second, researchers have struggled in being able to develop methods of measuring systemic constructs in a way that reflects and does justice to family systems theory, including its emphasis on triadic interactions with the family (instead of the more commonly dyadic interaction focus commonly seen in the empirical literature). Although researchers continue to be challenged in operationalizing and measuring these complex constructs, advances are being made in these domains.

Boundary Diffusion

Parentification.

Parentification has been described by theorists as the distortion or diffusion of boundaries among family subsystems, such that children take on roles and responsibilities usually reserved for adults (Boszomenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973). Parentification is thought to result from a family dynamic in which a parent turns to the child for assistance and nurturance (Jurkovic, 1997; Sroufe et al., 1985). Children may experience parentification by mothers, fathers, or both parents. The parentification phenomena is referred to in the literature using several terms including role-reversal (Jacobvitz, Morgan, Kretchmar, & Morgan, 1991; Zeanah & Klitzke, 1991), the child as parent (Goglia, Jurkovic, Burt, & Burge-Callaway, 1992), the parental child (Minuchin, 1974), and the burdened child (Chase, 1999). Acting in such a parental role frequently occurs at the expense of the child's own developmental needs. That is, the child is meeting their parents' and family's needs to such an extent that it is hindering the child from being able to fulfill their own developmental goals. Often times, the child is unable successfully to meet their parent's

inappropriately high expectations, consequently resulting in feelings of insecurity, self-blame, guilt, perceived incompetence (Byng-Hall, 2002) as well as disappointment or anger in the parent (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1988).

Jurkovic (1997) delineated the parentification construct into instrumental and emotional caregiving. Instrumental parentification refers to children being required to contribute to the physical well-being of their families beyond developmentally appropriate standards. For example, instrumentally parentified children and adolescents may be expected to prepare meals for the family, go grocery shopping, maintain the household, earn money, manage the family budget, and/or take care of their siblings (Jurkovic, Jessee & Goglia, 1991). Emotionally parentified children are expected to take care of the relational and emotional needs of their parents. For example, the emotionally parentified child acts to the parent as their best friend, is a source of support, and a confidante to the parent. By taking care of the emotional needs of the parents, emotionally parentified children and adolescents learn to submerge their own needs and to consider them less important than the needs of others. Although the distinction between emotional and instrumental parentification is illuminating, a given child or adolescent is often drawn into both practical and emotional forms of parentification.

Only a limited number of studies have examined parentification processes and their psychological consequences for children and adolescents. In divorced families, Johnston (1990) investigated role reversal between school age children and their parents. On the basis of clinical ratings by independent clinicians, scores were calculated for aspects of role-reversal and child outcomes. Parental boundary problems, including role reversal, were associated with emotional constriction and controlling interpersonal style

among children. Furthermore, in a longitudinal study, Hetherington (1999) reported that in young adulthood previously parentified adolescents were more vulnerable to feelings of depression and anxiety than their non-parentified peers.

Exploring retrospectively how young adult females' reconstructions of their family patterns related to psychological adjustment, Jacobvitz and Bush (1996) hypothesized that parents who sought intimacy with children as opposed to spouses, would negatively impact their daughters' development. Results suggested that mothers turning to their daughters for closeness was related to young adult children's level of anxiety, whereas fathers turning to their daughters for support was related to young adult children's feelings of depression. In a similar vein, Fullinwider-Bush and Jacobvitz (1993) investigated the relationship between parent-child role reversal and identity development for young adult daughters. Role-reversal with either parent was related to less identity exploration in the area of romantic relationships. The authors suggested that young adult females had difficulty exploring their own needs and wants because of their attunement to their parents' needs. Finally, consistent with ideas rooted in the family systems perspective, role-reversals, particularly with fathers, were associated with eating disorders in young adult women (Rowa, Kerig, & Geller, 2001).

In addition to exploring how parentification affects individual psychological functioning, a few studies have investigated how caregiving responsibilities might shape individuals' functioning in adult relationships. Most of these studies are retrospective in nature. For example, Valleau, Bergner, and Horton (1995) have linked childhood parentification with excessive caretaking in adult interpersonal relationships. Similarly, parentification was related to the tendency of acting as a caregiver rather than an equal

partner in adult relationships (Wells, Glickauf-Huges, & Jones, 1999) and was linked to shame-proneness in adults (Wells & Jones, 2000). The authors argued that young adults who experienced parentification internalized the unrealistic parental expectations, and thus tended to feel “badness” and inadequacy about themselves which, in turn, led to shame-proneness.

Overall, theoretical conceptualizations and empirical results suggest that the parentified child might be overburdened by responsibility for providing their parent with social support, is likely to feel guilty and anxious about not being able to meet parents’ unrealistic expectations, and may be prevented from pursuing age-appropriate interests and social relationships. Clinicians may notice these children’s and adolescents’ preoccupation with family matters and general inattentiveness (Jurkovic, 1997). Parentified children tend to be overly familiar with the adult aspects of their parents’ lives. At times they may suffer from social isolation and have few friends (Dawson, 1980). Boys who are overloaded with emotional and functional tasks have been described as showing subtle resistance against authority such as not finishing homework, truancy, and substance use (Hetherington, 1999). Clinicians and researchers have theorized that parentified children may encounter difficulties with identity development and healthy adolescent separation from their parents during adolescence. Since their acquired identities revolve around taking care of the needs of their families, room for experimentation with different aspects of identity may be limited or absent. Hence, a parentified adolescent may have difficulty establishing a healthy, independent sense of self (Jurkovic, 1997), including limiting themselves from fully exploring romantic relationships (Fullinwider-Bush & Jacobvitz, 1993). During adulthood, these individuals

may continue to seek out unbalanced adult relationships, in which they demonstrate excessive caretaking qualities, yet again, submerging their own needs for being nurtured (Valleau, Bergner, & Horton, 1995; Wells, Glickauf-Huges, & Jones, 1999). Overall, emotional parentification has been identified as being more problematic for the child's well-being than instrumental parentification in both theoretical conceptualizations and empirical findings (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973; Chase, 1999; Jurkovic, 1997).

Parentification, however, is not uniformly linked to negative outcomes for children. Under certain circumstances children may even benefit from some adult-type responsibilities. If children are able to successfully carry out these tasks, this may foster feelings of competence and responsibility (Barnett & Parker, 1998; Peris & Emery, 2005). Some researchers have pointed out additional potential strengths of parentified children including increased sensitivity, greater capacity for intimate relationships (Barnard & Spoentgen, 1987), independence, and flexibility (Chase, 1999). Similarly, Kerig (2005) argued that some individuals with childhood parentification histories may show high levels of empathy, social responsibility, and altruism. However, it is likely that these more positive outcomes are the result of what has been termed "adaptive parentification" (Jurkovic, 1997). Adaptive parentification is theorized to occur when parental reliance on the child is of moderate intensity and time-limited, or if prolonged, is recognized and supported by others in the community. Parentification is argued not to be destructive if children do not feel unfairly treated and feels that they are able to receive support from the parent and others when needed. Destructive parentification, on the other hand, is said to occur when the requested parental tasks are excessive, developmentally

inappropriate, and there is a clear lack of reciprocity of support between parent and child (Jurkovic, Morrell, & Thirkield, 1999).

Empirically, however, little attention has been paid to the factors that differentiate adaptive and destructive parentification. Thus, little evidence exists to demonstrate under what circumstances parentification may be more or less problematic. Certainly, contextual and cultural variables play an important role in how parentification is experienced by the child. Researchers and clinicians need to be mindful of the significance of the sociocultural context when making judgments about “appropriate” role taking. Different cultures have varying norms and expectations of how children should contribute to the family, which in turn will likely colour children’s interpretation of their parentification experiences and its potential effects on their adjustment and on their relationship with parents.

Triangulation.

Triangulation constitutes another type of boundary diffusion exhibited by some families. The term triangulation has been conceptualized in different ways by different authors (Grych, Raynor, & Fosco, 2004), but generally refers to the child being “pulled into” the marital dyad, in one way or another, to help resolve and diffuse conflict in the marital relationship. In the “mediator pattern,” the child or adolescent is closer to each parent than the parents are to each other (Minuchin, 1974). The child figuratively stands “between” the parents. In the mediator role, the child may be pulled into marital discussions and problems and asked to act as the “referee” for the parents. That is, parents will ask for the child’s input in deciding whose view point is more legitimate. In some cases the child may also be asked to “go-between” the parents to relay messages and

perform mediation of conflict between the spouses. Frequently, children experiencing these family dynamics report being “caught in the middle” and “feeling torn” between their two parents (Afifi, 2003; Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbush, 1991, 1996).

Another triangulation pattern involves the child being pulled into the marital dyad to form a cross-generational coalition with either the mother or the father. Parents may be observed to compete for their child’s affection and acceptance. In a mother-child coalition, the mother and child will feel closer to each other than the mother or child will feel towards the father. In a father-child coalition, the father and child will feel closer to each other than to the mother. The essence of a coalition is that one child sides with the parent against the other parent. Pressure is placed upon the child to pick one parent over the other. On the one hand, a coalition may provide a threat to the marital dyad; however, on the other hand, a cross-generational coalition may ease the tensions between the parents (Bell, Bell, & Nakata, 2001). For example, when a mother discusses her concerns about the father with her daughter, rather than directly with her husband, tension may be less likely to build up in the marital subsystem, at least in the short term.

The distinction between parent-child coalition and parent-child alliance is frequently not clear in the literature and the two terms are at times used interchangeably (e.g., Fullinwider-Bush & Jacobvitz, 1996). The main distinguishing feature appears to be that in a coalition two members actively side with each other *against* another member in the family system. Another differentiating factor of a parent-child coalition is that the relationship between the parent and child is somehow a function of the relationship between the other parent and child. For example, a child may be part of a coalition if he/she feels that his/her closeness with one parent will negatively influence the

relationship he/she may have with the other parent. In an alliance, two members are simply closer to each other than they are to a third member in a system, but do not necessarily side against the third party. Parent-child alliances may be conceptualized as a form of emotional parentification where parents turn to their children for emotional support and intimacy, which is typically provided by and may be lacking in the spousal relationship. Although emotional parentification and triangulation may be conceptualized as distinct family processes, they often co-occur in the same family system.

It is important to note that it is not necessarily the case that triangulation implies involving a passive third party. The child or adolescent may play an active role in including him/herself into the marital dyad. The child may try to protect one parent from the other, or help comfort one parent after a fight. Even if not explicitly asked to mediate, the child, often wanting to be close to both parents, may attempt to mediate their parents' disputes. Yet, at the same time, the child often fears that their interventions will be interpreted as acts of disloyalty by one or both parents, increasing feelings of being torn (Afifi, 2003).

Family system theorists argue that the risk of triangulation is particularly salient when parental conflict is present (Margolin et al., 2001; Minuchin, 1974). Indeed the link between marital discord and triangulation for children across the developmental lifespan has been well established. For example, Lindahl et al. (1997), following married couples before the birth of their first child until five years later, documented that couples experiencing higher conflict before birth of their child were more likely to form crossgenerational coalitions and later draw the children into marital arguments. Also, Kerig (1995) investigated family dynamics in intact families to find that 6-10 year old

children reported more intense, frequent, and unresolved parental conflict when coming from triangulated families versus more balanced families. Similarly, Frank and Buehler (2007) reported links between marital hostility and triangulation for sixth-graders. Grych, Raynor, and Fosco (2004), examining family processes and adolescent adjustment, demonstrated that 14-18 year olds exposed to more frequent and unresolved parental conflict were more likely to feel triangulated than adolescents who were less exposed to parental conflict. Finally, the risk for triangulation remains heightened in the context of parental conflict even in young and middle adulthood. For example, Amato and Afifi (2007) found that for a sample of randomly selected adults (age 19-37), feelings of triangulation were higher for adult children with parents in high-conflict marriages.

Triangulation is believed to increase children's and adolescents' risk for adjustment problems (Buchanan & Waizenhofer, 2001; Minuchin, 1974). Most research on triangulation and adjustment has focused on adolescents and young adults. However, a few studies support the relationship between triangulation and maladjustment even for younger children. For example, Kerig (1995) found that 6 to 10 year old children from intact families who experienced triangulation were rated by mothers as having more behaviour problems. In addition, triangulated children showed more negative affect towards their family than children who were not triangulated. Gerard, Buehler, Frank, and Anderson's (2005) results suggest that mothers' and fathers' reports of triangulation were linked to externalizing and internalizing problems among 10 to 14 year old children. Similarly, in a sample of sixth graders Frank and Buehler (2007) found that youth perceived triangulation was related to internalizing problems. In addition, triangulation mediated the association between marital conflict and youth internalizing difficulties.

Investigations of triangulation and adjustment in adolescent samples relate closely to findings demonstrated in younger samples. For example, Grych, Raynor, and Fosco (2004) found that adolescents who scored higher on a self-report triangulation scale reported more internalizing and externalizing problems than adolescents reporting lower triangulation levels. As in the case of Frank and Buehler's (2007) results, triangulation was a mediator for parental conflict and adjustment difficulties. Adolescents with divorced parents may be at particular risk for triangulation due to heightened parental conflict before, during, and after the divorce process. Studies focusing on adolescents with divorced parents demonstrated that triangulation, or feeling caught in the middle, was related to adolescents' level of depression, anxiety (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbush, 1991) and externalizing behaviour (Hetherington, 1999). Overall, irrespective of family structure, adolescents who experience triangulation are more vulnerable to feelings of anxiety and depression as well as engaging in some externalizing behaviours. Feelings of triangulation seem to mediate the relationship between parental conflict and adjustment.

Recently, researchers have turned their attention to studying triangulation processes and adjustment in young adulthood. As in adolescence, triangulation is consistently linked to adjustment difficulties, including heightened anxiety during young adulthood (Afifi, 2007; Jacobvitz & Bush, 1996). In addition, young adults who report triangulation typically indicate distant relationships with their parents and low levels of family satisfaction (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003). Triangulation was again found to be a mediator between parental conflict and adjustment, including family satisfaction (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003). Unique to young adulthood, triangulation has been implicated in intimacy

and relationship difficulties among young adults. For example, West, Zarski, and Harvill (1986) reported that triangulation and cross-generational coalitions among young adult families were related to problems with intimacy in young adult's romantic relationships. Extending on this finding, Benson, Larson, and Wilson (1993) found that young adults who reported triangulation in their families of origin were more likely to use aversive communication styles, such as frequent arguments/shouting matches, nagging, sulking, and having hurt feelings, in their own romantic relationships. Thus, despite young adults in these studies often having moved out of their parents' home and thus being less exposed to parental conflict on a daily basis, feelings of triangulation between parents extend to young adulthood and are related to adjustment and relationship difficulties. Overall, these robust empirical findings support family systems theory to reveal a link between triangulation and adjustment problems for children, adolescents, and young adults.

Boundary Diffusion in Divorced Single Parent Families

Parentification.

Parentification has been widely discussed within the context of divorce as a parenting behaviour that places children at risk for poor outcomes; however, careful empirical examinations of boundary diffusions following divorce remain limited. Clinicians have noted that the upheaval of a marital separation and the custodial parent's loss of the practical and emotional support previously provided by the spouse creates a context in which children can be more easily drawn into adult-like roles. For example, children already distressed by the family break-up may be reinforced with much needed attention from their custodial parent for listening patiently to adult concerns about the

marriage and separation. Thus, factors associated with the process of divorce, such as financial stresses, the loss of one parent's day-to-day support to the other spouse, and parental distress, all contribute to the susceptibility of that parent turning to the child for emotional and instrumental support. Early investigations reported that children in single-parent families assumed an increased number of practical responsibilities than those living in two-parent families (Dawson, 1980). Indeed, using case studies, Weiss (1979) was one of the first to document that traditional parent-child roles differed in divorced and intact homes, with the former demonstrating less of a hierarchical structure than the latter. Single parenting mothers were more likely to relate to their children as "junior partners" of the household, than mothers in two-parent families.

A handful of studies exist which specifically elucidate the psychosocial implications of boundary diffusions commonly found in the context of divorced families. For example, studying high-conflict couples involved in custody and access disputes two years after separation, Johnston, Gonzales, and Campbell (1987) observed a high frequency of boundary diffusion in these families, which had some negative, but also some positive implications for children aged 4 to 12. For example, role reversal (parentification) with the father was related to the child being withdrawn and uncommunicative whereas role reversal with the mother was related to less withdrawn and more communicative behaviour on the part of the child. In a related study, Johnston (1990) documented that role reversal (parentification) was not related to either interpersonal competence or general behaviour problems for children who experienced their parents' separation one to two years previously. However, role-reversal did predict a more "Responsible/Controlling of Others" style and greater "Emotionally Constricted"

style. Thus, children who were rated by clinicians to experience parentification were more likely to be seen as being controlling (or bossy) towards others, acting precociously and pseudo-adultlike, and demonstrating a more limited range of emotions. Unlike in Johnston et al.'s, (1987) study, Johnston (1990) did not differentiate whether children experienced role reversal from the mother's or father's side. Overall, these results lend support to the notion that boundary diffusions among divorced families may be linked to child adjustment, albeit not uniformly negative adjustment, when measured one to two years following parental separation.

More recently, in a 25 year longitudinal study Hetherington (1999) reported that irrespective of level of conflict, adolescents in divorced families were assigned more instrumental tasks than adolescents from intact families. For girls, emotional parentification was reported highest in divorced families with high levels of conflict, followed by intact families with high levels of conflict, and then followed by divorced families with low levels of conflict. Emotional parentification was lowest for girls from intact families with low levels of conflict. Boys from divorced families experienced more emotional parentification than boys from intact families irrespective of level of conflict. In terms of psychosocial adjustment, exposure to high levels of both instrumental and emotional parentification was associated with depressed or anxious internalizing in daughters but not sons. However, mother's emotional parentification was also associated with greater social responsibility during young adulthood for both sons and daughters, whereas father's emotional parentification was not linked to adjustment in daughters, but was related to son's depression. Emotionally parentifying mothers often described feeling particularly close to their sons and daughters, however, this was not the case for

emotionally parentifying fathers (Hetherington, 1999). These results highlight that the association between adolescent parentification and adjustment is complex and warrants careful consideration of numerous contextual variables, such as family structure, gender, and level of conflict.

In a sample of undergraduates, Jurkovic, Thirkield, and Morrell (2001) provided additional evidence that emotional caregiving in the past was more prevalent for participants from divorced families than those raised by married parents. In addition, perceptions of “unfairness” related to this emotional caregiving (e.g., “I gave more than I received”) were higher among students from divorced homes. No differences were noted for instrumental caregiving. Interestingly, current emotional caregiving did not differ between the groups, meaning that participants from divorced and intact families reported providing similar amounts of emotional care to their parents as young adults. These results suggest that although young adults from divorced background recollect providing more emotional care to their parents while growing up, by the time they reach adulthood, levels of emotional caregiving do not differ between young adults from divorced versus intact homes.

Adding to the literature on boundary diffusion and adjustment, Rosenberg and Guttman (2001) investigated structural boundaries in 60 married and 58 divorced families in Israel. Families who had 1 to 4 children who were between the ages of 8 and 18 were recruited, and in divorced families, the mother was the sole custodial parent and was not remarried or living in a common-law relationship. The majority of divorced families had been separated for over six years. Results suggested that children and mothers from divorced homes viewed their family subsystems to be less hierarchically

structured than children and parents in married families. However, neither mothers' nor children's perceptions of their family boundaries were related to emotional, social, and/or academic functioning of the child. On the contrary, Arditti (1999) provided preliminary evidence that boundary diffusion and role shifts may be beneficial for single parent families. In-depth interviews of 58 university students who had experienced parental divorce revealed that male and female young adult children viewed the shifts in family boundaries as positive changes in their parent-child dynamics. The participants frequently described their relationships with their mothers as close and mutually satisfying. Mothers tended to be characterized as "best friends," depending on the extent to which the adult child and mother had relied on each emotionally. Arditti (1999) argued that this was mostly a positive experience for the participants: "... mothers leaning on children for emotional support contributed to a sense of equality, being needed, closeness, shared disclosure, and friend status. These qualities appeared to be valued by the young adults in the study" (p. 116).

When considered together the results of these studies allow tentative conclusions about boundary diffusion (especially parentification), adjustment, and family structure. As theorists and clinicians suspected, it indeed does appear that parentification of children and adolescents occurs more frequently in divorced families than in intact families. Particularly, in single-parent families, the family structure demonstrates less traditional hierarchy between parents and children as is in the case in two-parent households. However, at this point, the research is mixed as to what the psychosocial implications are of these more egalitarian family structures for children. Research results

are inconsistent as to whether parentification has beneficial, detrimental, or no effect on children's adjustment.

Methodological issues may be contributing to the confusion concerning the implications of parentification for children. Most importantly, definitions of boundary diffusion and approaches to measuring this construct differ across studies. At the most general level, the summarized research assesses situations in which children provide care to the parent; however, the nature of the care as well as the specific aspects of this care that could make it unhealthy vary across conceptualizations. Second, some researchers treat participants from divorced families as a homogenous group, not duly recognizing the complicated family structure of participants with divorced parents. For example, a participant who experienced parental divorce at an early age, followed by a parental remarriage, may have experiences which are much more similar to a participant who never experienced parental divorce versus a participant who grew up in a divorced single-parent home. In order to understand more completely the effects of parentification for different family structures, care should be exercised to only include participants who had relatively comparable experiences in a group.

Overall, however, empirical results do not point to overwhelmingly negative effects of parentification in a divorced single parent family home as was initially expected (e.g., Hetherington, 1999). This finding sparks curiosity as to potential reasons of why this parent-child dynamic traditionally assumed to be dysfunctional may be less harmful than expected in single parent families. Perhaps when these dynamics occur following divorce, they may represent a more time-limited, adjustment period rather than a permanent shift between parent and child. Jurkovic et al.'s (2001) results preliminarily

support this notion, suggesting that young adults from divorced backgrounds do not endorse higher current levels of emotional caregiving than young adults from nondivorced backgrounds. Others suggest that even if higher levels of emotional caregiving persist and parents and children do not return to more boundaried roles after the initial adjustment phase, parental role shifts may be interpreted qualitatively differently by parents and children in a single parent family context (Arditti, 1999). For example, Guttman (1993) emphasizes the importance of conceptualizing households headed by divorced mothers as a structural system with its “own authority structure, norms, processes of conflict management and boundary maintenance, patterns of exchange and reciprocity, and decision making rules” (p. 90). Given that any effects of parentification are strongly influenced by context and cultural norms, it may not be appropriate to expect parentification to have the same implications in a divorced single parent family as in an intact family.

Triangulation.

Similar to the parentification literature, the most detailed discussion of triangulation following divorce is found in the clinical literature (Johnston & Campbell, 1988; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). These authors discuss the difficulties of children who feel allegiance to both parents and try to maintain fair relationships with both of them. Yet, these children fear the consequences of being “loyal” to both parents due to their disapproval and conflict with each other. In recent years, a number of investigators have begun to investigate triangulation, particularly feelings of being “caught in the middle” among children from divorced homes. For example, Hetherington (1999) documented in her longitudinal study that adolescents who were caught in their parents’ unresolved

disputes or felt torn between parents were more likely to engage in externalizing behaviours than adolescents who were not involved in parents' disputes. Likewise, Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbush (1991) interviewed adolescents, aged 10 -18 by telephone 4.5 years after their parents' separation. Results indicated that interparental conflict following divorce was related to feeling caught between parents. Feeling caught between parents, in turn, was related to adolescents' problems with depression, anxiety, and deviant behaviour. Residence only marginally related to feeling caught between parents, with father-resident adolescents feeling most caught and dual-resident adolescents feeling less caught. Also, unexpectedly, maintaining high contact with both mothers and fathers did not contribute to feelings of triangulation.

Afifi and Schrodtt (2003) conducted a large-scale study including 207 adolescents (ages 12-18) and 394 young adults (ages 19-22) investigating feelings of being caught in divorced and non-divorced homes. Despite a decline in exposure to parental discord, the authors argued that feelings of being torn between parents may extend into young adulthood. Particularly for participants from divorced homes, parents may be especially likely to disclose sensitive information to children (about former spouses or marriages) after they reach adulthood. In fact, participants from divorced homes were more likely to report feelings of being torn than participants from intact homes (Afifi & Schrodtt, 2003). Among young adults from divorced families, feelings of being caught in the middle were rather common in this sample.

Examining a slightly older sample of randomly selected adults, 19-37 years, Amato and Afifi (2006) documented that adult children with divorced parents were no more likely than adult children with continuously married parents in low-conflict

relationships to report feeling caught. Adult children with parents in high-conflict marriages were the most likely group to feel caught. Results suggest that high-conflict marriage, and not parental divorce, is the primary predictor of adult children's feelings of triangulation. In this particular sample, time since the divorce was a good predictor for feelings of being caught. When parents had divorced between six and ten years ago, participants scored 0.8 standard deviations above the mean, whereas when parents divorced more than 10 years ago, the mean for these adult children were comparable to the mean of the overall sample. Interestingly, level of postdivorce conflict and frequency of recent contact with both parents did not influence the degree of being caught in this sample. It seems that as time passes since the divorce and as children reach adulthood, feelings of triangulation for children with divorced parents diminish considerably whereas this is not necessarily the case for adult children with high-conflict married parents.

In summary, triangulation or feelings of being caught are a relatively common phenomenon for children whose parents have recently divorced and continue to experience interparental conflict. These feelings of triangulation have been consistently linked to negative outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, general mental health symptoms, relationship difficulties, and lower family satisfaction among adolescents and adults. Children with married parents in high-conflict relationships are also particularly vulnerable to triangulation and similar psychological outcomes. Assuming marital conflict continues, children from these families continue to be at a heightened risk for triangulation well into their adulthood years whereas this is not necessarily the case for adult children with divorced parents.

The Role of Gender and Boundary Diffusion

There is a need carefully to examine gender differences that emerge with respect to the gender of the parent seeking support or engaging in triangulation and the gender of the child who is relied upon (Peris & Emery, 2005). With regard to parent's gender, most studies have focused on the mother-child relationships (e.g., Arditto, 1999; Jurkovic et al., 2001; Koerner et al., 2002; 2004; Sroufe & Ward, 1980) and there are little data available on the extent to which fathers rely on children. This bias may reflect a belief that fathers are overall less inclined to confide in their children than mothers, as well as a general underrepresentation of fathers in studies of parent-child relations. Interestingly, research that has included both parents suggests that mothers engage in more emotional parentification of their children than fathers, whereas rates of instrumental parentification are similar for mothers and fathers (Hetherington, 1999). However, in those situations where fathers do rely on their children emotionally, children typically respond more poorly to fathers' emotional distress than to mothers' (Hetherington, 1999; Johnston, Gonzalez, & Campbell, 1987). Hetherington and Kelly (2002) explained this finding by highlighting the gender-atypical nature of male displays of vulnerability, which may add to particular feelings of distress for children. Overall, however, very little is known about the extent to which fathers contribute to feelings of parentification of children nor the implications of this father-child dynamic.

Compared to boys, most research indicates that girls are more often the targets of emotional parentification and triangulation by both mothers and fathers (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Bell, Bell, & Nakata, 2001; Buchanan et al., 1991; Goglia et al., 1992; Hetherington, 1999; Vuchnich, Emery, & Cassidy; 1988). Girls, overall, also seem to be

more sensitive to parental distress and display more empathic behaviour in response to lower levels of parental distress than boys (Radke-Yarrow et al., 1994). Some have speculated that cultural expectations and socialization reinforces nurturance and caregiving among girls which, in turn, increases the likelihood that girls will be pulled into or step into caretaking roles in the family (Brody, 1996; Kerig, 1999; Goglia et al., 1992).

However, a number of researchers have not found gender differences for levels of experienced boundary diffusion (Jurkovic et al., 2001; Johnston, 1990; Koerner et al., 2004). For example, Koerner et al. (2004) examined 145 mother-daughter dyads and 110 mother-son dyads and found that adolescent sons and daughters were exposed to similar frequencies and details of maternal disclosures during the first two years after their parents' divorces. Furthermore, using retrospective reports, male and female young adults did not report differences in terms of emotional or instrumental parentification, at present or while growing up (Jurkovic et al. 2001). Some preliminary evidence suggests that the nuances of parentification may take on slightly different forms depending on the child's gender. For example, Heister (1995), as reported in Kerig (2005), reported that maritally distressed mothers were more likely to engage in peer-or-spouse-like relationships with their sons and to parentify their daughters. Sons may be more frequently asked to explicitly fill the void the father left by "taking care" or "protecting" the mother and generally taking over their fathers' duties, whereas daughters may be more likely fill the role of being "mom's best friend." Regarding triangulation, Bell et al. (2001) reported that boys were more likely to be involved in triangulation by being scapegoated whereas girls were more likely to act as mediators.

Very little research exists evaluating whether the implications of boundary diffusion are similar or different for boys and girls. Hetherington's (1999) results indicated that high levels of parentification were associated with depressed and anxious internalizing in daughters, but not sons. However, high emotional parentification by mothers was related to greater social responsibility among girls and boys in young adulthood. In addition, Koerner et al. (2004) did not find that gender moderated the association between emotional parentification and adolescent adjustment difficulties. Her results suggested that neither males nor females were more vulnerable when exposed to frequent and detailed maternal disclosures.

Overall, it remains unclear what role gender plays in the manifestation and implications of boundary diffusions. Certainly results indicate that not only mothers and daughters are involved in these family dynamics. Given the frequency with which fathers (and sons) are excluded from research examining boundary diffusions (e.g., Jacobvitz & Bush, 1996; Koerner et al., 2002; Mayseless & Scharf, 2009), these results highlight the need to include fathers and sons in future examinations of boundary diffusion.

Individuation in the Context of Boundary Diffusion

Development of autonomy and psychological individuation represents a key developmental task for older adolescents and young adults (Bowen 1976; Erikson, 1968). During this time period, older adolescents are faced with finding a balance between separation-individuation and connectedness to the family of origin (Bartle, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 1989). Individuation may be described as a process in which adolescents increase the psychological distinctness between themselves and their parents (Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985). Ultimately the adolescent is faced with reworking their ties to the family

of origin and finding a “separate yet connected self” (Allison & Sabatelli, 1988). Thus, psychological individuation from parents is a process through which the ability to act autonomously is developed while being able to remain emotionally connected to parents (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1990). Evidence of successful mastery of individuation includes reaching a position where older adolescents and young adults do not feel guilty about their parents and do not continue to judge themselves according to their parents’ standards (Jersild, 1957). Simply the fact that the older adolescent has physically separated themselves from the parents’ home, (e.g., moved out of the home to attend university) is not necessarily an indication that the individuation process has occurred as the older adolescent and young adult may still be psychologically tied to the family by a high degree of emotional reactivity (Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985). On the contrary, some adolescents who prematurely cut themselves off from their families (physically separate) may show particularly low levels of psychological individuation as they may continue to be preoccupied with the struggle of separateness from their family (Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985). The older adolescent’s psychological individuation is reflected, in part, by the extent to which the adolescent is emotionally fused and reactive to their parents (Bowen, 1978). For example, experiencing consistently high emotional reactivity, such as frequently becoming overly emotional in a disagreement with parents, may suggest that the young adult continues to struggle with negotiating healthy separateness and connectedness to his or her parents. Finally, successful psychological individuation means the ability to exercise a greater degree of psychological autonomy in relationship with one’s parents (Bartle, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 1989).

The relative success of adolescent's psychological individuation from parents has been hypothesized to be related to adolescent personal adjustment (Allison & Sabatelli, 1988). In fact, research has consistently demonstrated that adolescents who show age-appropriate levels of individuation score high on a variety of measures related to psychological well-being (e.g., Hoffman, 1984; Hoffman & Weiss, 1987; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Levine, Gree, & Millon, 1986). For example, in a sample of undergraduates Mattanah et al., (2004) found that the separation-individuation construct explained half of the variance for personal adjustment for women and men and approximately a quarter of the variance for academic and social adjustment. In addition, Fleming and Anderson (1986) documented that adolescents' perceptions of fusion with parents were related to lower self-esteem and mastery, poorer health and college adjustment. Consistent with previous research results, Gavazzi and Sabatelli (1990) found that psychological dependence was associated with less psychological maturity, whereas Harvey, Curry, and Bray (1991) reported higher levels of individuation from parents to be related to psychological health. Similarly, Lopez, Campbell and Watkins (1986, 1989) documented that indices of psychological separation, particularly conflictual independence (e.g., freedom from feelings of anger, guilt, or mistrust of parents) were negatively related to depression scores in a college population. Overall, a significant positive relationship between parent-older adolescent individuation and older adolescent and young adult psychosocial well-being has been consistently shown across a number of studies.

Minuchin (1974) emphasized the importance of providing a family context in which children and adolescents can accomplish the dual goals of developing a sense of

self and sense of belonging. Family systems theorists argue that adolescents' individuation is influenced primarily by family patterns of interaction, particularly between parents and children. Certainly some family patterns may be more conducive to encouraging and supporting the older adolescent in their process of individuation whereas other patterns might impede or hinder older adolescent's and young adult's individuation attempts. For example, a parent who offers a mixture of consistent, emotional involvement, and age-appropriate encouragement towards autonomy will likely facilitate the psychological individuation process (Behrens & Blatt, 1985). More generally, the family's strategy for delineating its boundaries and managing its emotional climate are likely tied to the development of older adolescent individuation (Crespi & Sabatelli, 1997).

Theorists have described how overall family level of differentiation may be related to adolescent individuation (Bartle, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 1989; Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985). "Well-differentiated families" are families which are marked by developmentally appropriate autonomy for individual members and in which members maintain mutual respect and intimacy. Poorly differentiated families are characterized by interpersonal boundaries that are regulated by two extremes- either encouraging separateness without intimacy (disengagement) or demanding closeness without a separate sense of identity (enmeshment) (Allison & Sabatelli, 1988; Sabatelli & Anderson, 1991). It is argued that in poorly differentiated families, older adolescents' attempts to individuate are thwarted as individuation efforts are viewed as threats to the system's stability (Allison & Sabatelli, 1988). In poorly differentiated families, family

members fear separation and will dread letting go of another due to fears of loneliness and emptiness (Wechter, 1983).

Similarly, older adolescents and young adults who experience parentification and/or triangulation may also face less than ideal family dynamics to successfully navigate the individuation process in an age-appropriate fashion (Jurkovic, 1997). Frequently, over time, these families have assigned or delegated identities to these children that serve the sometimes dysfunctional needs of the family system, and thus may discourage the expression of individuality. This may cause resentment, anger, and guilt in the adolescents' relationship with their parents. In addition to being assigned a certain role by the family, some adolescents who serve the emotional and instrumental needs of their family may internalize their role as the "glue" that holds the family together. Parentified and triangulated young adult children may feel responsible for the well-being of their parents and family, thus, may feel anxieties and guilt about psychologically separating from their parents and family. Such adolescents and young adults are easily made to feel guilty if they pursue their own interests, and they are driven by feelings of loyalty and obligation to their parents and family (Crespi & Sabatelli, 1997). Over time, these feelings may turn into resentment and anger towards parents. Overall, parentification and triangulation during late adolescence and young adulthood may require the older adolescent/young adult to remain emotionally over-involved with the family. These demands are incompatible with psychological separation and extra-family pursuits needed for individuation purposes (Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1989).

Despite cogent theoretical arguments linking family system properties and older adolescent's psychological individuation from parents, only very few studies exist

examining this association specifically. For example, Bartle, Anderson, and Sabatelli (1989) documented that for undergraduate females an authoritative style of mothering was related to higher levels of individuation. Similarly, Gavazzi and Sabatelli (1990) reported higher levels of parental intrusiveness to be related to higher levels of psychological interconnectedness for both undergraduate males and females. In other words, the perception of parental intrusiveness was accompanied by feelings of loyalty to the family at the expense of personal autonomy, and a greater degree of guilt in response to family disapproval. Most recently, studying a sample of adolescent girls in Israel, Mayseless and Scharf (2009) found inadequate parent-child boundaries to be related to girls' low individuation from their parents. Finally, Mattanah et al.'s (2004) results indicate a relationship between attachment to parents and adolescent individuation. In fact, individuation fully mediated the association between attachment and adjustment. This result provides preliminary evidence that individuation processes may be the underlying mechanism of the relationship between some family system properties and adjustment in older adolescents and young adulthood.

Gaps in Existing Literature

In the past most information concerning boundary violations between parents and children was derived from clinical and case study work. As Fish, Belsky, and Youngblade (1991) pointed out, empirical investigations of boundary issues were limited especially in non-clinical populations. Reasons for this include difficulties with precise conceptualization of complex family systems constructs and a limited number of validated measures. However, encouraging progress has been made in operationalizing and measuring constructs, such as parentification and triangulation in the last decade,

resulting in studies elucidating the relationships among boundary diffusion and psychosocial adjustment for older adolescents and young adults. Nonetheless, important gaps continue to remain which future research needs to address.

Empirical investigations demonstrate a consistent link between feelings of triangulation and negative outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, for children across the developmental lifespan. Particularly, children from divorced homes have been identified as being especially vulnerable to feelings of triangulation due to the nature of the divorce process. Thus, most research efforts have concentrated on understanding the “caught in the middle” phenomena for children with divorced parents (e.g., Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbush, 1991) with relatively less emphasis placed on studying this construct in intact families. However, preliminary evidence exists that particularly older adolescents and adult children who were raised in conflictual intact homes may be at a heightened risk for triangulation, perhaps even more so, than older adolescents and adult children with divorced parents, particularly in cases where six or more years have passed since parental divorce (Amato & Afifi, 2006).

Whether triangulation processes are experienced similarly by young adults from divorced versus intact homes remains to be explored. Perhaps the consequences of triangulation are most salient for young adults from intact homes who have witnessed frequent marital disharmony and experienced direct triangulation between parents over a prolonged and continuous basis. Having lived with both parents and being triangulated might make this family dynamic particularly difficult for these older adolescents and young adults to manage. Perhaps older adolescents and young adults whose parents divorced in childhood might have an advantage to the extent that their triangulation

experience may be less short-lived or may not be experienced as intense and/or continuous because of the relative absence of at least one fighting parent. The most vulnerable population to triangulation are likely younger children who are going between divorced parents' homes (with high conflict) on a regular basis and are being used as messengers.

Somewhat inconsistent findings have been documented for the association between parentification and adjustment. Under certain circumstances, parentification is linked to a variety of negative outcomes (anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties; Kerig, 2005; Hetherington, 1999, Valleau et al., 1995), however, under other circumstances, parentification may be linked to positive outcomes (increased social responsibility; Hetherington, 1999). Empirically, little attention has been paid to delineating what factors or contextual variables contribute to adaptive parentification versus destructive parentification. Research has shown that even under very difficult circumstances, such as a mother having HIV who leans heavily on the child for emotional and instrumental support, over time older adolescents and young adults may react positively to parentification (Stein, Rotheram-Borus, & Lester, 2007). Surprisingly little work has been conducted on examining parentification processes and its impact on older adolescents' and young adults' adjustment in the context of divorced single parent households, considering the prevalence of this family dynamic in these households. Given that the structural systems, including norms and rules, of divorced single parent families are different (Guttman, 1993), parentification may be experienced and interpreted differently by adolescents and young adults raised in these homes. It is unknown whether parentification experienced in two-parent family homes is comparable

to parentification experienced in divorced single parent family homes. Initial evidence suggests that this may not be the case (Arditti, 1999).

More research is needed to explain the role that gender plays in the manifestation and implications of boundary diffusions. It appears that mothers may be more frequently implicated in showing diffuse boundaries with their children (Hetherington, 1999), however, implications may be more far reaching when fathers are engaged in this kind of behaviour (Johnston, Gonzalez, & Campbell, 1987; Hetherington, 1999). Also, girls seem to be more involved and sensitive to parentification and/or triangulation (e.g., Buchanan et al., 1991; Goglia et al., 1992, Hetherington, 1999), however, boys are by no means immune to being drawn into these kinds of family dynamics (e.g., Jurkovic et al., 2001; Koerner et al., 2004). Certainly, existing research suggests intriguing gender effects that future research should explore.

There is also a gap in the empirical literature investigating the underlying mechanisms of how and why boundary diffusion, such as parentification and triangulation, are associated with psychosocial and relationship adjustment. Theoretical descriptions have suggested that these family dynamics might inhibit or impede individuation from parents in older adolescents and young adults. It is unclear whether parentification and/or triangulation are in fact related to older adolescent psychological individuation. Although a recent study (Mayseless & Scharf, 2009) provided preliminary evidence that this is indeed the case, at least for girls. It also unknown whether inhibited psychological individuation processes from parents explain the link between boundary diffusion and psychosocial adjustment. More research is needed to identify contextual

factors to explain how, why, and under what contexts boundary diffusion is associated to psychological individuation and/or late adolescent adjustment.

Rationale for Current Study

Family systems theory argues that hierarchically organized subsystems demonstrating clear boundaries among each other are important for optimal family members' development (Minuchin, 1974). Adolescents whose families do not demonstrate clear generational hierarchies and/or develop diffuse boundaries are at risk for being involved in potentially unhealthy roles, such as parentification or triangulation. Indeed, family dynamics, such as parentification and triangulation, have been linked to a variety of negative outcomes for adolescents and young adults, particularly problems with anxiety, depression, and relational adjustment (e.g., Buchanan et al., 1991; Hetherington, 1999; Jacobvitz & Bush, 1996). However, the mechanisms underlying these relations are empirically unexplored.

A major task for older adolescents and young adults includes the development of autonomy and psychological individuation from their parents and families of origin (Bowen, 1976; Erikson, 1968). Older adolescents and young adults have to face the task of finding a balance between separation-individuation and connectedness to their family. The relative success of adolescents' achievement to find this balance has been hypothesized to be related to adolescent personal adjustment (Allison & Sabatelli, 1998). Indeed research consistently demonstrates that age-appropriate individuation from parents among older adolescents and young adults is linked to psychological well-being (e.g., Hoffman, 1984; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989).

Older adolescents and young adults who experienced parentification and/or triangulation may face particular challenges with healthy individuation. Being parentified and/or triangulated may require the older adolescent or young adult to remain emotionally over-involved with the family, limiting opportunities for psychological separation and extra-family pursuits needed to support the individuation process (Jurkovic, 1997; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1989), and in turn contributing to feelings of resentment toward parents. Thus, family dynamics, such as parentification and triangulation may impede or inhibit adolescents' attempts to individuate from their parents. Difficulties with healthy individuation may in turn be related to personal adjustment difficulties, such as anxiety, depression, and relationship difficulties. Hence, inhibited healthy psychological individuation from parents among older adolescents and young adults may be one factor to help explain the relationship between parentification and/or triangulation and adjustment. Indeed individuation has been documented to be a mediator for other family system properties, specifically parent-child attachment, and adjustment in late adolescents and young adulthood (Mattanah et al., 2004).

However, diffusion of family boundaries is not universally linked to negative outcomes for late adolescents and young adults. For example, experiences of parentification have been associated with increased sensitivity, good capacity for intimate relationships (Barnard & Spoentgen, 1987; Hetherington, 1999), and flexibility among young adults (Chase 1999). Under certain circumstances children and adolescents may benefit from adult-type responsibilities. Jurkovic (1997) suggested that consequences of parentification vary depending on cultural norms and contextual factors. For example, parentification may be less problematic if it is of moderate intensity, time-limited, or if

parentification occurs in a more prolonged context, normative for the cultural context and/or recognized and supported by others in the community (Jurkovic, 1997).

Parentification is a common phenomenon in divorced single parent families (Jurkovic et al., 2001). The experience of growing up in a single parent home is qualitatively different from growing up in a two-parent home. Households headed by one parent will differ in terms of their structural system and develop their “own authority structure, norms, processes of conflict management and boundary maintenance, patterns of exchange and reciprocity, and decision making rules” (Guttman, 1993, p. 90). Parentification in divorced, single parent homes may be differently experienced and interpreted by adolescents and others in the community than parentification occurring in two-parent married homes. Developmentally speaking, older adolescents and young adults are in an ideal position to reflect on the meaning of such role shifts with their parents following divorce. This research will explore how the experiences and implications of boundary diffusions during adolescence may vary across family structures, specifically for young adults who grew up in two-parent, continuously married families and for young adults who adolcesced in divorced single parent families.

Finally, it remains unclear what role gender plays in the manifestation and implications of boundary diffusions, individuation, and adjustment. Frequently fathers (and at times sons) have not been included in research studies. However, investigations that have addressed fathers and sons demonstrate that males are also involved and affected by these family dynamics (Hetherington, 1999). The current study will collect data from sons as well as include a balance of questions addressing both mother and

father involvement in boundary diffusion. Hopefully this line of approach will help in shedding more light on the role that gender dynamics may play.

Current Study: Hypotheses and Lines of Investigation

This study investigated the relations among family boundary diffusion experienced during adolescence, current psychological individuation, and current adjustment (general and relationship-specific) from the perspective of older adolescents and young adults. The roles that gender and family structure play within these relations were explored. For the purposes of this study, three indicators were used to assess the construct of family boundary diffusion: young adults' retrospective report of 1) *triangulation*, 2) *parentification by mother*, and 3) *parentification by father* during their adolescent years (ages 14 to 17). Psychological individuation was captured by measures assessing current *nonconflictual independence* and *psychological over-connectedness*, answered once in relation to mothers and once in relation to fathers. Nonconflictual independence is defined as a relationship free from anger and resentment whereas psychological over-connectedness refers to excessive emotional dependence of the adult child on the parent. Thus, high levels of individuation are indicated by high nonconflictual independence and low psychological over-connectedness to parents. Psychological adjustment was evaluated with measures assessing current general adjustment (*positive* and *negative adjustment*) and relationship-specific adjustment (*relational depression*, *relational anxiety*, and *relational esteem*).

Theory and previous research informed the following hypotheses:

Family structure and boundary diffusion.***Hypothesis 1.***

Family boundary diffusion was predicted to be more commonly reported by young adults who experienced parental divorce than by young adults with married parents. Specifically, it was expected that retroactive reports of triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father would be more prevalent among young adults who have experienced parental divorce than those who have not.

Lines of Investigation.

The role that gender plays in the prevalence of boundary diffusion was explored. Previous research has obtained inconsistent results regarding whether girls or boys may be more likely the target of boundary diffusions, thus no a-priori hypothesis regarding gender was formed.

Family boundary diffusion and adjustment.***Hypothesis 2.***

It was expected that retroactive reports of family boundary diffusion would be related to higher levels of current negative adjustment and lower levels of current positive adjustment outcomes. Specifically, it was expected that triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father would each be positively correlated with negative adjustment, relational depression, and relational anxiety, and negatively correlated with positive adjustment, and relational esteem. Overall, as a variable set, triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father were predicted to be related to the set of adjustment variables. Common and unique aspects among the different boundary diffusion elements for predicting adjustment were examined.

Lines of Investigation.

The role that gender and family structure play in the aforementioned relationships was explored. That is, it was investigated to what extent family boundaries are related similarly or differently to adjustment in men and women with divorced and married parents. It was anticipated that some differences exist. For example, it was expected that parentification would be linked to more maladjustment among young adults with married parents than among young adults with divorced parents.

Family boundary diffusion and psychological individuation.

Hypothesis 3.

It is expected that retroactive reports of family boundary diffusion during adolescence would be related to lower levels of current psychological individuation. Specifically, it was anticipated that higher levels of triangulation would be related to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from both mother and father (e.g., lower freedom of anger and resentment towards mother/father) and higher levels of psychological over-connectedness to both mother and father (e.g., high feelings of guilt and obligation towards mother/father). Young persons' reports of parentification by mother were anticipated to be related to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from mother and higher psychological over-connectedness to mother. Parentification by father was anticipated to be related to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from father and higher psychological over-connectedness to father. Overall, as a variable set, triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father was predicted to be related to the set of psychological individuation variables, consisting of nonconflictual independence from mother and father and psychological over-connectedness to mother

and father. Common and unique aspects among the different boundary diffusions for predicting psychological individuation were examined.

Lines of Investigation.

The role of gender and family structure in the aforementioned relations were explored. That is, it was investigated to what extent family boundaries were related similarly or differently to psychological individuation in men and women with divorced and married parents.

Psychological individuation and adjustment.

Hypothesis 4.

It was expected that lower levels of psychological individuation would be related to higher levels of negative adjustment and lower levels of positive adjustment outcomes. Specifically, it was hypothesized that low nonconflictual independence from both mother and father, and high psychological over-connectedness to both mother and father would both be related to higher negative adjustment, relational depression, and relational anxiety and lower positive adjustment and relational esteem. Overall, as a variable set, nonconflictual independence from both mother and father, and psychological over-connectedness to both mothers and fathers were predicted to be related to the set of adjustment variables. Common and unique aspects among the psychological individuation variables for predicting adjustment were also examined.

Lines of Investigation.

The role that gender and family structure play in the aforementioned relationships was explored. That is, it was investigated to what extent psychological individuation was

related similarly or differently to adjustment in men and women with divorced and married parents.

Family boundary diffusion, psychological individuation, and adjustment.

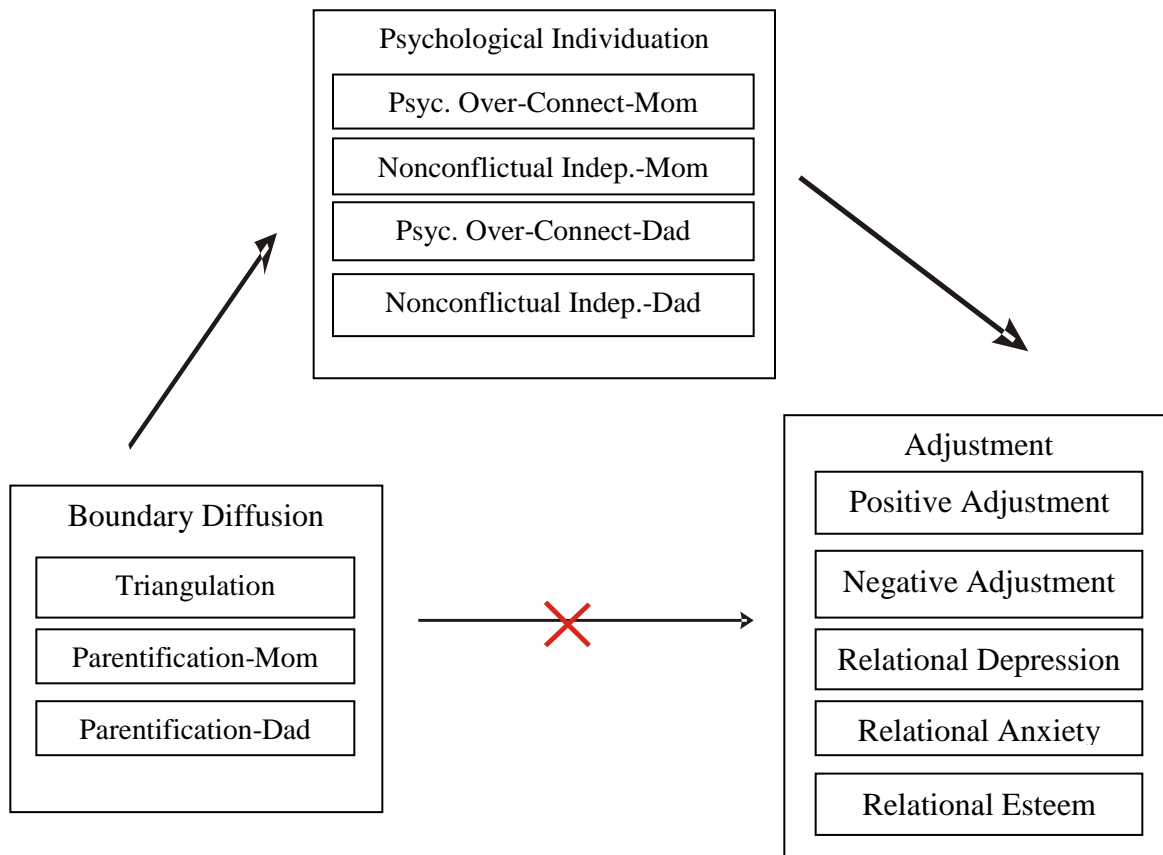
Hypothesis 5.

It was expected that psychological individuation (measured by nonconflictual independence from mother and father, and psychological over-connectedness to mother and father) would mediate the relationship between family boundary diffusion (measured by triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father) and adjustment (positive- and negative general adjustment, relational depression, relational anxiety, and relational esteem) (see Figure 1).

Lines of investigation.

It was explored whether this mediational relationship would hold equally for young men and women with married and divorced parents.

Figure 1. Hypothesized Mediating Relation of Psychological Individuation in the Association between Family Boundary Diffusion and Adjustment



Method

Participants

A total of 404 young adults participated in the study. Approximately 70% of the sample was recruited from undergraduate classes at the University of Victoria (UVic) and the remaining 30% of the sample was recruited from the community. In order to achieve relatively homogenous sample sizes across gender and family structure, efforts were made to recruit a total of 100 females and 100 males raised in two-parent, married households as well as a total of 100 females and 100 males raised in divorced single parent households. Unfortunately, recruiting males from divorced parent households proved even more difficult than anticipated and the goal of recruiting 100 young men with divorced parents was not quite met. The final sample included 104 males from two parent married households (of which 81 were recruited from UVic and 22 from the Greater Victoria and Vancouver community), 67 men from divorced parent households (of which 37 were recruited from UVic and 30 from the community), 111 females from two parent married households (of which 77 were recruited from UVic and 34 from the community), and 122 females from divorced parent households (of which 81 were recruited from UVic and 41 from the community).

Given the focus of the study, restrictions were placed on who was eligible to participate. First, participants had to be between the ages of 17 and 22, since this is roughly the age period during which the individuation processes of interest are most salient. However, this criterion was relaxed towards the end of data collection in the hopes of increasing the number of recruited males from divorced parent households. Six young men between the ages of 23 and 25 with divorced parents also participated. All

other participants met the 17 to 22 years age criterion. Second, participants who were included in the “two-parent married household” group were defined as having continuously married parents who live together. Third, a number of inclusion criteria for participants with divorced parents were established to create a relatively homogenous group with similar family background experiences: Participants (1) experienced parental separation/divorce by the age of 14; (2) lived primarily with their mothers; (3) resided in a single parent home during their adolescence, meaning that mothers were not married or had common-law partners when participants were between the ages of 14 and 17; and (4) had continued and regular contact with their fathers.

For the purposes of the study it was important for this group to have experienced parental separation/divorce by the age of 14 since participants were reflecting back to their adolescent years (between the ages of 14 to 17) to report triangulation and parentification experiences. By meeting this eligibility criterion it was ensured that participants were reporting on these experiences after their parents had separated. Also, because most children resided primarily (or at least half of the time) with their mothers following divorce (Statistics Canada, 2006) and in order to keep the group as homogenous as possible, a restriction was applied that adolescent and young adult children were primarily raised by their mothers. Since experiences regarding boundary diffusion in remarried households may appear significantly different from single parent households, the added restriction was put into place that participants were raised in a single parent family household for the time period for which they were reporting on parentification and triangulation (ages 14 to 17). Finally, a key part of this study included

examining the role that fathers play in boundary diffusion; hence, it was important for participants to have regular contact with their fathers.

Description of overall sample.

The 404 participants ranged in ages from 17 to 25 years with a mean age of 19.4 years ($SD = 1.52$). No significant age differences were noted when comparing the four gender-by-family structure groups. The majority (92.1%) were Canadian, with other nationalities such as American ($n = 5$), Chinese ($n = 3$), Taiwanese ($n = 1$), Australian ($n = 3$), South African ($n = 2$), Mexican ($n = 2$), German ($n = 2$), Swedish ($n = 2$), Russian ($n = 3$), Israeli ($n = 3$), and Philippino ($n = 2$) being represented. The majority of respondents (84.6%) identified themselves as Caucasian. The remaining participants reported being Asian (8%), Indo-Canadian (2.5%), Middle Eastern (1%), First Nations (0.7%), Mixed (0.7%), Eastern European (0.7%), Western European (0.5%), Philippino (.5%), Jewish, (0.2%), and African American (0.2%).

The majority of participants endorsed an upper middle class background (58.9%), the next largest groups described a lower middle class background (19.8%), a working class background (16.1%), and lastly, an upper class background (5.2%). Differences were noted in the reported SES status of participants recruited from the community versus participants recruited from UVic ($\chi^2 (5) = 26.66, p < .001$), in that participants recruited from the community endorsed a lower SES background status than participants recruited from UVic. Specifically, a higher percentage of participants recruited from the community reported coming from a working class background than participants recruited from UVic (28.6% of participants from the community versus 10.8% of participants from UVic; $\chi^2 (1) = 13.22, p < .001$). In addition, participants from the community were less

likely to report coming from an upper middle class background than participants recruited from UVic (43.7% of participants from the community versus 65% for UVic students; $\chi^2(1) = 4.31, p < 0.05$).

Participants recruited from the community also differed significantly from participants recruited from UVic in terms of their living arrangements ($\chi^2(7) = 35.77, p < .001$). Most respondents from the community lived with their parents (42%), followed by living with roommates (24.4%), living alone (16%), living with romantic partners (13.4%), or some other living arrangements (4.2%). Participants recruited from UVic were most likely to live with roommates (47.3%), followed by living with their parents (21.3%), living alone (20.9%), living with romantic partner (7.6%), or some other living arrangement (2.9%).

Description of background variables specific to participants from divorced families.

For the 190 participants with divorced parents, age at the time of parental separation ranged from age 0 to 14 with a mean age of 7.80 ($SD = 4.31$). Age of parental divorce ranged from age 0 to 22 with a mean age of 9.23 ($SD = 4.87$). On average, parents divorced just under two years after they had separated. Thirty participants indicated not knowing when their parents officially divorced and therefore were not included in the above mentioned calculation. Consistent with eligibility criteria, 87% of the sample reported living mostly with mothers after parental separation and the remaining 13% reported dividing their time evenly between mothers and fathers. Overall, participants spent on average of 76% of their time with their mothers ($SD = 21.8\%$), an average of 22% of their time with their fathers ($SD = 21\%$), and an average of

2% ($SD = 3.8\%$) with both parents following parental separation. Male and female participants did not differ with respect to time spent with parents after parental separation. Roughly 13% of the sample experienced their mother's remarriage (or common-law relationship) in childhood, which dissolved by the time the participant was 14 years of age. Approximately 7% reported their mother remarrying (or having a common-law relationship) when the participant was older than 17 years of age. Again, no gender differences were noted for these relationships.

Procedure

Following approval of the study by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics board, recruitment of participants from UVic undergraduate classes and the community commenced. Students from psychology undergraduate classes ($n = 262$) were recruited via an internal online posting system and received extra credit in their psychology classes for their participation. Instructors from other disciplines (e.g., computer science, political science, biology etc.) were contacted to seek permission to give a brief participant recruitment talk in their classes. Interested students signed-up by leaving their names and email addresses with the investigator in order to contact them. Fifteen students were recruited in this fashion and received a \$10 gift card for their compensation. Participants from UVic were administered the consent forms and questionnaires in a small group setting. After completing the questions, participants received debriefing summary sheets and they were encouraged to contact the investigator if they had any additional questions about the study.

The remaining 127 participants were recruited from the community. All university students who participated in the study were asked to share a flier advertising the study

with a friend who is not attending university. Across Victoria, Vancouver, and the Lower Mainland, fliers and posters were distributed at various locations, such as coffee shops, restaurants, cinemas, recreation centers, where older adolescents and young adults tend to spend their time (see Appendix 1 for sample poster). Internet sites listing volunteer opportunities, including Craigslist, UsedVictoria, Kijiji were also used to advertise the study. Finally, a Facebook interest group was formed to recruit young adults into the study. Everybody who participated was encouraged to share the recruitment information with their friends. Interested volunteers were asked to contact the investigator by email or telephone to receive more information about the study. Community participants were screened by phone to ensure they met eligibility criteria and to personally inform them about the risks and benefits of the study. To make participation as user-friendly as possible, respondents had the option to receive the consent form and questionnaire via email (or regular mail) and email (or mail) it back once it was completed. Alternatively, they were welcomed to fill out the questionnaire in a research lab at UVic (see Appendix 2 for consent form and questionnaire). Most community-based participants took advantage of the option of receiving the questionnaire via email ($n = 120$) and only a few requested and returned a paper copy ($n = 4$) or completed the questionnaire in the research lab ($n = 3$). All respondents (except 2 who declined) received a \$10 gift card to Cineplex, Starbucks, or Chapters (whichever one they preferred) to thank them for their time. Approximately half of the community sample resided in Victoria, roughly 40% resided in Vancouver, and nearly 10% lived in the Fraser Valley.

Measures

Demographics and background variables.

Participants completed a short questionnaire assessing basic demographics (e.g., sex, age, nationality, SES) and family characteristics (e.g., level of parental conflict while growing up and presently). Specific family background questions applicable to participants with divorced parents (e.g., age at parental separation, time spent with each parent after separation) verified that participants met inclusion criteria for the study. From the demographic and background variables, socioeconomic status, age, parental conflict while growing up, present parental conflict, age at parental separation, age at parental divorce, percentage of time spent with mother following divorce, and percentage of time spent with father following divorce were related to some of the dependent variables.

Specifically, SES was related to triangulation ($F(3, 393) = 3.73, p < .05$), such that participants from lower SES status tended to report higher triangulation experiences than participants from higher SES status ($p < .01$). In addition, participants from higher SES status tended to report higher levels of psychological over-connectedness to their fathers than participants from lower SES status ($p < .01$). Not surprisingly, parental conflict (present and while growing up) was related to family boundaries. In particular, present and past parental conflict were strongly related to triangulation ($r = .55$ and $.66, ps < .001$, respectively), moderately related to parentification by mothers ($r = .27$ and $.37, ps < .001$, respectively), and parentification by fathers ($r = .15, p < .01$, and $.20, p < .001$, respectively). In addition, present and past parental conflict were negatively correlated with nonconflictual independence from mothers ($r = -.33$ and $-.36, ps < .001$,

respectively) and nonconflictual independence from fathers ($r = -.38$ and $-.41$, $ps < .001$, respectively).

Participants' age was related to both nonconflictual independence from mothers and fathers ($r = -.12$ for both, $p < .05$), such that older participants tended to report higher feelings of nonconflictual independence from their parents than younger participants. For female participants who experienced parental divorce, age at parental separation was positively related to triangulation experiences during adolescence ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), such that female participants who experienced parental separation at a later age tended to report more triangulation than female participants who experienced parental separation at a younger age. Older age at parents' separation was also linked to women's lower feelings of nonconflictual independence from mother ($r = -.21$, $p < .05$) and higher feelings of psychological over-connectedness to father ($r = .29$, $p < .001$). Similarly, for young women older age at parental divorce was related to higher levels of triangulation during adolescence ($r = .29$, $p < .01$) and psychological over-connectedness to father ($r = .28$, $p < .01$) than younger age at parental divorce. The above-mentioned relationships were not found to be statistically significant for young men with divorced parents. For males with divorced parents, the correlation coefficients were in the same direction as for the female sample, however, the coefficients were much lower in magnitude (rs ranging from $.04$ to $.12$). Finally, percentage of time spent with mother following divorce was negatively related to psychological over-connectedness to father for both sons ($r = -.26$, $p < .05$) and daughters ($r = -.29$, $p < .01$). Similarly, for sons and daughters, percentage of time spent with father following divorce was negatively related to psychological over-connectedness to mother (sons: $r = -.19$, $p < .10$; daughters: $r = -.21$, $p < .05$) and

positively related to psychological over-connectedness to father (sons: $r = .21, p < .10$; daughters: $r = .24, p < .01$). No other demographic variables (e.g., geographic location, education level of mother or father) were related to the dependent variables (boundary diffusion and psychological individuation variables).

The significant relationships make intuitive sense and, thus, provide a rough validity check that participants answered the questions appropriately. Preliminary analyses included these variables (SES, participant's age, present and past parental conflict, age at parental separation, age at parental divorce, percentage of time spent with mother or father following divorce) as covariates when relevant. However, results remained unchanged whether or not these variables were included as covariates hence results are presented without their inclusion.

General adjustment.

Questions drawn from the Mood and Anxiety Symptom Questionnaire (MASQ; Watson & Clark, 1991) were used to measure general adjustment. The MASQ was designed to measure general distress, anxiety, and depression. Factor analyses of the scale across several university student samples suggest that the MASQ assesses general distress, positive affect, and anxiety (Keogh & Reidy, 2000; Watson, Clark, Weber, & Assenheimer, 1995). The current study included items that loaded on the general distress and positive affect dimensions obtained from these factor analyses, in order to measure aspects of both positive and negative adjustment. Participants rated the extent to which they had experienced each symptom "during the last week, including today" on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all" to "extremely." An index of positive adjustment was attained by adding the 23 positive affect items. Similarly, an index of negative

adjustment was attained by adding the 23 general distress items. The correlation between the two adjustment indices was $-.44$ ($p < .001$), which is similar to that found in other student and adult samples (Watson et al., 1995; Saffrey & Ehrenberg, 2005). Internal consistencies for both scales are high with previous research documenting Cronbach's alphas of .95 for positive adjustment (positive affect) and .93 to .95 for negative adjustment (general distress) (Keogh & Reidy, 2000; Saffrey & Ehrenberg, 2007). In this sample, Cronbach's alphas of .94 for positive adjustment and .92 for negative adjustment were observed. MASQ items used in the study are located in Appendix 3.

Relationship-specific adjustment.

Two subscales of the Relational Assessment Questionnaire (RAQ; Snell & Finney, 1993) and one subscale of the Relationship Awareness Scale (RAS; Snell, 1998) were used to assess relationship-specific adjustment in this study. The RAQ was designed to measure relational-esteem, relational-depression, and relational-preoccupation. The current study included the Relational-Esteem and the Relational-Depression subscales. The Relational-Esteem scale (7 items) measures the tendency to positively evaluate one's ability to be in a close relationship (e.g., "I am confident about myself as a relationship partner"). The Relational-Depression scale (10 items) assesses the chronic tendency to evaluate one's relationship potential in a negative way and to feel discouraged about one's abilities to relate in a meaningful way to a close partner (e.g., "I am disappointed about the quality of my close relationship") (Snell & Finney, 1993; 2002). Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all characteristic of me" to "very characteristic of me." Total score for each scale was derived by adding up the respective items. Validation efforts of the RAQ have been conducted on undergraduate university

students (Snell & Finney, 1993; 2002). Evidence for convergent and discriminant validity of the RAQ was provided by Snell and Finney (1993). For example, no correlations were significant between the RAQ subscales and a measure of social desirability. Furthermore, relational-esteem was related to general self-esteem as well as a higher likelihood of being involved in a romantic relationship and reporting a greater love for their partner. Relational depression was negatively related to the degree of love felt for their partner and whether they believed that they could find an alternative partner. Both RAQ scales were unrelated to theoretically unrelated constructs, such as self-monitoring and body-competence (Snell & Finney, 1993). Internal consistencies of both scales are good with Cronbach's alphas of .86 for the Relational-Esteem scale and .90 for the Relational-Depression scale (Snell & Finney, 1993; 2002). In this sample, Cronbach's alphas of .91 and .82 were noted for the Relational-Depression and the Relational-Esteem scales respectively.

The RAS (Snell, 1998) was designed to measure relational-consciousness, relational-monitoring, and relational-anxiety. The current study included the Relational-Anxiety subscale (9 items) measuring the tendency to experience anxiety and discomfort in close relationships. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all characteristic of me" to "very characteristic of me." Validation efforts of this scale have been conducted with samples involving undergraduate university students (Snell, 1998; 2002). Scores on the Relational-Anxiety scale did not correlate with measures of social desirability. As expected, individuals with higher relational-anxiety tended to report higher social anxiety, lower self-esteem, lower relational-esteem, and less relationship satisfaction (Snell, 2002). The Relational-Anxiety scale has demonstrated

good internal consistency with Cronbach's alphas reported ranging from .85 and .88 (Riggio, 2004; Snell, 1998; Snell, 2002). In this sample, a Cronbach's alpha of .91 was observed.

For the purposes of the current study, some relationship adjustment items were slightly reworded to achieve more clarity. In the original scales, many items referred to "intimate relationships." The word "intimate" was changed to "close romantic" to ensure that participants were not misled to think that "intimate" refers solely to "sexual" relationships. Riggio (2004) took a similar approach when using the Relational-Anxiety scale for her research. Items of the relationship adjustment scales are listed in Appendix 4.

Triangulation.

Only a few self-report measures of triangulation exist in the current literature. Some self-report inventories have been specifically developed for children who have experienced parental divorce (e.g., Caught in the Middle Scale by Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch (1996)), whereas others measure children's perception of triangulation between two married parents (e.g., Triangulation subscale of the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Questionnaire (CPIC) by Grych, Seid, & Fincham (1992)). Given that this research examines triangulation for participants with divorced and married parents, it was important to ensure that items used for measuring triangulation were applicable to participants from both family backgrounds. Also, previous researchers have emphasized different facets of triangulation. For example, Buchanan et al.'s (1992) Caught in the Middle Scale stressed the extent to which the child is asked to relay messages and information between parents, with less focus on cross-generational

coalitions. For the purposes of this research, items were used which gave full coverage to the construct of triangulation. Specifically, items were included that addressed the mediator patterns (e.g., child being pulled into parental conflict) as well as cross-generational coalitions (e.g., parents competing for the affection of the child). Thus, two main issues were considered when selecting items to measure triangulation: 1) generalizability of items to participants with divorced and married parents, and 2) item coverage of the triangulation construct.

Considering these two main criteria, a careful review of items from existing self-report inventories measuring triangulation was conducted. The final selection of items included: 1) all items from the Caught in the Middle Scale (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991); 2) all additional items written by Afifi and colleagues to complement the Caught in the Middle Scale (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Afifi & Schrodtt, 2003); 3) all but one item (which was a near duplicate from the Caught in the Middle Scale) from the Triangulation Subscale of the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Questionnaire (Grych et al. 1992); and 4) two items from the Filial Responsibility Scale-Adult (Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1999) tapping aspects of the mediation patterns in triangulation. Previous research has demonstrated adequate internal consistencies for these measures, including Cronbach's alphas of .62 and .71 for the Triangulation Subscale of the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Questionnaire (Grych et al. 1992) and a Cronbach's alpha of .64 for the Caught in the Middle Scale (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991) when the questionnaires were answered by a youth (ages 10 to 17).

For all included items participants were asked to reflect back to their adolescence (ages 14 to 17) and answer the questions for this time period. The final scale included 17 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “almost always.” A list of the items noting their respective sources is located in Appendix 5.

An observed Cronbach’s alpha of .95 suggested high internal consistency for the constructed Triangulation scale. Inter-item correlations ranged from .25 to .79 with a mean of .51. Item-total scale correlations ranged from .52 to .85. One of the 17 items was a reverse scored item (“I didn’t feel like I had to take sides when my parents had a disagreement”). Although this item demonstrated good inter-item correlations with the other items (ranging from $r = .30$ to $r = .65$) and good item-total scale correlation ($r = .62$) it was deleted from the final scale to decrease any likelihood of introducing error variance from a reverse stated statement. Thus, the final triangulation scale consisted of 16 items with a Cronbach’s alpha of .95. Inter-item correlations ranged from .25 to .79 and the inter-item correlation mean was .53. Each item correlated well with the total scale score demonstrated by correlations ranging from .53 (“My father asked me to carry messages to my mother”) to .85 (“I felt caught in the middle between my parents”). To obtain the Triangulation total score the 16 items were added. A list of the retained triangulation items noting their respective sources is located in Appendix 6.

Parentification.

Parentification has been conceptualized and measured by researchers in numerous ways. For the current research the goal was to measure the emotional aspect of parentification. A review of the literature (including existing measures) suggested that emotional parentification may encompass the following elements: 1) the child being

enlisted to ensure and support the emotional well-being of the parent; 2) the child being enlisted as the confidante to the parent; 3) the child acting as the advisor and decision-maker for the parent; 4) the child feeling responsibility for the parent; and 5) the care that the child is providing to the parent is one-sided. Existing parentification measures typically assess some of these domains, but vary in how much emphasis is placed on each domain. To ensure that each element received roughly the same amount of coverage it was decided to draw on several measures to achieve this desired coverage. Since many items of the parentification measures overlap significantly with each other, only a subset of questions from most questionnaires were chosen instead of including all reviewed questionnaires in their entirety. In addition, reviewed parentification measures at times included items that assessed aspects of triangulation. These items were avoided in the newly constructed parentification scale as this study's goal was to measure the unique contributions that triangulation and parentification made in the prediction of individuation and adjustment.

Items for the parentification measure were drawn from the Parent-Child Boundaries Scale-III (PBS-III; Kerig, 2006), the Filial Responsibility Scale-Adult (FRS-A; Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1999), the Family Structure Survey (FSS; Lopez, 1986), and the Parentification Scale (PS; Mika, Bergner, & Baum, 1987). In light of the goal of balanced coverage of the construct, 9 items were chosen from the Parentification and the Adultification subscale of the PBS-III, 6 items were included from the Current Emotional Caregiving subscale of the FRS-A, 4 items were selected from the Parent-Child Role Reversal subscale of the FSS, and finally, 2 items were chosen from the Parental Role

vis-à-vis Parents subscale of the PS. A list of the 21 included items and their respective sources may be found in Appendix 7.

Each item was once worded in reference to mothers and once in reference to fathers. Participants were asked to reflect back to their adolescence (ages 14 to 17) and answer the questions for this time period. Questions were ranked on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “almost always.” Four anchor questions were added (e.g., “During my adolescence (ages 14 to 17) my mother/father was stressed”) to help orient participants to the perceived emotional state of their parents during this time period. These 4 contextual questions were not included in the analyses. The 21-item Parentification scale answered in relation to mothers (from now on called “Parentification-Mother Scale”) showed high internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.93. Inter-item correlations ranged from 0.06 to 0.70 with an inter-item correlation mean of 0.40. Item-total scale correlations ranged from .32 to .77. Four items correlated less than 0.40 with the total scale. Specifically, “My mother usually consulted me before making household decisions,” “My mother let me have a lot of influence when making important adult decisions,” “In my mind the welfare of my mother was my first priority,” and “If my mother was upset, I usually did not get involved” (reverse scored) correlated least strongly with the total scale.

Similar results emerged for the Parentification scale answered in relation to fathers (from now on called “Parentification-Father Scale”). The overall Parentification-Father Scale showed high internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of .92. Inter-item scale correlations ranged from -.12 to .71 with an inter-item correlation mean of .37. Item-total scale correlations ranged from .17 to .77. The same four items that correlated

less than .40 with the total Parentification-Mother Scale also correlated the least strongly (less than .43) with the total Parentification-Father Scale. Examination of these items suggested that they may not accurately characterize or be the most representative items of the emotional parentification construct.

For example, in North American society, a parent consulting or including an adolescent into the decision-making process concerning decisions that involve the family is quite normative and likely qualitatively different from emotional parentification experiences. Thus, the item stating “My mother/father usually consulted me before making household decisions” may not be a good item for distinguishing young adults who have experienced versus not experienced emotional parentification. Furthermore, the item stating “My mother/father let me have a lot of influence when making important adult decisions” may be more representative of instrumental parentification than emotional parentification, and thus, may also not be the best item for describing emotional parentification. Finally, one of the four items was reverse scored (“If my mother/father was upset, I usually did not get involved”), which may have introduced additional error variance explaining the relatively low correlation of this item with the total scale. Given that these four items were least strongly correlated to the total scale for both Parentification-Mother and Parentification-Father, they were deleted from the final parentification scales.

The final 17-item Parentification-Mother Scale demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.94. Inter-items correlations ranged from 0.19 to 0.71 with an inter-item correlation mean of 0.49. Item-total scale correlations ranged from 0.41 (“I tried to protect my mother from stress and distress”) to 0.78 (“At times I

felt like I was the only one my mother could turn to”). Similarly, the final 17-item Parentification-Father Scale demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.93. Inter-item correlations ranged from 0.10 to 0.71 with an inter-item correlation mean of 0.45. Item-total scale correlations ranged from 0.45 (“I tried to protect my father from stress and distress”) to 0.79 (“My father depended on me for emotional support”). Total scores for the scales were derived by adding the respective 17 items for each scale. A list of the final items used in the Parentification Scale may be found in Appendix 8.

Psychological individuation.

For the purposes of the current study psychological individuation is defined as the process through which young adults increase the psychological distinctiveness between themselves and their parents (Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985). Successful individuation involves a reworking of the young adult’s ties to the family of origin and finding a separate yet connected self (Allison & Sabatelli, 1988). Young adults who show evidence of healthy psychological individuation take responsibility for their own lives and do not continue to judge themselves by their parents’ standards or feel guilty about their parents. They are able to exercise psychological autonomy in relationships with their parents, yet remain emotionally connected to one another. Young adults who struggle with psychological individuation may show signs of being emotionally fused or highly reactive to their parents as well as experience excessive feelings of guilt/resentment within the context of the relationship with their parents (Bartle, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 1989; Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985).

Two scales, the Psychological Connectedness subscale of the Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale (MIS; Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1987) and the Conflictual Independence subscale of the Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI; Hoffman, 1984) were used to measure psychological individuation in this study.¹

Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale (MIS).

The MIS consists of three factor-analytically derived subscales assessing financial, functional, and psychological connectedness between the young adult and his or her family (Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1987). Only the Psychological Connectedness scale was used in this research as it most closely relates to psychological individuation as defined for this study. The Psychological Connectedness subscale consists of 15 items and addresses degree of emotional dependence on family members (e.g., “I rely on family members’ approval to let me know when I am doing things right”). It refers to the need for approval, obligation, loyalty, and guilt that family members experience with one another. Items were ranked on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all true” to “very true” and added to receive a total score. Questions were worded once in reference to mothers and once in reference to fathers (e.g., “I rely on my mother’s/father’s approval to let me know when I am doing things right”). Bartle, Anderson and Sabatelli (1999) used this same approach with success in their study of parenting style, individuation, and adolescent self-esteem. A list of the Psychological Connectedness subscale items can be found in Appendix 9.

¹ Data were also collected on a few items of the Fear of Separation subscale of the Family Structure Survey (FFS; Lopez, Campbell, & Watkins, 1988) as well as a number of positively worded self-written items (e.g., “I feel like I can be myself around my mother/father”). In general, these additional items did not correlate well with items from the MIS and PSI. Thus, it was decided to rely on the two established and already validated scales for further analyses.

Scores on the Psychological Connectedness subscale have been identified as a significant predictor of young adults' psychosocial maturity such that lower psychological connectedness was related to higher psychosocial maturity (Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1990). Similarly, Klasner and Pistole (2003) reported high scores on the Psychological Connectedness subscale to be related to negative personal adjustment for young women and negative personal and social adjustment for young men. Internal reliability as measured by Cronbach's alpha is adequate to good with values ranging from 0.70 to 0.87 (Dwairy, 2004; Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1987; Gavazzi, Sabatelli, & Reese-Weber, 1999; Klasner & Pistole, 2003). In this sample, Cronbach alphas of 0.77 and 0.87 were noted for the mother-oriented and the father-oriented subscales respectively. Total scores for the scales were derived by adding the respective 15 items for each scale.

Since the Psychological Connectedness subscale refers to unhealthy (e.g., excessive feelings of guilt) rather than healthy features of connectedness and to avoid possible confusion, this construct is referred to as *psychological over-connectedness* in this study.

Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI).

The PSI (Hoffman, 1984) contains four subscales measuring the following constructs in the parent-adolescent and young adult relationship: functional independence, emotional independence, attitudinal independence, and conflictual independence. The Conflictual Independence (CI) subscale assesses the young adult's freedom from excessive anger, guilt, and resentment of their parents (e.g., "I argue with my mother/father over many little things"). Questions were ranked on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all true" to "very true." The scale consists of 25 items, once

answered in reference to mothers and once in reference to fathers. In order to calculate a total score the 25 items are added and then subtracted from 125, which is the highest score any given participant could receive when the items are added. This total score then reflects the degree to which the participant is *free* from conflictual feelings towards their parents. From the four subscales of the PSI, the CI subscale most closely measures elements of psychological individuation as defined for this study. Since this scale assesses the degree of nonconflictual feelings towards parents, the scale will be referred to measuring *nonconflictual independence* towards mothers and fathers for the remainder of the study.

The PSI has been examined with respect to several indices of older adolescent adjustment as well as college student adjustment (e.g., Hoffman & Weiss, 1987; Lapsley Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Lopez, 1991; Lopez, Campbell, Watkins, 1989; Rice et al., 1995). Internal consistency of the CI scale is good, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.92 and 0.88, for mothers and fathers respectively (Hoffman, 1984). Two week test-retest correlations for the CI scales ranged from 0.85 to 0.96 (Hoffman, 1984). CI scores have been generally uncorrelated with the other PSI subscales and, relative to the other three subscales, have been a more prominent and consistent predictor of adjustment (Hoffman, 1984; Rice et al., 1990; 1995). In this sample, Cronbach alphas of 0.93 and 0.91 were observed for mothers and fathers respectively. A list of the CI items may be found in Appendix 10.

Results

The results of this study are presented in three main sections. The first section compares men and women with married and divorced parents on family boundary, psychological individuation, and adjustment measures. The second section examines whether family boundaries, psychological individuation, and adjustment are related in the hypothesized directions. First, bivariate correlations are presented to investigate pairwise relations between variables. Second, family boundaries, psychological individuation, and adjustment are considered as three variable sets, in which adjustment serves as the criterion set whereas family boundaries and psychological individuation serve as predictor sets. Multiple set correlations (see Cohen, 1982) are used to evaluate the common and unique aspects of each predictor set in explaining the criterion set. To explore how these relationships may be similar or different across gender and family structure, bivariate and multiple set correlations are conducted and presented for the overall sample and for each group separately. The final section examines whether psychological individuation mediates the hypothesized relationship between family boundary diffusion and adjustment using multiple set correlation techniques². Again, results are presented for the overall sample as well as for each group separately to explore whether the variables are related similarly or differently across different family structures and sex of the participant.

² A more commonly seen method for testing mediational models among sets of variables is Structural Equation Modeling. The philosophical distinction between that approach and the “softer” modeling approach used here is whether a model is being used for theory testing and development or for application and prediction (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The technique used here reflects the study’s more exploratory nature and its interest in predicting adjustment (multivariately and univariately), without making strong inferences regarding the latent causes of the covariances among the adjustment scales. Another reason for not using Structural Equation Modeling was because the sample sizes were not sufficient for the purposes of Structural Equation Modelling, particularly when testing the models for each individual group.

Comparisons of Family Boundaries, Psychological Individuation, and Adjustment among Men and Women with Divorced and Married Parents

Family boundaries.

Hypothesis 1: Family boundary diffusion was predicted to be more commonly reported by young adults who experienced parental divorce than by young adults with married parents. Specifically, it was expected that retroactive reports of triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father would be more prevalent among young adults who have experienced parental divorce than those who have not.

Lines of Investigation: The role that gender plays in the prevalence of boundary diffusion was explored. Previous research has obtained inconsistent results regarding whether girls or boys may be more likely the target of boundary diffusions, thus no a-priori hypothesis regarding gender was formed.

MANOVA for family structure, gender, and boundary diffusion.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to examine differences related to family structure and gender with respect to boundary diffusion. As hypothesized, for family structure, the multivariate F was significant, $F(3, 370) = 47.34, p < .001; \eta^2 = .277$, using the Wilks' criterion. Specifically, participants with divorced parents scored significantly higher on triangulation, ($F(1, 372) = 136.82, p < .001$), parentification by mothers ($F(1, 372) = 48.86, p < .001$), and parentification by fathers ($F(1, 372) = 9.93, p < .001$) than participants with married parents. Following Cohen's guidelines, a large effect size was observed between the two groups in relation to triangulation experiences ($d = 1.19$) and parentification by mothers ($d = .76$). A small effect size was observed between the two groups in relation to parentification by fathers ($d = .34$). Means, standard

deviations, and observed ranges for participants with married and divorced parents on boundary diffusion variables are outlined in Table 1. No significant differences with respect to gender ($F(3, 370) = 1.42, p = .24$) or interaction of gender and family structure ($F(3, 370) = .29, p = .84$) related to boundary diffusion were observed. This suggests that men and women across the whole sample and across different family structures reported similar levels of boundary diffusion.

Psychological individuation.

MANOVA for family structure, gender, & psychological individuation.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to examine differences related to family structure and gender with respect to psychological individuation. No a priori hypotheses had been made whether participants would vary on psychological individuation measures as a function of gender or family structure. For gender, the multivariate F was significant ($F(4, 354) = 4.23, p < .01; \eta^2 = .046$) using the Wilks' criterion. Specifically, men scored lower on psychological over-connectedness to mothers ($F(1, 357) = 16.17, p < .001$) and fathers ($F(1, 357) = 4.50, p < .05$) than women. These results suggest that young men reported feeling less guilt, loyalty, and obligation towards their parents than young women reported feeling. For means, standard deviations, and observed ranges on the individuation measures for male and female participants please refer to Table 2.

For family structure, the multivariate F was also significant ($F(4, 354) = 12.55, p < .001; \eta^2 = .124$) using the Wilks' criterion. Specifically, participants with married parents scored higher on nonconflictual independence from both mothers ($F(1, 357) = 8.01, p < .01$) and fathers ($F(1, 357) = 19.06, p < .001$), and scored higher on

Table 1

Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Observed Ranges (R) for Participants with Married and Divorced Parents on Family Boundary Diffusion Measures

Domain/Measures	Family Background						<i>F</i> (1, 372)
	Married			Divorced			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	
Boundary Diffusion							
Triangulation	27.91	10.39	16 - 66	43.38	15.13	16 - 80	136.82***
Parentification-Mother	34.43	11.59	17 - 76	44.61	15.01	20 - 83	48.86***
Parentification-Father	28.14	9.80	17 - 75	32.33	14.13	17 - 78	9.92**

Note. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Possible range of values for the Triangulation scale is 16 to 80. Possible range of values for the Parentification-Mother and Parentification-Father Scales is 17 to 85.

Table 2

Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Observed Ranges (R) of the Psychological Individuation Measures as a Function of Gender

Domain/Measures	Men			Women			<i>F</i> (1, 357)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	
Psychological Individuation							
Psych Over-connect-Mother	35.08	9.05	16 - 67	38.16	9.15	17 - 65	16.17***
Psych Over-connect-Father	33.88	10.28	15 - 63	35.38	10.83	16 - 68	4.50*
Nonconflict Indep-Mother	75.45	16.51	18 - 99	72.10	17.91	17 - 97	2.55
Nonconflict Indep-Father	75.56	17.17	25-100	74.99	16.69	12-100	.04

Note: * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$. Possible range of values for the Psychological Over-connectedness-Mother Scale and Psychological Over-connectedness-Father Scale is 15 to 75. Possible range of values for the Nonconflictual Independence-Mother Scale and Nonconflictual Independence-Father Scale is 0 to 100.

psychological over-connectedness to fathers ($F(1, 357) = 14.58, p < .001$) than participants with divorced parents. Overall, this suggests that participants with divorced parents experienced less freedom from excessive anger, guilt, and resentment in their relationships with their mothers, and particularly with their fathers, than participants with married parents. However, participants with married parents were experiencing higher levels of obligation, loyalty, and guilt towards their fathers than participants with divorced parents. For means, standard deviations, and observed ranges on the individuation measures for participants with divorced and married parents, please refer to Table 3. No interaction effect was observed for family structure and gender on the individuation measures.

Adjustment.

MANOVA for family structure, gender, and adjustment.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to examine differences related to family structure and gender with respect to adjustment. No a priori hypotheses had been made whether participants would vary on adjustment measures as a function of gender or family structure. For gender, the multivariate F was significant ($F(5, 369) = 2.24, p < .05; \eta^2 = .030$) using the Wilks' criterion. Specifically, women scored higher on negative adjustment ($F(1, 373) = 4.79, p < .05$) than men. However, the magnitude of difference between the two groups in terms of negative adjustment was small in nature (Cohen's $d = .27$). No other differences on the adjustment measures with respect to gender were noted. For means, standard deviations, and observed ranges on the adjustment measures for male and female participants please refer to Table 4. There were no significant differences related to family structure ($F(5, 369) = 1.43, p = .21, \eta^2 = .019$),

Table 3

Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Observed Ranges (R) of the Psychological Individuation Measures as a Function of Family Background Experiences

Domain/Measures	Family Background						<i>F</i> (1, 357)
	Married			Divorced			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	
Psychological Individuation							
Psych Over-connect-Mother	36.98	8.98	17-65	36.73	9.52	16-67	.87
Psych Over-connect-Father	36.52	10.25	17-68	32.73	10.68	15-63	14.58***
Nonconflict Indep-Mother	75.74	15.91	18-99	70.95	18.66	17-97	8.01**
Nonconflict Indep-Father	78.78	15.48	27-100	71.06	17.52	12-100	14.58***

Note: ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Possible range of values for the Psychological Over-connectedness-Mother Scale and Psychological Over-connectedness-Father Scale is 15 to 75. Possible range of values for the Nonconflictual Independence-Mother Scale and Nonconflictual Independence-Father Scale is 0 to 100.

Table 4

Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Observed Ranges (R) of the Adjustment

Measures as a Function of Gender

Domain/Measures	Men			Women			<i>F</i> (1, 373)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	
Adjustment							
Positive Adjustment	80.44	14.58	31 - 111	80.39	16.03	39 - 113	.08
Negative Adjustment	45.71	14.38	23 - 96	49.75	15.58	24 - 106	4.79*
Relational Depression	20.71	8.78	10 - 48	20.62	8.78	10 - 46	.14
Relational Anxiety	19.04	7.56	9 - 44	19.89	8.38	9 - 45	.61
Relational Esteem	23.37	5.61	8 - 35	23.04	6.19	9 - 35	.16

Note: * $p < .05$. Possible range of values for the Positive and Negative Adjustment Scales is 23 to 115. Possible range of values for the Relational Depression Scale is 10 to 50; for the Relational Anxiety Scale is 9 to 45; and for the Relational Esteem Scale is 7 to 35.

meaning that participants with divorced parents did not differ significantly from participants with married parents on the adjustment measures. Furthermore, no interaction effect of gender and family structure on the adjustment measures was observed ($F(5, 369) = 1.11, p = .36, \eta^2 = .019$).

Relations among Boundary Diffusion, Individuation, and Adjustment

In order to gain in-depth knowledge of how the variables of interest are related, correlations among boundary diffusion, individuation, and adjustment variables for the overall sample were performed and presented in Table 5. In addition, multivariate set correlation (Cohen, 1982) was used to investigate how the sets of variables were related to one other. More information about this technique is described on pages 76 and 77. In order to explore the lines of investigation of how these relations are similar or different for men and women with married and divorced parents, analyses were performed for each group separately.

Boundary diffusion and adjustment for overall sample.

Hypothesis 2: It was expected that retroactive reports of family boundary diffusion would be related to higher levels of current negative adjustment and lower levels of current positive adjustment outcomes. Specifically, it was expected that triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father would each be positively correlated with negative adjustment, relational depression, and relational anxiety, and negatively correlated with positive adjustment, and relational esteem. Overall, as a variable set, triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father were predicted to be related to the set of adjustment variables. Common and unique

Table 5

Intercorrelations among Boundary Diffusion, Individuation, and Adjustment Measures for Overall Sample

Subscale	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Triangulation	-	.54**	.39**	.23**	.17*	-.46**	-.51**	-.15*	.29**	.28**	.24**	-.18**
2. Parentification-Mother		-	.33**	.24**	.09	-.34**	-.30**	-.14**	.28**	.18**	.13**	-.05
3. Parentification- Father			-	.12*	.24**	-.16*	-.36**	-.01	.18**	.16**	.14**	-.01
4. Psyc Over-connect-Mother				-	.55**	-.35**	-.24**	-.01	.24**	.10*	.16**	.00
5. Psyc Over-connect-Father					-	-.21**	-.15**	.08	.12*	.06	.11*	.05
6. Nonconflict Indep-Mother						-	.30**	.20**	-.38**	-.26**	-.28**	.17**
7. Nonconflict Indep-Father							-	.10	-.31**	-.29**	-.28**	.21**
8. Positive Adjustment								-	-.44**	-.34**	-.28**	.38**
9. Negative Adjustment									-	.44**	.35**	-.26**
10. Relational Depression										-	.70**	-.69**
11. Relational Anxiety											-	-.61**
12. Relational Esteem												-

Note: N based on pairwise deletion. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

aspects among the different boundary diffusion elements for predicting adjustment were examined.

Triangulation.

As expected, participants' feelings of triangulation in their adolescence were related to higher levels of overall negative adjustment ($r = .29, p < .001$), relational depression ($r = .28, p < .001$), and relational anxiety ($r = .24, p < .001$). Relatively weaker, yet statistically significant relationships, were also observed between triangulation and positive adjustment ($r = -.15, p < .05$) and relational esteem ($r = -.18, p < .01$), supporting the claim that triangulation experiences are related to adjustment in young adults.

Parentification by mother.

Participants' parentification experiences by mothers were related to higher levels of negative adjustment ($r = .28, p < .001$), relational depression ($r = .18, p < .01$) and relational anxiety ($r = .13, p < .01$). The associations, however, between parentification by mothers and negative relationship adjustment indices were small in magnitude. As expected parentification by mothers was also negatively correlated with positive adjustment ($r = -.14, p < .01$) but did not correlate significantly with relational esteem ($r = -.05, p = .33$). Overall, support for the claim was found that parentification by mothers is related to adjustment among young adults. Specifically, the construct seems to be strongest related to negative overall adjustment and more weakly related to negative relationship-specific adjustment.

Parentification by father.

Only partial support for the hypothesis that parentification by father is related to overall and relationship-specific adjustment for young adults was found. Parentification by fathers was observed to be weakly, yet significantly, related to negative overall adjustment ($r = .18, p < .001$), relational depression ($r = .16, p < .01$), and relational anxiety ($r = .14, p < .01$). No relationship was observed for parentification by fathers and positive adjustment ($r = -.01, p = .81$) and relational esteem ($r = -.01, p = .80$).

Set correlations to examine family boundaries and adjustment indices for the overall sample.

For the following analysis boundary diffusion and adjustment components were considered as variable sets. Specifically, triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father comprised the boundary diffusion variable set acting as the predictor set. Positive adjustment, negative adjustment, relational depression, relational anxiety, and relational esteem comprised the adjustment variable set acting as the criterion set. The focus of the analysis was to predict adjustment components (the criterion) from boundary diffusion elements (the predictors). The procedure used was multivariate set correlation (Cohen, 1982).

Conceptually, multiple-set correlation is a generalization of multiple regression/correlation in which sets of predictor variables are used to predict a set of criterion variables rather than the usual relating of single indicators of each construct. Set correlations provide indices comparable to those provided by MCR analysis, such as the multivariate multiple correlation coefficient and the multiple partial correlation. This procedure provides numerous analytic possibilities (see Cohen, 1982) and is ideal for the current study because it allows the investigation of the relationship of two variable sets

and provides information concerning the common as well as unique aspects regarding the predictor/criterion sets and their constitute variable sets.

Many significance tests arise in multiple-set correlation, thus protection of Type I error is critical. Cohen (1982) recommends a hierarchical procedure in which relations among larger sets of variables should be significant first before testing separate or partialled subtests. For example, in the current study the overall association between boundary diffusion and adjustment should be statistically significant before running univariate tests examining how boundary diffusion is related to specific aspects of adjustment.

The results that follow adhere by Cohen's (1982) guidelines for interpreting set correlations to control for Type I error. As expected, results suggested that the boundary diffusion variable set was indeed significantly related to the adjustment variable set ($F(15, 1094) = 5.42, p < .001$, adjusted multivariate $R^2 = .15$). Follow-up univariate regressions indicated that all five adjustment variables were significantly predicted by the set of boundary diffusion variables. Specifically, the boundary diffusion variable set was significantly related to positive adjustment ($F(3, 401) = 3.32, p < .05$), negative adjustment ($F(3, 401) = 16.53, p < .001$), relational depression ($F(3, 401) = 8.92, p < .001$), relational anxiety ($F(3, 401) = 8.92, p < .001$), and relational esteem ($F(3, 401) = 5.84, p < .01$).

The regression weights shown in Table 6 reflect the contribution of each boundary diffusion element to the prediction of each of the adjustment variables after the remaining boundary diffusion elements have been partialled out. As seen in Table 6, within the boundary diffusion variable set, triangulation explained unique variance to

Table 6

The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Adjustment for Overall Sample

Boundary Diffusion	Adjustment	B	<i>t</i> (403)	p
Triangulation	Positive Adjustment	-.09	-1.28	.17
	Negative Adjustment	.17	3.07	.00
	Relational Depression	.23	4.10	.00
	Relational Anxiety	.23	3.97	.00
	Relational Esteem	-.25	-4.26	.00
Parentification-Mother	Positive Adjustment	-.11	-1.86	.07
	Negative Adjustment	.17	2.88	.00
	Relational Depression	.04	.54	.48
	Relational Anxiety	-.01	-.28	.84
	Relational Esteem	.06	1.18	.29
Parentification-Father	Positive Adjustment	.06	1.13	.26
	Negative Adjustment	.06	1.22	.22
	Relational Depression	.06	1.15	.25
	Relational Anxiety	.05	.90	.33
	Relational Esteem	.07	1.24	.21

Note: B = beta weights

predicting relationship adjustment and negative adjustment. Parentification by mother explained unique variance for general adjustment (positive and negative) but not for relationship adjustment, whereas parentification by fathers did not explain unique variance, above and beyond triangulation and parentification by mothers, for the adjustment measures. Overall, these findings support hypothesis 2 predicting that the set of boundary diffusion variables would be related to the set of adjustment variables.

Lines of Investigation: How did the relations among boundary diffusion and adjustment vary by gender and family structure?

As conducted for the overall sample, correlations among boundary diffusion, individuation, and adjustment variables were performed for each group separately in order to gain in-depth knowledge of how the variables of interest are related within each group. Results are presented in Tables 7 to 10.

Triangulation.

Triangulation was consistently linked to negative overall adjustment for all four groups. A particularly strong association between triangulation and negative adjustment was found among men with married parents ($r = .50, p < .001$). Triangulation was also consistently linked to relational depression for all four groups with similar magnitude (r s ranging from .26 to .28). Finally, triangulation was consistently significantly linked to relational anxiety (except for men with married parents where only a trend was observed; $r = .18, p = .08$). In terms of triangulation and positive adjustment indices, all relationships were in the predicted direction but did not reach statistical significance (with the exception of triangulation and relational esteem for women with married parents). Overall, the effect of triangulation on adjustment is similar for men and women

Table 7

Intercorrelations among Boundary Diffusion, Individuation, and Adjustment Measures for Young Men with Married Parents

Subscale	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Triangulation	-	.55**	.47**	.50**	.32**	-.64**	-.67**	-.03	.50**	.26**	.18	-.12
2. Parentification-Mother		-	.64**	.50**	.38**	-.34**	-.47**	-.04	.30**	.29**	.15	-.18
3. Parentification- Father			-	.36**	.33**	-.25*	-.33**	-.14	.37**	.17	.16	.01
4. Psyc Over-connect- Mother				-	.70**	-.37**	-.37**	.06	.36**	.08	.07	.03
5. Psyc Over-connect-Father					-	-.41**	-.20*	.09	.29**	.03	.06	.20*
6. Nonconflict Indep- Mother						-	.51**	-.03	-.34**	-.34**	-.34**	.13
7. Nonconflict Indep- Father							-	-.00	-.31**	-.24*	-.27**	.19
8. Positive Adjustment								-	-.46**	-.33**	-.31**	-.26**
9. Negative Adjustment									-	.40**	.36**	-.18
10. Relational Depression										-	.64**	-.64**
11. Relational Anxiety											-	-.45**
12. Relational Esteem												-

Note: N based on pairwise deletion. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 8

Intercorrelations among Boundary Diffusion, Individuation, and Adjustment Measures for Young Women with Married Parents

Subscale	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Triangulation	-	.36**	.30**	.10	.07	-.34**	-.52**	-.04	.31**	.27**	.28**	-.21*
2. Parentification-Mother		-	.53**	.11	.01	-.27**	-.26*	-.09	.38**	.28**	.20*	-.13
3. Parentification-Father			-	.16	.31**	-.24*	-.23*	-.09	.21*	.12	.10	-.05
4. Psyc Over-connect- Mother				-	.72**	-.35**	-.26**	-.11	.15	.19	.33**	-.04
5. Psyc Over-connect-Father					-	-.23*	-.20*	.01	.01	.14	.21*	-.07
6. Nonconflict Indep-Mother						-	.42**	.24*	-.49**	-.31**	-.27**	.13
7. Nonconflict Indep-Father							-	.19	-.38**	-.36**	-.38**	.27**
8. Positive Adjustment								-	-.31**	-.38**	-.23*	.40**
9. Negative Adjustment									-	.46**	.35**	-.24*
10. Relational Depression										-	.21**	-.65**
11. Relational Anxiety											-	-.61**
12. Relational Esteem												-

Note: N based on pairwise deletion. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 9

Intercorrelations among Boundary Diffusion, Individuation, and Adjustment Measures for Young Men with Divorced Parents

Subscale	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Triangulation	-	.35**	.18	.31*	.35**	-.32**	-.42**	-.13	.26*	.26*	.24*	-.23
2. Parentification-Mother		-	.06	.51**	.14	-.31*	-.33**	-.09	.34**	.11	.00	.13
3. Parentification-Father			-	-.02	.12	.07	-.26*	.13	-.06	.10	.04	-.05
4. Psyc Over-connect-Mother				-	.43**	-.40**	-.42**	.13	.31*	.20	.13	.06
5. Psyc Over-connect-Father					-	-.11	-.29*	-.04	.07	-.01	.18	.02
6. Nonconflict Indep-Mother						-	.16	.04	-.22	-.17	-.31*	.18
7. Nonconflict Indep-Father							-	.05	-.20	-.16	-.10	.14
8. Positive Adjustment								-	-.50**	-.46**	-.34**	-.46**
9. Negative Adjustment									-	.58**	.32**	-.32**
10. Relational Depression										-	.64**	-.67**
11. Relational Anxiety											-	-.67**
12. Relational Esteem												-

Note: N based on pairwise deletion. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 10

Intercorrelations among Boundary Diffusion, Individuation, and Adjustment Measures for Young Women with Divorced Parents

Subscale	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Triangulation	-	.51**	.45**	.21*	.39**	-.53**	-.42**	-.07	.25**	.28**	.25**	-.12
2. Parentification-Mother		-	.17	.11	.17	-.33**	-.08	-.15	.18*	.09	.10	.03
3. Parentification- Father			-	.08	.35**	-.16	-.44**	.12	.24*	.18*	.18*	.04
4. Psyc Over-connect-Mother				-	.36**	-.32**	-.06	-.03	.15	.02	.09	-.02
5. Psyc Over-connect-Father					-	-.18	-.17	.11	.13	.11	.16	.04
6. Nonconflict Indep-Mother						-	.09	.33**	-.36**	-.20*	-.29**	.19*
7. Nonconflict Indep-Father							-	.03	-.30**	-.31**	-.29**	.19*
8. Positive Adjustment								-	-.50**	-.27**	-.27**	.38**
9. Negative Adjustment									-	.39**	.35**	-.29**
10. Relational Depression										-	.77**	-.75**
11. Relational Anxiety											-	-.66**
12. Relational Esteem												-

Note: N based on pairwise deletion. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

from married and divorced parents. Retrospective accounts of triangulation experiences in adolescence were robustly linked to negative adjustment, relational depression, and relational anxiety in young adulthood irrespective of gender and family structure. Unlike in the overall sample, triangulation was not statistically related in a negative direction to positive adjustment indices; however, this is likely due to decreased power (smaller sample size) for each group versus overall group to detect significant relationships as the magnitude of correlations between these variables are similar for the overall group and the individual groups.

Parentification by mothers.

Parentification by mothers was consistently linked to negative adjustment for all four groups. This relationship was moderate in strength for all groups (r s ranging from .30 to .38), except for women with divorced parents where this relationship was observed as weak ($r = .18$). Furthermore, for young men and women with married parents, parentification by mothers was negatively linked to relationship adjustment indices, whereas this was not found for young men and women with divorced parents. No statistical significant relationships were noted among parentification by mothers and positive adjustment indices. Overall, parentification by mothers was linked to a number of negative adjustment indices, particularly for young adults with married parents. The findings were less consistent with respect to young adults with divorced parents.

Parentification by fathers.

Parentification by fathers was linked to negative adjustment for all groups with the exception of men with divorced parents where such a relationship was not observed. Parentification by fathers was only related to negative relationship adjustment indices for

women with divorced parents, however, these relationships were weak in nature ($r = .18$ for relational depression and relational anxiety). Overall, parentification by fathers was related to negative adjustment, particularly for men with married parents ($r = .37$) and perhaps to a lesser extent for women with married ($r = .21$) and divorced ($r = .24$) parents. Parentification by fathers did not have a negative effect on the adjustment of young men with divorced parents (r s ranging from $-.06$ to $.13$, all p s $\geq .05$). In fact, correlation coefficients were at times opposite of the predicted direction (e.g., positive correlation of $r = .13$ for parentification by fathers and positive adjustment). For a list of all correlation coefficients and significance values please refer to Tables 7 to 10.

Set correlations to examine family boundaries and adjustment in relation to gender and family structure.

As conducted for the overall sample, multivariate set correlations were used to predict adjustment variables from boundary diffusion variables for each group. These analyses were conducted separately for men and women with divorced and married parents to explore how the sets of variables may relate similarly or differently for the four groups. For all four groups, the boundary diffusion variable set significantly predicted the adjustment variables (see Table 11 for a detailed overview). At a univariate level, the boundary diffusion variable set significantly predicted negative adjustment for all four groups. For participants with married parents, the boundary diffusion variable set also consistently predicted relationship adjustment. A similar pattern regarding boundary diffusion and relationship adjustment emerged among participants with divorced parents. Boundary diffusion was not significantly predictive of positive adjustment for any of the groups.

Table 11

The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Adjustment for each Group

Group	Adjustment	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Men w/ married parents		.30	$F(15, 265) = 3.62$	.00
	Positive Adjustment		.79	.50
	Negative Adjustment		11.61	.00
	Relational Depression		4.30	.01
	Relational Anxiety		2.92	.04
	Relational Esteem		3.25	.03
Women w/ married parents		.15	$F(15, 285) = 2.21$	.00
	Positive Adjustment		.41	.75
	Negative Adjustment		7.8	.00
	Relational Depression		5.27	.00
	Relational Anxiety		3.76	.01
	Relational Esteem		2.59	.05
Men w/ divorced parents		.15	$F(15, 163) = 1.71$	.05
	Positive Adjustment		.88	.46
	Negative Adjustment		4.24	.01
	Relational Depression		1.99	.13
	Relational Anxiety		1.58	.20
	Relational Esteem		2.70	.05

Table 11

The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Adjustment for each Group cont.

Group	Adjustment	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Women w/ divorced parents		.17	$F(15, 315) = 2.49$	.00
	Positive Adjustment		1.74	.16
	Negative Adjustment		3.48	.02
	Relational Depression		3.73	.01
	Relational Anxiety		3.09	.03
	Relational Esteem		1.68	.18

The regression weights shown in Tables 12-15 reflect the contribution of each boundary diffusion element to the prediction of each of the adjustment variables after the remaining boundary diffusion elements have been partialled out for each group. In general, triangulation explained unique variance for predicting aspects of relationship adjustment for each group and negative adjustment for each group except for women with divorced parents. Parentification by mothers uniquely contributed to explaining negative adjustment for women with married parents and men with divorced parents but not for the other two groups. In addition, parentification by mothers also uniquely predicted aspects of relationship adjustment for each group except for women with divorced parents, where parentification by mothers was not uniquely related to any adjustment measures. Parentification by fathers was not uniquely related to any adjustment measures with the following exception. For men with married parents, parentification by fathers uniquely predicted negative adjustment and relational esteem.

Boundary diffusion and psychological individuation for overall sample.

Hypothesis 3: It was expected that family boundary diffusion would be related to lower levels of psychological individuation. Specifically, it was anticipated that triangulation, parentification by mothers, and parentification by fathers would each be related to low levels of nonconflictual independence (low freedom of negative emotions) from both mothers and fathers and higher psychological over-connectedness to both mothers and fathers. Parentification by mothers was anticipated to be related to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from mothers and higher psychological over-connectedness to mothers. Parentification by fathers was expected to be related to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from fathers and higher psychological

Table 12

*The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Adjustment for Men with Married**Parents*

Boundary Diffusion	Adjustment	B	t(103)	p
Triangulation	Positive Adjustment	-.01	-.04	.97
	Negative Adjustment	.44	3.98	.00
	Relational Depression	.17	1.46	.16
	Relational Anxiety	.25	2.02	.04
	Relational Esteem	-.09	-.71	.48
Parentification-Mother	Positive Adjustment	.09	.58	.56
	Negative Adjustment	-.14	-1.11	.27
	Relational Depression	.22	1.57	.12
	Relational Anxiety	.02	.13	.90
	Relational Esteem	-.32	-2.30	.02
Parentification-Father	Positive Adjustment	-.19	-1.49	.14
	Negative Adjustment	.27	2.44	.02
	Relational Depression	-.02	-.20	.84
	Relational Anxiety	.05	.41	.68
	Relational Esteem	-.26	-2.12	.03

Note: B = beta weights

Table 13

The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Adjustment for Women with Married Parents

Boundary Diffusion	Adjustment	B	t(110)	p
Triangulation	Positive Adjustment	-.02	-.22	.82
	Negative Adjustment	.24	2.46	.02
	Relational Depression	.24	2.48	.02
	Relational Anxiety	.25	2.54	.01
	Relational Esteem	-.26	-2.52	.01
Parentification-Mother	Positive Adjustment	-.05	-.42	.68
	Negative Adjustment	.29	2.76	.01
	Relational Depression	.24	2.15	.03
	Relational Anxiety	.14	1.23	.22
	Relational Esteem	-.06	-.55	.58
Parentification-Father	Positive Adjustment	-.06	-.52	.61
	Negative Adjustment	-.03	-.42	.81
	Relational Depression	-.09	-.79	.43
	Relational Anxiety	-.05	-.48	.64
	Relational Esteem	.11	.97	.33

Note: B = beta weights

Table 14

The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Adjustment for Men with Divorced Parents

Boundary Diffusion	Adjustment	B	t(66)	p
Triangulation	Positive Adjustment	-.16	-1.18	.24
	Negative Adjustment	.23	1.86	.07
	Relational Depression	.27	2.07	.05
	Relational Anxiety	.28	2.08	.05
	Relational Esteem	-.31	-2.42	.02
Parentification-Mother	Positive Adjustment	-.06	-.43	.67
	Negative Adjustment	.27	2.19	.03
	Relational Depression	-.01	-.06	.95
	Relational Anxiety	-.14	-1.04	.30
	Relational Esteem	.27	2.09	.04
Parentification-Father	Positive Adjustment	.12	.94	.35
	Negative Adjustment	-.11	-.95	.34
	Relational Depression	.08	.62	.54
	Relational Anxiety	.02	.12	.86
	Relational Esteem	-.04	-.33	.75

Note: B = beta weights

Table 15

*The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Adjustment for Women with Divorced**Parents*

Boundary Diffusion	Adjustment	B	t(121)	p
Triangulation	Positive Adjustment	-.06	-.50	.62
	Negative Adjustment	.10	.91	.37
	Relational Depression	.29	2.59	.01
	Relational Anxiety	.24	2.08	.04
	Relational Esteem	-.26	-1.27	.03
Parentification-Mother	Positive Adjustment	-.14	-1.33	.19
	Negative Adjustment	.10	.98	.33
	Relational Depression	-.07	-.66	.51
	Relational Anxiety	-.03	-.30	.76
	Relational Esteem	.12	1.19	.24
Parentification-Father	Positive Adjustment	.17	1.66	.10
	Negative Adjustment	.17	1.70	.09
	Relational Depression	.05	.55	.59
	Relational Anxiety	.08	.81	.42
	Relational Esteem	.13	1.27	.21

Note: B = beta weights

over-connectedness with fathers. Overall, as a variable set, triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father was predicted to be related to the set of psychological individuation variables, consisting of nonconflictual independence from mothers and fathers and psychological over-connectedness with mothers and fathers. Common and unique aspects among the different boundary diffusions for predicting psychological individuation were examined.

Correlations between the variables of interest for the overall sample are summarized below. Please refer to Table 5 for a detailed overview.

Triangulation.

As expected, triangulation was negatively related to nonconflictual independence from mothers ($r = -.47, p < .001$) and nonconflictual independence from father ($r = -.52, p < .001$), meaning that participants who reported feeling triangulated between their parents in adolescence were also likely to report low levels of freedom from negative emotional reactivity toward their parents in young adulthood. As expected, triangulation was also related to feelings of psychological over-connectedness to their mothers ($r = .23, p < .001$) and fathers ($r = .16, p < .01$). This indicates that participants who reported experiencing triangulation during their adolescence tended to report higher feelings of guilt and need for approval from their parents currently. Overall, these findings support the hypothesis that triangulation and psychological individuation from parents are related among young adults.

Parentification by mothers.

As expected, parentification by mothers was related to indices of psychological individuation. Specifically, parentification by mothers was related to low nonconflictual

independence toward mothers ($r = -.34, p < .001$) and high psychological over-connectedness to mothers ($r = .24, p < .001$). Also, parentification by mothers was related to low nonconflictual independence toward fathers ($r = -.30, p < .001$). No relationship was noted for parentification by mothers and psychological over-connectedness to fathers ($r = .09, p = .07$). Overall, these findings support the hypothesis that parentification by mothers and psychological individuation (particularly from mothers) are related among young adults.

Parentification by fathers.

As expected, parentification by fathers was related to indices of psychological individuation. Specifically, parentification by fathers was related to low nonconflictual independence from fathers ($r = -.36, p < .001$) and high psychological over-connectedness to fathers ($r = .24, p < .001$). Weaker relationships were found between parentification by fathers and nonconflictual independence towards mothers ($r = -.16, p < .05$) and psychological over-connectedness to mothers ($r = .12, p < .05$). Overall, these findings support the expectation that parentification by fathers and psychological individuation (particularly from fathers) are related among young adults.

Set correlations to examine boundary diffusion and psychological individuation for overall sample.

For the following analysis boundary diffusion and psychological individuation components were considered as variable sets. Specifically, triangulation, parentification by mother, and parentification by father comprised the boundary diffusion variable set acting as the predictor set. Nonconflictual independence from mother, nonconflictual independence from father, psychological over-connectedness to mother, and

psychological over-connectedness to father comprised the psychological individuation variable set acting as the criterion set. The focus of the analysis was to predict psychological individuation components (the criterion) from boundary diffusion elements (the predictors).

As expected, results suggested that the boundary diffusion variable set was indeed significantly related to the psychological individuation set ($F(12, 1051) = 23.15, p < .001$, adjusted multivariate $R^2 = .45$). Follow-up univariate regressions indicated that all four psychological individuation variables were significantly predicted by the set of boundary diffusion variables. Specifically, the boundary diffusion variable set was significantly related to nonconflictual independence from mother ($F(3, 401) = 41.09, p < .001$), psychological over-connectedness to mother ($F(3, 401) = 8.32, p < .001$), nonconflictual independence from father ($F(3, 401) = 58.87, p < .001$) and psychological over-connectedness to father ($F(3, 401) = 9.42, p < .001$).

The regression weights shown in Table 16 reflect the contribution of each boundary diffusion element to the prediction of each of the psychological individuation variables after the remaining boundary diffusion elements have been partialled out. As seen in Table 16, within the boundary diffusion variable set, triangulation explained unique variance for predicting all psychological individuation variables with exception of psychological over-connectedness to fathers. Parentification by mothers predicted unique variance for both individuation measures answered in relation to mothers whereas parentification by fathers predicted unique variance for both individuation measures answered in relation to fathers. Overall, these results were consistent with hypothesis 3,

Table 16

*The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Psychological Individuation for**Overall Sample*

Boundary Diffusion	Individuation	B	t(403)	p
Triangulation				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.12	1.96	.05
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.40	-7.37	.00
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.08	1.37	.17
	Nonconflictual Independence -Father	-.47	- 8.99	.00
Parentification-Mother				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.15	2.57	.01
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.15	-2.89	.00
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	-.03	-.47	.64
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	.03	.66	.51
Parentification-Father				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.01	.22	.82
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	.04	.84	.40
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.23	4.23	.00
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.20	-4.30	.00

Note: B = beta weights

predicting that the boundary diffusion variable set was related to the psychological individuation variable set.

Lines of Investigation: How did the relations among boundary diffusion and psychological individuation vary by gender and family structure?

Results of correlations between the variables of interest are summarized for each group below. A detailed overview of the correlations is presented in Tables 7 to 10.

Triangulation.

Triangulation was consistently linked to lower nonconflictual independence from both mothers and fathers for all four groups. Particularly high correlations were observed for men with married parents ($r = -.64$ and $-.67$ with respect to triangulation and their feelings towards mothers and fathers). Furthermore, triangulation was related to higher psychological over-connectedness to both mothers and fathers for all groups except for young women with married parents. In general, similar patterns of relationships were found for triangulation and psychological individuation for young men and women with divorced and married parents.

Parentification by mother.

Parentification by mother was consistently linked to lower nonconflictual independence from mother for all four groups. The strength of this relationship was similar for all groups (r ranging from $-.27$ to $-.34$). Parentification by mother was also associated to lower nonconflictual independence from father for all groups (r ranging from $-.26$ to $-.37$), except for women with divorced parents ($r = -.08$). Finally, for men, parentification by mothers was strongly related to higher psychological over-connectedness to mothers ($r = .50$ for men with married parents and $r = .52$ for men with

divorced parents), however, this relationship was not found for women. In summary, young adults who report parentification by mothers in their adolescence tended to also report less freedom of anger and resentment towards mothers in their young adulthood, irrespective of the young adults' gender. Young men, however, were particularly vulnerable to also be reporting psychological over-connectedness to their mothers if they experienced parentification by their mothers.

Parentification by father.

Parentification by father was consistently linked to lower nonconflictual independence from father for all four groups. The strength of this relationship was similar for all groups (r ranging from $-.23$ to $-.44$). Parentification by father was also related to psychological over-connectedness to fathers for all groups (r s ranging from $.24$ to $.35$) except for men with divorced parents ($r = .12$). For young adults with married parents, parentification by father was also related to psychological individuation indices from mothers. In general, parentification by fathers was related to feelings of anger and resentment towards fathers and, to some extent, psychological over-connectedness to fathers for young men and women with married and divorced parents.

Set correlations to explore family boundaries and psychological individuation in relation to gender and family structure.

As conducted for the overall sample, multivariate set correlations were used to predict psychological individuation variables from boundary diffusion variables for each group. These analyses were conducted separately for men and women with divorced and married parents to explore how the sets of variables may relate similarly or differently for the four groups. For all four groups, the boundary diffusion variable set significantly predicted the

psychological individuation variables (see Table 17 for a detailed overview). At a univariate level, the boundary diffusion variable set significantly predicted all four psychological individuation variables for men with married and divorced parents. For women with married and divorced parents, the boundary diffusion variable set significantly predicted all psychological individual variables with the exception of psychological over-connectedness to mothers.

The regression weights shown in Table 18-21 reflect the contribution of each boundary diffusion element to the prediction of each of the psychological individuation variables after the remaining boundary diffusion elements have been partialled out for each group. Overall, triangulation most consistently explained unique variance for predicting a number of psychological individuation variables for each group. For males, in general, parentification by mothers uniquely predicted one aspect of psychological individuation from mothers (low nonconflictual independence- mother for men with divorced parents and high psychological over-connectedness to mothers for men with married parents). For women, parentification by mothers did not uniquely contribute to explaining the psychological individuation variables. For all groups, except men with married parents, parentification by fathers uniquely predicted aspects of psychological individuation from fathers. For a comprehensive listing please consult Tables 18-21.

Psychological individuation and adjustment for the overall sample.

Hypothesis 4: It was expected that lower levels of psychological individuation would be related to higher levels of negative adjustment and lower levels positive adjustment outcomes. Specifically, lower nonconflictual independence from both mother and father, and higher psychological over-connectedness to both mother and father would

Table 17

*Boundary Diffusion Variable Set Predicting Psychological Individuation for**Each Group*

Group	Individuation	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Men w/ married parents		.64	$F(12, 257) = 11.64$	.00
Psych Over-connectedness-Mother			8.27	.00
Nonconflictual Independence-Mother			26.94	.00
Psych Over-connectedness-Father			6.48	.00
Nonconflictual Independence-Father			30.55	.00
Women w/ married parents		.35	$F(12, 276) = 5.20$	.00
Psych Over-connectedness-Mother			1.22	.31
Nonconflictual Independence-Mother			6.55	.00
Psych Over-connectedness-Father			4.76	.00
Nonconflictual Independence-Father			12.99	.00
Men w/ divorced parents		.39	$F(12, 159) = 3.87$	.00
Psych Over-connectedness-Mother			7.82	.00
Nonconflictual Independence-Mother			3.82	.01
Psych Over-connectedness-Father			2.96	.04
Nonconflictual Independence-Father			6.95	.00
Women w/ divorced parents		.52	$F(12, 305) = 9.53$	.00
Psych Over-connectedness-Mother			1.87	.14
Nonconflictual Independence-Mother			16.38	.00
Psych Over-connectedness-Father			10.27	.00
Nonconflictual Independence-Father			14.12	.00

Table 18

The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Psychological Individuation for Men with Married Parents

Boundary Diffusion	Psychological Individuation	B	t(103)	p
Triangulation				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.26	2.29	.02
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.69	-7.35	.00
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.05	.40	.69
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.65	-7.14	.00
Parentification-Mother				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.24	1.79	.07
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	.05	.47	.64
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.23	1.71	.09
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.02	-.16	.88
Parentification-Father				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.00	.01	.99
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.01	-.15	.88
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.18	1.56	.12
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.06	-.63	.53

Note: B = beta weights

Table 19

The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Psychological Individuation for Women with Married Parents

Boundary Diffusion	Psychological Individuation	B	<i>t</i> (110)	p
Triangulation				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.04	.35	.72
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.27	-2.83	.01
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	-.00	-.01	.99
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.48	-5.34	.00
Parentification-Mother				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.03	.24	.81
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.14	-1.26	.21
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	-.19	-1.74	.09
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.01	-.07	.94
Parentification-Father				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.15	1.31	.19
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.09	-.80	.42
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.40	3.72	.00
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.08	-.84	.40

Note: B = beta weights

Table 20

The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Psychological Individuation for Men with Divorced Parents

Boundary Diffusion	Psychological Individuation	B	t(66)	p
Triangulation				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.19	1.65	.11
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.25	-1.95	.05
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.32	2.47	.02
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.32	-2.70	.01
Parentification-Mother				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.43	3.70	.00
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.23	-1.88	.06
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.02	.16	.80
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.17	-1.41	.16
Parentification-Father				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	-.10	-.95	.35
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	.12	1.01	.32
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.08	.69	.49
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.22	-1.94	.05

Note: B = beta weights

Table 21

The Relations among Boundary Diffusion and Psychological Individuation for Women with Divorced Parents

Boundary Diffusion	Psychological Individuation	B	<i>t</i> (121)	p
Triangulation				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.21	1.82	.07
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.51	-5.17	.00
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.35	3.36	.00
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.36	-3.51	.00
Parentification-Mother				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	.01	.12	.91
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	-.12	-1.29	.20
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	-.04	-.46	.65
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	.13	1.45	.15
Parentification-Father				
	Psych Over-connectedness-Mother	-.01	-.07	.95
	Nonconflictual Independence-Mother	.11	1.22	.23
	Psych Over-connectedness-Father	.19	2.07	.04
	Nonconflictual Independence-Father	-.29	-3.28	.00

Note: B = beta weights

each be related to higher negative adjustment, relational depression, and relational anxiety and lower positive adjustment and relational esteem. Overall, as a variable set, nonconflictual independence from both mother and father, and psychological over-connectedness to both mothers and fathers was predicted to be related to the set of adjustment variables. Common and unique aspects among the psychological individuation variables for predicting adjustment were examined.

Correlations between psychological individuation and adjustment for overall sample.

Table 5 summarizes the information pertaining to correlations between psychological individuation and adjustment. Only nonconflictual independence from mother correlated significantly ($r = .20, p < .001$) with positive adjustment for the overall sample. The other psychological individuation indices did not relate to positive adjustment. However, as anticipated, nonconflictual independence from mother and father, and psychological over-connectedness to mother and father were individually significantly related to negative adjustment and relational anxiety. That is, lower nonconflictual independence and higher psychological over-connectedness were each related to higher levels of negative adjustment and relational anxiety. In addition, all psychological individuation indices except for psychological over-connectedness to father, were related to relational depression. Specifically, lower non-conflictual independence from mothers and fathers and higher psychological over-connectedness to mothers were each related to higher levels of relational depression. Finally, nonconflictual independence from mother and father were positively related to relational esteem. For details about these correlations including their strength and significance

value please refer to Table 5. Overall, the claim that low levels of psychological individuation, measured by low nonconflictual independence from parents and high psychological over-connectedness to parents, are related to negative overall adjustment and negative relationship adjustment was supported. Evidence concerning whether low levels of psychological individuation are negatively related to positive adjustment or relational esteem were more inconsistent.

Set correlations to examine psychological individuation and adjustment for the overall sample.

For the following analysis psychological individuation components and adjustment were considered as variable sets. Specifically, nonconflictual independence from mother, psychological over-connectedness to mother, nonconflictual independence from father, and psychological over-connectedness to father comprised the psychological individuation variable set acting as the predictor set. Positive adjustment, negative adjustment, relational depression, relational anxiety, and relational esteem comprised the adjustment variable set acting as the criterion set. The focus of the analysis was to predict adjustment components (the criterion) from the psychological individuation elements (the predictors).

As expected, results suggested that the psychological individuation variable set was significantly related to the adjustment variable set ($F(20, 1311) = 7.27, p < .001$, adjusted multivariate $R^2 = .26$). Follow-up univariate regressions indicated that all five adjustment variables were significantly predicted by the set of psychological individuation variables. Specifically, the psychological individuation variable set significantly predicted positive adjustment ($F(4, 400) = 6.04, p < .001$), negative

adjustment ($F(4, 400) = 24.99, p < .001$), relational depression ($F(4, 400) = 13.97, p < .001$), relational anxiety ($F(4, 400) = 14.69, p < .001$), and relational esteem ($F(4, 400) = 7.46, p < .001$).

The regression weights shown in Table 22 reflect the contribution of each psychological individuation element to the prediction of each of the adjustment variables after the remaining psychological individuation elements have been partialled out. As seen in Table 22, nonconflictual independence from mother uniquely predicted all five adjustment variables. Nonconflictual independence from father uniquely predicted all adjustment variables with the exception of positive adjustment. Psychological over-connectedness to mother and father did not add unique variance above and beyond the other individuation variables for predicting the individual adjustment variables.

Lines of Investigation: How did the relations among psychological individuation and adjustment vary by gender and family structure?

Correlations between psychological individuation and adjustment by gender and family structure.

A summary of the correlations between psychological individuation and adjustment for each group may be found in Tables 7 to 10.

For men with married parents, low levels of nonconflictual independence from mothers and fathers were both related to all negative adjustment indices ($r = -.34$ and $-.31$ respectively) but not to positive adjustment indices. Psychological over-connectedness to mothers and fathers were both related to overall negative adjustment ($r = .36$ and $.29$ respectively) but not to relational specific adjustment nor to overall positive adjustment (see Table 7). For women with married parents, nonconflictual independence from

Table 22

The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Overall Sample

Individuation	Adjustment	B	t(403)	p
Psych. Over-connectedness-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	.02	.38	.71
	Negative Adjustment	.11	1.90	.06
	Relational Depression	-.03	-.52	.60
	Relational Anxiety	-.01	-.08	.93
	Relational Esteem	.03	.46	.65
Nonconflictual Independence-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	.22	4.10	.00
	Negative Adjustment	-.30	-6.03	.00
	Relational Depression	-.21	-4.02	.00
	Relational Anxiety	-.23	-4.37	.00
	Relational Esteem	.15	2.77	.01
Psych. Over-connectedness-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	.11	1.90	.06
	Negative Adjustment	-.04	-.71	.48
	Relational Depression	.00	.01	.99
	Relational Anxiety	.04	.73	.47
	Relational Esteem	.09	1.67	.10

Table 22

*The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Overall Sample**cont.*

Individuation	Adjustment	B	<i>t</i> (403)	p
Nonconflictual Independence-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	.05	1.00	.32
	Negative Adjustment	-.20	-4.31	.00
	Relational Depression	-.24	-4.78	.00
	Relational Anxiety	-.21	-4.17	.00
	Relational Esteem	.19	3.66	.00

Note: B are regression weights.

mothers was related in the predicted direction to all adjustment indices (r s ranging from .24 to -.49) except relational esteem. Nonconflictual independence from fathers was related in the predicted direction to all adjustment indices except positive adjustment (r s ranging from .27 to -.38). Psychological over-connectedness to mothers and fathers were both only significantly related to increased levels of relational anxiety ($r = .33$ and $.21$ respectively) (see Table 8).

For men with divorced parents, low nonconflictual independence from mothers was only significantly related to heightened relational anxiety ($r = -.31$) and nonconflictual independence from fathers was unrelated to any adjustment indices. Psychological over-connectedness to mother was only related to negative adjustment ($r = .31$), whereas psychological over-connectedness to father was unrelated to any adjustment indices (see Table 9).

For women with divorced parents, nonconflictual independence from mothers was related in the predicted direction to all adjustment indices (r s ranging from .33 to -.36). Similarly, nonconflictual independence from fathers was related to all adjustment indices in the predicted direction (r s ranging from .19 to -.30), except positive adjustment. Psychological over-connectedness to mothers and fathers were both not related to any adjustment indices (see Table 10).

In summary, nonconflictual independence from mothers and fathers appeared to be most consistently related to a number of adjustment indices, except for males with divorced parents where no relationship was found between nonconflictual independence from father and adjustment. Overall, psychological over-connectedness to parents

appeared to be less strongly related to adjustment than nonconflictual independence. However, it did play a role in adjustment particularly for adults with married parents.

Set correlations to explore psychological individuation and adjustment in relation to gender and family structure.

As conducted for the overall sample, multivariate set correlations were used to predict adjustment variables from psychological individuation variables for each group. These analyses were conducted separately for men and women with divorced and married parents to explore how the sets of variables may relate similarly or differently for the four groups. For all four groups, the psychological individuation variable set significantly predicted the set of adjustment variables (see Table 23 for detailed overview). At a univariate level, the psychological individuation variable set consistently predicted negative adjustment, relational depression, and relational anxiety for all groups except men with divorced parents. Furthermore, the individuation variable set predicted relational esteem for men with married parents and women with divorced parents. A trend was noted for women with married parents. The psychological individuation variable set tended to predict positive adjustment for women only ($p = .09$ for women with married parents and $p < .001$ for women with divorced parents). Overall, the psychological individuation variable set was related similarly to adjustment variables across sex and family structure, with the exception for men with divorced parents. For this group, the relation between psychological individuation and adjustment appeared to be weaker and less consistent than for the other three groups.

The regression weights shown in Table 24-27 reflect the contribution of each psychological individuation element to the prediction of each of the adjustment variables

Table 23

The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Each Group

Group	Adjustment	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Men w/ married parents		.38	$F(20, 316) = 3.62$	.00
	Positive Adjustment		.26	.91
	Negative Adjustment		6.77	.00
	Relational Depression		4.63	.00
	Relational Anxiety		6.18	.00
	Relational Esteem		4.28	.00
Women w/ married parents		.34	$F(20, 339) = 3.40$	.00
	Positive Adjustment		2.08	.09
	Negative Adjustment		11.27	.00
	Relational Depression		5.09	.00
	Relational Anxiety		6.93	.00
	Relational Esteem		2.06	.09
Men w/ divorced parents		.19	$F(20, 193) = 1.70$	.03
	Positive Adjustment		.58	.67
	Negative Adjustment		2.37	.06
	Relational Depression		1.01	.41
	Relational Anxiety		1.91	.12
	Relational Esteem		1.35	.26

Table 23

*The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Each Group**cont.*

Group	Adjustment	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Women w/ divorced parents		.25	$F(20, 376) = 2.75$	.00
	Positive Adjustment		5.15	.00
	Negative Adjustment		7.57	.00
	Relational Depression		4.87	.00
	Relational Anxiety		4.25	.00
	Relational Esteem		2.58	.04

Table 24

The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Men with Married Parents

Individuation	Adjustment	B	F(1, 103)	p
Psych Over-connectedness-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	.04	.31	.76
	Negative Adjustment	.14	1.17	.25
	Relational Depression	-.01	-.04	.07
	Relational Anxiety	-.08	-.62	.54
	Relational Esteem	-.17	-1.40	.16
Nonconflictual Independence-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	.03	.20	.84
	Negative Adjustment	-.18	-1.65	.10
	Relational Depression	-.35	-3.08	.00
	Relational Anxiety	-.39	-3.46	.00
	Relational Esteem	.19	1.66	.00
Psych Over-connectedness-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	.08	.56	.58
	Negative Adjustment	.11	.87	.39
	Relational Depression	-.10	-.83	.41
	Relational Anxiety	-.07	-.55	.58
	Relational Esteem	.41	3.28	.00

Table 24

*The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Men with Married**Parents cont.*

Individuation	Adjustment	B	<i>t</i> (103)	p
Nonconflictual Independence-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	.04	.33	.74
	Negative Adjustment	-.20	-1.88	.06
	Relational Depression	-.18	-1.07	.29
	Relational Anxiety	-.15	-1.44	.15
	Relational Esteem	.15	1.36	.18

Note: B = beta weights.

Table 25

The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Women with Married Parents

Individuation	Adjustment	B	t(110)	p
Psych Over-connectedness-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	-.15	-1.06	.29
	Negative Adjustment	.11	.86	.39
	Relational Depression	.05	.39	.70
	Relational Anxiety	.27	2.05	.04
	Relational Esteem	.03	.24	.81
Nonconflictual Independence-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	.17	.40	.12
	Negative Adjustment	-.40	-4.23	.00
	Relational Depression	-.17	-1.63	.11
	Relational Anxiety	-.07	-.71	.48
	Relational Esteem	.00	.01	.99
Psych Over-connectedness-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	.16	1.20	.23
	Negative Adjustment	-.20	-1.74	.09
	Relational Depression	.01	.07	.95
	Relational Anxiety	-.06	-.46	.65
	Relational Esteem	-.02	-.15	.88

Table 25

The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Women with Married Parents cont.

Individuation	Adjustment	B	<i>t</i> (110)	p
Nonconflictual Independence-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	.09	.87	.39
	Negative Adjustment	-.22	-2.44	.02
	Relational Depression	-.27	-2.73	.01
	Relational Anxiety	-.29	-2.94	.00
	Relational Esteem	.27	2.60	.01

Note: B = beta weights.

Table 26

The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Men with Divorced Parents

Individuation	Adjustment	B	t(66)	p
Psych Over-connectedness-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	.21	1.37	.18
	Negative Adjustment	.24	1.59	.12
	Relational Depression	.10	.66	.52
	Relational Anxiety	-.14	-.89	.38
	Relational Esteem	.25	1.64	.10
Nonconflictual Independence-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	.13	.97	.34
	Negative Adjustment	-.16	-1.22	.23
	Relational Depression	-.14	-1.01	.32
	Relational Anxiety	-.31	-2.32	.02
	Relational Esteem	.24	1.77	.08
Psych Over-connectedness-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	-.10	-.72	.47
	Negative Adjustment	-.09	-.68	.50
	Relational Depression	-.11	-.80	.43
	Relational Anxiety	.19	1.46	.15
	Relational Esteem	.00	.02	.98

Table 26

The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Men with Divorced Parents cont.

Individuation	Adjustment	B	t(66)	p
Nonconflictual Independence-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	.08	.61	.55
	Negative Adjustment	-.11	-.88	.38
	Relational Depression	-.12	-.91	.37
	Relational Anxiety	-.01	-.09	.93
	Relational Esteem	.18	1.35	.18

Note: B = beta weights.

Table 27

The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Women with Divorced Parents

Individuation	Adjustment	B	<i>t</i> (121)	p
Psych Over-connectedness-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	.03	.28	.78
	Negative Adjustment	.02	.20	.84
	Relational Depression	-.09	-.94	.35
	Relational Anxiety	.01	.09	.93
	Relational Esteem	.02	.22	.83
Nonconflictual Independence-Mother				
	Positive Adjustment	.38	4.15	.00
	Negative Adjustment	-.34	-3.85	.00
	Relational Depression	-.21	-2.24	.03
	Relational Anxiety	-.20	-2.19	.03
	Relational Esteem	.20	2.16	.03
Psych Over-connectedness-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	.19	2.06	.04
	Negative Adjustment	.01	.05	.96
	Relational Depression	.05	.55	.58
	Relational Anxiety	-.02	-.25	.80
	Relational Esteem	.09	.94	.35

Table 27

The Relations among Psychological Individuation and Adjustment for Women with Divorced Parents cont.

Individuation	Adjustment	B	<i>t</i> (121)	p
Nonconflictual Independence-Father				
	Positive Adjustment	.04	.49	.63
	Negative Adjustment	-.26	-3.09	.00
	Relational Depression	-.30	-3.42	.00
	Relational Anxiety	-.28	-3.15	.00
	Relational Esteem	.20	2.17	.03

Note: B = beta weights.

after the remaining psychological individuation elements have been partialled out for each group. For men, nonconflictual independence from mothers uniquely predicted aspects of relational adjustment. Individuation from fathers did not add unique variance in the prediction of any of the adjustment measures for men. For women, nonconflictual independence from mothers was uniquely related to negative adjustment. In addition, for women with divorced parents, nonconflictual independence from mothers also uniquely predicted positive adjustment and all three relationship adjustment indices. For women nonconflictual independence from fathers was uniquely related to all adjustment indices except positive adjustment.

In summary, nonconflictual independence from mothers was uniquely related to aspects of adjustment (particularly, relational adjustment for men) across all four groups. Nonconflictual independence from fathers only played a role in uniquely predicting adjustment for women but not for men. Psychological over-connectedness tended not to be uniquely related to adjustment across the four groups. Overall, the results are consistent with hypothesis 4, stating that the psychological individuation variable set is related to the adjustment variable set among young adults.

Psychological individuation as a mediator between family boundary diffusion and adjustment.

Hypothesis 5: It was expected that psychological individuation (measured by nonconflictual independence from mother and father, and psychological over-connectedness to mother and father) would mediate the relationship between family boundary diffusion (measured by triangulation, parentification by mother, and

parentification by father) and adjustment (measured by positive and negative adjustment and relational depression, relational anxiety, and relational esteem).

To this point, the results have indicated that boundary diffusion is related to psychological individuation and to adjustment and that psychological individuation is related to adjustment among young adults. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), these pairwise relationships between constructs are necessary as a first step for evaluating a model in which psychological individuation mediates the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment. The second step requires regressing adjustment on family boundaries and psychological individuation simultaneously. In this way, the unique contribution of each of boundary diffusion and psychological individuation components to the prediction of adjustment can be evaluated. Furthermore, a model in which psychological individuation mediates the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment will be supported if psychological individuation remains related to adjustment independent of boundary diffusion, while boundary diffusion demonstrates no independent relationship to adjustment.

Since each construct was measured by a set of variables, partial set correlation (Cohen, 1982) was used first used to evaluate the unique contributions of boundary diffusion and psychological individuation on adjustment, followed by univariate multiple regression analyses. The results of the partial set correlation analysis indicated that psychological individuation predicted adjustment independent of boundary diffusion ($F(20, 1301) = 4.18, p < .001, \text{adjusted multivariate } R^2 = .13$). However, boundary diffusion did not predict adjustment independent of psychological individuation ($F(15, 1083) = 1.64, p = .06, \text{adjusted multivariate } R^2 = .02$). This pattern of results also held for

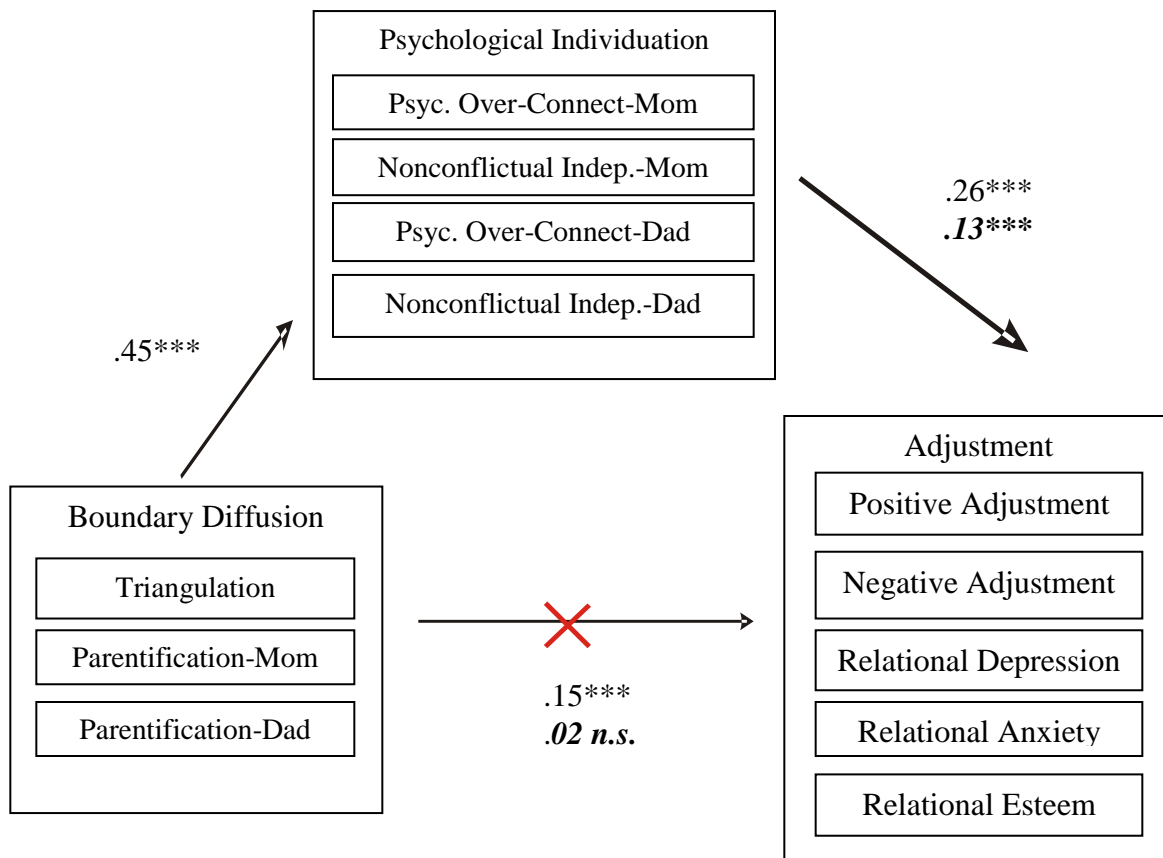
the individual adjustment measures. That is, all previously presented univariate effects of boundary diffusion on the five adjustment measures were reduced to nonsignificance after controlling for psychological individuation, whereas all previously reported univariate effects of psychological individuation and adjustment remained significant after controlling for boundary diffusion. Thus, in combining these results with those reported previously, a model is supported in which psychological individuation mediates the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment among young adults (see Figure 2).

Lines of investigation: Did the suggested meditational model hold for men and women with married and divorced parents?

As outlined in previous sections, results have consistently indicated that boundary diffusion is related to psychological individuation and to adjustment and that psychological individuation is related to adjustment among men and women with married and divorced parents. The next step involves examining whether psychological individuation remains related to adjustment independent of boundary diffusion, while boundary diffusion demonstrates no independent relationship to adjustment for each of the groups.

Since each construct was measured by a set of variables, partial set correlation (Cohen, 1982) was used first used to evaluate the unique contributions of boundary diffusion and psychological individuation on adjustment, followed by univariate multiple

Figure 2. The model representing the mediating relation of psychological individuation in the association between family boundary diffusion and adjustment



Note: *** $p < .001$

Numbers represent adjusted multivariate R^2 . Numbers that are italicized and in bold print refer to adjusted multivariate partial R^2 . For example, the adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .13$ refers to the relationship of psychological individuation to adjustment after controlling for boundary diffusion. The adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .02$ refers to the relationship of boundary diffusion to adjustment after controlling for psychological individuation.

regression analyses. The results of the partial set correlation analysis indicated that psychological individuation predicted adjustment independent of boundary diffusion for men with married parents ($F(20, 306) = 2.22, p < .003$, adjusted multivariate $R^2 = .17$), women with married parents ($F(20, 329) = 2.48, p < .001$, adjusted multivariate $R^2 = .20$), women with divorced parents ($F(20, 366) = 1.81, p < .02$, adjusted multivariate $R^2 = .11$), but not for men with divorced parents ($F(20, 183) = 1.36, p = .15$, adjusted multivariate $R^2 = .09$). This pattern of results also held mostly for the individual adjustment measures. That is, for men with married parents all adjustment indices (with the exception of negative adjustment) that were previously reported as significant remained significant after controlling for boundary diffusion. For women with married parents, all previous significant effects of individuation on adjustment remained significant after controlling for boundary diffusion. For women with divorced parents, the previously significant effects of individuation on relational adjustment (relational depression, relational anxiety, and relational esteem) were reduced to trend findings ($p < .10$) whereas the significant effects of individuation and adjustment (positive and negative) remained after controlling for boundary diffusion. For men with divorced parents, individuation was not found to be significantly related to the individual adjustment indices before or after controlling for boundary diffusion. It is suspected that the fewer number of participants in this group contributed to the lack of statistically significant findings as the overall general patterns and direction of results are similar to the other groups.

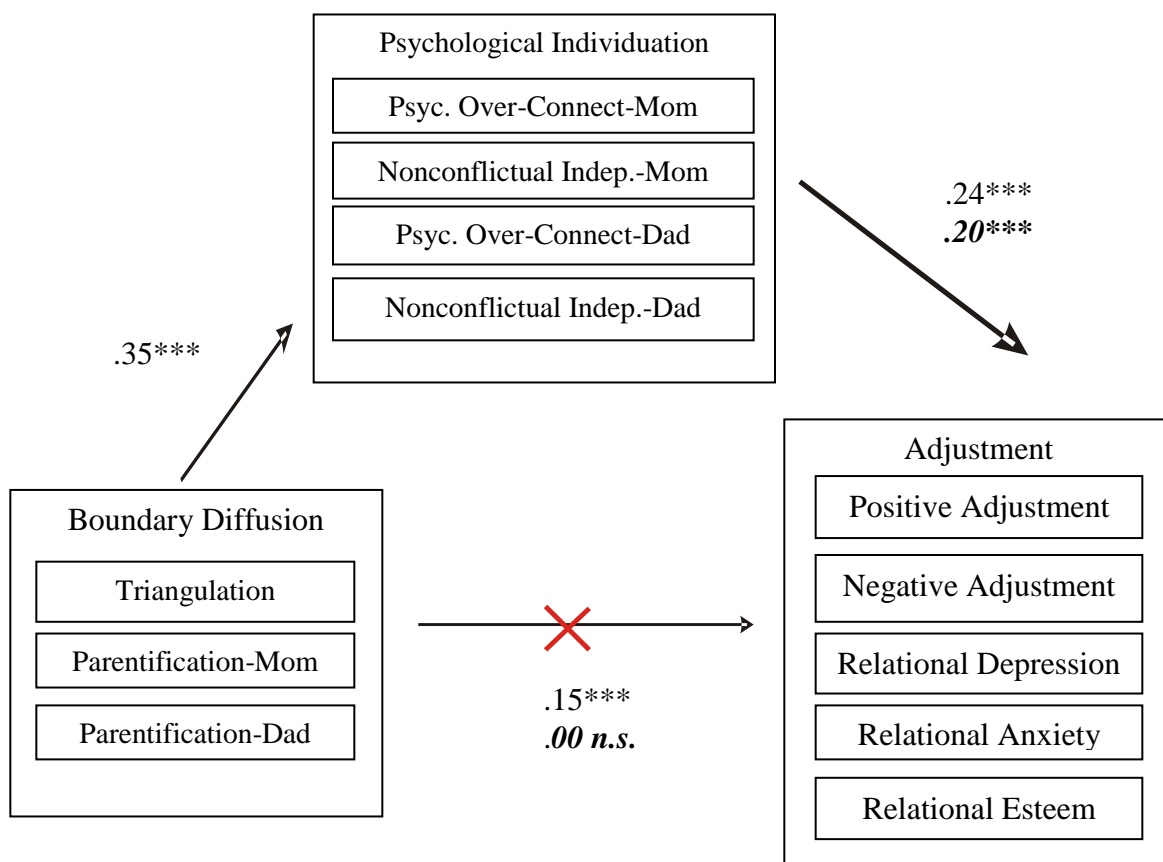
The next step involved testing whether boundary diffusion did not predict adjustment independent of psychological individuation. For women with married parents ($F(15, 274) = 1.11, p = .35$, adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .00$) and for women with

divorced parents ($F(15, 304) = 1.29, p = .21$, adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .02$) this claim was supported. For these two groups, this pattern of results also held for the individual adjustment measures. That is, all previously presented univariate effects of boundary diffusion on the adjustment measures were reduced to nonsignificance after controlling for psychological individuation. These results in conjunction with results presented earlier support the model that psychological individuation mediates the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment for women with married and divorced parents (see Figures 3 and 4).

For men with married parents boundary diffusion continued to have a statistical significant relationship to adjustment after controlling for individuation ($F(15, 254) = 1.80, p < .05$, adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .08$). However, controlling for psychological individuation did reduce the adjusted multivariate R^2 from .30 to .08, suggesting that psychological individuation partially mediated the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment for men with married parents (see Figure 5). In terms of univariate analyses, previously significant effects of family diffusion on relational depression and anxiety were reduced to nonsignificance after controlling for psychological individuation. Effects of boundary diffusion on negative adjustment ($p = .02$) and relational esteem ($p = .04$) remained significant after controlling for psychological individuation for men with married parents.

Finally, for men with divorced parents boundary diffusion ceased to be significantly related to adjustment after controlling for individuation ($F(15, 152) = 1.26, p = .23$, adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .04$) (see Figure 6). In terms of univariate analyses, previously significant effects of boundary diffusion on negative adjustment and

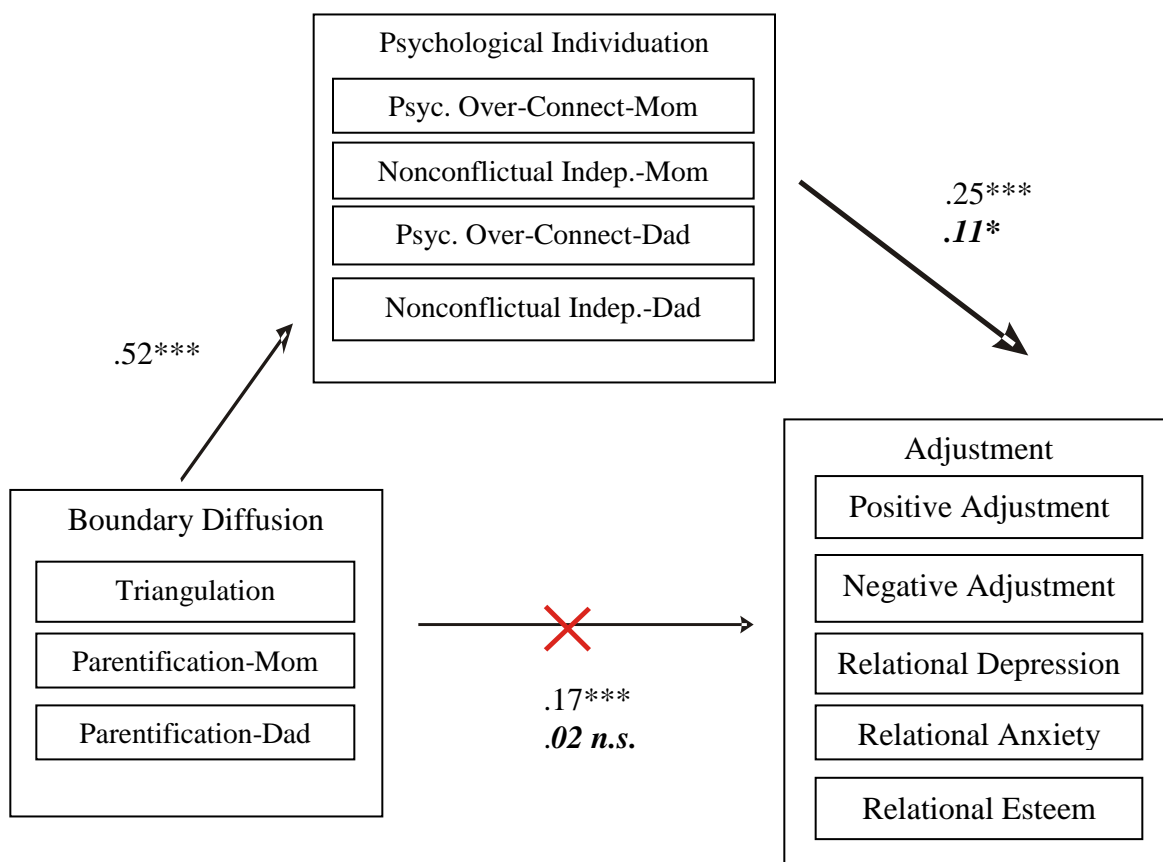
Figure 3. The model representing the mediating relation of psychological individuation in the association between family boundary diffusion and adjustment among women with married parents



Note: $*** p < .001$

Numbers represent adjusted multivariate R^2 . Numbers that are italicized and in bold print refer to adjusted multivariate partial R^2 . For example, the adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .20$ refers to the relationship of psychological individuation to adjustment after controlling for boundary diffusion. The adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .00$ refers to the relationship of boundary diffusion to adjustment after controlling for psychological individuation.

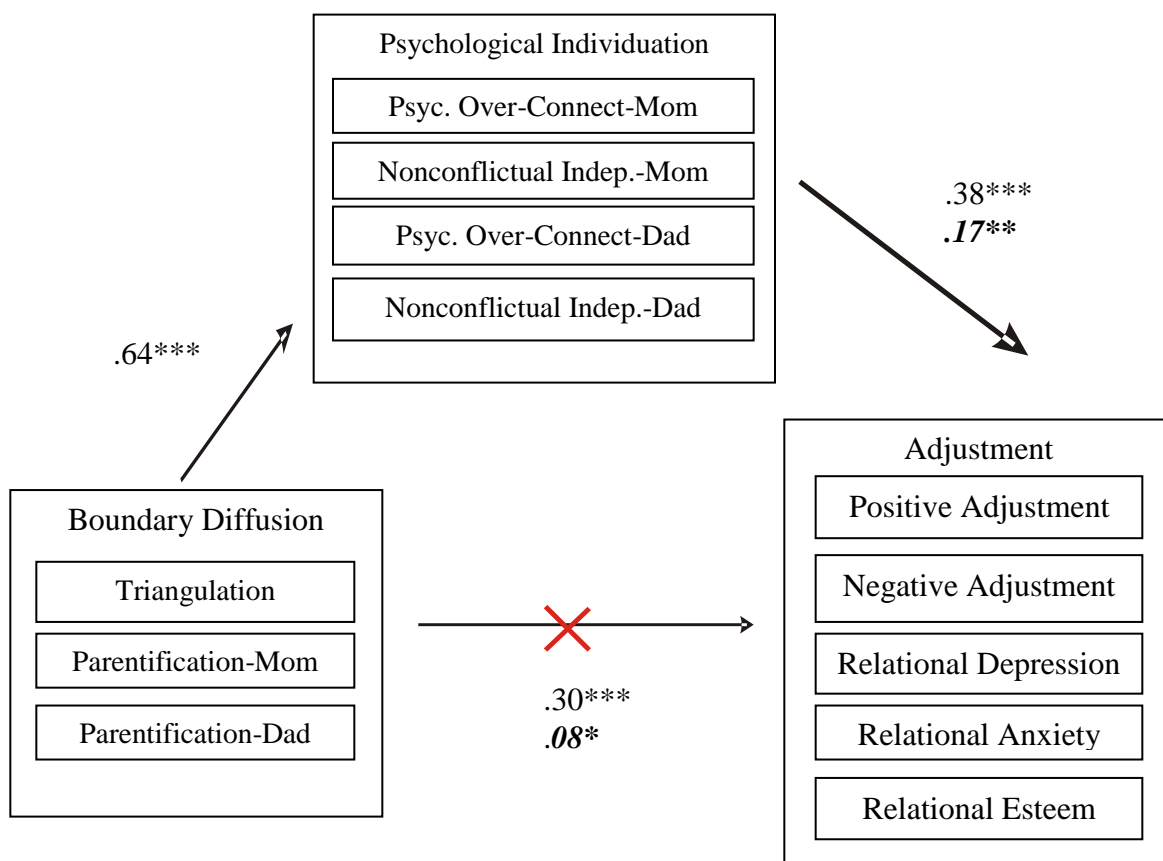
Figure 4. The model representing the mediating relation of psychological individuation in the association between family boundary diffusion and adjustment among women with divorced parents



Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Numbers represent adjusted multivariate R^2 . Numbers that are italicized and in bold print refer to adjusted multivariate partial R^2 . For example, the adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .11$ refers to the relationship of psychological individuation to adjustment after controlling for boundary diffusion. The adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .02$ refers to the relationship of boundary diffusion to adjustment after controlling for psychological individuation.

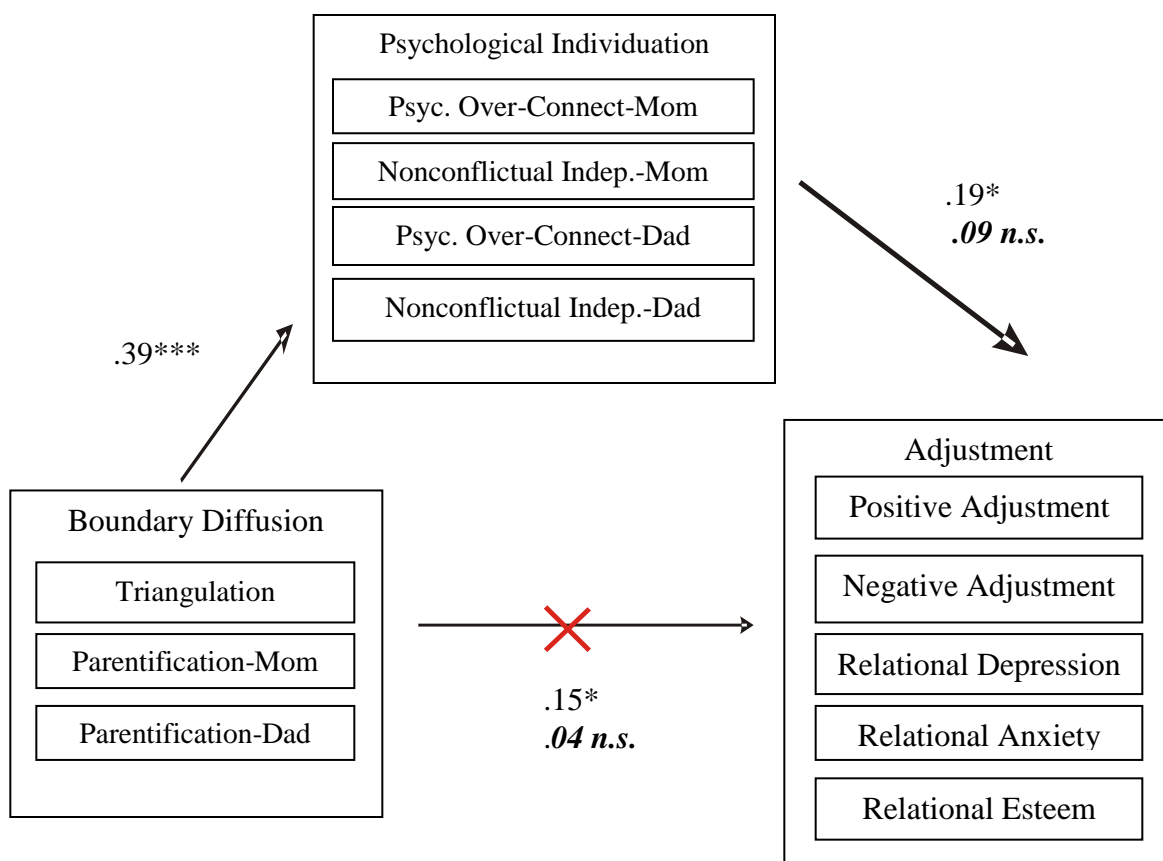
Figure 5. The model representing the partial mediating relation of psychological individuation in the association between family boundary diffusion and adjustment among men with married parents



Note: $*** p < .001$; $** p < .01$; $* p < .05$

Numbers represent adjusted multivariate R^2 . Numbers that are italicized and in bold print refer to adjusted multivariate partial R^2 . For example, the adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .17$ refers to the relationship of psychological individuation to adjustment after controlling for boundary diffusion. The adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .08$ refers to the relationship of boundary diffusion to adjustment after controlling for psychological individuation.

Figure 6. The model representing the partial mediating relation of psychological individuation in the association between family boundary diffusion and adjustment among men with divorced parents



Note: $*** p < .001$; $** p < .01$; $* p < .05$

Numbers represent adjusted multivariate R^2 . Numbers that are italicized and in bold print refer to adjusted multivariate partial R^2 . For example, the adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .09$ refers to the relationship of psychological individuation to adjustment after controlling for boundary diffusion. The adjusted multivariate partial $R^2 = .04$ refers to the relationship of boundary diffusion to adjustment after controlling for psychological individuation.

relational esteem were reduced to nonsignificance after controlling for psychological individuation.

In summary, for women with married and divorced parents the model was supported that psychological individuation mediates the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment. For men with married parents psychological individuation only partially explained the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment. For this group, boundary diffusion continued to have an independent effect on adjustment after controlling for psychological individuation. For men with divorced parents, controlling for psychological individuation reduced boundary diffusion's relationship to adjustment to non-significance. However, psychological individuation also did not have an independent relationship to adjustment after controlling for boundary diffusion, thus, not lending support for a mediational model. In general, however, the pattern of results for this group is similar to the pattern of results for the other groups, suggesting that the lack of significance finding may be due to lower sample size in this group relative to the other groups.

Summary of Results

Across the analyses employed in this study, nearly all hypotheses were upheld in this sample of young adults. Consistent with the first hypothesis, all three indices of family boundary diffusion were more commonly reported by young adults who experienced parental divorce than by young adults with married parents. Particularly large effects between the two groups were found with respect to triangulation, followed by medium-to-large effect size differences with respect to parentification by mothers, and small effect size differences with respect to parentification by fathers. Hence, as

expected, young adults who experienced parental divorce were more likely to endorse having encountered boundary diffusions, particularly triangulation and parentification by mothers in their adolescent years than young adults with married parents. Overall, gender differences were not noted with respect to boundary diffusions.

Consistent evidence in support of the hypothesized relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment was also observed across analyses. Specifically, boundary diffusion was linked to all five adjustment indices. Triangulation demonstrated itself to be a unique predictor of negative adjustment as well as of negative relationship-specific adjustment (relational depression and anxiety) above and beyond parentification by mothers and parentification by fathers. Overall, triangulation played a comparable role in predicting young adults' adjustment across sex and family structure.

Parentification by mothers was consistently linked to negative adjustment for all four groups. Yet, this relationship appeared weaker for women with divorced parents compared to the remaining three groups. Parentification by mothers was also only linked to negative relationship adjustment indices for participants with married parents but not for participants with divorced parents. With respect to unique contribution of parentification by mothers in predicting adjustment, it was observed that parentification by mothers was independently related to negative adjustment only for women with married parents and men with divorced parents. Furthermore, parentification by mothers was uniquely related to higher levels of relational esteem for men with divorced parents and lower levels of relational esteem for men with married parents. In combination, these results provide preliminary evidence that parentification by mothers may be related differently to young adults' adjustment across sex and family structure.

In terms of parentification by fathers, it was observed that parentification by fathers was linked to negative adjustment for all groups except men with divorced parents. This relationship was particularly strong for men with married parents and only for this group did parentification by father uniquely predict negative adjustment. These results suggest that men with married parents may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing negative consequences, specifically negative overall adjustment, from being exposed to parentification by fathers. Relationships between parentification by father and indices of relationship specific adjustment were weaker and more variable in nature.

Consistent support across analyses was received for the hypothesis that boundary diffusion is related to psychological individuation from parents. Across groups, triangulation was strongly related to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from mothers and fathers. Moreover, triangulation was robustly linked to higher feelings of psychological over-connectedness to mothers and fathers, except for women with married parents. Triangulation contributed uniquely in the prediction of all indices of psychological individuation, with the exception of psychological over-connectedness to fathers. Overall, triangulation and young adults' psychological individuation were related similarly across sex and family structure.

As expected, parentification by mothers was consistently linked to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from mothers for all four groups. When examined in the context of the other boundary diffusion variables, however, parentification by mothers did not uniquely predict nonconflictual independence for any of the groups. Interestingly, parentification by mothers was strongly related to psychological over-connectedness to mothers among men ($r = .50$) but no statistically significant relationship was found for

women. Consequently, parentification by mothers tended to uniquely predict psychological over-connectedness to mothers for men but not for women.

As expected, parentification by fathers was also consistently related to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from fathers for all four groups. Significant relations were found among parentification by fathers and psychological over-connectedness to fathers for all groups, except for men with divorced parents. Parentification by fathers predicted unique aspects of individuation from fathers for all groups except for men with married parents. Overall, strong support was obtained that boundary diffusion is related to young adults' psychological individuation as defined in this study.

Consistent with hypothesis 4 and previous research, psychological individuation was related to adjustment among young adults. Specifically, low levels of psychological individuation, measured by low nonconflictual independence from parents and high psychological over-connectedness to parents, were consistently negatively related to positive adjustment indicators (positive adjustment and relational esteem) and positively related to negative relationship indicators (negative adjustment, relational depression, and relational anxiety). For the overall sample, nonconflictual independence from mothers played a particularly important role in uniquely predicting all five adjustment variables. Similarly, nonconflictual independence from father uniquely predicted all adjustment variables with the exception of positive adjustment for the overall group. Psychological over-connectedness to mothers and fathers did not add unique variance above and beyond the other individuation variables for predicting the separate adjustment variables. However, when examined individually (without nonconflictual independence),

psychological over-connectedness to parents was related to adjustment indices particularly for young adults with married parents. Across gender and family structure, nonconflictual independence from mother was uniquely related to adjustment. Nonconflictual independence from fathers, however, only played a role in uniquely predicting adjustment for women but not for men. Psychological over-connectedness tended not to be uniquely related to adjustment across the four groups.

Finally, the hypothesized model that psychological individuation mediates the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment received partial support. For the overall group, psychological individuation indeed fully explained the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment. Similarly, for women with married and divorced parents, this model was supported. For men with married parents, psychological individuation was able to explain part but not all of the observed relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment. For men with divorced parents, boundary diffusion ceased to be significantly related to adjustment once psychological individuation was controlled for. However, psychological individuation was also no longer independently related to adjustment once boundary diffusion was controlled for ($p = .15$), which negates the support for a mediational model. It is uncertain whether the mediational model did not hold for this group due to the relatively small sample size and thus decreased power, or whether different mechanisms underlie the studied relations among men with divorced parents. Up to this point, however, the overall pattern of relationships among the variables had been similar for men with divorced parents compared to the other three groups, increasing the likelihood that the model was not fully supported due to insufficient power.

Discussion

Overview

The discussion is presented in five main sections. The *first section* provides an interpretive context of the study by describing background characteristics of the sample. In addition, an overview is given how this sample compares to previously studied samples in terms of their level of adjustment and psychological individuation from parents. *Section two* summarizes the study's main findings and situates them within the context of previous research efforts. Particular attention is paid to how these results build upon and extend the existing literature of boundary diffusion. *Section three* provides a critical review of the strengths and limitations of this study, followed by a *fourth section* which outlines potential areas for future research. The discussion concludes with a *fifth section* highlighting practical implications arising from the results.

Description of the Interpretive Context

One of the aims of the study was to recruit a diverse sample of young adults. Hence, efforts were made to recruit beyond the university setting, in the hope of increasing the diversity of participating young adults. Indeed, participants engaged from the community tended to report a lower socio-economic background, were more often living with their parents, and identified with more culturally diverse backgrounds than young adults recruited from the university. This suggests that the sample was successfully diversified beyond typical samples drawn solely from the university population, at least in terms of SES, living arrangements, and ethnicity. Nonetheless, even among participants recruited from the community, just over 40% indicated a middle to upper middle class background (versus 65% recruited from UVic), suggesting that, overall, the participating young adults reflected a relatively high socioeconomic background. In terms

of living arrangements, 42% of community participants reported living with their parents, which closely mirrors national trends, in that roughly 50% of all young adults aged 20–24 years live with their parents in Canada in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006). It is not surprising that a lower percentage (21%) of participants recruited from UVic reported living with their parents as the ability to attend university, and specifically UVic which is located on an island, frequently necessitates a move away from the parents' home. Finally, the ethnic variability was limited in this sample with approximately 84% of participants endorsed being Caucasian (nearly 90% of participants recruited from UVic versus 72% of the community participants), 8% identified being Asian (4% of UVic participants versus 19% of community participants), 3% reported being Indo-Canadian (3% of UVic and community participants), and the remaining 5% endorsing belonging to other ethnicities (e.g., Middle Eastern, Pilipino etc.).

However, this distribution is roughly representative of the ethnic diversity found within this geographical region as only 12% of the population residing in Victoria, British Columbia, belong to a visible minority group and 25% of the population living in British Columbia belong to a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2006). In summary, although this sample may overrepresent young adults from higher socioeconomic family backgrounds, evidence suggests that efforts to approximate a representative sample of young adults living in this geographic region were, at least, partially successful.

Given the focus of this research, participants with divorced parents had to meet a number of eligibility criteria in order to enroll in the study. Specifically, only participants were included who experienced their parents' separation before the time period (ages 14 to 17) for which the presence of boundary diffusion was retrospectively assessed.

Between 25% and 30% of children experience parental separation by age 14 in Canada, and it is this group that was targeted by the study (Statistics Canada, 2006). Additional inclusion criteria consisted of participants' mothers being single parents during participants' adolescence as it was expected that boundary diffusion may be interpreted differently in single-parent family homes than in remarried family homes. In British Columbia, approximately 19% of families are headed by single mothers (Statistics Canada, 2006), and it is thus from this population that the sample was drawn. Finally, participants had to have maintained contact with their fathers following the parental separation, which is not uncommon practice.

For example, for children who experienced parental separation between the ages of 2 to 11, only approximately 10-15% of fathers report seeing their child less than six days a year (Statistics Canada, 2006). On average, following their parents' separation participants in this sample reported spending 22% of their time with their fathers, which is comparable to the national trends (Statistics Canada, 2006). By virtue of the exclusion criteria, in this sample participants with divorced parents were more homogenous in their demographic characteristics than young adults with divorced parents in the overall population. As such, the current results may not generalize to young adults with remarried parents or young adults who experienced parental separation later in adolescence or young adulthood. Nonetheless, the make-up of this sample captures a large proportion of young adults who experienced parental separation in their childhood.

In this sample, young adults' overall adjustment tended to be high but comparable to participants' adjustment levels from other research studies (e.g., Saffrey & Ehrenberg, 2007). Despite relatively high adjustment levels, the standard deviations and observed

ranges on the adjustment measures suggested that the sample represented considerable variability in their psychological well-being. A similar picture is painted with respect to relational adjustment. Young adults reported relatively low levels of relational depression, relational anxiety, and medium levels of relational esteem. Again, these results are comparable to relational adjustment levels found among other young adult samples drawing (e.g., Snell, 1993; 1998; Snell & Finney, 2002). The ranges and standard deviations suggest a considerable degree of variability on the psychological dimensions of interest. Participants drawn from the community versus participants drawn from UVic did not differ on any of the adjustment indices.

In terms of psychological individuation, the young adults who participated in the current study also exhibited comparable levels of individuation as seen in other recent research using North American university samples (e.g., Schwartz & Buboltz, 2004) and samples drawn from different ethnicities and countries (Kalsner & Pistole, 2003; Mayseless & Scharf, 2009). On average, participants scored relatively high on nonconflictual independence from mothers and fathers. In addition, participants tended to score in the medium range for psychological over-connectedness to mothers and fathers. The observed means and standard deviations on the individuation measures are very similar to previous research.

In summary, participants were generally well-functioning young adults drawn from the community and university setting, yet representing a considerable range of relational and psychological adjustment to approximate a representative sample of young adults.

Findings Relevant to the Hypotheses

Boundary diffusion, family structure, and gender.

Consistent with previous research and clinical accounts, young adults in this study with divorced parents experienced higher levels of boundary diffusion or blurring of family boundaries during their adolescence than participants with parents who stayed married. On average, young adults with divorced parents experienced moderate levels of triangulation and feelings of parentification by mothers, but low levels of feelings of parentification vis-à-vis their fathers. In contrast, young adults with married parents tended to experience low levels of triangulation or feeling drawn into their parents' disagreements, and very little parentification by mothers or fathers. The low base rate of parentification among adolescents with married parents is also consistent with recent research (e.g., Maysless & Scharf, 2009; Peris, Goeke-Morey, Cummings, & Emery, 2008), suggesting that in families in which both parents are present, there may be less need for parents to turn to their children for emotional support. Overall, young adults with married parents were only rarely asked to mediate parental conflicts, infrequently perceived loyalty conflicts, and typically did not feel emotionally responsible for their parents' well-being, whereas reports of such experiences were reported much more frequently by young adults with divorced parents. Interestingly, higher standard deviations of experienced boundary diffusion were noted among young adults with divorced parents versus married parents, suggesting that the prevalence of boundary diffusion is more variable within divorced than married families.

A particularly striking difference between young adults with married and divorced parents was the frequency for which they perceived being caught in the middle between their parents. Young adults with divorced parents experienced considerably more loyalty conflicts and becoming involved as the mediator between their parents than young adults with married parents, suggesting that the circumstances of divorcing families created a context in which triangulation was more likely to occur. These findings are consistent with previous research, such as Afifi and Schrodt (2003), who reported similarly large triangulation differences between adolescents and young adults from divorced and intact families. Consistent with the current study's findings, Afifi and Schrodt (2003) concluded that triangulation was a rather common experience for adolescents with divorced parents in their sample. Given the reliable negative associations among triangulation and various psychosocial outcomes, educating and providing support to parents undergoing separation about how to help their children not to feel caught between their parents remains an important task.

In addition to experiencing higher levels of triangulation between their parents, young adults with divorced parents also felt more parentified by their mothers than young adults with married parents. Following Cohen's guidelines, this observed difference represented a large effect size between the two groups. These results are consistent with previous research, such as Hetherington (1999) and Jurkovic et al. (1997), who reported higher levels of emotional parentification for adolescents and young adults from divorced versus intact homes. Indeed, Jurkovic et al.'s (1997) effect size for differences between past emotional parentification among university students with divorced and married parents was nearly identical to the one found in this study (Cohen's $d = .77$ in Jurkovic et

al.'s sample and $d = .76$ in the current sample). Hence, these results provide further support that parental divorce presents a context that increases the risk for mothers to rely on their children for emotional support.

Most previous research does not differentiate between parentification by mothers versus fathers or limits their investigations to only mothers (for an exception see Hetherington, 1999). One aim of the current study was to flesh out the unique role that fathers may play in parentification and other types of boundary diffusion. Among the young adults who participated in this study, it was perceived that fathers were less likely to emotionally rely on their children than mothers (Cohen's $d = .70$). This finding is consistent with Hetherington's results outlining that mothers are more vulnerable than fathers to be drawn into parentification dynamics with their children when stressors are present. Nonetheless, young adults with divorced parents reported higher levels of parentification by fathers than young adults with married parents. Yet, it is important to note that this difference was relatively small. Overall, parental divorce slightly increased the risk for fathers to seek out emotional guidance from their children; however, the risk appeared higher for mothers than for fathers. This could be due to a number of different factors. Perhaps mothers are inherently more likely to meet their emotional needs in stressful times by sharing and discussing their worries with people in their lives (including their children) than fathers are. Also, adults who have supportive romantic relationships typically lean on their partner for emotional support and share their worries. Given the exclusion criteria of the current study, young adults' mothers were not remarried nor cohabitated with a partner during their child's adolescence whereas this exclusion criteria was not applied to young adults' fathers. Thus, mothers may have had

less opportunity to seek support from a partner than fathers had. Consequently, some mothers may be more likely to meet their emotional needs by turning to their children and adolescents for emotional support if a helpful partner is not available. Finally, following parental divorce, children were more likely to spend time with their mothers than their fathers. Perhaps mothers are more vulnerable to confide in their children in part because they spend a larger percentage of time with their children than fathers typically do, allowing the mother to more readily feel “close” to the child and to seek peer-like interactions with the child.

No gender differences were observed with respect to boundary diffusion in this sample of older adolescents and young adults. Specifically, young men and women experienced similar levels of triangulation, parentification by mothers, and parentification by fathers. Inconsistent findings have been reported with respect to child’s gender and boundary diffusion in past research. Most studies suggest that girls are more often the targets of emotional parentification and triangulation by both mothers and fathers (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Bell, Bell, & Nakata, 2001; Buchanan et al., 1991; Goglia et al., 1992; Hetherington, 1999; Vuchnich, Emery, & Cassidy, 1988). To explain these findings, researchers have speculated that cultural expectations and socialization reinforces nurturance and caregiving among girls, which in turn, increases the likelihood that girls will be pulled into or step into caregiving roles in the family (Brody, 1996; Kerig, 1999; Goglia et al., 1992). However, a number of other researchers have not found gender differences for levels of experienced boundary diffusion (Johnston, 1990; Jurkovic et al., 2001; Koerner et al., 2004). At a minimum, results from the current study suggest that adolescent boys are not invulnerable to being involved in boundary diffusion and need to

be included in future studies. Furthermore, young men are able to identify experiences of boundary diffusion in retrospect, even if this is not observable or reportable at the time during adolescence when parentification dynamics may come into play.

Boundary diffusion and young adults' adjustment.

Results from the current study support family system theory's claim that boundary diffusion within the family is negatively related to children's adjustment. Consistent with previous research efforts (e.g., Afifi, 2007; Fosco & Grych, 2008; Grych, Raynor, & Fosco, 2004; Mayseless & Scharf, 2009; West, Zarski, & Harvill, 1986) feelings of loyalty conflicts between parents were reliably linked to negative adjustment and negative relationship-specific adjustment. These relationships held across all four groups. Interestingly, feelings of triangulation were particularly highly correlated ($r = .5$) with negative adjustment for males with married parents, tentatively suggesting that within the context of intact families, adolescent boys may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing negative influences from taking on the mediation role between upset parents. This speculative statement contradicts previous results indicating that girls are more sensitive and affected by parental distress (e.g., Radke-Yarrow et al., 1994; VanderValk, de Goede, Spruijt, & Meeus, 2007) partly due to their greater social sensitivity (Crawford et al, 2001; Davies & Windle, 1997) and higher levels of empathy (Brody, 1996). Nonetheless, the current study's finding underscoring the vulnerability of boys is intriguing and further highlights the importance of including the male perspective in future studies.

Previous research has not yet examined the unique contributions that different boundary diffusion elements may make in the prediction of adult children's adjustment.

In the current study of young adults, experiences of triangulation during adolescence were unique contributors to explaining negative psychological adjustment and negative relationship-specific adjustment, such as relational depression and anxiety, over and above parentification by mothers and fathers. Specifically for young adults with married parents, a strong unique relationship was found between feelings of being “caught in the middle” and negative adjustment. For all four groups, triangulation uniquely predicted relationship adjustment over and above parentification. Thus, even within the context of other elements of boundary diffusion, such as parentification, the experience of triangulation adds unique variance in the prediction of adjustment. That is, the experience of being drawn into adult conflicts between their parents or being engaged to the side of one parent against the other is a potent predictor of negative psychological experience. Overall, these results further highlight the significance of raising awareness of the detrimental effect that drawing children into parental conflict or loyalty conflicts may have for children not only in divorced families but potentially also in intact families.

Maternal parentification was also linked to negative adjustment indices for all four groups. Yet, this relationship seemed more inconsistent and/or weaker for young adults with divorced parents. For example, mother’s emotionally leaning on their children was moderately related to negative overall adjustment for all groups, except for young women with divorced parents, where only a weak relationship was observed ($r = .18$). In addition, interesting group differences emerged in terms of parentification by mothers’ unique role in predicting adjustment over and above triangulation and parentification by fathers. For young women with married parents specifically, parentification by mothers uniquely predicted negative adjustment and relational

depression, whereas such relationships were not found for young women with divorced parents. For young men with married parents, parentification by mothers was uniquely *negatively* related to relational esteem, whereas for young men with divorced parents, it was uniquely *positively* related to relational esteem. In other words, for men with married parents, experiencing parentification by mothers in the context of other boundary diffusion predicted negative relational esteem whereas for men with divorced parents, parentification by mothers predicted positive relational esteem. In combination, these results provide preliminary evidence that parentification by mothers may be related differently to young adults' adjustment across gender and family structure. Indeed, adolescents with married parents might be vulnerable to experiencing the most negative consequences from parentification by mothers, although adolescents with divorced parents were not immune to some negative effects.

Specifically in this sample, young women with divorced parents seemed to be the least negatively affected by being parentified by their mothers. A number of possibilities exist of why young adults with divorced parents, and in particular, young women, may be experiencing less negative effects from parentification by mothers. For example, within the context of single-parent families it may be that parentification frequently represents a more time-limited parent-child dynamic as a response to an acute stressor. The data collected, unfortunately, does not allow investigation of the validity of this interpretation, as the duration of parentification by mothers was not assessed. However, the data did suggest that some parentification by mothers is a relative normative phenomenon for children with divorced parents. As Guttman (1993) emphasized, divorced single parent households should be conceptualized as having their own norms regarding boundary

regulation and exchange/reciprocity patterns. Perhaps, within the context of single-parent families, parentification by mothers is interpreted qualitatively differently due to different norm structures than within the context of intact families. However, this finding seems to be most applicable to girls' experiences only.

As previous research and the current results suggest, parentification by mothers is considerably less likely to be present in intact families. Perhaps, when it is present, it represents a less normative parent-child dynamic than in divorced-single parent families. Also, if it occurs it may be suggestive of other more longstanding parental and/or family issues that are giving rise to blurred boundaries, such as parental mental health issues and chronic marital conflict. In these circumstances, parentification is likely to become an entrenched pattern and may be longstanding, overtaxing children's emotional resources over time. However, these claims were not directly investigated in this study but should be addressed by future research. Overall, however, the current study's results suggest that the implications of parentification by mothers may vary as a function of family structure and child's sex. In this study, parentification by mothers was most consistently linked to indices of maladjustment for young women with married parents when controlling for other elements of boundary diffusion.

Interestingly, paternal parentification roughly mirrored the patterns of results found for maternal parentification and adjustment. Fathers leaning on their children was related to negative adjustment for all groups except for men with divorced parents. As in the case for parentification by mothers towards daughters in the context of divorced-single parent families, it may be that parentification by fathers takes on a different meaning within the father-son relationship within divorced families versus intact families,

leading to less negative impact for sons. The relationship between parentification by fathers and negative adjustment was strongest for young men with married parents and only for this group did parentification by father uniquely predict negative adjustment above and beyond triangulation and parentification by mother. These results were consistent with Hetherington's (1999) findings that boys were more sensitive than girls to emotional parentification by fathers. However, the current study's results suggest that this may only hold true for boys raised in intact families. For girls from both married and intact families, parentification by fathers were observed to be related to negative adjustment, however, this relationship was reduced to nonsignificance once triangulation and parentification by mothers was controlled for.

Boundary diffusion and psychological individuation of young adults.

Development of autonomy and psychological individuation represents a key developmental task for older adolescents and young adults (Bowen 1976; Erikson, 1968). This developmental task includes finding a balance between separation-individuation and connectedness to the family of origin (Bartle, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 1989). Evidence of successful mastery of individuation includes achieving nonconflictual independence from internalized childhood parental images (Blos, 1979) and reaching a position where older adolescents and young adults do not feel guilty about their parents and do not continue to judge themselves according to their parents' standards (Jersild, 1957). Theoretical writings have proposed that boundary diffusion may inhibit adolescents' and young adults' ability to navigate the individuation process in an age-appropriate fashion (Jurkovic, 1997). However, only very few studies exist which examine these proposed relations empirically (e.g., Jacobvitz & Bush, 1996; Mayseless & Scharf, 2009) and, of

these few studies, none of them include male participants or participants from divorced families. Thus, the current study extends earlier findings of boundary diffusion and individuation by widening the participant characteristics to include males and young adults with divorced parents. In the current study, boundary diffusion was indeed related to lower levels of psychological individuation among young adults across all analyses. These findings are consistent with recent results of Mayseless and Scharf (2009) who reported that inadequate boundaries were associated with lower levels of individuation indices, such as higher levels of separation anxiety and lower levels of nonconflictual independence, among a sample of Israeli female adolescents from intact families.

Overall, analyses suggested that boundary diffusion was related similarly to psychological individuation across gender and family structure. Specifically, “feeling caught in the middle” was strongly related to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from mothers and fathers and moderately related to higher levels of psychological over-connectedness to mothers and fathers. These results suggest that adolescents who perceived involvement as a mediator between their parents were also more likely to experience negative emotions, such as anger, resentment, guilt, towards their parents than those who were not involved in this role. The association between triangulation and conflicted feelings towards parents was particularly strong for men with married parents. Even when examined in the context of other boundary diffusion elements (parentification), triangulation was uniquely related to nearly all indices of psychological individuation across the groups, underscoring the robust relationship between triangulation and low levels of psychological individuation.

Maternal emotional reliance was also consistently linked to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from mothers across all four groups, suggesting that maternal parentification was linked to higher levels of anger and resentment towards mothers. Interestingly, this finding was observed for women with divorced parents as well, suggesting that even though parentification by mothers did not show consistent negative adjustment effects for these young women, it nonetheless was associated with more negative mother-daughter relationship. This finding contradicts researchers who have proposed that mothers leaning on their children for support may result in a closer, more supportive mother-daughter bond (e.g., Arditti, 1999) within the context of divorced parent families. However, when parentification by mothers was examined in the context of the other boundary diffusion variables, it ceased uniquely to predict nonconflictual independence for any of the groups. Thus, perhaps it is not parentification by mothers, per se, that might exert a negative influence on the parent-child relationship, but rather, a specific type of parental emotional reliance, which as a result contributes to loyalty conflicts or triangulation feelings that might be most potent for aspects of young adults' individuation from mothers irrespective of sex and family structure.

Interestingly, mothers seeking emotional guidance was associated with psychological over-connectedness to mothers for young men but not for young women. That is, only men who reported their mothers relying on them emotionally in adolescence were more likely to report feeling guilt and loyalty towards their mothers in young adulthood. This finding continued to be present when triangulation and parentification by father were controlled. In combination, these results may tentatively suggest that parentification by mothers differentially influences facets of individuation for women and

men. For both sexes, parentification by mothers is associated with anger and resentment towards mothers, but only for young men is maternal emotional reliance linked to feelings of guilt and loyalty towards mothers.

In contrast, parentification by fathers was associated with psychological over-connectedness to fathers for all groups, except for men with divorced parents. That is, those young adults, including women, who perceived fathers' support-seeking during adolescence, were more likely to endorse feelings of guilt, loyalty, and obligation to their fathers in young adulthood. Paternal parentification was also consistently related to lower levels of nonconflictual independence from fathers for all four groups. In other words, paternal emotional reliance and support-seeking was related to young adults' anger and resentment towards fathers. For young adults with divorced parents, this relationship remained significant even after triangulation and parentification by mothers was controlled. As was true in the case for mother-daughter relationships in the context of single-parent families, sons' relationships with divorced fathers are negatively influenced (increased anger and resentment) by paternal parentification despite it not being related to son's adjustment levels. Perhaps, within the context of divorced families, parentification represents a more variable and heterogeneous construct than is the case for married parent families, which may account for the less consistent findings among parentification, individuation, and adjustment. Future qualitative research may be particularly adept at delineating subgroups of parentification and its psychological meanings for young adults with divorced parents.

In summary, the results of the current study support earlier theoretical writings linking boundary diffusion to lack of individuation among young adults. Specifically, in

this study, boundary diffusion was associated with higher levels of psychological over-connectedness and lower levels of nonconflictual independence, exposing the internal conflictual nature of the dilemma faced by young adults who experienced boundary diffusion. These young adults were in conflictual relationships with their parents but, at the same time, unable to separate themselves because of feeling excessive amounts of guilt, obligation, and loyalty to their parents. The current study's results are extending on previous research investigating boundaries and individuation by demonstrating that these associations are generalizable to males as well as to young adults with divorced parents.

Psychological individuation and adjustment among young adults.

The relative success of adolescent's psychological individuation from parents has been hypothesized to be related to adolescent personal adjustment (Allison & Sabatelli, 1988). In fact, research has consistently demonstrated that adolescents who show age-appropriate levels of individuation score high on a variety of measures related to psychological well-being (e.g., Hoffman, 1984; Hoffman & Weiss, 1987; Lapsley, Rice, & Shadid, 1989; Levine, Gree, & Millon, 1986). Not surprisingly, in this sample of young adults, psychological individuation, measured by high nonconflictual independence and low psychological over-connectedness, predicted adjustment indices of overall- and relationship-specific adjustment across all four groups. For the overall sample, nonconflictual independence from mothers played a particularly important role in uniquely predicting all five adjustment indices. It was uniquely related to aspects of adjustment across all four groups. Similarly, nonconflictual independence from fathers uniquely predicted all adjustment variables with the exception of positive adjustment for the overall group. Particularly for daughters, nonconflictual independence from fathers

played a unique role (above and beyond other individuation indices) in predicting adjustment, underscoring the important role freedom from negative feelings towards fathers play in young women's adjustment levels.

Psychological over-connectedness to mothers and fathers were individually related to some adjustment variables, but did not provide unique variance in the prediction of adjustment over and above nonconflictual independence. In other words, nonconflictual independence from parents was the strongest predictor for varied aspects of positive and negative adjustment, including relationship adjustment, among young adults. This is consistent with previous research, such as Hofmann (1984) who also identified nonconflictual independence to be the most reliable predictor of adjustment among other individuation indices, such as emotional independence, attitudinal independence, and financial independence. However, given the correlational nature of the associations it is unclear whether low nonconflictual independence (high feelings of anger, resentment) precedes or causes negative adjustment, or whether those young adults who already are more negatively adjusted consequently report more negativity in their relationships with their parents.

Interestingly, psychological over-connectedness proved to be a less consistent predictor of adjustment than initially hypothesized. It was expected that young adults who feel excessive levels of guilt, loyalty, and obligation to their parents may fare less well than adults who have more balanced feelings towards their parents. Perhaps, however, this construct is not linearly associated with adjustment, potentially explaining the less strong findings. For example, it is reasonable to imagine that small to moderate amounts of feelings of obligation, loyalty, and wanting to please parents, may be suggestive of a

healthy parent-adolescent relationship. Individuation, after all, is a balance between separation and connectedness. Young adults scoring in the low to mid-range of this measure may in fact be feeling healthy levels of connectedness to parents. Conceivably those young adults who are scoring at either extreme of psychological over-connectedness may be struggling the most with individuation issues. Young adults who report feeling no obligation, loyalty, and guilt may be unhealthily disengaged from their parents whereas those feeling high levels of obligation, loyalty, and guilt may be unhealthily enmeshed with their parents. This idea would be consistent with a number of other related family relationship constructs, such as cohesion/enmeshment, which possess a curvilinear relationship to adjustment (Olson, 1994; Olson & McCubbin, 1990; Thomas & Ozechowski, 2000). Nonetheless, psychological over-connectedness was related to some aspects of adjustment for most groups and correlated in the predicted direction with nonconflictual independence. That is, feelings of obligation, guilt, and loyalty were associated with conflictual feelings (e.g., anger and resentment) towards parents.

Overall, consistent with previous research (e.g., Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1990; Hoffman, 1984; Klasner & Pistole, 2003) psychological individuation, measured by nonconflictual independence and psychological over-connectedness was related to adjustment indices, including general and relationship-specific adjustment among young adults. The pattern of associations was similar across gender and family structure, with nonconflictual independence from mother and father being most consistently related to adjustment.

Psychological individuation as a mediator between boundary diffusion and adjustment.

One of the key purposes of the study was to investigate the mechanism underlying the relation between boundary diffusion and adjustment in young adulthood. It was hypothesized that boundary diffusion experienced during adolescence may inhibit individuation from parents which, in turn, may negatively impact adjustment among young adults. In previous research, adolescent individuation has been identified as a mediator between parent-child dynamics (e.g., attachment) and adjustment among older adolescents (Mattanah et al., 2004). This study extends existing literature by examining whether individuation may account for the relationship among other family system properties, such as family boundaries, and adjustment among young adults. Furthermore, it explores whether these relationships hold similarly for males and females across two different family constellations.

As expected, for the overall sample, psychological individuation fully mediated the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment among young adults. In other words, young adults' conflictual feelings towards parents (anger, resentment, guilt) accounted for the relationship between perceived boundary diffusion in adolescence (triangulation and parentification) and adjustment in young adulthood. This mediation held for all indices of adjustment, highlighting the important and consistent role psychological individuation plays in explaining the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment among young adults. Previous theorists have speculated that family dynamics, such as parentification, may inhibit individuation (e.g., Jurkovic, 1997). However, this study represents the first empirical attempt to demonstrate that individuation is a key mechanism underlying the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment.

Tentative conclusions may be drawn based on the exploration of these relations for young men versus women with married and divorced parents. Psychological individuation fully mediated the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment for both young women with married and divorced parents. Thus, irrespective of family structure, perceived boundary diffusion in adolescence heightened vulnerability to conflicted feelings towards parents which, in turn, negatively impacted adjustment among young women. Broadly speaking, this suggests that boundary diffusion show similar relations to individuation and adjustment for women across family structures. It speaks against the notion that boundary diffusion has different implications for young adults raised in single, divorced parent families versus intact families as some previous researchers have proposed (e.g., Arditto, 1999, Rosenberg & Guttman, 2001). Nonetheless, certain subtypes of boundary diffusion, such as parentification by a specific parent, may be related to different outcomes depending on family context and child's gender.

The relations among boundary diffusion, individuation, and adjustment may be more complex for young men than young women. Individuation only partially mediated the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment for men with married parents. This suggests that factors in addition to conflictual feelings towards parents underlie the relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment. Interestingly, in this sample, the effect of boundary diffusion on adjustment was particularly strong for young men with married parents. It is unclear why young men with married parents seemed to be particularly vulnerable to negative effects of boundary diffusion, in particular, when previous research either indicates no gender differences (Jurkovic et al.,

2001; Koerner et al., 2004) or girls being more vulnerable to experiencing deleterious effects (Goglia et al, 1992; Hetherington, 1999). One possible explanation may be that due to gender socialization models, males may be less encouraged to storing emotional information during their development. Consequently, male adolescents may struggle more with processing and regulating emotional information than female adolescents (Roberston & Shepard, 2008). Perhaps one protective mechanism mitigating negative effects of boundary diffusion is the ability effectively to process emotional information and the capacity for self-regulation, which may be more developed among adolescent girls. Yet, further research is needed to replicate the finding and shed light on which factors, in addition to psychological individuation, may explain the robust relationship between boundary diffusion and adjustment among young men with married parents.

Although a mediational model was not statistically supported for men with divorced parents, the overall pattern of results strongly suggests that the variables are related in similar fashion as documented for women. It is suspected that the relative small sample size contributed to the lack of significance. Further research is needed to ascertain this claim. Overall, however, it was striking to observe how relatively similar the relations were among the main variables across the four groups, highlighting the robust role psychological individuation plays in boundary diffusion and young adult's adjustment irrespective of gender and family structure.

Strengths and Limitations

Family system constructs have gained wide popularity in the clinical literature over the past several decades; however, their systematic evaluation in the research literature is relatively new. Consequently, the development of the constructs'

measurement is still in its infancy. This study represents a careful attempt comprehensively to assess triangulation and parentification via self-report by drawing on theoretical conceptualizations and previous self-report measures. In order to extend previous research, an important goal consisted of establishing measures which achieved a balanced coverage of the constructs, capturing the complex nature of the phenomena. The resulting measures exhibited solid psychometric properties, demonstrated by consistently high Cronbach's alphas and high inter-item correlations. In addition, the measures consistently correlated in the predicted direction with other relevant constructs, suggesting convergent validity. Overall, the careful nature of the construction of the boundary diffusion scales and, subsequently, the strong psychometric properties of the scales represent a significant strength of the study.

The sample for the study was drawn from both the community and university setting. Efforts were made to achieve a relatively representative sample of young adults, allowing some generalization of results beyond young adults attending university. Indeed, review of background variables suggested that a more diverse set of young adults were captured when including participants recruited from the community. Nonetheless, on average, the young adults sampled were quite high-functioning. The benefits of focusing on such a non-clinical versus, for example, a clinical sample include reduced likelihood of confounding derivatives of other more severe risk conditions contributing to the development of blurred boundaries. For instance, children who experienced sexual and/or physical abuse are at a higher risk of experiencing parentification than those children who have not experienced such abuse (Howes et al., 2000; Macfie et al., 1999). This, in turn, raises the question whether it is actually parentification or the outcome of other risk

conditions which may co-occur with boundary diffusion that may influence individuation and adjustment. By studying a non-clinical sample, the hope is that there is less likelihood that the results are confounded by such factors. Even so, it is likely that even among this high-functioning sample, some derivatives of risk conditions may have been present for some young adults, which were not disentangled from the variables in this study. Such variables, for example childhood maltreatment, parental mental illness, which may set the stage for boundary diffusion (e.g., Howes et al, 2000; Kelley et al., 2007; Macfie et al., 1999; McMahon & Luther, 2007) were not controlled for in this study and, thus, this represents a weakness of the study.

Previous research investigating boundary diffusion has focused specifically on girls, due to the assumption that girls may be more vulnerable to being entangled in such family dynamics. A strength of this study was its balanced approach in including both young men and young women with roughly equal representation. The study demonstrated that young men are not invulnerable to boundary diffusion and are similarly if not more affected than young women, if not even more so, as was seen among young men with married parents. Future studies on this topic area should continue to pay attention to how young men may experience these family dynamics. Although considerable effort was exerted to recruit men with divorced parents, success was limited compared to the recruitment achievement of women with divorced parents. Due to the relatively small sample size of men with divorced parents, conclusions regarding this group need to be drawn more cautiously, and further research focusing on this group specifically, is needed. It remains uncertain why the recruitment of this group represented such a challenge. As a group, perhaps they are less willing or interested in sharing their

difficult family experiences compared to women with similar family experiences. Possibly they represent a group that is at higher risk for psychological maladjustment, yet, this appeared not to be the case for participants who were recruited into the study given their self-reported adjustment scores. Logistically speaking, perhaps fewer men than women with divorced parents attend post-secondary institutions (in particular, introductory psychology classes), where recruitment efforts were focused on. Indeed, for all groups but young men with divorced families, 70% of participants were drawn from UVic. For men with divorced parents, nearly 50% were drawn from the community as recruitment efforts were stagnant at UVic. This suggests that future researchers may be most successful at recruiting this group from the community versus university settings.

In the hope of striving for a balance between genders not only in terms of participant recruitment but also in terms of understanding boundary diffusion in relation to both parents, parentification was studied separately for mothers and fathers. This approach allowed for a more fine-grained analysis of how mothers and fathers might jointly and independently contributing to their child's individuation and adjustment. One reason given by researchers for not having investigated parentification separately for mothers and fathers is because of the often large observed correlation between the two constructs (e.g., Mayseless & Scharf, 2009), leading researchers to collapse the two constructs into one. Indeed, in this current sample, among young adults with married parents, parentification by mothers and parentification by fathers were relatively highly correlated ($r = .56$), suggesting overlap between the two constructs. However, for young adults with divorced parents, parentification by mothers and fathers was not significantly correlated ($r = .13, p > .05$). These results underscore the importance of investigating

these constructs separately for mothers and fathers, particularly for children with divorced parents.

This study focused on a subgroup of children with divorced parents, which represents a strength as well as a limitation of the study. The rationale to restrict the investigation to only a subgroup of children, who experienced their parents' separation by the age of 14 and whose mothers did not remarry during their adolescence, was to limit heterogeneity of the group, as such heterogeneity presented problems in previous studies. It was hypothesized that factors, such as having a step-parent or no contact with the biological father, may diversify the experiences young adults have with regards to boundary diffusion and adjustment. Since one of the major goals of the study was to explore whether boundary diffusion are experienced differently in diverse family structures, it was important that, at least as a starting point, the adult children with divorced parents had relatively comparable family structure experiences to one another. Yet, at the same time, it is important to note that these restrictions on the sample limit generalizability of the results to only young adults who fit the same eligibility criteria used in the study.

Other limitations of the study include the correlational and retrospective design of the study. The correlational nature of the analyses precludes any causal inferences of the variables. For example, based on this study it is incorrect to draw the conclusion that low individuation *causes* negative adjustment. Even though a causal relationship is hypothesized by theory, it is plausible that a young adult who experiences negative adjustment may also be more likely to view their relationship with their parents more negatively. Indeed, a more negatively adjusted individual may report having a more

conflictual relationship with their parents, without their negative adjustment being necessarily caused by such a relationship. Rather, it is likely that the two constructs are influencing each other bi-directionally over time. Similarly, given the correlational design of the study it is incorrect to conclude that boundary diffusion *causes* low individuation. Most likely there may be some inter-dependence between the facets of these two constructs as well. For example, in this study, psychological over-connectedness to mothers was linked to parentification by mothers among young adult males. Perhaps mothers were more drawn to confide in sons who exhibited an inherent tendency to feel concern, guilt, and loyalty towards them, which in turn strengthened sons' feelings of concern and loyalty for mothers, illustrating the potential bi-directionality effect between parentification of mothers and psychological over-connectedness. Yet, it is more difficult to understand to what extent a conflictual parent-child relationship may encourage the parent to seek out emotional support from the child. Certainly, theoretical writings presume that it is the experience of blurred boundaries, which in turn impedes healthy individuation. However, the possibility that adult children with low individuation possessed certain characteristics which drew parents to seek emotional support from them needs to be considered as well.

One of the main tenets of the study is that boundary diffusion in adolescence contributes to levels of individuation in young adulthood. In order to investigate this claim, participants were asked to report on current individuation levels and reflect back to their adolescence (ages 14 to 17) to recall boundary diffusion experiences for this time period. Even though this did not require participants to think back many years, it is possible that recent parent-child interactions coloured memories of past parent-child

dynamics. However, recent longitudinal research drawing on adolescents with married or cohabitating parents has suggested that boundary diffusion, such as parentification, demonstrates high stability over time (Peris, Cummings, Gocke-Morey, & Emery, 2008). This suggests that even if a recency bias was operating in the current study, it may not have confounded the results significantly as such family dynamics tend to persist over these developmental time periods. Yet, this notion may not be the case for the adolescents with divorced parents. On several occasions during administration of the research questionnaires, women and men with divorced parents asked for confirmation that the boundary diffusion experiences were to be reported for earlier in life versus currently, elaborating that, for particular parentification items, these kinds of interactions used to occur at a higher frequency in the past than now. These types of statements are consistent with research suggesting that parentification experiences are retroactively recounted as occurring at higher frequency in adolescence than in young adulthood for university students with divorced parents (Jurkovic et al., 2001), whereas this relationship was not found for university students with married parents (Jurkovic et al., 2001). Hence, being asked to recall these experiences retrospectively may have added error variance particularly for young adults with divorced parents.

This study relied on multiple self-report measures based on the reports of only one respondent, which represents a further limitation of the study. Having only one respondent raises the question of shared method variance bias. At the same time the young adult is in the best position to comment on many of the constructs measured, such as their adjustment levels. Nonetheless, richer data could have been obtained by also assessing parents' perceptions of their involvement in boundary diffusion and their adult

children's level of individuation. Ideally, a longitudinal design with multiple informants is needed to elucidate with more certainty to what extent boundary diffusions experienced during childhood and adolescence influence individuation levels later on during young adulthood.

A final consideration when interpreting the results is that the current study embraced a more narrow definition of individuation than many previous studies investigating individuation among adolescents and young adults. A number of other facets of individuation could have been measured, such as financial and/or functional independence. Since it was hypothesized that boundary diffusion may have the most impact on specific psychological aspects of individuation, a decision was made to focus on this facet solely. Recent research, however, has demonstrated that boundary diffusion is also related to these other aspects of individuation. For example, in a sample of Israeli adolescents, Mayseless and Scharf (2009) reported that parentification was negatively related to functional independence ($r = -.41$), although no significant relationship was found for triangulation and functional independence. These findings raise the possibility that at least certain types of boundary diffusion may be linked to other facets of individuation not discussed in the current study.

Future Research Directions

As alluded to in the previous section, a number of future research directions are warranted. For example, it is unclear to what extent blurring of boundaries are typically a stable family dynamic, specifically in the context of divorced families. Preliminary evidence suggests that boundary dynamics, such as parentification are relatively stable among adolescents in intact families (Peris et al., 2008), but little is known about their

maintenance or dissolution among adolescents in divorced families. During data collection a few participants with divorced parents had explicitly noted a change of these dynamics over adolescence. It is possible that more variability exists among divorced families, if such dynamics developed as a time-limited response to the separation crises, which subsides over time. Perhaps this variability may also explain the more inconsistent findings among parentification and adjustment for participants with divorced parents. It is suspected that particularly among children with divorced parents, different subgroups may be found which warrant further exploration. This calls for qualitative research, which focuses on contextual factors, to gain an in-depth knowledge of how family boundaries are understood and experienced in divorced homes. Similarly, qualitative research may also be needed to shed light on the preliminary finding of why parentification by the same-sex parent appeared to have little to no adverse effect on adjustment for young adults with divorced parents, which stood in contrast to findings related to young adults with married parents. In general, more fine-grained, contextual analyses are needed to further understand the mechanisms and implications of boundary diffusion in the family context of parental divorce.

When continuing to study this population in-depth it will be important to further include the male perspective. Men with divorced parents proved to be particularly difficult to recruit, perhaps because of increased hesitancy or limited comfort with sharing and reflecting on their family experiences. Indeed, men, in general, were more reticent to participate than women, who, on average, may be more open and eager to reflect on their relationships. Finding approaches to further motivate men to participate in similar research studies will be vital. For example, in the current study, research

invitations that were slightly re-worded to specifically reflect a concerted interest in hearing men's viewpoints as opposed to young adults' viewpoints in general tended to be more successful in engaging men into the study. Similar specifically tailored recruitment strategies may be necessary in order to achieve a balanced representation of young men and women in future studies. Since research in this area has traditionally focused on daughters and mothers, it is of particular importance that future research does not continue to neglect the male perspective.

Research conducted in other cultural contexts could also help shed additional light on risk and protective factors with respect to boundary diffusion. Previous theorists have speculated, for example, that parentification has less of a detrimental impact within cultures which are more familial in nature. The current sample was drawn from a predominately Caucasian, North American cultural background population, although, a significant minority of the participants indicated that they identified with Asian cultural background. Preliminary analyses indicated no significant statistical differences between the subgroups; however, this should not suggest that important differences do not exist. First, the sample sizes for the different ethnic groups were too small to be able to meaningful analyze potential differences. Second, since cultural background was not a focus of the study only a rough indicator of such was used for measurement, thus, perhaps obscuring differences. Studying boundary diffusion across various contexts (such as different family structures and cultural backgrounds) is meaningful to unravel diverse protective and risk factors implicated in family boundary diffusion.

The current study did not examine antecedents of boundary diffusion. For example, factors such as parents' personalities, mental health and physical health status,

and child effects, such as child's personality or temperament, likely influence the development and maintenance of boundary diffusion. To obtain a more complete understanding, future research may need to examine the contribution of both parent and child variables to these boundary problems. In particular, attention should be paid to separating adjustment difficulties resulting from boundary diffusion versus those more clearly related to pre-existing difficulties. Research studies employing a longitudinal design will be in the best position to address these remaining questions. Following families over different developmental periods, will provide more insight as to what processes are involved in the development and maintenance of problematic family boundaries across time and development.

Practice and Intervention Implications

Results of this study highlight the detrimental role triangulation plays in adjustment and healthy psychological individuation from parents among young adults. Triangulation proved to have more consistent and widespread negative effects on young adults' overall and relationship-specific adjustment than parentification, and thus, deserves special consideration from clinicians working with families who are at-risk for developing this pattern. Feelings of triangulation are particularly common for children with divorced parents. Parents undergoing separation should be routinely educated about the increased risk of triangulation and given tools to recognize and minimize such behaviour. Specifically, in high-conflict divorces, separating parents may need additional guidance in how to best avoid involving their children into their adult lives.

Even though triangulation is less common in intact families than in divorced families, when it does occur, it demonstrates similarly detrimental effects on adjustment

levels of young adults. Preliminary findings from this study suggest that adolescent males with married parents may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing negative effects from stepping into the mediation role between parents. Previous research has identified that these dynamics are most likely to occur in intact families when high parental conflict is present. Hence, when working with families presenting with marital conflict, clinicians should assess for triangulation and target this parent-child dynamic in their interventions. Moreover, since different types of boundary diffusion tend to co-occur, clinicians should be mindful of assessing parent-child boundaries in general. For example, if triangulation dynamics are noticed within a family, the clinician should be attuned to any potential parentification dynamics as well. Particularly, within the context of intact families, where boundary diffusion are less normative, clinicians are advised to address problematic parent-child boundaries in their interventions.

This study highlighted that maternal emotional reliance on adolescents within the context of intact families is related to problematic mother-child relationships later on and young adult children's adjustment. In families exhibiting this dynamic, clinicians may need to provide guidance to mothers in helping them not turn to their children for emotional support, and instead, get their emotional needs met by turning to friends and/or adult relatives. Yet, at the same times, clinicians should be aware that some emotional reliance by the same-sex parent in certain families (e.g., single parent families) may be more normative and not necessarily detrimental to the child's development. Overall, clinicians need to be sensitive of the different meanings family boundaries may take depending on cultural and contextual factors of each family and adjust interventions accordingly.

One of the major findings of the study suggested that psychological individuation is the underlying mechanism for explaining the relationship between boundary diffusion in adolescents and adjustment in young adulthood. Clinicians working with older adolescents and young adults with known boundary diffusion histories and adjustment difficulties may find it helpful to explore individuation themes with their clients in therapy. Addressing individuation issues by assisting clients with recognizing, understanding, and resolving conflictual feelings related to psychologically separating from significant others, particularly parents, may facilitate client's overall level of adjustment. Exploring with clients how their experience of diffuse family boundaries may have contributed to their struggles with healthy individuation from their parents may facilitate greater insight, understanding, and ultimately resolution of their current challenges.

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Appendix 2

Consent Forms, Questionnaire, and Debriefing Form



Department of Psychology

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (*for Psychology 100 students*)

Family Roles, Individuation, and Adjustment among Young Adults

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “Family Roles, Individuation, and Adjustment among Young Adults” that I (Marei Perrin, M.A.) am conducting under the supervision of Marion Ehrenberg, Ph.D. (a faculty member in the Department of Psychology). I am a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Victoria and you may contact me by phone (250- 721-8589) if you have any questions. You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Ehrenberg by phone at 250-721-8771 or via email at ehm@uvic.ca.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree in Psychology. The purpose of this research project is to understand the different family roles that young adults may have and how those may relate to parent-child relationships and adjustment. Research of this type is important because it will help professionals, such as counselors working with young adults, understand the relationships among family roles, parent-child relationships, and adjustment better. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an older adolescent or young adult from a family background (married parents or divorced, single parent) that we want to learn more about in this study.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a completion of a series of questionnaires. The study will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will be conducted either in a classroom or in a research laboratory at the University of Victoria.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including a commitment of time, as the completion of questionnaires will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete.

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include possible boredom, fatigue, and/or mild emotional discomfort. Because family relationships, relationship satisfaction and personal adjustment, at times, can be emotional topics, you may feel some mild emotional discomfort while answering some of the questions. If you become emotional during the course of the research study, you are free to interrupt or stop participating at any time. You may also choose not to answer a particular question with which you don’t feel comfortable. Copies of the University Counselling Centre pamphlets will be available to you if you desire professional assistance.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include giving researchers and counselors more information about how family roles, parent-child relationships, and adjustment are related. This information will be valuable to counselors who work with young adults from diverse family backgrounds. Also, participants in similar studies have sometimes found it

interesting and constructive to think about their family relationships by completing these questionnaires.

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given two bonus course credit points for Psychology 100. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used in the study and you will still receive your full bonus points for Psychology 100.

Since I will be administering questionnaires face-to-face in a group format (or individual format for those who prefer) anonymity is not possible in the data collection process. However, anonymity will occur in the management of the data and in reporting of findings. In addition, your name will not appear on any of the questionnaires. Instead of your name a research number will be assigned to the questionnaires to protect your anonymity.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by locking all questionnaires in a secure filing cabinet in a locked research office. Only lab members will have access to the locked filing cabinet. Signed consent forms will also be kept in a locked office but will be separated from any completed questionnaires.

It is anticipated that the results of this study may be discussed in classes, may be presented at professional conferences, and may be published in scholarly journals, but never with any identifying information. Moreover, if you are interested in the results of the study, copies of the research findings will be provided to you. You will also be able to access up-to-date summaries of the research findings through the research project's website at <http://web.uvic.ca/psyc/fmric/>.

The questionnaire data from this study will be disposed of seven years after any publication of research findings in professional journals, as this is how long the American Psychological Association requires researchers to keep such data in order to answer questions about their publications. Subsequently, all questionnaires will be shredded.

There are no other planned uses of this data. If an unforeseen application arises in the future, you will be contacted to obtain written consent before your data is used in a different project.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher



PLEASE READ AND TYPE IN YOUR NAME AND DATE AT THE BOTTOM OF PAGE 2 THANK YOU!

Family Roles, Individuation, and Adjustment among Young Adults

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “Family Roles, Individuation, and Adjustment among Young Adults” that I (Marei Perrin, M.A.) am conducting under the supervision of Marion Ehrenberg, Ph.D. (a faculty member in the Department of Psychology). I am a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Victoria and you may contact me by phone (250-721-8589) if you have any questions. You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Ehrenberg by phone at 250-721-8771 or via email at ehm@uvic.ca.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree in Psychology. This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

The purpose of this research project is to understand the different family roles that young adults may have and how those may relate to parent-child relationships and adjustment. Research of this type is important because it will help professionals, such as counselors working with young adults, understand the relationships among family roles, parent-child relationships, and adjustment better. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an older adolescent or young adult from a family background (married parents or divorced, single parent) that we want to learn more about in this study.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a completion of questionnaires. The study will take approximately 40-50 minutes and will be conducted by completing questionnaires sent to you by email or mail. Questionnaires may also be completed in-person in a research laboratory at the University of Victoria.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including a commitment of time, as the completion of questionnaires will take approximately 40-50 minutes to complete.

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include possible boredom, fatigue, and/or mild emotional discomfort. Because family relationships, at times, can be an emotional topic, you may feel some mild emotional discomfort while answering some of the questions. If you become emotional during the course of the research study, you are free to interrupt or stop participating at any time. You may also choose not to answer a particular question with which you don't feel comfortable.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include giving researchers and counselors more information about how family roles, parent-child relationships, and adjustment are related. This information will be valuable to counselors who work with young adults from diverse family backgrounds. Also, participants in similar studies have sometimes found it

interesting and constructive to think about their family relationships by completing these questionnaires.

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given a **\$10 gift certificate** either for Cineplex, Chapters, or Starbucks (whichever you prefer). If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation.

Anonymity will occur in the management of the data and in reporting of findings. Your name will not appear on any of the questionnaires. Instead of your name a research number will be assigned to the questionnaires to protect your anonymity. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by locking all questionnaires in a secure filing cabinet in a locked research office. Only lab members will have access to the locked filing cabinet. Signed consent forms will also be kept in a locked office but will be separated from any completed questionnaires.

It is anticipated that the results of this study may be discussed in classes, may be presented at professional conferences, and may be published in scholarly journals, but never with any identifying information. Moreover, if you are interested in the results of the study, copies of the research findings will be provided to you. You will also be able to access up-to-date summaries of the research findings through the research project's website at <http://web.uvic.ca/psyc/fmric/>.

The questionnaire data from this study will be disposed of seven years after any publication of research findings in professional journals, as this is how long the American Psychological Association requires researchers to keep such data in order to answer questions about their publications. Subsequently, all questionnaires will be shredded.

There are no other planned uses of this data. If an unforeseen application arises in the future, you will be contacted to obtain written consent before your data is used in a different project.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Typing your name below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study.

Your Name

Date

About You and Your Feelings:

The following sentences describe how people may feel. Please indicate how much you felt the following feelings in the past week including today by circling the number between 1 and 5 that best describes your experience (1 = not at all to 5 = extremely). Please respond to every statement.

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
1. Felt confident about myself	1	2	3	4	5
2. Felt depressed	1	2	3	4	5
3. Felt really up or lively	1	2	3	4	5
4. Felt pessimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
5. Felt like being with other people	1	2	3	4	5
6. Felt nervous	1	2	3	4	5
7. Was afraid I was going to lose control	1	2	3	4	5
8. Felt like I had many interesting things to do	1	2	3	4	5
9. Felt optimistic	1	2	3	4	5
10. Thought about death or suicide	1	2	3	4	5
11. Felt like I had a lot to look forward to	1	2	3	4	5
12. Felt like I was going crazy	1	2	3	4	5
13. Felt successful	1	2	3	4	5
14. Was able to laugh easily	1	2	3	4	5
15. Felt inferior to others	1	2	3	4	5
16. Felt really happy	1	2	3	4	5
17. Seemed to move quickly and easily	1	2	3	4	5
18. Felt keyed up, on edge	1	2	3	4	5
19. Felt very alert	1	2	3	4	5
20. Felt dissatisfied with everything	1	2	3	4	5
21. Felt cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
22. Unable to relax	1	2	3	4	5
23. Felt tense or high strung	1	2	3	4	5
24. Blamed myself for a lot of things	1	2	3	4	5
25. Felt sad	1	2	3	4	5
26. Felt like I was having a lot of fun	1	2	3	4	5
27. Felt really talkative	1	2	3	4	5
28. Felt hopeless	1	2	3	4	5
29. Felt like something awful was going to happen	1	2	3	4	5
30. Felt confused	1	2	3	4	5
31. Thoughts and ideas came to me very easily	1	2	3	4	5
32. Felt uneasy	1	2	3	4	5
33. Felt like I could do everything I needed to do	1	2	3	4	5
34. Felt worthless	1	2	3	4	5
35. Felt hopeful about the future	1	2	3	4	5
36. Felt like I had accomplished a lot	1	2	3	4	5
37. Felt discouraged	1	2	3	4	5
38. Looked forward to things with enjoyment	1	2	3	4	5
39. Felt like a failure	1	2	3	4	5
40. Felt very clearheaded	1	2	3	4	5
41. Was proud of myself	1	2	3	4	5
42. Felt afraid	1	2	3	4	5
43. Felt like I had a lot of energy	1	2	3	4	5
44. Was disappointed in myself	1	2	3	4	5
45. Felt really good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
46. Felt like crying	1	2	3	4	5

About You and Your Opinions about Relationships:

The following sentences describe how people may feel about close romantic relationships. While answering the questions you may think about a **current** close romantic relationship, a **past** close romantic relationship, and/or an **imagined** close romantic relationship. Please respond with the rating that fits best with your opinions (1= not at all like me to 5 = very much like me). Please respond to every statement.

	Not at all like me	Slightly like me	Somewhat like me	Moderately like me	Very much like me
1. I am a good partner for a close romantic relationship	1	2	3	4	5
2. I sometimes have doubts about my romantic relationship competence	1	2	3	4	5
3. It takes me time to get over my shyness in a new close romantic relationship	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am more anxious about close romantic relationships than most people are	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am not discouraged about myself as a close romantic partner	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel unhappy about my close romantic relationships	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel sad when I think about my close romantic experiences	1	2	3	4	5
8. I would feel anxious in a new close romantic relationship	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am better at close romantic relationships than most other people	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am disappointed about the quality of my close romantic relationships	1	2	3	4	5
11. I usually feel quite anxious about my close romantic relationships	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am depressed about the close romantic relationship aspects of my life	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel uncomfortable when I think about talking with a close romantic partner	1	2	3	4	5
14. I think of myself as an excellent close romantic partner	1	2	3	4	5
15. I would feel inhibited and shy in a close romantic relationship	1	2	3	4	5
17. I sometimes doubt my ability to maintain a close romantic relationship	1	2	3	4	5
18. Close romantic relationships make me feel nervous and anxious	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am less than happy with my ability to sustain a close romantic relationship	1	2	3	4	5
20. I have few doubts about my capacity to relate to a close romantic partner	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all like me	Slightly like me	Somewhat like me	Moderately like me	Very much like me
20. I feel nervous when I interact with a partner in a close romantic relationship	1	2	3	4	5
21. I am confident about myself as a close romantic partner	1	2	3	4	5
22. I would rate myself as a “poor” partner for a close romantic relationship	1	2	3	4	5
23. I am somewhat awkward and tense in close romantic relationships	1	2	3	4	5
24. I feel down about myself as a close romantic partner	1	2	3	4	5
25. I feel good about myself as a close romantic partner	1	2	3	4	5
26. I am not very confident about my potential as a close romantic partner	1	2	3	4	5

27. I responded to the above based on (circle all that apply):

- A. A current close romantic relationship
- B. A past close romantic relationship
- C. An imagined close romantic relationship

About You and Your Parents:

The following sentences describe experiences you may have had with your mother. Thinking about your relationship with your **MOTHER** during your **ADOLESCENT YEARS** (ages 14 to 17), indicate how often the following experiences occurred. Because each person’s experiences are different, there are no right or wrong answers. Just try to respond with the rating that fits best. Your first impression is usually best. Please respond to every statement.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
1. My mother depended on me for advice	1	2	3	4	5
2. It seemed like it was my job to make sure my mother was happy	1	2	3	4	5
3. At times I felt like I was the only one my mother could turn to	1	2	3	4	5

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
4. My mother discussed her financial issues and problems with me	1	2	3	4	5
5. I felt like my mother was the kid and I was the parent	1	2	3	4	5
6. Even when my mother did not need help, I felt very responsible for her	1	2	3	4	5
7. My mother needed me to take care of her	1	2	3	4	5
8. My mother usually consulted me before making household decisions	1	2	3	4	5
9. My mother talked with me about "adult" matters that parents don't usually tell their children	1	2	3	4	5
10. My mother let me have a lot of influence when making important adult decisions	1	2	3	4	5
11. I took care of my mother more than she took care of me	1	2	3	4	5
12. During my adolescence (ages 14 -17) my mother had worries	1	2	3	4	5
13. My mother talked to me about her worries	1	2	3	4	5
14. During my adolescence (ages 14 – 17) my mother was upset	1	2	3	4	5
15. If my mother was upset, I usually didn't get involved	1	2	3	4	5
16. During my adolescence (ages 14 – 17) my mother had personal problems	1	2	3	4	5
17. It seemed like my mother was always bringing her problems to me	1	2	3	4	5
18. My mother thought that it was right for me to know all about her personal problems	1	2	3	4	5
19. My mother confided in me about everything, even her most personal matters	1	2	3	4	5
20. During my adolescence (ages 14 – 17) my mother was stressed	1	2	3	4	5
21. I tried to protect my mother from stress and distress	1	2	3	4	5
22. In my mind the welfare of my mother was my first priority	1	2	3	4	5
23. My mother sought me out for advice	1	2	3	4	5
24. I was the one who was supposed to make sure my mother is happy	1	2	3	4	5
25. My mother depended on me for emotional support	1	2	3	4	5

The following sentences describe experiences you may have had with your father. Thinking about your relationship with your **FATHER** during your **ADOLESCENT YEARS** (ages 14 to 17), indicate how often the following experiences occurred. Because each person's experiences are different, there are no right or wrong answers. Just try to respond with the rating that fits best. Your first impression is usually best. Please respond to every statement.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
1. My father depended on me for advice	1	2	3	4	5
2. It seemed like it was my job to make sure my father was happy	1	2	3	4	5
3. At times I felt like I was the only one my father could turn to	1	2	3	4	5
4. My father discussed his financial issues and problems with me	1	2	3	4	5
5. I felt like my father was the kid and I was the parent	1	2	3	4	5
6. Even when my father did not need help, I felt very responsible for him	1	2	3	4	5
7. My father needed me to take care of him	1	2	3	4	5
8. My father usually consulted me before making household decisions	1	2	3	4	5
9. My father talked with me about "adult" matters that parents don't usually tell their children	1	2	3	4	5
10. My father let me have a lot of influence when making important adult decisions	1	2	3	4	5
11. I took care of my father more than he took care of me	1	2	3	4	5
12. During my adolescence (ages 14 -17) my father had worries	1	2	3	4	5
13. My father talked to me about his worries	1	2	3	4	5
14. During my adolescence (ages 14 – 17) my father was upset	1	2	3	4	5
15. If my father was upset, I usually didn't get involved	1	2	3	4	5
16. During my adolescence (ages 14 – 17) my father had personal problems	1	2	3	4	5
17. It seemed like my father was always bringing his problems to me	1	2	3	4	5
18. My father thought that it was right for me to know all about his personal problems	1	2	3	4	5
19. My father confided in me about everything, even his most personal matters	1	2	3	4	5

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
20. During my adolescence (age 14 – 17) my father was stressed	1	2	3	4	5
21. I tried to protect my father from stress and distress	1	2	3	4	5
22. In my mind the welfare of my father was my first priority	1	2	3	4	5
23. My father sought me out for advice	1	2	3	4	5
24. I was the one who was supposed to make sure my father is happy	1	2	3	4	5
25. My father depended on me for emotional support	1	2	3	4	5

Thinking about your relationship with your **PARENTS** during your **ADOLESCENT YEARS** (ages 14 to 17), indicate how often the following situations occurred by circling the number between 1 and 4 that best describes your experience (1 = never to 4 = often). Because each person's experiences are different, there are no right or wrong answers. Just try to respond with the rating that fits best. Your first impression is usually best. Please respond to every statement.

Please circle the numbers :

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1. My mother asked me to carry messages to my father	1	2	3	4	5
2. My father asked me to carry messages to my mother	1	2	3	4	5
3. My mother asked me questions about my father I wished she wouldn't	1	2	3	4	5
4. My father asked me questions about my mother I wished he wouldn't	1	2	3	4	5
5. When my mother was around, I hesitated to talk about things concerning my father	1	2	3	4	5
6. When my father was around, I hesitated to talk about things concerning my mother	1	2	3	4	5
7. My parents involved me in their conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
8. My mother wanted me to be on her side when she and my father argued	1	2	3	4	5
9. My father wanted me to be on his side when he and my mother argued	1	2	3	4	5

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
10. I felt caught in the middle between my parents	1	2	3	4	5
11. I felt like the mediator between my parents	1	2	3	4	5
12. I felt like I had to take sides when my parents had an argument	1	2	3	4	5
13. I felt that my parents could not get along with each other without my help	1	2	3	4	5
14. I felt disloyal to one parent if I was loyal to the other	1	2	3	4	5
15. It was difficult for me to feel closer to one parent without feeling less close to the other parent	1	2	3	4	5
16. I felt that my parents were competing for my affection	1	2	3	4	5
17. I didn't feel like I have to take sides when my parents have a disagreement	1	2	3	4	5

The following sentences describe experiences you may be having with your **MOTHER CURRENTLY**. Because each person's experiences are different, there are no right or wrong answers. Just try to respond with the rating that fits best. Your first impression is usually best. Please respond to every statement.

	Not at all true	A little bit true	Moderately true	Quite a bit true	Very true
1. I would have fewer problems if my mother behaved differently	1	2	3	4	5
2. My mother will be very hurt if I don't live near her	1	2	3	4	5
3. If I did not follow the advice that my mother offered, I would feel guilty	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sometimes my mother is a burden to me	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel like I am constantly at war with my mother	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am comfortable with how I'm similar to my mother	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all true	A little bit true	Moderately true	Quite a bit true	Very true
7. I blame my mother for many of the problems I have	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel guilty about continuing a relationship with someone my mother does not like	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel like I can be myself around my mother	1	2	3	4	5
10. I become upset when my mother criticizes my behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel that bad things may happen to my mother if I don't stay in close contact with her	1	2	3	4	5
12. I want to live close to my mother	1	2	3	4	5
13. I wish I could trust my mother more	1	2	3	4	5
14. I have to be careful not to hurt my mother's feelings	1	2	3	4	5
15. I sometimes feel like I'm being punished by my mother	1	2	3	4	5
16. When I don't agree with my mother, we usually "agree to disagree"	1	2	3	4	5
17. I feel obligated to spend time with my mother	1	2	3	4	5
18. When I am told that I have done something which hurt my mother I feel guilty	1	2	3	4	5
19. When my mother asks me to do certain things, I feel comfortable saying "no"	1	2	3	4	5
20. I wish my mother wasn't so over protective	1	2	3	4	5
21. My mother expects too much of me	1	2	3	4	5
22. I am sometimes ashamed of my mother	1	2	3	4	5
23. I feel obligated to stop associating with friends my mother does not like	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am comfortable with how I'm different from my mother	1	2	3	4	5
25. I wish my mother wouldn't try to manipulate me	1	2	3	4	5
26. I feel that I have obligations to my mother that I wish I didn't have	1	2	3	4	5
27. I wish I could stop lying to my mother	1	2	3	4	5
28. I feel guilty when I do not take the side of my mother in a disagreement with others	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all true	A little bit true	Moderately true	Quite a bit true	Very true
29. I become upset at the thought of telling my mother that she is interfering in my life	1	2	3	4	5
30. There are certain things I do for my mother because I have an obligation to	1	2	3	4	5
31. I wish my mother wouldn't try to make fun of me	1	2	3	4	5
32. I hate it when my mother makes suggestions about what I do	1	2	3	4	5
33. Even when my mother has a good idea I refuse to listen to it because she made it	1	2	3	4	5
34. When I am told that my mother disapproves of something I have done, I feel obligated to change what I am doing	1	2	3	4	5
35. I feel comfortable associating with friends my mother does not like	1	2	3	4	5
36. I often wish that my mother would treat me more like an adult	1	2	3	4	5
37. I argue with my mother over many little things	1	2	3	4	5
38. I wish my mother wouldn't try to get me to take sides with her	1	2	3	4	5
39. I am usually able to disagree with my mother without getting upset	1	2	3	4	5
40. I am often angry at my mother	1	2	3	4	5
41. My mother is sometimes a source of embarrassment to me	1	2	3	4	5
42. When I don't keep in touch with my mother often enough I feel guilty	1	2	3	4	5
43. I ask whether or not my mother approves of people I am intimate with	1	2	3	4	5
44. If I disagree with something my mother is doing, I usually feel free to say so	1	2	3	4	5
45. I feel uncomfortable keeping things from my mother	1	2	3	4	5
46. I get angry when my mother criticizes me	1	2	3	4	5
47. I often have to make decisions for my mother	1	2	3	4	5
48. When my mother asks me to do certain things, I feel guilty when I have to say no	1	2	3	4	5
49. I rely on my mother's approval to let me know I am doing things right	1	2	3	4	5
50. I feel okay about continuing a relationship with someone my mother does not like	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all true	A little bit true	Moderately true	Quite a bit true	Very true
51. I feel upset when my mother does not approve of people I am intimate with	1	2	3	4	5
52. My mother sometimes does things I do not agree with	1	2	3	4	5
53. When my mother does things I do not agree with, I still care about her a great deal	1	2	3	4	5
54. I choose friends that my mother will like and feel comfortable with	1	2	3	4	5
55. I sometimes resent it when my mother tells me what to do	1	2	3	4	5
56. I listen to my mother's advice but ultimately decide what I do on my own	1	2	3	4	5

The following sentences describe experiences you may be having with your **FATHER CURRENTLY**. Because each person's experiences are different, there are no right or wrong answers. Respond with the rating that fits best. Your first impression is usually best. Please respond to every statement.

	Not at all true	A little bit true	Moderately true	Quite a bit true	Very true
1. I would have fewer problems if my father behaved differently	1	2	3	4	5
2. My father will be very hurt if I don't live near him	1	2	3	4	5
3. If I did not follow the advice that my father offered, I would feel guilty	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sometimes my father is a burden to me	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel like I am constantly at war with my father	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am comfortable with how I'm similar to my father	1	2	3	4	5
7. I blame my father for many of the problems I have	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel guilty about continuing a relationship with someone my father does not like	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel like I can be myself around my father	1	2	3	4	5
10. I become upset when my father criticizes my behaviour	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all true	A little bit true	Moderately true	Quite a bit true	Very true
11. I feel that bad things may happen to my father if I don't stay in close contact with him	1	2	3	4	5
12. I want to live close to my father	1	2	3	4	5
13. I wish I could trust my father more	1	2	3	4	5
14. I have to be careful not to hurt my father's feelings	1	2	3	4	5
15. I sometimes feel like I'm being punished by my father	1	2	3	4	5
16. When I don't agree with my father, we usually "agree to disagree"	1	2	3	4	5
17. I feel obligated to spend time with my father	1	2	3	4	5
18. When I am told that I have done something which hurt my father I feel guilty	1	2	3	4	5
19. When my father asks me to do certain things, I feel comfortable saying "no"	1	2	3	4	5
20. I wish my father wasn't so over protective	1	2	3	4	5
21. My father expects too much of me	1	2	3	4	5
22. I am sometimes ashamed of my father	1	2	3	4	5
23. I feel obligated to stop associating with friends my father does not like	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am comfortable with how I'm different from my father	1	2	3	4	5
25. I wish my father wouldn't try to manipulate me	1	2	3	4	5
26. I feel that I have obligations to my father that I wish I didn't have	1	2	3	4	5
27. I wish I could stop lying to my father	1	2	3	4	5
28. I feel guilty when I do not take the side of my father in a disagreement with others	1	2	3	4	5
29. I become upset at the thought of telling my father that he is interfering in my life	1	2	3	4	5
30. There are certain things I do for my father because I have an obligation to	1	2	3	4	5
31. I wish my father wouldn't try to make fun of me	1	2	3	4	5
32. I hate it when my father makes suggestions about what I do	1	2	3	4	5
33. Even when my father has a good idea I refuse to listen to it because he made it	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all true	A little bit true	Moderately true	Quite a bit true	Very true
34. When I am told that my father disapproves of something I have done, I feel obligated to change what I am doing	1	2	3	4	5
35. I feel comfortable associating with friends my father does not like	1	2	3	4	5
36. I often wish that my father would treat me more like an adult	1	2	3	4	5
37. I argue with my father many over little things	1	2	3	4	5
38. I wish my father wouldn't try to get me to take sides with him	1	2	3	4	5
39. I am usually able to disagree with my father without getting upset	1	2	3	4	5
40. I am often angry at my father	1	2	3	4	5
41. My father is sometimes a source of embarrassment to me	1	2	3	4	5
42. When I don't keep in touch with my father often enough I feel guilty	1	2	3	4	5
43. I ask whether or not my father approves of people I am intimate with	1	2	3	4	5
44. If I disagree with something my father is doing, I usually feel free to say so	1	2	3	4	5
45. I feel uncomfortable keeping things from my father	1	2	3	4	5
46. I get angry when my father criticizes me	1	2	3	4	5
47. I often have to make decisions for my father	1	2	3	4	5
48. When my father asks me to do certain things, I feel guilty when I have to say no	1	2	3	4	5
49. I rely on my father's approval to let me know I am doing things right	1	2	3	4	5
50. I feel okay about continuing a relationship with someone my father does not like	1	2	3	4	5
51. I feel upset when my father does not approve of people I am intimate with	1	2	3	4	5
52. My father sometimes does things I do not agree with	1	2	3	4	5
53. When my father does things I do not agree with, I still care about him a great deal	1	2	3	4	5
54. I choose friends that my father will like and feel comfortable with	1	2	3	4	5
55. I sometimes resent it when my father tells me what to do	1	2	3	4	5
56. I listen to my father's advice but ultimately decide what I do on my own	1	2	3	4	5

Demographics and Basic Background Information

1. What is your gender (check one): male _____ female _____

2. What is your age: _____

3. Are you Canadian?

Yes _____

No



What is your nationality? _____

In this country, people come from a lot of different cultures and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or *ethnic* groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Indo-Canadian, Chinese, Black, First Nations, and White.

4. To which ethnic or cultural group/background do you belong? _____

5. With which ethnic or cultural group/background do you identify? _____

6. People often think of themselves as belonging to one social class or another. If you had to make a choice, which of the following classes would you consider yourself as belonging to (check one)?

working class _____

upper middle class _____

lower middle class _____

upper class _____

7. What is the HIGHEST LEVEL of education that your FATHER has achieved?

____ Elementary School

____ High School

____ Two Year College

____ Four Year University

____ Post-graduate (e.g., law, medicine, graduate school)

8. What is the HIGHEST LEVEL of education that your MOTHER has achieved?

____ Elementary School

____ High School

____ Two Year College

____ Four Year University

____ Post-graduate (e.g., law, medicine, graduate school)

9. What is your father's occupation? _____

10. What is your mother's occupation? _____

11. What are your current living arrangements (check one)?

with parents _____

with roommates _____

with romantic partner _____

alone _____

other (please specify): _____

12. Are your parents together (e.g., married or common-law)? Yes _____ No _____

If your parents are together please skip to the next page and start at Question 20 (If your parents are not together please answer Questions 13 to 19).

13. Were your parents ever married? Yes _____ No _____

14. How old were you when your parents separated (e.g., your parents stopped living together)? _____ years

24. Did one of your parents ever have a major medical or psychological health problem (for example cancer, schizophrenia, alcoholism etc.) which prevented them from going to work or carrying out usual household chores for a significant time period (check one)? Yes _____ No _____

If yes: a) which parent: Mother _____ Father _____

b) what kind of health issue did your parent have? _____

c) for about how long did your parent have the health problem? _____

c) how old were you when your parent began having this health problem? _____

25. Are there any other events that have influenced your family life now or in the past?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

Debriefing form given to Psychology 100 research participants



Thank you for participating in the study!

This study is looking at how certain family roles that older adolescents and young adults may be involved in are related to their well-being and their relationships to their parents. In some families children play certain family roles such as being the “mediator” for their parents to help solve their conflict or being the “counselor” for their parents to help them with their difficulties. Research has provided mixed evidence regarding the implications of such family roles on older adolescents and adult children. Some research has shown that being involved in these roles can lead to feelings of anxiety and guilt whereas others have shown that sometimes it can foster particularly close parent-child relationships. This study explores in more detail how family roles are related to parent-child relationships and adjustment. It is hypothesized that being involved in such family roles (as described above) may make it more difficult for some older adolescents to emotionally separate from parents (without guilt), which may in turn have implications for general and relationship well-being.

Another aim of the study was to see if males and females experience these family roles similarly or differently. Previous studies have shown that males are typically less likely to be involved in these kinds of family roles than females. Finally, this study will explore if these family roles and their potential implications differ for young adults who were raised with married parents versus young adults raised with a single parent. Previous research suggests that young adults from single parent families may be involved in these kinds of family roles to a greater extent than young adults from married families. However, there is some evidence to suggest that young adults from single parent families may interpret and understand these experiences differently than young adults from two married parent families. It is hoped that results from this research will help to inform counselors who work with older adolescents and young adults who might be struggling with issues regarding emotional separation from parents and adjustment difficulties.

Sometimes being asked about family relationships and your own personal adjustment may elicit feelings of distress. If you are experiencing negative feelings and would like to discuss these with a professional please make an appointment with the UVic counseling center (tel: 250-721-8341; website: <http://www.coun.uvic.ca/>). If you would like any additional information please do not contact to hesitate me (Marei) at tel: 250- 721- 8589 or email: fmrig@uvic.ca.

Appendix 3

Items of the Mood and Anxiety Questionnaire (MASQ; Watson & Clark, 1991)

Positive Adjustment

1. Felt confident about myself
2. Felt really up or lively
3. Felt like being with other people
4. Felt like I had many interesting things to do
5. Felt optimistic
6. Felt like I had a lot to look forward to
7. Felt successful
8. Was able to laugh easily
9. Felt really happy
10. Seemed to move quickly and easily
11. Felt very alert
12. Felt cheerful
13. Felt like I was having a lot of fun
14. Felt really talkative
15. Thoughts and ideas came to me very easily
16. Felt like I could do everything I needed to do
17. Felt hopeful about the future
18. Felt like I had accomplished a lot
19. Looked forward to things with enjoyment
20. Felt very clearheaded
21. Was proud of myself
22. Felt like I had a lot of energy
23. Felt really good about myself

Negative Adjustment

1. Felt depressed
2. Felt pessimistic about the future
3. Felt nervous
4. Was afraid I was going to lose control
5. Thought about death or suicide
6. Felt like I was going crazy
7. Felt inferior to others
8. Felt keyed up, on edge
9. Felt dissatisfied with everything
10. Unable to relax
11. Felt tense or high strung
12. Blamed myself for a lot of things
13. Felt sad
14. Felt hopeless

15. Felt like something awful was going to happen
16. Felt confused
17. Felt uneasy
18. Felt worthless
19. Felt discouraged
20. Felt like a failure
21. Felt afraid
22. Was disappointed in myself
23. Felt like crying

Appendix 4

Items of the Relational Anxiety subscale of the Relationship Awareness Scale (Snell, 1998)

Relational Anxiety

1. It takes me time to get over my shyness in a new close romantic relationship
2. I am more anxious about close romantic relationships than most people are
3. I would feel anxious in a new close romantic relationship
4. I usually feel quite anxious about my close romantic relationships
5. I feel uncomfortable when I think about talking with a close romantic partner
6. I would feel inhibited and shy in a close romantic relationship
7. Close romantic relationships make me feel nervous and anxious
8. I feel nervous when I interact with a partner in a close romantic relationship
9. I am somewhat awkward and tense in close romantic relationship

Items of the Relational Depression and Relational Esteem subscales from the Relational Assessment Questionnaire (Snell & Finney, 1993)

Relational Depression

1. I sometimes have doubts about my romantic relationship competence
2. I feel unhappy about my close romantic relationships
3. I feel sad when I think about my close romantic relationships
4. I am disappointed about the quality of my close romantic relationships
5. I am depressed about the close romantic relationship aspects of my life
6. I sometimes doubt my ability to maintain a close romantic relationship
7. I am less than happy with my ability to sustain a close romantic relationship
8. I feel down about myself as a close romantic partner
9. I would rate myself as a “poor” partner for a close romantic relationship
10. I am not very confident about my potential as a close romantic partner

Relational Esteem

1. I am a good partner for a close romantic relationship
2. I am better at close romantic relationships than most other people
3. I think of myself as an excellent close romantic partner
4. I have few doubts about my capacity to relate to a close romantic partner
5. I am confident about myself as a close romantic partner
6. I feel good about myself as a close romantic partner
7. I am not discouraged about myself as a close romantic partner

Appendix 5

Items considered for the Triangulation scale and their respective sources

1. My mother asked me to carry messages to my father (Buchanan et al.)
2. My father asked me to carry messages to my mother (Buchanan et al.)
3. My mother asked me questions about my father I wished she wouldn't (Buchanan et al.)
4. My father asked me questions about my mother I wished he wouldn't (Buchanan et al.)
5. When my mother was around, I hesitated to talk about things concerning my father (Buchanan et al.)
6. When my father was around, I hesitated to talk about things concerning my mother (Buchanan et al.)
7. My parents involved me in their conflicts (Afifi et al.)
8. My mother wanted me to be on her side when she and my father argued (Grych et al.)
9. My father wanted me to be on his side when he and my mother argued (Grych et al.)
10. I felt caught in the middle between my parents (Buchanan et al.)
11. I felt like the mediator between my parents (Jurkovic et al.)
12. I felt like I had to take sides when my parents had an argument (Grych et al.)
13. I felt that my parents could not get along with each other without my help (Jurkovic et al.)
14. I felt disloyal to one parent if I was loyal to the other (Afifi et al.)
15. It was difficult for me to feel closer to one parent without feeling less close to the other parent (Afifi et al.)
16. I felt that my parents were competing for my affection (Afifi et al.)
17. I didn't feel like I had to take sides when my parents had a disagreement (Grych et al.)- reverse scored

Appendix 6

Items retained for the Triangulation scale and their respective sources

1. My mother asked me to carry messages to my father (Buchanan et al.)
2. My father asked me to carry messages to my mother (Buchanan et al.)
3. My mother asked me questions about my father I wished she wouldn't (Buchanan et al.)
4. My father asked me questions about my mother I wished he wouldn't (Buchanan et al.)
5. When my mother was around, I hesitated to talk about things concerning my father (Buchanan et al.)
6. When my father was around, I hesitated to talk about things concerning my mother (Buchanan et al.)
7. My parents involved me in their conflicts (Afifi et al.)
8. My mother wanted me to be on her side when she and my father argued (Grych et al.)
9. My father wanted me to be on his side when he and my mother argued (Grych et al.)
10. I felt caught in the middle between my parents (Buchanan et al.)
11. I felt like the mediator between my parents (Jurkovic et al.)
12. I felt like I had to take sides when my parents had an argument (Grych et al.)
13. I felt that my parents could not get along with each other without my help (Jurkovic et al.)
14. I felt disloyal to one parent if I was loyal to the other (Afifi et al.)
15. It was difficult for me to feel closer to one parent without feeling less close to the other parent (Afifi et al.)
16. I felt that my parents were competing for my affection (Afifi et al.)

Appendix 7

Items considered for the Parentification Scale and their respective sources

Ensure/support well-being of parent

- 1) I was the one who was supposed to make sure my mother/father was happy (Kerig)
- 2) It seemed like it was my job to make sure my mother/father was happy (Kerig)
- 3) My mother/father needed me to take care of him/her (Kerig)
- 4) If my mother/father was upset, I usually didn't get involved (Reverse scored; Jurkovic & Thirkield)

One-sidedness

- 5) I felt like my mother/father was the kid and I was the parent (Kerig)
- 6) I took care of my mother/father more than she/he took care of me (Kerig)

Confidante to parent

- 7) My mother/father talked to me about her/his worries (Kerig)
- 8) My mother/father confided in me about everything, even her/his most personal matters (Kerig)
- 9) My mother/father discussed her/his financial issues and problems with me (Mika et al.)
- 10) At times I felt like I am the only one my mother/father could turn to (Jurkovic & Thirkield)
- 11) It seemed like my mother/father was always bringing her/his problems to me (Jurkovic & Thirkield)
- 12) My mother/father depended on me for emotional support (Lopez)
- 13) My mother/father talked with me about "adult" matters that parents don't usually tell their children (Kerig)
- 14) My mother thought it was right to know about all of her personal problems (Kerig)

Advisor and decision-maker for parent

- 15) My mother/father depended on me for advice (Lopez)
- 16) My mother/father usually consulted me before making household decisions (Lopez)
- 17) My mother/father sought me out for advice (Lopez)
- 18) My mother/father let me have a lot of influence when making important adult decisions (Mika et al.)

Felt responsibility for parent

- 19) Even when my mother/father did not need help, I felt very responsible for her/him (Jurkovic & Thirkield)
- 20) In my mind the welfare of my mother/father was my first priority (Jurkovic & Thirkield)
- 21) I tried to protect my mother/father from stress and distress (Jurkovic & Thirkield)

Appendix 8

Items retained for the Parentification Scale

- 1) I was the one who was supposed to make sure my mother/father was happy (Kerig)
- 2) It seemed like it was my job to make sure my mother/father was happy (Kerig)
- 3) My mother/father needed me to take care of him/her (Kerig)
- 4) I felt like my mother/father was the kid and I was the parent (Kerig)
- 5) I took care of my mother/father more than she/he took care of me (Kerig)
- 6) My mother/father talked to me about her/his worries (Kerig)
- 7) My mother/father confided in me about everything, even her/his most personal matters (Kerig)
- 8) My mother/father discussed her/his financial issues and problems with me (Mika et al.)
- 9) At times I felt like I am the only one my mother/father could turn to (Jurkovic & Thirkield)
- 10) It seemed like my mother/father was always bringing her/his problems to me (Jurkovic & Thirkield)
- 11) My mother/father depended on me for emotional support (Lopez)
- 12) My mother/father talked with me about “adult” matters that parents don’t usually tell their children (Kerig)
- 13) My mother thought it was right to know about all of her personal problems (Kerig)
- 14) My mother/father depended on me for advice (Lopez)
- 15) My mother/father sought me out for advice (Lopez)
- 16) Even when my mother/father did not need help, I felt very responsible for her/him (Jurkovic & Thirkield)
- 17) I tried to protect my mother/father from stress and distress (Jurkovic & Thirkield)

Appendix 9

Items of the Psychological Connectedness subscale from the Multigenerational Interconnectedness Scale (Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1987).

1. I feel upset when my mother/father do not approve of people I am intimate with.
2. I feel guilty about continuing a relationship with someone my mother/father does not like.
3. When I am told that my mother/father disapproves of something I have done, I feel obligated to change what I am doing.
4. I rely on my mother's/father's approval to let me know I am doing things right.
5. I feel obligated to spend time with my mother/father.
6. If I did not follow advice that my mother/father offered, I would feel guilty.
7. I feel guilty when I do not take the side of my mother/father in a disagreement with others.
8. When my mother/father asks me to do certain things, I feel guilty when I have to say no.
9. I become upset when my mother/father criticizes my behaviour.
10. I ask whether or not my mother/father approves of people I am intimate with.
11. I feel obligated to stop associating with friends my mother/father does not like.
12. When I am told I have done something which hurt my mother/father I feel guilty.
13. I become upset at the thought of telling my mother/father she/he is interfering in my life.
14. There are certain things I do for my mother/father because I have an obligation to.
15. I choose friends that my mother/father will like and feel comfortable with.

Appendix 10

Items of the Conflictual Independence Scale from the Psychological Separation Inventory
(Hoffman, 1984)

1. Sometimes my mother/father is a burden to me.
2. I feel like I am constantly at war with my mother/father.
3. I blame my mother/father for many of the problems I have.
4. I wish I could trust my mother/father more.
5. I have to be careful not to hurt my mother's/father's feelings.
6. I sometimes feel like I'm being punished by my mother/father.
7. I wish my mother/father wasn't so over protective.
8. I wish my mother/father wouldn't try to manipulate me.
9. I wish my mother/father wouldn't try to make fun of me.
10. I feel that I have obligations to my mother/father that I wish I didn't have
11. My mother/father expects too much from me.
12. I wish I could stop lying to my mother/father.
13. I often wish that my mother/father would treat me more like an adult.
14. I am often angry at my mother/father.
15. I hate it when my mother/father makes suggestions about what I do.
16. Even when my mother/father has a good idea I refuse to listen to it because she/he made it.
17. I wish my mother/father wouldn't try to get me to take sides with her/him.
18. I argue with my mother/father over little things.
19. My mother/father is sometimes a source of embarrassment to me.
20. I am sometimes ashamed of my mother/father.
21. I get angry when my mother/father criticizes me.
22. When I don't keep in touch with my mother/father often enough I feel guilty.
23. I feel uncomfortable keeping things from my mother/father.
24. I often have to make decisions for my mother/father.
25. I sometimes resent it when my mother/father tells me what to do.