

DEVELOPMENT OF AN EMPIRICAL PROCEDURE
FOR THE STUDY OF FAMILY MYTHS

by

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to the required standard


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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to specify and test a set of procedures for identifying family myths in a "normal" (non-clinically involved) family. It was proposed (a) that the expression of family myths would affect the interaction of family members as the family myth was expressed and (b) that family myths would be found to support complex patterns of interaction that recur in the day-to-day life of the family. One family, comprised of two parents and four children, were interviewed by the principal investigator using a circular questioning strategy and a flexible protocol of topics related to different aspects of family functioning.

The principal investigator and two raters independently identified family myths from the videotape of the two and one-half hour interview, using the operational definition provided by the principal investigator as a guide. The three lists of family myths were then analyzed for similarity of content by having each pair of raters identify those family myths that occurred in both of their lists; this procedure determined the level of agreement between raters. Raters also described the interaction of family members as family myths occurred in the interview; these descriptions were combined to form a composite image of the effect of the expression of family myths on the behavior of family

members. Finally, the principal investigator gathered family members' reports of how specific family myths were perceived to affect the interaction of family members on a day-to-day basis; these reports were accepted at face value.

Results indicate that family myths were identified with a moderately high level of agreement between raters despite minimal training and the very abstract nature of the concept of family myths. Raters' combined descriptions illustrate the immediate impact of family myths on the interaction of family members, and several examples are presented. Analysis of the transcript highlights the intricate discursive processes by which family myths were constructed. Family members clearly linked specific family myths with the recurrence of important patterns of interaction in their daily lives. These patterns are described in detail by family members.

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DEDICATION

To Cathy, whose patience, sensitivity, and hard work have made this thesis possible.

To Andrew, Darcy, and "Livie" whose smiling faces have been an enormous inspiration.

To Mom and Dad for many years of understanding, support, and encouragement.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Family myths were initially defined by Antonio Ferreira as "...a series of fairly well-integrated sets of beliefs shared by all family members, concerning each other and their mutual position in the family life..." (1963, p.457). Ferreira related both the content and function of family myths to the development and maintenance of family psychopathology, just as psychopathology was being redefined in systemic terms by Ferreira's colleagues at the Mental Research Institute (Don Jackson, Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland, Jay Haley, and Gregory Bateson). At this time, the symptomatic behavior of any individual was assumed to be the result of disturbed relationships in the family as a unit. The family myth was seen as providing the family with a ready explanation of the symptomatic behavior of one of its members, diverting attention away from the "real" relationship problems underlying the development and maintenance of the symptom.

Pragmatically, the family myth was seen as restoring the family to a manageable equilibrium by interrupting or otherwise altering interactions that threaten to make the buried conflict explicit.

Subsequent to Ferreira's work, several psychodynamically oriented family therapists (Stierlin, 1973; Box, 1979; Byng-Hall, 1973, 1979) suggested that family myths function for the family exactly as a defensive mechanism functions for the individual -

as a method of avoiding (repressing) unacknowledged (unconscious) ideas or conflicts. Family therapists utilizing systemic (Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman, and Penn, 1987) structural (Minuchin, 1974), and strategic (Madanes et al., 1988) approaches have continued to use the idea of family myths to explain family interaction, the development and maintenance of psychopathology, and therapeutic change, from the viewpoint of their respective models.

Ferreira (1963) suggested that family myths may serve an important function in both "normal" and clinical families. Citing his own family as an example, Minuchin (1974) proposed a normative model of family functioning in which family myths organize the experience of family members. If family myths could be identified and described in a non-clinical population, they would offer a rich new insight into the interaction of families, from a systemic perspective. In particular, the concept of family myths proposes a mutually causal, recursive connection between "belief" and "behavior". In a non-clinical population, it is suggested, family myths guide and support complex sequences of interaction, contribute to individual identity formation, and prescribe a range of acceptable conduct for all family members. Family myths support predicatable patterns of behavior, and give each member of the family a position of uniqueness and significance. Despite these encouraging proposals, the concept of family myths has remained tied to a clinical population without benefit of empirical investigation.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to assess the extent to which normal family relationships and interaction could be understood through the study of family myths. Three specific research questions were addressed:

1. To what extent are family myths identifiable in a normal family?
2. What interaction occurs among family members as the family myth is expressed?
3. According to family members, how do the family myths affect their day-to-day interactions (i.e., how do family members describe the interpersonal affects of family myths?

For the purposes of this study, family myths were defined as perspectives, beliefs, or opinions shared by at least two family members, about any aspect of the experience or character of family relationships and family life. They may have the status of "sacred stories" which symbolize important perspectives or traditions. Family myths include (a) legends or stories about the family or its members, (b) beliefs about individual character, (c) explanations of events or relationships, or (d) organizing themes or premises that appear to support any aspect of family interaction.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

The content of this literature review is restricted to research and clinical publications bearing directly on the concept family myth, however the scope of related reading was much more inclusive. Anthropology and literary criticism were very helpful in gaining an understanding of the structure and function of myths. The sociological and anthropological literature offered a great deal of information pertaining to the role of belief systems in group organization and activity, and the family therapy and research literature provided a number of perspectives on the nature of family interaction (e.g., Reiss's notion of family paradigm). The purpose of this review is to explore the idea of family myth in its various transformations in the contexts where it has been applied directly to families and family interaction.

Antonio Ferreira introduced the idea of family myth in his 1963 paper, Family Myth and Homeostasis. He then defined family myths as;

...a series of fairly well-integrated sets of beliefs shared by all family members, concerning each other and their mutual position in the family life, beliefs that go unchallenged by everyone involved in spite of the reality distortions which they may conspicuously imply. (p. 457)

Although family myths could be described according to their content or "themes", Ferreira argued that content was secondary to the function of family myths in promoting homeostasis. Don Jackson brought the idea of homeostasis to the family therapy field in 1957, as a means of explaining his clinical observation that, "the continuous interplay of dynamic forces within the family tends toward the maintenance of certain forms of equilibrium among family members" (Ferreira, 1963, p.457). "Homeostasis" was to become one of the most widely utilized explanatory metaphors in the early family therapy movement because it gave clinicians a conceptual and linguistic tool with which to connect the behavior of family members to one another in a recursive, systemic way. In Family Myth and Homeostasis, as in subsequent papers on the topic, Ferreira speculated about the means by which myths operate homeostatically, the qualities common to myths across family groups, and the relation of myths to the development of symptomatic behaviors.

Ferreira "discovered" the idea of family myths "accidentally", while doing an experimental study of family decision-making processes (Ferreira & Winter; 1965). The design of that study required family members to complete a questionnaire in which they were to choose one of a number of possible solutions to complex, ambiguous, dilemma-type problems. At first, each of the family members completed the questionnaire privately; later, the family was brought together, and asked to complete the same questionnaire collectively, as a unit, with instructions to provide

only one response to each question. Each family member was also asked to predict which of the individually completed questionnaires would most closely resemble the questionnaire completed collectively.

From their detailed observations of the family's behavior throughout the task of completing the questionnaire collectively, the experimenters and an additional observation team attempted to predict which family member would have the most influence on the decision-making process. "Influence" was to be measured by comparing the individually completed questionnaire to the questionnaire completed collectively; for the purposes of the experiment, the family member whose individually completed questionnaire was the most similar to the questionnaire completed collectively would be defined as the most influential.

The experimental and observation teams were particularly interested in one family in which the wife appeared very powerful and active in relation to her husband who, in contrast, appeared passive, almost meek, and only marginally involved in the family decision-making. Accordingly, the experimenters unanimously predicted the mother would be the most influential "by a country mile". However, to the astonishment of both teams, and against the predictions of family members themselves, a comparison of the questionnaires showed the father to be by far the most influential, in spite of the fact that he had appeared so uninvolved.

Ferreira became intrigued with the unexpectedly dramatic difference between what the subjects themselves and the teams predicted, and what the results had clearly demonstrated. "Family myth" was the term introduced to describe the unanimously held illusion of the wife's greater influence (and correspondingly, the husband's greater "passivity"), and the fact that an elaborate system of interaction seemed to sustain, in fact cultivate, that illusion. How could this phenomenon be explained? Why would a family propagate such illusions? What was the function of these myths in terms of family interaction? Were family myths related to psychopathology? Were there common themes contained in family myths?

The remainder of this review is concerned with addressing these questions, first from Ferreira's systemic, interactional perspective, then from a psychodynamic point of view, and finally, through the contributions of several well known systemic family therapists. The literature pertaining to family myths is found exclusively in systemic or structural family therapy publications, and there is no empirical research to report. The approach taken in this review therefore, is to describe the unique view of each therapist in some detail, in order to tease out the more subtle distinctions between different perspectives regarding the content and function of family myths in the context of family interaction.

The Content of Family Myths:

According to Ferrelra (1963), family myths may appear in a variety of guises; they may be very general, such as themes of "happiness" or "unhappiness", or quite specific, such as opinions about the personality of an individual. They may be propitiative - "she's always been good with her little brother"- or indicting - "she's always been difficult to manage". They may contain the "covert rules of the relationship", or they may contain specific taboos imbued with a quality of sacredness. Family myths may also appear as elaborate explanatory systems complete with evidence marshalled from the family history, much in the fashion of an academic essay. They may assign roles, stipulate behavior, and otherwise define the nature of family relationships.

Variation in the content of family myths is accounted for by the larger social context in which the family resides, and by the unceasingly unique minutae - biological, cultural, genetic, etc. - that consort to form the individual family's adaptive responses to that larger context. And so, as Ferrelra points out;

As a concept, the notion of family myth belongs to that field of inquiry that stands between individually and socially oriented formulations, that is, to the transition ground between psychiatry and sociology. For, on the one hand, the family myth colors the individual's perception of the world, personal fantasies, and myths; but, on the other hand, it is often anchored upon and affiliated with the larger social myths, such as racial myths,...national

myths,... religious myths,...and others. (Ferreira, 1967, p.195)

The function of family myths:

Irrespective of their content, Ferreira argued that family myths share certain qualities and functions in all families (Ferreira, 1963). As an aspect of interpersonal relationships, family myths promote patterns of interaction involving all family members and are simultaneously reconstituted by the consequences of those interactions. The expression of a family myth is an interactive, communicative event in itself. Because the family myth both constitutes and is constituted by communicative, interactional sequences, its content tends to be self-validating, and comes to be treated by the family as a set of unquestionable truths - as reality itself.

Myths may function homeostatically in several different ways. First, the expression of a myth, as in the telling of a story or the recounting of a legend, can change the quality of an on-going interaction. In Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* for example, the two main characters, George and Martha, continually engage in symmetrically escalating exchanges that threaten the possibility of violence, dissolution of the relationship, or some unforeseen alternative. It is made clear to the reader as the play unfolds that George and Martha are highly skilled at performing these interactions, and quite sensitive to one another's "moves" in the game. At an intense high-point in an escalating exchange,

when the explosion of the couple seems imminent, either George or Martha will bring up the topic of their son - their mythical (non-existent) son. The myth of the son has an immediate de-escalating effect on the interaction of the couple.

"While the son is imaginary", as Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) point out in their analysis of George and Martha's relationship, "their interaction about him (*italics added*) is not, and the nature of this interaction, then, becomes the fruitful question" (p. 174). The mention of the son-myth changes the quality of the interaction because they must be "together" in order to maintain the fiction. Because the myth of the son functions to limit the symmetrical escalation, it is said to function as a homeostatic mechanism (Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1967). Ferreira (1963) put this point in more general terms:

Seemingly, the family myth is called into play whenever certain tensions reach predetermined thresholds among family members and in some way, real or fantasied, threaten to disrupt ongoing relationships. Then, the family myth functions like the thermostat that is kicked into action by the 'temperature' in the family. Like any other homeostatic mechanism, the myth prevents the family system from damaging, perhaps destroying, itself. It has therefore the qualities of any 'safety valve', that is, a survival value...It tends to maintain and

sometimes even to increase the level of organization in the family by establishing patterns that perpetuate themselves with the circularity and self-correction characteristic of any homeostatic mechanism (p.462).

Family myths also function homeostatically as ready "frames" for the interpretation of behavior and events in family life. Myths that function in this way may be global, ambiguous, and relatively explicit. For example, in an earlier study on this topic, Wade and Ellis (1984) interviewed an Irish immigrant family who described themselves as "wedded to growth". They were a Catholic family who had undergone profound changes in the course of their lives together, having overcome some severe difficulties. The family members came to define themselves as in a continual process of evolution. That definition, condensed into the motto "wedded to growth", functioned to prescribe appropriate conduct for the children, reaffirm the value of family rituals, and separate the couple from a very unsatisfactory early marriage. By virtue of this motto, even the transgression of important rules of conduct - by the 16 year old daughter for example - could be interpreted as evidence of her developing independence and of the parents' appreciation of experimentation and the struggle for adult status.

Generalizing from his clinical experience, Ferreira (1967) suggested that family myths may serve an important function in non-clinical families as well.

It is quite conceivable that a certain amount of mythology may be indispensable to smooth and economic family living. The cultivation of family principles, values, traditions, and rituals, certainly points in this direction. However, it seems that in pathologic families...family myths are more conspicuous, perhaps more pervasive and unalterable, than in the presumably 'normal' family groups. But this may be a false impression, for where the family myth remains operative, there may be no felt need to seek psychiatric aid (pp. 195-196).

By 1967, Ferreira had begun to extend the idea of family myths beyond the realm of psychopathology, at a distance from the metaphor of homeostasis, which had itself been co-opted by the family therapy movement where it was confused with statisticity, rigidity, or resistance. Unfortunately, this was to be his last publication on the topic.

Family Myths and "Psychopathology":

In his most protracted discussion of family myth and psychopathology, Ferreira(1967) put forth the (interactional) view that;

...psychotic behavior may be regarded not simply as a product of the individual, but rather as an expression of the family interaction, that is, as a relationship-event. In this sense, the 'psychosis' of

one family member will appear to be but an aspect of the current relationship, an elaboration of pre-existing family myths upon which the preservation of the relationship may depend. (p.186)

According to the interactional view, it was not only the psychoses but all forms of symptomatic behavior, that could be understood as communication about or, as Ferreira says, "aspects of" current relationships. The importance of this perspective is that it moves the focus of attention immediately out of the individual and into the context of collective phenomena, that is, communication.

By connecting symptomatic behavior with family myths, Ferreira was suggesting that such behavior somehow embodies or reflects the premises of a consensually achieved family reality. For instance, family myths may be offered as explanations for the symptom, they may suggest certain character traits in the symptomatic individual, or they may manifest a theme, such as, "we are a happy family except for the depression of our daughter". However, the premises contained in the family myth can no more be reduced to an individually held belief than symptomatic behavior can be reduced to the properties of an individual. Patterns of interaction are understood as reflecting and maintaining patterns of meaning in a mutually constitutive, reflexive fashion - family myths are "blue-prints" for action (Ferreira, 1963, p. 458).

This argument connects a description of patterned behavior, to inferred underlying premises, in a way that formally resembles psychodynamic styles of inference; for instance, explanations

that relate childhood behavior problems to a lack of self-esteem, depression to repressed anxiety, or violence to an aggressive personality structure, have in common the leap from a fairly behavioral description to an abstract and unverifiable (inferred) network of premises to explain the behavior. However, Ferreira's argument differs from psychodynamic forms of explanation in that he considers individual behavior and family myths to be comprehensible only in the context of patterns of interaction and communication with others. In addition, family myths do not "cause" behavior as, let us say, an aggressive personality causes violence. Instead, as mentioned, family myths and patterns of interaction exist in a recursive, mutually causal relationship; meaning "in-forms" behavior, behavior "in-forms" meaning. It would be erroneous, an epistemological error in Bateson's (1974) terms, to suggest that either behavior or meaning is the primary, causal agent.

With respect to "psychopathology", Ferreira faced the problem of how to explain the fact that a family with a symptomatic member would adhere so adamantly to beliefs that he saw as obviously distorted. He concluded:

...the family myth functions very much like a group defense against threats to or alterations in the relationship. Seemingly, the family myth is to the family what the defense is to the individual.

However, the notion of defense requires a qualification: The family myth is a group defense

against disturbances or changes in the relationship.

(1967, p.187)

With this statement, and with subtle echoes of the same point made elsewhere, Ferreira (perhaps unintentionally) linked the concept of family myth to the backbone of clinical psychodynamic thinking - resistance. From this opening it was a small step to conclude that family myths were a necessary defense against "hidden material". Why else would a family guard against "disturbances or changes in the relationship"? Since hidden material is assumed, because it is conjectured from within the context of psychotherapy, to be pathological or potentially so, the concept of family myths became tied to the presence of pathology, and this fact may explain why family myths are discussed exclusively in the clinical literature. After all, we do not usually think of normal families distorting reality.

In families with a psychotic member, Ferreira found that the more one investigated other members of the family, the more difficult it became to identify the patient. The psychosis of a child may be accompanied by a legend in the family recounting the child's long-standing mental illness - "from birth" in one case Ferreira described (1967). Legends, like myths and other stories, may consist of incorrigible assumptions, based on the opportunistic use of family histories, and the result may be a legend that is very durable and stubborn, being both unfalsifiable and unverifiable. The patient-child, having been so labelled early on and responded to so consistently as "ill", of course

adapts his behavior to fill the only role made available to him. Eventually, a sympathetic physician confirms the family's diagnosis, and the child's response to a program of medication (any response can be incorporated to fit the diagnosis at this stage) provides the final proof. "Psychosis" is reified; the child is firmly ensconced as the family patient.

In contrast to this all too familiar scenario, Ferreira suggested "that the role of 'patient' subsumes a whole chain of stipulations which prescribe not only the individual's behavior but also the behavior of the other people - counter-roles - involved in the relationship" (1967, p. 190). For example, "Joe's role as patient implied that someone else (his mother?) was by contrast cast as 'not-a-patient', a counter-role which was set off at all times by Joe's sick behavior" (1967, p. 190). According to the interactional view, "pathology" or "problem behavior" is created, defined, and consolidated in a complex pattern of relationships - it is not the property of an individual. Ferreira's use of dramatic clinical examples in his discussions of family myths apparently had the effect of energizing the search, by other clinicians, for an illness or hidden material "behind" the myth. In the context of therapy, the appearance of a myth became a "sign" of underlying pathology.

However, as Ferreira repeatedly emphasized, the psychotic behavior of one person must be considered as complementary to the non-psychotic behavior of someone else. By applying the same principle to normal families, it could be argued that similar

complementarities are at work in the identity formation of children; "Tammy is not so good at math but better at reading"; "June is great at math but not so fond of music"; "Eric is a terrible artist but...". Rather than a property of the individual per se, this view suggests that an identity forms in relation to other identities pertinent in the same social context; the individual must be understood through the quality of his relationships.

Likewise, the idea of family myths must be understood in the context of the interactional view. Developed directly out of the Bateson project and Jackson's Mental Research Institute, the interactional view benefited from the explicit application of systems theory and cybernetics to the study of psychopathology, thereby contributing to the establishment of actual family interaction as a unit of investigation (Schwartzman, 1984). Taken out of this context, family myth loses its explanatory force entirely. Nevertheless, several therapists have tried to apply the idea of family myths to the practice of psychodynamic "family therapy".

The psychodynamic interpretation of family myths:

Box (1979) describes family myths as a group system of defenses "which serve to protect areas of vulnerability and unacknowledged conflict in the family" (p. 76). For Box, the myths defend against the coming to awareness of "shared unconscious conflictual relationships" on the part of the married

couple (p.78). Psychoanalytic theory suggests that family members must have some conflictual, unconscious preoccupations that are inherently dangerous. Consequently, Box juxtaposes two incompatible ideas; the idea of "unconscious conflict", a concept by definition referring to the individual, and the concept of "myth" which, as defined by Ferreira (1963), presupposes patterns of interaction as primary.

Byng-Hall (1973) also set out to utilize family myths in the context of a psychodynamic approach, with the goal of developing "a conceptual framework for therapeutic interventions during family therapy" (p.239). He suggested the following redefinition of the functions and mechanisms of family myths:

Definition of family myth. Those family role images which are accepted by the whole family together as representing each member. This gives each an allotted role in a particular pattern of interaction. The images of interaction are, however, either distortions of, or only a segment of, observable behavior. The integrity of the role images is not irrevocably challenged from within the family and hence may come to have some degree of permanence.

Function. The function is twofold: to hide from awareness each member's own repudiated, because feared or taboo, inner potential roles; and to help restrain members from enacting those roles overtly.

Mechanism. The family myth establishes the role images at some distance, from where they create most anxiety. This is done either by enabling those most anxious about entering particular roles to play counterpart roles to their own disallowed roles, or by refocusing on the repudiated drama as it manifests itself outside the family or in a different generation. At a whole family level, the overt drama and dramatic images hide and prevent, often by reversal, a family drama felt to be potentially calamitous. (1973, p.244-245; italics his)

From the psychodynamic viewpoint, the tendency is to invoke anxiety, repression, defense mechanisms, and the unconscious as a means of explaining the existence and function of family myths. There are two reasons for this; first, psychoanalytic theory presupposes menacing unconscious conflict as basic to the operations of the psyche; second, and most important here, both Box and Byng-Hall studied family myths within the confines of the clinical setting where "pathology" is the dimension according to which relationships are defined (ie, therapist - patient). Although Byng-Hall acknowledges Ferrelra's point that probably all families have their "need" of myths, he goes on to discuss strictly the pathology underlying family myths in specific clinical cases.

Stierlin (1973) proposed three categories of family myths, according to their "major defensive function"; myths of harmony,

myths of exculpation and redemption, and myths of salvation (p.118). In all cases, according to Stierlin, myths serve to distort or selectively "blot-out certain aspects of the members' real past and present involvements with each other" (p.118). Myths of harmony paint an unrealistically rosy picture of the past and present family relationships. Myths of exculpation and redemption identify an individual in the group (alive or dead) as the perpetrator and prime wrong-doer, the one who has caused problems for everyone. Myths of salvation involve the shared belief that "somehow the pains, conflicts, injustices, and sufferings inherent in family life, and inherent in the process of individuation and separation, can somehow be avoided or undone through the benign intervention of some strong, if not omnipotent, figure or agency" (p.121). Myths serve more or less protective or defensive functions. Protective myths effectively "hide" the family from outsiders; defensive myths avoid family members' confrontations with each other and their real, shared past (p.124).

The assumption of the actual existence of an unconscious, conflict-ridden psyche predisposes the psychodynamically oriented "observer" to explain family myths as yet another example of a defensive mechanism. Implicit in such a view is a definition of family myths as erroneous, delusional, and facade-like; in short, relevant only in the clinical context which presupposes pathology. In deference to this view, it should be noted that Ferreira's

narrowly programmatic use of the word myth (as distortion), lends itself nicely to psychodynamic forms of explanation.

However, if one operates on psychoanalytic premises, and is involved in a patient-therapist relationship with a family who presumably have been referred due to problems in their life, it is reasonable to assume underlying pathology. So, the problem is not with the emphasis on pathology per se, but with the lack of literature relating family myth to non-clinical families; that is, to a normative view of family life.

Family myths and family history; a clinical example:

In Strategies for Changing the Past, Madanes et al. (1987) discuss the role of different versions of the past in mediating current patterns of interaction and problem-definition. They state;

The central issue in many therapies is the struggle to arrive at an acceptable version of one's life.

Clients bring an array of 'legends' to the scene of therapy; these stories are helpful to them in understanding who they are and what has happened to them. The therapist discerns order and themes from these legends, expresses respect for client views and challenges the stories through the use of reframes. Small reframes, as such, make possible a re-writing of the client's story (p.2).

In the same article, the authors describe the therapy of a couple presenting relationship problems. In the initial interviews, the therapist attempts to bring into relief the explanations the couple have of the nature and development of their problems. Through this process, several "legends" emerge, namely, the myth of the husband's homosexuality, the legend of the wife's instability early in their marriage, the wife's claim to have married her husband in order to save him from becoming a homosexual, and the legend of their first meeting). The therapists conduct strategic couples' therapy on the premise that these legends underlie the relationship problems reported by the couple. Although the (legends) are "reality" to the couple, representing their "real, shared past", the therapists set out to challenge those legends with a variety of interviewing techniques which they hope will result in the creation of different, more adaptive set legends.

Madanes et al. attempt to formalize the idea of legends, and to distinguish them as a specific sub-type of the more inclusive category of "stories". A legend is a story that has been repeated many times, is a relatively vague and imprecise account of events that took place in the past, is both unverifiable and unprovable and may therefore be uncontestable (the truth of the facts is rendered irrelevant by the significance of the story), the meaning of the legend resides either in the way in which the literal content is significant to the teller(s), or the communicative purposes and effect of telling the story within a given

interaction, and the literal content of the story is less important than its "meaning", and what it reveals about the teller and others depicted in the story. (1987; pp.3-4)

By formally distinguishing between legends and other unspecified stories, Madanes et al. imply the possibility that family myths may fall into different descriptive categories and that, by attempting a rough categorization of this sort, the function and content of myths in normal and "pathological" interaction might be explicated in more detail. They make clear the importance of formally distinguishing between "stories", "legends", "family myths", and "personal narratives", for example. In addition, they study legends from two distinct perspectives; as communicative events to be understood in the context of specific interactions, clusters of meaning which reveal something about the speaker. Finally, the authors provide a rare view of how important the idea of family myths is to their model of strategic family therapy.

Folie a Famille and Family Myth

Wikler (1980) and Pollner and McDonald-Wikler (1985) have described a case of folie a famille that illustrates the applicability of family myths to the study of both normal and clinical families. By discussing family myths, family paradigm (Reiss, 1984), and folie a famille in the same paper, as similar notions, Wikler (1980) effectively summarized a view of family interaction based on the constructivist view that "reality" is

consensually achieved. In addition, Pollner and McDonald-Wikle (1985) give a detailed description of the discursive practices used by one family to maintain an obviously delusional reality.

Mary was a 5 and 1/2 year old girl who was brought to a psychiatric institute by her parents for an inpatient evaluation. The parents complained that Mary acted mentally retarded in public, though she was perfectly normal at home. From the evaluation, they hoped to understand the reasons for this difficult to manage behavior. The family had taken the same complaint to several reputable out-patient clinics. Each time, the evaluation concluded that Mary was severely mentally handicapped, and each time, Mary's parents rejected these conclusions, regarding them instead as evidence of Mary's ability to fool the clinicians.

Mary was admitted to the children's ward in a neuropsychiatric institute specializing in the evaluation and treatment of retarded children, with the understanding that her family would stay closely involved. She was observed twenty four hours a day for eight weeks, except on weekends, when she went home. A social worker and a pediatrician had daily contact with Mary, and ample opportunity, therefore, to observe her behavior. In addition, Mary was evaluated by specialists in developmental disabilities from neurology, psychiatry, pediatrics, psychology, special education, psychiatric nursing, vocational rehabilitation, physical therapy, audiometry, speech pathology, dentistry, and social work. Once again, Mary was unanimously diagnosed as

severely mentally handicapped. In addition, the entire family was diagnosed as a case of folie a famille, imposee (Translation; the family was diagnosed as sharing the same psychosis, with the mother being identified as the person imposing the delusional content.)

Pollner and McDonald-Wikler (1985) became interested in how the family managed to maintain the delusion. They asked, what sorts of skills, practices and strategies are utilized to create and then 'discover' Mary's competence? Wikler (1980) summarized the communicative behavior of the family with the following explanatory constructs:

Framing:

Framing refers to the ways in which family members verbally or physically prestructured the environment to maximize the likelihood that whatever Mary did could be seen as meaningful, intentional activity. For example, her failure to catch a ball was framed as a decision not to play catch.

Postscripting:

Postscripting refers to processes where family members attempted to generate or discern significance after the fact. For example, in "commanding the already done" family members observed the beginnings of possible actions and then ordered their completion. As Mary looked at her sister and climbed onto the chair, her sister said, "And you sit down". Mary sat down.

Puppeteering:

The family would create Mary's behavior by physically maneuvering her through tasks, accompanied by commentary implying that she was performing as an autonomous and responsive agent.

Semantic Crediting:

Although Mary responded to a range of stimuli appropriate to her mental age (such as noises, movements, gestures), she was credited with responding to the full communicative meaning of a verbal or nonverbal message. She was not capable of responding to complex verbal content; although she would respond in relation to the gesture that accompanied it, she was credited with a complete, appropriate response.

Putting words in Mary's mouth:

Family members insisted that Mary spoke and spoke well, though not always and not everywhere; the observation team on the other hand, said Mary's utterances were capricious and unintelligible. When Mary made an utterance, a family member would "repeat" what Mary said; but, of course, they were actually creating a novel, intelligent utterance. The effect of this was to produce a family consensus on what Mary had said.

Explaining in the "bright" direction:

Episodes in which other family practices failed to convey Mary's "capability" were nonetheless transformed into evidence for her sophistication. Instances where Mary's behavior seemed to defy interpretation as a directly responsive action were treated as the product of Mary's proclivity toward teasing and pretending.

The theoretically significant step taken by Pollner and McDonald-Wikler is the move into the face-to-face interaction between family members, and to the decision to use an inductive, descriptive approach in an effort to capture its complexity. The result is an impressive summary of discursive and nonverbal practices that are linked to the maintenance of a delusional system of beliefs. Behavior and meaning are convincingly conjoined. In addition, Pollner and McDonald-Wikler create a bridge across the unfortunate abyss separating "normal" and "abnormal" families by pointing that the same family practices associated with the maintenance of a delusion (in Mary's family) are common practice in the interaction between adults and preverbal children; these interactions, they point out, are "replete with 'putting words in the mouth', 'puppeteering', and 'framing' " (p.251-252).

A Normative View of Family Myths:

Salvador Minuchin, the prominent and influential family therapist, has provided a rare and more normative view of family myths. In contrast to many family therapists, Minuchin's structural approach is founded upon a well-articulated model of healthy family functioning; it is a model that emphasizes the importance of clear interpersonal and inter-system boundaries, and a stable family hierarchy (Minuchin, 1974; Minuchin and Fishman, 1981).

The family is a natural group which over time has evolved patterns of interacting. These patterns make up the family structure, which governs the functioning of family members, delineating their range of behavior and facilitating their interaction. A viable form of family structure is needed to perform the family's essential tasks of supporting individuation while providing a sense of belonging (Minuchin and Fishman, 1981, p.11).

The process of constructing workable patterns of interaction involves the family in the construction of realities, 'frames', and 'myths'. Such constructive capacities are innate to human beings, as evidenced in oral tradition, religious myth, history, and poetry. Minuchin saw that the exercise of our myth-making capacities is the basis upon which we create identity and meaning in family and social contexts. For example:

In a playground in Central Park, a Puerto Rican mother watches her three-year-old playing in the sand box. An older woman tells her in Spanish that her son has a very nice cuadro (picture or image). She says that he will grow up to become a teacher. The prediction obviously pleases the mother, who smiles at the older woman while she brushes the sand from the child's knees. He writes:

A child's cuadro floats above his head, for everybody who is knowledgeable to see and transmit.

Puerto Rican parents search for a child's *cuadro*, unaware that they are contributing to its construction. But every family, ...stamps upon its members the unique shape that identifies them as belonging to that family. This image, which individual psychologists see as role, is an ongoing interpersonal process (*italics added*). People are continuously molded by their contexts and the characteristics elicited by contexts. (Minuchin and Fishman, 1981, p.73)

Myth-making involves individual identity formation, rules and roles, the "personality" of the family, explanations of problematic behavior, and the range of available solutions to those problems. In short, family myths pervade every aspect of family life. The task of the therapist when asked to "solve problems" is to join with the family in such a way as to construct new realities, new myths, that will render symptomatic behavior unnecessary (Minuchin, 1974). In Minuchin's system, the therapist is "a creator of worlds" (1974, p.207).

Like Ferreira, Minuchin suggested a dialectical relation between 'belief' and 'behavior': "A family has not only a structure but also a set of cognitive schemes that legitimate or validate the family organization. The structure and the belief structure support and justify each other" (1974, p.207). It follows from this perspective that change (normal, developmental change, and change to a symptomatic or non-symptomatic pattern of

relationships) can be understood as occurring at the level of epistemology as well as on the level of behavior, and that change in either one of these "variables" is accompanied by change in the other.

An example taken from Minuchin's own family illustrates the constraining effects of family myths, and how the identity of one family member is constructed in a complementary relation to the identity of other members of the family.

[When I was eleven years old] I was supposed to be responsible, a day dreamer, and a child with ten thumbs. My sister was supposed to be socially competent, flighty, but efficient. My brother, eight years younger, came into a family in which labels had already been distributed, so we pegged on him the frames that were left - bright, easygoing, able, and irresponsible. The way in which the frames included and excluded experiences was quite simple; if my brother responded in a responsible way to family tasks, that behavior was framed as his being unusually able and intelligent; if I was not responsible, this was framed as unusually inefficient; and so it went. Our experiences were labeled in the 'appropriate' way to fit our family truth.

We, the children, framed out parents in equally inflexible boxes. Our father was just, honest, and authoritarian, with a strict code of ethics that we

could violate at our own peril; our mother was concerned, available, and protective, except that as our house was in just the right state of cleanliness and order, any breaking of this order was a transgression. We also had frames for both father-mother and sibling transactions. We were part of an extended patriarchal family, since our grandparents and the families of our paternal aunt, our maternal uncle, and a cousin all lived in contiguous houses. In this organism our family had a clearly delineated niche. My father was the responsible, fair arbiter of conflicts; my Aunt Esther and my mother shared the protective, fairy-godmother function for all their nieces and nephews (1974, pp. 74-75).

From Minuchin's perspective, we encounter family myths at every turn. All relationships are formed, described, explained, and changed mythopaically, and the "identity" of any individual in the family cannot be understood in isolation from those "whole-family" processes.

Family Myths and Cybernetic Explanation

Cybernetic explanation (Bateson, 1972; Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967) and systemic epistemology (Minuchin, 1974; Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967) have become common metaphors for the understanding of communication in families.

Ferreira linked the concept of family myths to cybernetic explanation through the concept of homeostasis. It is through cybernetic explanation that the family can be described as having the properties of a system. Although a full description of cybernetics and systems theory is beyond the scope of this paper, some of the key concepts of cybernetics will be explained with application to the idea of family myths, primarily through the work of Michael White (1986) and Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman, and Penn (1987).

Linear-causal epistemology is deterministic in the sense that a given series of events can be described as a chain in which event "a" effects event "b", and "b" effects "c", "c" in turn brings about "d" and so on. If, however, "d" leads back to "a", the system is circular, and functions in an entirely different fashion (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson; 1967). In a linear chain of events, it is possible to define event "a" as the cause and event "b" as the effect. A cybernetic circuit, in contrast, operates with circular causality because event "d" can also be seen to "cause" event "a". Furthermore, each of the events in the circuit can be seen to "cause" itself in the sense that "a" leads through events "b", "c", and "d", back to "a"; "b" leads back to "b", and so on. "Self-causation", known also as "self-reflexivity", is accomplished by the maintenance of certain stable relationships with other "events".

The cybernetic circuit can be broken up, or punctuated, in many different ways. We could say for instance, that "c" causes

"d", or that "a" leads to "c", etc., but to postulate a linear-causal relationship between any of the variables in the circuit, without reference to its circularity, is to commit a serious epistemological error, particularly if it is a living system that we are trying to describe. The essential feature of living systems is their capacity for self-regulation.

Self-regulation is the process of keeping the definitive qualities of a system stable by restraining events from exceeding certain pre-established limits or value ranges, beyond which the system could no longer exist in its present form. Self-regulation is accomplished by regulating the relationships between variables in such a way as to reproduce the system that consists of those variables and the changes in and among them.

The classic example of a cybernetic circuit used by Bateson (1972) to demonstrate cybernetic explanation is the simple home thermostat. The householder typically sets the thermostat switch to activate the furnace if the room temperature falls below a desired threshold, say 25 degrees celcius. The setting 25 degrees acutally corresponds to a small range of fluctuation within which small variations can occur without activating the furnace. The switch will activate the furnace when the temperature drops to 23 degrees and de-activate the furnace when the temperature rises to 27 degrees. The temperature has a range of possible fluctuation of 4 degrees. Now, when the temperature drops to below 23 degrees, a series of events is set in motion; the small metal pins in the thermostat switch connect, thus completing an electric

circuit and sending a charge along a wire to the motor of the furnace, which responds by clicking on, thereby starting a fire. The fire raises the temperature in the fire box, eventually activating the fan, which sends the warm air through the ducts into the room, raising the temperature continuously until it reaches 27 degrees, causing the pins in the thermostat switch to separate, thus breaking the circuit, deactivating the furnace, and so on. The system can be seen to regulate itself with respect to a pre-established range of fluctuation. An aggregate of events is instigated when the temperature exceeds the limit at either end of the range; fluctuations in room temperature are said to be restrained.

The heating system itself receives information in the form of a difference between the actual temperature and the specified threshold (Bateson & Bateson; 1987). Each event in the circuit is in fact activated by a transform of a difference, and each difference is "sensed" only as it exceeds a given threshold. In order for a change in the behavior of any component in the system to occur, there must be an appreciable difference. Differences that are not of sufficient magnitude, or of the wrong type, are simply not noticed; in White's terms, they are not "newsworthy" (White, 1986). Homeostasis, the maintenance of a stable physiological environment, is accomplished by the operation of a cybernetic system. Thus, when Jackson applied the idea of homeostasis metaphorically to the maintenance of a dynamic equilibrium in family relationships, he was referring specifically

to the process of self-regulation through the application of restraints to behaviors that threaten to exceed predetermined limits.

Premises, a term which Boscolo & Cecchin use interchangeably with family myths, define the acceptable range of fluctuation in the behavior of family members. Premises are the "network of presuppositions and expectations that make up the family members' map of the world, and establish rules for the selection of information about perceived objects or events" (White, 1986, pp. 169-170). Premises restrain the perception of difference by contributing to sensory limitations, thereby predisposing the person toward recognizing certain kinds of information and not others. Information that does not have meaning in relation to the "network of presuppositions" is forgotten or blurred.

The connection between family myths and the "network of presuppositions" postulated by Bateson and White is most evident in the systemic therapy of Boscolo and Cecchin, as summarized by Hoffman (Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman, & Penn, 1987):

From the beginning the Milan group took mental artifacts as seriously as behaviors. Their philosophy of change was tied to the notion that families come in with 'maps' of what is going on and that the therapist attempts to challenge or shift these 'maps'. The Milan group also makes therapeutic use of Bateson's emphasis on premises - reference values or guiding principles that are programmed in at the level of deep

structure and out of the reach of conscious mind. They look for a 'myth' or 'premise' that seemingly holds the behaviors attached to a problem in place and try to enunciate this premise or myth in their messages to a family. Often the problem is commented on as being in the service of such a myth. If the premise, usually a collective one, shifts or changes, this will hopefully affect major areas of family behavior, producing...what we might...call a change in premise. (p. 19)

Premises (family myths) control entire classes of behavior. Boscolo and Cecchin appear to have accepted Bateson's (1972) suggestion that premises operate on the level of deep structure where they are not normally accessible to the conscious mind. Based on this assumption, Boscolo and Cecchin interview families with the intent of making those premises explicit through the process of circular questioning.

The behavior of family members is connected to the premise in different ways. For instance, Boscolo has suggested that the person in the family who behaves in a psychotic manner is usually the one who no longer accepts the myth and, through his behavior, challenges it (Boscolo; 1987; p.35). Some premises provide the family with more choice in terms of their relationships with one another than do other premises. "A rigidly constructed myth...restricts the options of all family members to conceive of a more complex reality" (Boscolo; 1987; p.35). Rigid family myths

narrow the available range of behavior and the perception of difference, and thereby limit the capacity of the family to respond adaptively to changed conditions, even normal developmental changes such as the graduation of a child from the home at maturity. Premises may be acquired in childhood and may persist across generations, resulting in the repetition of clinical problems from generation to generation; for instance, three generations of distant fathers, three generations of depressed adolescents, and so on. As Penn put it: "It's as if the system has to keep looking for an epistemological solution for some particular issue that was not achieved by the previous generations" (1987, p. 206).

In the light of cybernetic explanation family myths are seen as premises, operating at the level of deep structure, which define a range of acceptable behavior for family members and restrain the perception of information. Family myths "control" entire classes of behavior; accordingly, changes in the content of family myths open space for new forms of behavior. Since family myths exist on the level of deep structure, they may operate outside the conscious awareness of the family. However, they may be evident in patterns of interaction, and may become explicit through conversation; specifically, through the process of circular questioning (Ugazio, 1985; Tomm, 1984a).

Summary of the Literature Review

Family myths were brought to life in the clinical literature and have become constrained by the presumption of psychopathology inherent in the clinical context. Nevertheless, several of the most prominent family therapists have not been shy about suggesting the applicability of family myths to the study of family interaction generally. Therapists have described many different themes contained in family myths; this reflects positively on the concept because, while the same or similar formal structures have been identified across families, each family nevertheless speaks with its own voice, it's unique "mythos".

It is generally agreed that family myths are linked to complex patterns of interaction, although the nature of this link varies among therapists. Ferreira (1965), Madanes et al.(1988), Wikler (1980), and Pollner and McDonald-Wikler (1985) point out that family myths are communicative, discursive events that have an immediate effect on the interaction in which they occur, while virtually all contributors to the literature agree that family myths are recursively linked with very complex patterns of interaction in families. In the context of the present study, these have become empirical questions.

Family myths have been related to several more specific functions as well. Where psychopathology is the operative frame, it was suggested that family myths allow the family to resist an encounter with unconscious conflict, or function to limit

escalating exchanges. From this point of view, the family myth is an aspect of the family pathology; it is a delusional system of beliefs. However, outside the realm of psychopathology, the function of family myths is to create a position of uniqueness and significance for each of its members, to promote "smooth and economic family living" in Ferreira's words, by creating predictable, stable relationships between family members.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

The purpose of this study was to specify and test a set of procedures for identifying family myths and to study the immediate and on-going effects of family myths on family interaction. The main requirement of the method was that it offer the opportunity for description in considerable depth and detail. The literature makes it clear that to abstract one or two family myths from a family, without exploring the uniqueness of the situation in which they have meaning, would be to debase the phenomenon by pulling it out of context. A case study approach, utilizing an in-depth interview, most closely satisfied these requirements, and most closely resembled the clinical contexts in which family myths had been identified previously.

Procedures

Participants:

One family, consisting of six members (two parents and four children), participated in this study. The family had no current or previous involvement in psychotherapy. The family was selected by word of mouth, through a mutual acquaintance. The acquaintance who made contact with the family was asked to describe the project as a research project conducted by a student at the University of Victoria into the operation of normal, healthy families. They were told that it would involve an interview with the

investigator, and that, if they were interested, she (the acquaintance) would pass their name and phone number on to the investigator who would call to explain the purposes and procedures of the project in more detail. The principal investigator and the family had not met previously.

A total of four families were contacted in this manner, by two different acquaintances. All of the families indicated an initial interest, although only one of the families agreed to participate in the interview. Two of the families who did not proceed into the interview indicated that the time commitment (about three hours, plus driving etc.) was too much. The third family expressed nervousness about being videotaped.

The purposes of the first phone contact were (a) to explain the purpose of the study, (b) to describe the research procedures involved, and (c) to discuss ethical safeguards (confidentiality, privacy, the right of withdrawal, etc.). The family were asked to discuss the project, and decide whether or not they would like to participate; they were told the principal investigator would contact them in a week to get their decision. The purposes of the second phone contact, assuming the family agreed to proceed, were to repeat the information given to the family in the first phone contact, to answer any questions, and to set a date for the interview.

Setting:

The venue was a combined personal residence and community health promotion centre. The interviewing room was pleasant, with a variety of interesting paintings, a carpet, several plants, and a number of small end tables which the children could use for coloring and so on. The interviewer provided coloring books, crayons, and a wooden interlocking train set, which was positioned so the children could play outside of the area defined by the arrangement of chairs. The children could not be captured by the camera while playing. The room was approximately twelve feet wide by twenty-five feet long. The chairs were arranged in a semi-circle facing the interviewer, who sat at an equal distance from all members of the family, approximately six feet away.

Apparatus:

The interview was videotaped with an RCA 2000 camcorder (model no. CPS06) using an Optex Macro wide-view lens (VA-0311), from a stationary position atop a tripod (five feet high) about twelve feet from the centre point between the family and the interviewer. The camera was set up to include all family members and the profile of the interviewer (taken from slightly behind), providing everyone was seated. There was one chair for each participant and the interviewer. The room was well lit, so no additional lighting was necessary. A remote microphone (Realistic PZM) was placed on a side table to the interviewer's left. One trial run under similar conditions two days prior to the interview produced adequate audio and video quality.

Gathering of the Data: Structure of the Interview

The interview consisted of (a) circular questioning (APPENDIX 1) applied to (b) a pre-established set of topic areas (APPENDIX 2) and (c) a structured three-step procedure for identifying, confirming, and tracking the interpersonal effects of family myths. First, circular questioning was used to call forth family myths. Second, once a potential family myth had been expressed (see Operational Definition), the interviewer then asked who in the family agreed with the idea(s) expressed in the myth. Third, if at least two people appeared to share the idea, the interviewer then asked a series of circular, behavioral linking questions in order to obtain the the family's reports of the interpersonal patterns associated with the family myth.

The protocol was applied flexibly in order to take advantage of the family's interests as much as possible, and allow for the possibility of pursuing one or two family myths in depth rather than the entire list of topics in a cursory fashion. The protocol consisted of the following topic areas: (a) Family composition, (b) developmental transitions, (c) key events, (d) family rituals and traditions, (e) legends, and (e) anticipated changes in the future.

The interview began with questions pertaining to family composition, the founding of the couple, and their families of origin, in order to quickly develop a three-generational genogram to help with subsequent questioning.

Analysis of the Data

Three levels of data were analyzed separately, using the video tape: (a) Family myths were identified by two independent raters and the principal investigator; (b) Raters and the principal investigator described the interaction of family members during the expression of family myths; (c) The family's reports of how specific family myths affected the on-going interaction of family members recorded and accepted at face value.

Training of Raters

Raters were briefed on the idea of family myths, the operational definition of family myths was explained, and the three step procedure for bringing forth, confirming, and tracking family myths was described. Agreement between raters regarding the identification of family myths was established by practice with a video tape of a clinical interview conducted by the principal investigator with the use of circular questioning strategies modified for the unique purposes of the clinical context. Raters viewed the tape separately and made separate lists of family myths, following the operational definition. The lists were then compared and a level of approximately 85% agreement between raters was obtained (of fifteen family myths identified by rater #1, rater #2 agreed on thirteen).

One month after being given a copy of the family myth interview to score, Rater #1 withdrew from the study, due to lack of available time. Within a week another volunteer was found to

replace Rater #1, although he had no background with the idea of family myths, and no experience scoring human interaction video tapes (he has a mathematics degree and teaches in the public school system). The primary criteria for selection were availability (time) and interest, since the raters were not being paid. The first ten minutes of the family myth interview were used to train the new Rater #1. (No family myths were scored or reported during this phase of the interview, by any raters.) The principal investigator explained the purpose of the study, the operational definition of family myths, the three-step interviewing procedure, and the scoring procedures, and a copy of the study proposal was left with him to read. He was instructed to score the first twenty to thirty minutes of the interview and keep track of any questions or difficulties. The principal investigator then telephoned him to answer any questions.

There were two main questions asked by Rater #1 at this time: (a) Is it a family myth if an agreement becomes evident due to comments made by family members at different points in the interview? (b) Is it a family myth whenever the couple/family agree on a given topic? (3) What counts as agreement - statements, head nods, etc.? Rater #1 was told that two statements amounting to an agreement made at different points in the interview should be scored as a family myth, since the operational definition did not rule out this possibility explicitly. With respect to the second question, Rater #1 was told that agreements between family members should not be scored

as a family myth when (a) they are simply agreeing with a statement made by the interviewer or, (b) if they are agreeing on a statement of fact. With respect to the third question, Rater #1 was told that if the agreement may include head nods, and common vocalizations such as "mhmmm" and "yeah", providing it appeared to him that the agreement was unequivocal. Rater #2 also asked questions (b) and (c) while he was scoring the tapes, and was given the same responses.

Identification of Family Myths:

Raters' completed descriptions of family myths were given to the principal investigator. Each rater's list was reviewed to ensure that the family myths reported in fact fit with the identification procedure and operational definition; reported family myths that did not fit these criteria were eliminated from the rater's list by the principal investigator. (See Results, Table 2)

Raters were then asked to identify, separately, which of the family myths they had identified they would judge to be: (a) most important, (b) important, or (c) least important. The judgment of relative importance was to be based on their subjective opinion of the significance of the family myth in terms of understanding the family and on the apparent importance of the myth to family members themselves. Categories did not have to be equally represented, nor did the raters have to use all three categories

if they chose not to. The principal investigator completed the same task.

The purpose of this procedure was to gain more information about the significance of the agreement and disagreement between raters. If agreement occurred proportionately more often on those family myths judged to be most important, this would add weight to the level of agreement attained and mitigate against the potential criticism that agreement may have occurred on relatively insignificant information. If, on the contrary, agreement tended to occur proportionately more often with myths judged as relatively unimportant, the "significance" of the agreement would be diminished.

Confirmed family myths were then matched for similarity of content separately, by each pair of raters, using the following procedure: Raters were instructed to compare their lists of family myths and match those that they felt were similar or referred to the same idea. They were given one numbered 4 x 6 inch index cards for each of the family myths they had identified, with a different family myth printed on each card. The cards were then sorted into agreement and non-agreement piles according to the similarity of their content, as determined by each pair of raters. This procedure yielded a percentage of agreement for each pair of raters on the content of the family myths they had identified, and mean percentages of agreement for each rater and pair of raters.

Based on the pair-wise content matching, a composite list was compiled of family myths receiving unanimous agreement. The composite list gives the verbatim description of individual family myths as reported by each rater. The percentage of the total number of family myths reported receiving unanimous, partial (agreement between two of three raters), and no agreement were calculated.

These procedures yielded several different expressions of the level of agreement between raters for the identification of family myths.

Behavior Accompanying the Expression of Family Myths:

For the purposes of this study, "verbal and nonverbal behavior" referred to relatively global indicators of "involvement", as opposed to micro-level behavior such as subtle changes in facial expression, small gestures, amount of eye contact, and so on. Raters were instructed to note "significant" changes in posture, including postural synchrony, eye contact, facial expressions such as smiling, frowning, etc., touching, changes in seating, and large gestures that appeared to be directed to another member of the family. In addition, raters were asked to note any verbal interaction during the expression of a family myth.

The raters' reports consisted of descriptions of what they perceived to be significant, communicative behavior during the expression of family myths. Although raters' descriptions of

non-verbal behavior were not as detailed as expected, they were highly consistent, and there was a much greater emphasis on the verbal interaction of the couple during the "construction" of family myths than was expected. Raters' reports were accepted verbatim and are included in those descriptions contained in Section #3 of the Results.

The Effects of Family Myths on Family Interaction:

The data describing the effect of family myths on the on-going interaction of the family, are the reports of family members themselves. These reports are presented in transcript form, with brief introductory and summarizing comments.

Validity

The data elicited in this study were the family members' accounts (descriptions and opinions) of the family itself. Content-related evidence of validity is thus the statements made by family members. No effort was made to assess the accuracy of the family's accounts since accuracy was not the issue being addressed; family myths were identified on the basis of explicit agreement between family members' accounts rather than on the accuracy of those accounts. The question pertaining to content validity is how accurately the family myths identified in this study reflect the statements made by the family in the interview. Since only those accounts receiving agreement between at least two family members are included in the results, and these are presented verbatim in transcript form, the chances of

misrepresenting the family are minimal. Furthermore, each of the raters' summaries of each family myth are also presented verbatim. It is quite possible that another interviewer may have stimulated a quite different set of accounts from the family, but even so, the present findings would remain valid since no claim is made here that the family myths described exhaust the family's repertoire of family myths.

Reliability

Reliability of the results rests on the issue of interrater agreement pertaining to (a) the identification and summation of family myths and (b) the behavior of family members during the expression of family myths. Although the training of raters was minimal, and complicated by the withdrawal of one experienced rater, the results indicate a relatively high level of interrater agreement on the identification and summation of family myths. The levels of agreement for each rater and each pair of raters are presented. It is difficult to assess the level of agreement between raters' descriptions of the behavior of family members during the expression of family myths since their reports were incomplete due to the excessive amount of time required to score those behavior completely. However, there is a high level of agreement in the descriptions that were completed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Summary of the Interview

In order to provide the information necessary for the reader to put the family myths that will be described in the results section into proper context, a description is provided of the flow of topics discussed in the interview and the activity of the family and interviewer just prior to the interview, during the break, and at the close of the interview.

The "Miller" Family

The Miller family consists of Michael (42) and Louise (41), and their four children, Tom (13), Jerry (11), Annette (8), and Jimmy (5). They live in a semi-rural area not far from a small village centre. Michael is a Minister in a non-denominational church. Louise is a teacher, currently dividing her time between substituting and working in the home. The couple married seventeen years ago, after meeting in the Bible College of a major university. Both of the couple have university degrees. All of the Miller children are in their age-appropriate grades in school and appear to be doing well.

Michael comes from a family of four siblings; an older brother (45), a younger brother (36), and an adopted sister (22). Both of Michael's brothers are married; his sister is living near

her parents' home and is dating. Michael's eldest brother has two sons, (14) and (7). Michael's father (76) and mother (64) are in relatively good health, and they still reside on the family farm, in western Canada.

Louise has two older sisters, (46) and (45). Her father, Phillip, died in 1959 of illness due to poisoning of the liver. Her mother, Mary (73), has just moved into a residential centre for the elderly in a nearby urban centre after having lived the last five years with the couple and their children. Mary has had several heart surgeries, beginning about ten years ago. Mary remarried about five years following Phillip's death, but the marriage ended about ten years later when Mary left. Louise's sisters are married and have four daughters and five daughters respectively, ranging in age from (23) to (11).

Seating and Movement

Members of the family chose their own seating arrangement. Two of the six chairs arranged for the family were nicely padded, with comfortable backs. Once they were in the door, Tom and Jerry headed straight for these chairs. Jimmy found a spot between Tom and Jerry, and Annette sat between her Mom and Dad. Chairs were arranged in a crescent shape facing the interviewer, who sat six to seven feet away, at the mid-point of the crescent. There were end tables beside the chairs at both ends of the crescent and to the interviewer's left. If the chairs were numbered 1 to 6, from the interviewer's left to right, the seating arrangement would be

as follows: 1. Tom, 2. Jimmy, 3. Jerry, 4. Louise (Mom), 5. Annette, 6. Michael (Dad).

There was a wooden train set near the base of the camera but out of view. The children spent a good deal of time moving back and forth between their seats and the train set. There were also children's books and coloring supplies on one of the end tables. Louise and Michael remained seated in the same chairs throughout the interview, as did Tom with one or two notable exceptions. The children moved freely about the room, climbed onto their parents' laps, and so on.

Opening Statements to the Family

At the beginning of the interview, following introductions, the family were given the following explanation of the study:

I am a student at the University of Victoria, and I'm ahh...one of the things I'm really interested in is families. And so I'm working on a project for my master's thesis in the department of psychological foundations there, and one of the things I'm doing is studying families. And I'm particularly interested in kinda normal, healthy, regular families, and what I'm interested in is kinda how things go over time, how things change, how they make sense of themselves and how ideas sorta develop about one another and how traditions kinda develop and how all those things sort of work together to maintain a good family environment and give everybody a place of importance and uniqueness, and so on. So that's what I'm studying.

I heard about your family through a woman called Norma who I think is your neighbor. She said, "I know this really normal, healthy family. You should talk to them!".

The interviewer then explained to the family that he would be asking many questions, some of which might sound a bit unusual. They were told that didn't have to answer any of the questions,

but that they should feel free to speak up at any time. The interviewer also explained that there were some toys in the room that they could play with whenever they wished.

Not surprisingly, the children chose to play with the toys for much of the interview, especially Jimmy, the youngest. The other children tended to play with the toys for a while, then return to their chair and watch or participate in the interview, then return to the toys again, and so on. As a result, the interviewer and the couple did most of the talking, and the chances for the children to elaborate on family myths were somewhat restricted.

Sequence of Topics in the Interview

The interview ranged across many topics, and a reading of only the family myths identified would not give an accurate picture of which topics were discussed, in what order, and at which times. Table 1 shows where (the principal investigator's) confirmed family myths (see "Reported and Confirmed Family Myths") fit into the conversation as a whole. In addition, it shows the actual topics discussed on both general and specific levels. Table 1 shows the amount of time spent discussing Louise's family of origin, for example, and indicates which of the topics listed in the protocol were actually discussed. The family myths listed in Table 1 are taken from the Principal Investigator's list of confirmed family myths only (see Appendix G) and should not be taken as the only list.

TABLE 1

Sequence Of Family Myths Paired With Topics Discussed

Time	Family Myths	Topics	Topics Summarized
08:15	Louise attracted to Michael's beliefs	The meeting and attraction of L. & M	The founding of the couple
18:35	Mary's kindness and sensitivity	Mary	Louise's family of origin
21:35	Mary's "becoming"	Mary	Louise's family of origin
20:50	Louise's parents very happy marriage	The relationship of Mary and Phillip	Louise's family of origin
26:55	Mary's illnesses and sublimating abilities	Mary	Louise's family of origin
27:30	Phillip's dominance	The relationship of Mary and Phillip	Louise's family of origin
32:45	Louise the most affected by changes	The relationship of Louise and Mary	Louise's family of origin
39:45	The independence and strength of the women	The independence and ability of the women	Louise's family of origin
40:50	Mary paving the way for the women	The independence and ability of the women	Louise's family of origin
58:30	Phillip's commitment, ability and notoriety	Phillip	Louise's family of origin
BREAK			
1:20:30	Michael enjoyed being an older brthr. more	The relationships of brothers	Michael's family of origin
1:23:45	Michael closer to and more like older brthr.	The relationships of brothers	Michael's family of origin
1:24:00	Louise and Michael became "one" in Tom	Effect of first child on the couple	Miller family children

1:24:05	Tom and Jerry will become best friends	The relationships of brothers	Miller family children's relationships
1:29:18	An open, inclusive family	Friendships of Miller children	Miller family children's relationships
1:36:38	Tom more similar to Louise as a teen	Tom's relationship to Louise and Michael	Miller family
1:36:50	Tom is shy, like Dad	Tom's relationship to Louise and Michael	Miller family
1:58:00	Michael's Dad busy so M. closer to Mom	Father/son, Mother/relationships	Michael's family of origin
1:59:05	Michael closest to his Dad when little	Father/child relationships	Michael's family of origin
1:59:48	M.'s Dad close to M. due to personality fit	Father/child relationships	Michael's family of origin
2:01:00	Michael seen as a conciliator in his fam.	M.'s relationships to brthrs. & parents	Michael's family of origin
2:02:00	Michael now more outspoken in his family	Michael's position in his family	Michael's family of origin
2:04:40	M. more like his mthr. re: parenting style	Father/child relationships	Michael's family of origin
2:04:40	Michael can be too reactive as a parent	Father/child relationships	M. & L.'s parenting relationship
2:05:02	Michael's Mom a loyal, affectionate parent	Michael and Mom's parenting styles	M. & L.'s parenting relationship
2:11:00	Faith in God helps to mend disagreements	The role of faith in the marriage	Commitment to Christian beliefs
2:13:56	Meal and holiday times are close	Ways of getting close	Importance of being close

The break in the interview lasted about fifteen minutes. Louise took three of the children outside for some fresh air.

Near the end of the break, Michael read a story to Tom, from one of the books brought by the interviewer.

At the close of the interview, the couple was asked for permission to keep and use the videotape, were informed of the conditions of informed consent for themselves and their children, and asked to sign the appropriate forms. The purpose of the study was explained in more detail, including the idea of family myths. They were then given a gift certificate to a local restaurant for a family lunch.

The Identification of Family Myths

Research Question

This section is concerned solely with the first research question: To what extent are family myths identifiable in a normal population? This is the most central of the three research questions; several methods for assessing and expressing the level of interrater agreement have been used and are described in detail.

Reported and Confirmed Family Myths

The procedures used for scoring, reporting, family myths are described in under Analysis of the Data, in the Method section. The raters' completed scoring sheets were reviewed by the principal investigator to ensure that all of the myths identified satisfied the operational definition and identification procedure. Family myths that did not fit these criteria were eliminated, yielding the total number of family myths identified by each rater, including the principal investigator (Table 2). The complete, verbatim lists of confirmed family myths are reported in Appendix G.

There were four separate reasons for eliminating family myths initially identified by the raters.

(1) Where there was not sufficient evidence that at least two family members agreed with the central idea of the family myth, or apparent agreement was equivocal.

(2) Where the family myth that was agreed upon by the family was clearly introduced by the interviewer, where there was no discussion of the idea, and the family were simply agreeing with what the interviewer said. For example:

i) I: Good memories make a family feel good about themselves.

L: Nods

M: Nods

ii) I: Age differences (in the children) diminish over time.

L: Yeah.

M: That's true.

(3) Where the rater identified a family myth that was clearly a subset of a larger myth that had just been identified, and the subset myth occurred while the interviewer was tracking the on-going effects of the family myth on the interaction of family members. These apparent myths also had the quality of factual statements. For example, the idea that "Louise lets Michael know when he's being too reactive", is actually a description of the behavioral effect of the idea that Michael is too reactive (which was identified as the family myth), rather than a separate myth unto itself.

(4) Where the apparent family myth was a statement of fact. For example, "We used to have game nights".

Table 2

Number of Family Myths Identified by Raters, Adjusted to Fit
Identification Procedure and Operational Definition

	Raters		
	P.I.	#1	#2
# Initially Reported	26	48	26
# Eliminated due to:			
1. Equivocal or non-agreement	-	2	-
2. Introduced by interviewer	-	4	1
3. Subset or behavioral effect	-	4	-
4. Factual statement	-	2	-
# Confirmed Family Myths	26	36	25

Level of Interrater Agreement by Content of Family Myths

Each rater identified a different amount and different set of family myths. Therefore, matching for content required the raters to determine which family myths could be combined in agreement with the lists of the other raters. For example, "Mary is a kind person", and "Mary is a giving person", are identified as separate family myths by rater #1; virtually the same content is expressed as one myth by rater #2 ("Mary is very kind, has a good heart, and cares about people"), and by the principal investigator ("Mary is

a kind and sensitive person"). The greater number of family myths identified by rater #1 is explained partly by the fact that he tended to record family myth in their smallest confirmable units, as in the example just cited and other cases. In contrast, the principal researcher and rater #2 tended to present as one "compound" myth a set of similar, or essentially identical, "smaller" myths.

Table 3(a)

Percentages of Agreement for Each Rater

	Rater	
	#1	#2
Principal Investigator (/26) %	24/26 92.30	21/26 80.87
	Rater	
	P.I.	#2
Rater #1 (/36) %	33/36 91.66	28/36 77.77
	Rater	
	P.I.	#1
Rater #2 (/20) %	20/25 80.00	19/25 76.00

Table 3(b)

Mean Percentage of Agreement by Rater

	Rater		
	P.I.	#1	#2
Mean % of Agreement	86.58	84.71	78.00

The mean overall percentage of agreement for each rater was 83.09%, while agreement between rater dyads was a mean of 83.01% (Table 3c); however the difference in amount of agreement between raters is far more interesting. The level of agreement attained by raters #1 and #2 is substantially different from the level of agreement attained by the principal investigator/rater #1 dyad. The reasons for these differences are discussed at the end of this section.

Table 3(c)

Mean Percentage of Agreement Between Raters By Dyad

	Dyad		
	P.I./#1	P.I./#2	#2/#3
Mean % of Agreement	91.98	80.43	76.89

Family Myths Receiving Unanimous Agreement

Based on pair-wise content matching, the principal investigator compiled a list of those family myths that were identified and agreed upon by all three raters. Table 4 lists unanimously identified family myths according to the sequence in which they occurred in the interview, using the complete verbatim summary provided by the raters. Each composite family myth begins with the principal investigator (P.I.), and is followed by raters #1 and #2 in that order.

Table 4

Family Myths Receiving Unanimous Agreement

-
1. (P.I.) Louise was initially attracted to Michael's faith. "Because we pray together", we are able to solve conflicts and maintain our relationship to God. (1) The relationship to God is an organizing factor. (2) The principles of Christianity are important to this family. This family was founded because of these principles.
 2. (P.I.) Mary is a kind and sensitive person. (1) Mary is a kind person. Mary is a giving person. (2) Mary is very kind, a good heart, and cares about people.
 3. (P.I.) Mary's becoming; including the story of her doing less as a Minister's wife than she was capable of, and of her blossoming through social work, etc. (1) Mary preserves her energy. Mary was a very capable person. Mary changed after Phillip's death. Mary was under a lot of stress. (2) Amazing Mary has the ability to be both a little helpless and very competent as the situation requires.
 4. (P.I.) Phillip was both dominant and loving. (1) Phillip was dominant and loving. (2) Phillip was dominant. Mary was subservient. Mary made herself sick because she was unhappy (unfulfilled), being subservient to her husband.
 5. (P.I.) Louise was the most affected by the changes in Mary following Phillip's death. (1) Louise was most affected by changes in Mary. (2) Louise was the most affected by the remarriage of her mother.
 6. (P.I.) This is a family of strong, independent, but not abrasive women. (1) Louise is a member of a family of strong, independent women. (2) This is a family of strong, loving, independent women.

7. (P.I.) The legend of Phillip; his successfulness, lovingness, kindness, notoriety as a "Godly man, and his status as the "family hero". (1) Phillip was fun, loving, Phillip's influence lives on. Phillip's grandchildren know what he was like. (2) Phillip was a "Godly man", the family hero.
8. (P.I.) Louise and Michael became "one" in Tom. (1) Louise and Michael became "one" in Tom. (2) Louise and Michael got closer after Tom was born.
9. (P.I.) This is a family that includes others. (1) The family home is an open home. (2) Louise's childhood home was an open home.
10. (P.I.) Tom is more similar to how Louise was as a teen, including being rambunctious. (1) Tom will be more like Louise as a teenager. (2) Louise was rambunctious, outgoing, etc., as a teenager.
11. (P.I.) Tom is shy, like his Dad. (1) Tom is shy. Michael is shy. Michael is not outspoken. (2) Tom is shy like his Dad. Michael is generally shy.
12. (P.I.) Michael was much closer to his Dad when he was little, and his Dad was more affectionate with little ones generally. Michael's Dad was very affectionate, especially with Michael, due to their personality fit. (1) Michael as a boy was close to his Dad. Michael's Dad was affectionate to the young kids. Michael's Dad was more affectionate with Michael. (2) Michael's father was more loving when the kids (Michael in particular) were little.
13. (P.I.) Michael's Dad was preoccupied much of the time, so Michael became closer to his Mom. (1) Michael's Dad was preoccupied. (2) Michael was closer to his Mom; his Dad was always working hard, and preoccupied.
14. (P.I.) Michael is seen as a conciliator in the family. (1) People see Michael as a peace-maker. (2) Michael is a conciliator.
15. (P.I.) Michael has been more influenced by his mother's parenting style - including her tendency to be reactive, loyal, and affectionate - more than by his father's parenting style. (1) Michael was more influence by his Mom's style of parenting. Michael is reactive. Michael's Mom is reactive. (2) Michael's mother was loyal and affectionate with the children, like Michael. Michael is sometimes reactive with the children, like his mother.
-

Table 5

Proportion of Family Myths Receiving Unanimous, Partial, and No Agreement (By Rater)

	Rater		
	P.I.	#1	#2
Unanimous Agreement			
Proportion	19/26	29/36	19/25
%	73.07	80.55	76.00
Partial Agreement			
Proportion	7/26	5/36	2/25
%	26.91	13.92	8.00
No Agreement			
Proportion	0/26	2/36	4/25
%	0.00	5.55	16.00

Between 84% and 100% of the family myths identified received either unanimous or partial agreement, depending on the rater.

"Importance" of Family Myths Compared to Level of Agreement

Subjective judgment of the importance of family myths was established prior to content matching, and was done individually by each rater. This procedure was included to test the potential criticism that agreement between raters, although high, occurred on relatively trivial information.

Table 6(a)

Importance Of Family Myths Compared to Level Of Agreement

	Level of Agreement		
	Unanimous	Partial	None
P.I.:			
Most Important (10)	10	-	-
Important (10)	8	2	-
Least Important (6)	1	5	-
Rater #1:			
Most Important (12)	12	-	-
Important (13)	9	3	1
Least Important (11)	8	2	1
Rater #2:			
Most Important (6)	6	-	-
Important (11)	9	1	1
Least Important (8)	5	-	3

Table 6(b)

Summary Of Importance Of Family Myths Compared to Level Of Agreement

	Level of Agreement		
	Unanimous	Partial	None
Most Important (38)	38	-	-
%	100.00	0.00	0.00
Important (34)	26	6	2
%	76.44	17.44	5.90
Least Important (25)	14	7	4
%	56.00	28.00	16.00

As one would hope, agreement was highest on those family myths identified as most important (Table 6b). Family myths receiving no agreement were far more likely to have been judged least important than were family myths receiving unanimous or partial agreement, and family myths receiving partial or no agreement were more likely to have been judged important or least important than were myths receiving unanimous agreement. The results indicate that the procedure was successful at creating a high level of agreement on the family myths judged to be the most important.

Summary

Family myths were identified, in a "normal" family, with a mean level of inter-rater agreement of slightly more than 83%, despite poor rater training procedures, and the global, abstract nature of the concept. Agreement was particularly high with family myths identified as most important according to the subjective appraisal of all raters, indicating that the procedures used were successful in identifying salient information about the family.

In addition to confirming that family myths could be identified, the results also showed that family myths emerged in the interview in unexpected ways. It had been presumed that they would occur as discrete units of communication, more or less separate in the way that topics are separate in a normal conversation. Instead, as the transcripts presented later in this

section show, they were interwoven much like strands of straw in a nest; each strand becomes alternately visible and lost in the nest of other strands, depending on subtle, unexpected turns in the conversation. Family myths that occurred in this way were spliced together, and were sometimes comprised of statements that occurred many minutes apart. These family myths were never "discussed" in the usual sense of that word, and their identification as family myths was possible only in retrospect. Because of this structure, several family myths could be emerging and retreating simultaneously. The three-step identification, confirmation, and tracking procedure was not helpful in these cases, because it would have meant changing the subject suddenly against the flow of the family's conversation.

Unexpected as this result is, it highlights a very important feature of family myths: that is, they tend to occur in "clusters" or "nests", in the sense that they are more or less interdependent. For instance, the legend of Mary's becoming is inextricably bound to the myth of strong, independent, women, the legend of Phillip, the legend of Louise being the most affected by changes following Phillip's death, and so on. These family myths depend for their comprehensibility on the data, explanations, and descriptions provided within the structure of other family myths. The procedure utilized for identifying family myths makes it possible to disentangle the nest conceptually, but the manner in which they occurred in the interview makes it clear that they cannot be truly separated, in the manner of discrete "beliefs" or

"cognitions", particularly where the data gathering event is an interview.

Factors Accounting For Disagreement

Disagreement regarding the identification of family myths ranged from 8% to 23%, depending on the rater dyad. Several possible sources may be identified.

First and foremost, the operational definition did not adequately define those behaviors that would be called "agreement" on the part of the family. Both raters had difficulty making consistent judgments of agreement, particularly when it meant interpreting a slight nod of the head, or a quiet, reserved, "Yeah". A more specific definition of agreement would still leave unresolved the natural ambiguity that occurs in human communication but could still be expected to raise the level of agreement.

Second, raters #1 and #2 were not trained in the same way, and did not have an opportunity to meet to calibrate their scoring prior to undertaking the family myth interview. Due to the last minute withdrawal of the first rater #1, there was not sufficient time to arrange a training session where both raters (the new #1 and #2) could be present. Rater #1 discussed the concept and procedures with the principal investigator only. In addition, rater #2 was trained using a practice tape of a clinical interview, but, as there was no permission from the family for the

new rater #1 to view the tape, he did not have that experience to draw on.

Finally, the raters had a completely different level of knowledge and experience with the idea of family myths prior to their participation as raters. Rater #1 was completely unfamiliar with the idea and with scoring procedures pertaining to human interaction research. Rater #2 has considerable experience as a family therapist, is intimately familiar with the idea of family myths, and has some experience with interpreting human interaction video-tapes. The experience factor would have been minimized had the other training procedures been sufficient, and the same for both raters.

Third, rating the family myth video-tape is very time consuming, and the raters were not paid. It is a two and one-half hour tape; scoring requires several viewings, including a great deal of rewinding, and so on. Raters worked between fifteen and twenty hours each on scoring the tape and, while rater #2 had no more time available, he reported that he was still finding new information when it was time to submit the list of identified family myths to the principal investigator. As a result, some family myths were simply overlooked.

Behavior Accompanying the Expression of Family Myths

Research Question

This section is concerned solely with the second research question: What interaction occurs among family members as the family myth is being expressed?

It was proposed that the expression of a family myth would have an immediate impact on the communicative behavior (interaction) of family members as it was expressed. However, several of the identified family myths were not simply "expressed" at a distinct moment, as a discrete event; they were, instead, "constructed" through and during the flux of verbal and nonverbal behavior of family members. The behavior that captured the attention of the raters and the principal researcher was the process of "constructing" the myths rather than strictly the interpersonal following their expression. "Construction" of family myths involved primarily the verbal level, but was accompanied by nonverbal communication as well. Consequently the presentation of results emphasizes verbal interaction far more than was anticipated prior to the interview.

Results are presented in two parts. The first part presents and summarizes the nonverbal behavior of family members during the expression of four relatively discrete family myths. Part two presents and summarizes examples of the intricate, patterned way in which the family, particularly the couple, constructed family

myths in and through the conversation, with modifications of one another's descriptions and accounts. A clear pattern of discursive interaction was evident and is presented and discussed in detail. In both parts, verbatim transcripts from the interview are used extensively, although in part two the method of transcription has been changed to more adequately demonstrate the couple's co-construction of family myths.

PART 1: Non-verbal Interaction During the Expression of Family Myths

Raters' descriptions included both general comments on the interaction of the couple (in particular) throughout the interview, and descriptions of verbal and nonverbal behavior during the expression of specific family myths. Rater's descriptions were minimalist, in the sense that both raters noted only those non-verbal behaviors that appeared to be communicative and salient, rather than producing an exhaustive description of the behavior of all family members during the entire discussion of a given family myth. Since raters disagreed to some extent in their identification of family myths, not all raters described the behavior of family members for all family myths. Raters' descriptions have been combined in the examples that follow.

Descriptions of behavior are interspersed with the dialogue, in order to accurately reflect their timing and context. Descriptions of behavior appear in square ([...]) brackets.

Following each example, noted behavior is summarized and related to the content of the conversation taking place while it occurred.

It is worth noting that the raters were not asked to describe the general pattern of interaction of the couple; however, both raters were sufficiently impressed by what they perceived as interesting consistencies that they included these descriptions in the package of data given to the principal researcher.

Consistencies in Family Interaction

All three raters noted several outstanding features of the interaction among family members. It should be noted that the same, or similar, patterns may be found in many different types of conversations with families.

(1) Throughout the interview, Michael and Louise are highly coordinated in terms of their posture. They assume an identical posture at key points in the conversation (during the discussion of important family myths) and maintain synchrony for relatively long periods of time.

(2) Throughout the interview, Michael and Louise carefully coordinate their descriptions of information about the family. They "influence" one another's descriptions by supplying descriptive phrases that extend or modify their partner's statement without explicitly disagreeing. They occasionally complete one another's gestures and, on one occasion, Michael supplies the gesture while Louise supplies the words (see part two of this section).

(3) Throughout the interview, the couple exchange many smiles, particularly at key points in specific family myths.

(4) Both of the couple are very sensitive to, and inclusive of, the children. They regularly scratch their backs, stroke their hair, and encourage them to sit close by. Louise consistently attempts to have the children answer questions, sometimes asks the children to answer a question that was asked of her, and encourages the interviewer to include the children in the interview.

The Legend of Louise's Attraction to Michael's Beliefs

At the beginning of the interview, while the entire family is still seated, the interviewer is asking about the founding of the couple.

I: (to Tom) Do you know how they met?

Tom: They met through bible college [Louise and Michael look at one another and exchange smiles, they both nod affirmatively at Tom, as Tom looks at each of them in turn].

L: Met at...which is a Christian Club on campus.

I: What do you think it was about your Dad that your Mom found so attractive?

Tom: Beliefs [Michael and Louise nodding "loudly" and affirmatively].

I: What kind of beliefs?

Tom: Christian beliefs [Michael and Louise smile broadly, nod affirmatively to Tom, who looks at them quickly and then looks down].

Tom receives a lot of affirmation for his statement of the reason for the attraction between his parents. They clearly enjoy Tom being so informed about the basis of their relationship and the history of their meeting. Michael and Louise also appear to become closer through the expression of this family, as they exchange obviously warm smiles and eye contact while enjoying their son.

Mary's Kindness and Sensitivity, and the Legend of Mary's "Becoming"

At the beginning of the conversation focusing on Mary, the couple establish a metacommunicative frame - "Better be careful" - regarding how they will talk about Mary. All family members were seated as at the start of the interview.

I: Well, how old's Mary, Michael?

M: She would be seventy...thhhhh...ree. [looks at Louise, Louise nods]

I: How's she doing?

M: Actually, she does fairly well. She's had a number of heart operations. I think three.

I: Beginning when?

M: Back probably about ten years ago. But she's very ah...(long pause)...[Tom pokes Jimmy, then makes a funny face, everyone except Michael and the interviewer look at Tom, the children giggle, Louise smiles, then Michael looks at Tom and smiles, as does the interviewer]...laid back and ah...doesn't move a lot...

I: Right.

M: ...so she keeps on going.

I: So Mary is cookin' along just fine despite the fact that she's got some health problems.

M: Well I think so. She never thinks that she is. [turns and looks at Louise, lowers voice] Better be careful.

[Louise slaps her knee and laughs with Michael, she moves an identical, synchronous posture with Michael, legs crossed, fingers interlocked over top knee, slightly forward in chair, sitting very upright]

L: Yeah, Mom sees this.

I: Why? (i.e. does she never think that she is)

M: We always have a joke that we have which is that we'll put on Mary's tombstone, "See I told you I was sick". [big laughs from both Louise and Michael] ...

Just as the interviewer invites Michael to discuss Mary, he (Michael) lets Louise know that he knows that this may be a sensitive topic. With the quiet and parenthetical, "Better be careful", uttered from the corner of his mouth, he assures Louise of his carefulness and refers to the family joke about what will

be written on Mary's tombstone. The simultaneous laughter and move to synchrony signifies a "togetherness" on this topic. Louise accepts the metacommunicative frame, and elaborates for the benefit of the interviewer. The effect of discussing Mary (especially her health) is that the couple become more explicitly "cooperative"; they clearly enjoy talking about how they tease her.

The Legend of Phillip

The legend of Phillip is recounted principally by Louise. In fact, Louise tells a story to illustrate the legend of Phillip; a story that itself is destined for status as a legend in the family.

I: Well, what's the legend of Phillip...that lives on?

[Louise and Michael look at one another and smile, Louise in particular is smiling very broadly]

I: What's the ah...what's the most...you know...

L: Well, I think that's best explained by ah...we were at a ahh...we were at ahh...umm... [Michael assumes exact synchrony with Louise, Tom, Jerry and Michael listening quietly] reunion for this church where we grew up that...we were there from the time I was six months old until he died when I was eleven. This church had been built up and, even though this church had been going on for many years...ummm...they spoke most of Phillip Hanks, because he was the one...that had built it up. So, and you know

there were people getting up and saying, "Well, when I was a kid you know...

I: Oh is that right hey?

L: ...he would come and see me when my father died". And he was...he was described ...several people described him as a Godly man. So I think that is the heritage he has...has...[Louise smiling] you know how I remember him as being fun and loving and deeply committed...ummm...as a Christian...one who just lived his faith. And other people liked him, he was very well liked in the community. So I think he is...he is the family hero...I guess. [Louise smiles broadly, laughs softly, and looks at Michael, Michael smiles while looking at Louise]

I: He is hey?

L: Yeah...I would say he definitely is...a very ah...appealing character...[smiling]

M: Yes. His influence has lived on.

L: ...and influence...and is still living on...

I: Well what happens when you...oh, sorry, go ahead.

L: ...I was going to say he is influencing his grand children.

I: Yeah, his grand...

L: His grandchildren are sitting in this...you know listening to this...[very animated tone] this eulogy to their grandfather, and...

I: Right.

L: You know my mother has a picture...and you know Tom looks like me and I look like my Dad, and...

I: Oh, is that right?

L: ...and you know we tell him, "You look like your Grandfather", and you know this kind of thing. Jerry is Jerry Phillip...and so I...you know... [Michael smiling all this time, looking at Louise, no interruptions as she tells this story, Tom is listening quietly, also looking at Louise]

...he's an inspiring figure...he probably...as far as inspiring figures go...he's dead, [Louise laughs] and although he was, you know, a very good man when he lived...[Louise nods "loudly" while speaking]... as well.

I: So there are some ways the family has of remembering Phillip.

L: Yeah. [nods]

M: [nods]

I: And ah...and kind of including his...he still contributes really actively to the family.

[Louise and Michael both nodding "loudly" and affirmatively]

L: I think so, yeah.

Throughout this conversation, Michael and the children remain quiet. Michael adds one comment but quickly backs off and watches Louise recount the legend of her father. Louise's tone is animated, she smiles broadly and frequently, and consistently looks at Michael in particular. The couple sit in precisely synchronous positions for much of this sequence.

Rather than a jointly constructed myth, the legend of Phillip is told in story form, and the rest of the family responds

appropriately, encouraging the story teller non-verbally with their attention, smiles, and nods. Even while Louise is looking at the interviewer, Michael is looking at Louise and smiling, indicating his enjoyment at the fact that Louise is having the opportunity to tell this story. The overall effect of the legend of Phillip is a tone of reverence and enjoyment.

The Myth of Tom's Shyness

The myth of Tom's shyness emerged from the question of who he would be most similar to, as a teenager - his Mom or his Dad. Louise suggested that Tom would be very much like her in that he was "reactive and outspoken", and was known (by other adults who know him) to have the combination of "leadership potential" and a not very serious approach to life. Louise also stated that Tom was shy, like Michael. Michael agreed.

This sequence begins with Louise and Michael separated by an empty chair, Annette is on Louise's lap, Jerry and Jimmy are playing with the train set, and Tom is sitting, reading a book on the chair on the other end of the semi-circle from Michael. As the conversation proceeds, Tom becomes more and more noticeable, and the flow of the dialogue is interrupted. Finally, after Louise twice asks Tom to let his brothers get by (to and from the bathroom), Michael "asks" Tom to come over and sit next to him. The topic of the conversation while these maneuvers are taking place is Tom and Tom's shyness. It becomes clear near the end of the sequence that the effect of the idea that Tom is shy is that

Michael takes up a position of encouragement. At times Tom will not look encouraged at first. Michael will respond by becoming more encouraging. Tom may look even more hesitant. Michael will respond by encouraging even more, and so on. In this way Michael and Tom become quite close, and the closeness is based partially on two related family myths, both of which were confirmed in this interview. The first is the character myth of Tom's ability and potential. The second is the legend or explanatory myth of Michael's lack of involvement in outside activities due to his chores on the farm. Michael's lack of involvement or, as he put it "discouragement", is the lesson or experience that explains his motivation in taking up the position of encouraging Tom.

M: He's shy like I am.

I: Yeah.

M: I would say that was true, is it not Tom?

[Louise, Michael, and the interviewer look at Tom]

Tom: [looks up from the book he was reading, at Michael, the adults smile] Pardon? What?

M: [laughs softly, looking at Tom] You probably are the same...have the same...

L: Like your Daddy...

M: ...measure of shyness...like Daddy had. I mean you don't remember what I was like...

L: And I was a little shy too.

M: ...but ah...ummm...but I do see reflections of myself in him...

I: Right.

M: ...in that way. As much as self-consciousness can be a special quality of any one person, I...I guess that self-awareness and self-consciousness...

I: How does that make itself...How does that sort of come out? Somewhat...how does that...you know...what does Tom do that gives you the idea that he is shy or self-conscious?

L: Well, I think there's certain situations that he won't get himself into without a little bit of a push.

I: O.K.

L: You know with some...

I: Right.

L: ...people and I', you know I mean, and I was a little like that too. I was a little more competitive at that age too and so occasionally we'll have to push a little bit. Like for instance an immediate example is swimming lessons. If we want him to take swimming lessons, we give him a little bit of a push. "C'mon, you'll have a good time". You know, rah, rah, rah... And umm...after he gets there he does very well and enjoys himself.

I: O.K. So he gets a little bit reluctant from time to time...to do things.

L: Yeah, initially.

I: So when he gets reluctant looking...like about doing something, what happens? Who notices it the most when he gets reluctant?

M: Probably Dad.

L: We do. Yeah.

I: You said you notice it a bit more. O.K. [Jerry returns from the bathroom through the door beside Tom, Tom hits him as he goes by] Why would that be that you notice it a bit more Michael?

[Tom closes the door to prevent Jimmy from leaving the room, Louise, Michael, Annette, and the interviewer look at Tom]

L: [to Michael] Let him (Jimmy) go to the bathroom. [Tom pushes Jimmy's hand away robustly]

Annette: Tom! [a commanding tone]

M: Well...well I guess because ah...I ah...I see that ah... [Tom is sparring with Jimmy as Jimmy tries to get by]

L: [to Tom] Tom let Jimmy go out.

M: [leans forward in chair, he and Tom looking at one another, motions to the empty chair beside him] Tom, [In a stern voice] could you please come sit over here.

Tom: O.K. [gets up, walks over and sits in the chair next to Michael]

M: ...I guess its because I see in both of my boys [Tom actively adjusts the chair, the pillow and his posture] umm...that they are probably more capable [Tom sits down and begins to read a book again] than I was in certain...

I: Right.

M: ...certainly physical abilities at any rate...

I: Right.

M: ...and ...ah...[Tom adjusts chair, pillow and posture again]...it dates back again, when I was a child, my parents

discouraged me from being involved in basketball and sports. I wanted to be and because I worked on the farm, and so they have the opportunity to be but they're more reluctant to be. [Annette leaves to play with the toys]

I: Yeah.

M: So...

I: Oh, I see.

M: ...you know...I guess it bothers me a bit when I see that Tom is one of the more physically capable students in his class...and...[looking at Tom]

I: So...so do you take up a position of kind of encouraging him when he...he gets a little bit hesitant looking or ah...

L: Yes.

M: Yes I try to.

L: Yes and occasionally forcing a little bit. [laughs]

M: Yes, pushing a bit.

L: A little bit...Michael doesn't force him very much.

I: No. No. So you agree that Michael takes a position of encouraging Tom? [Annette returns to talk to Louise]

L: Yes.

I: Tom, [Tom looks up, Michael reaches to take the book he was reading] do you ever notice that your Dad's encouraging you? [Tom looks up, puts the book down, and looks at the interviewer] Do you ever notice that your Dad's encouraging you?

Tom: Uh huh. Yeah.

It is striking that this sequence ends with Michael and Tom seated next to one another, with Michael stroking Tom's neck and back, while gently stroking his hair. The idea of Tom's shyness, or more accurately, the conversation about Tom's shyness and Michael's response to that shyness, produced an actual closeness between Tom and his Dad.

Summary: Part 1

When the raters' descriptions of family interaction during the expression of the four family myths described in Part one were combined, there were clearly discernible communicative exchanges. The legends of Louise's attraction to Michael's beliefs and Mary kindness and sensitivity, were accompanied by a high level of smiling, nodding, laughing, and affirmative behavior. The family clearly enjoyed the content of these family myths, and the overall effect was to create more closeness and enjoyment.

The legend of Phillip was unique in that it created, both by the manner in which it was told and by virtue of its content, a kind of reverence and quiet pleasure. Louise in particular appeared to enjoy recounting the story that typified the legend of Phillip, while Michael enjoyed Louise and listened attentively with Tom.

However, the legend of Tom's shyness, and his father's corresponding tendency to encourage Tom, had the most striking effect on the immediate interaction. As the discussion of shyness/encouragement went on, Tom gradually became more active

with his two brothers, keeping them from leaving or entering the room. When Louise spoke to him, he simply continued to bug his brothers. Finally, Michael "asks" Tom to sit next to him. The content of the myth of Tom's shyness, that is, the fact that Michael gets closer to Tom in this way, is reproduced in the interview. Michael begins to stroke Tom's back and hair, and encourages him to answer questions directly. The sequence ends with Michael and Tom sitting very close together, Michael has his arm around Tom, and Tom is reading a book.

The raters' descriptions of family interaction were anecdotal and minimalist, focusing only on those behaviors that appeared to have a salient, communicative effect. There were at least three factors that made this approach necessary: (1) since many of the confirmed family myths were "spliced" together from comments made at different points in the interview, and the conversation about myths shifted from topic to topic, from myth to myth, it was often impossible to relate the immediate behavior of the participants to the content of any one myth, and there was not a protracted discussion during which verbal and nonverbal behavior could have been scored; (2) the time required to do a thorough job of scoring was prohibitive for both raters (they were not paid); (3) some of the discussions of specific family myths lasted several (five to ten) minutes; in these cases, describing all the nonverbal behavior of family members would have taken many hours and perhaps have been of no use.

PART 2: The Construction and Modification of Family Myths in Discourse

The several examples that follow have been selected because they exemplify an interactional pattern between Michael and Louise, noted by all raters; the pattern is evident by the way in which the couple construct, negotiate, and modify family myths in discourse, and is discussed in detail at the close of this section.

The Myth of Mary's Becoming

The myth of Mary's becoming involves her transition from staying at home and being known for frequent illnesses to a very successful, pioneering career in social work and corrections following the death of her husband. In this segment, Michael and Louise negotiate the expression of possible reasons for Mary's willingness to stay at home before her husband's death.

I: So she's seen a lot of life.

L: Yes...well she was a very protected minister's wife until she was about...well she was forty-four when my Dad died and had never worked a day in her life.

I: Oh is that right?

L: Yeah.

M: Outside the home.

L: Outside the home.

I: Yeah...outside the home? O.K.

L: ...had never even written a cheque...

I: Oh, really.

L: ...and then was given the responsibility of everything.

I: Right.

M: It was interesting because she was...she was a very capable woman, and she had graduated along with her husband from university, but at that point had sort of not done anything afterwards other than be a minister's wife, and all of the responsibility that goes along with that...of course.

The key exchange is Michael's modification of Louise's statement that Mary "had never worked a day in her life", by adding "outside the home". Louise quickly accepts the addition by repeating it. Louise goes to point out the contrast between never having written a cheque and then being given the responsibility of everything. However, Michael's statements modify Louise's rendition of the legend by implying quite clearly that, in fact, Mary may have been more prepared for the transition than was suggested by Louise. The complex narrative that is the legend of Mary's becoming incorporates both of these "punctuations".

The Joint Explanation of Mary's "Willingness" to Stay at Home

Louise begins to explain her mother's willingness to stay at home as a function of her father's dominance and failure to encourage Mary to become more involved in outside activities, such as a career. The interviewer is asking how Mary and Phillip's

relationship may have been different if it had developed in the eighties.

L: Yes, it probably would have been a little bit different...depending though...my Dad was really a dominant person and in a way...he was very loving...and I think without even knowing it, he didn't encourage her as he perhaps should have ...as my husband does.

M: Well it was part of societal expectations ...

L: Yeah, that's true.

Later in the interview, Michael offers another possible explanation:

M: You know, she probably would have tried to step out more if she wasn't so happily married.

L: Yeah.

These alternative explanations tend to "limit" Louise's implication that her father's dominance and failure to encourage his wife were ultimately to blame for Mary's illnesses. Instead of one major explanation, there are several plausible explanations. The potential for misinterpreting Louise's statement is thus diminished, and the explanation is limited to the confines required by the tradition of respect for Phillip and his status in the family.

The Joint Construction of the Myth of Strong, Loving, Independent Women

In this brief sequence, the interviewer introduces one adjective, Louise adds a second, and Michael adds a third.

I: So ah, pretty independent women hey?

L: I would say rather strong.

I: Rather strong, independent women.

L: Yeah. Wouldn't you? (big smile, turns to Michael)

M: They are...you know...not abrasive...very umm...(looks at Louise)...strong, loving, independent women.

L: Yeah...ah strong (big smile)...I would say.

Later in the interview Louise returns to the topic of the women in the family, referring to them as "strong and loving", thus incorporating the addition suggested by Michael.

The Construction of Phillip's Dominance and Lovingness

In this sequence, the method of transcribing the conversation has been changed so that it appears that the turns taken by Louise and Michael are continuous, as if it were one person speaking. This method makes their high degree of coordination more visible; that is, the extent to which the explanations they offer are co-authored during the interaction. If the reader was provided with no clues that two people exchanged turns, it could easily be assumed that the statement that follows was made by one person. Louise's statements are shown in boldface; Michael's

statements appear in normal type. No other markers are shown. The sequence is set up with a question from the interviewer.

I: So one of the effects of her (Mary) looking sick was that it was even more clear that your Dad was kind of the strong one - and the central one?

Yes...I suppose. He was very dominant. My impression...dominant in a very loving way. Oh they were all very happily married, very loving. My recollection of them was of a lot of mushing and you know that kind of thing...very affectionate with one another. But...ah he was definitely dominant...dominant...in that he taught at the bible school, and he was the pastor you know, and my Mom she has a personality that will step back if there is another person there...its not really a strong... assertive?...yeah...

Michael modifies Louise's comments by adding and specifying without violating grammatical rules, the cadence of her speech, or the description she has made. The paragraph taken as a whole could have been spoken by one person; in fact, given the pauses and so on that populate speech in these contexts, the statement presented above is very well put together.

While discussing her father seventeen minutes later in the interview, Louise once again describes him as dominant, but includes, parenthetically, "he was very loving". So the mutually constructed description of Phillip is carried forward, and

Michael's part in forming that description is pointedly acknowledged.

The Myth of Michael's and his Mother's Reactiveness, Loyalty, and Affectionateness as Parents

This sequence begins with a triadic question from the interviewer to Michael. The first few exchanges, between Michael and the Interviewer, are transcribed with each speaker's turn clearly named, and beginning on a separate line. The exchange between Michael and Louise is transcribed as a continuous statement. Louise's statements appear in bold face; Michael's statements appear in normal type.

I: This is Louise's point of view about how your mother's style of parenting has affected you.

M: Yes. Well I guess naturally...naturally...

I: Right.

M: ...if I had been married to a fence post...

I: Right.

M: ...who didn't effect me at all...

I: Right.

M: ...I'd probably have been much more uptight...and much more...reactive, you know, to the situation.

I: O.K. Is that from your mother's...

M: Yeah.

I: Your mother's a little bit more like that?

Yeah, she's very much that way. Dad is that way too. Dad...but he was preoccupied and so I don't know...umm...Yeah. You know. But predom...But predominantly though, you are...you're that way, like your mother is. But predominantly too, you're very affectionate...with them, and I think that's...one of the things you get from your mother. She's very... very loyal to her children. Loyal and affectionate. Yes, and...Yeah.

In this sequence, the couple carefully construct the myth of Michael's Mom's parenting style, and at the same time Michael's parenting style. The "dialogue" flows smoothly and, with the exception of some very small grammatical problems, makes perfect sense. Michael's pauses "invite" Louise to participate, and Louise's subsequent pause (at *She's very...*) invites Michael to resume his position as the main respondent to the question, which he does with noteworthy precision.

Again in this sequence, one member of the couple "modifies" the description of the other. Louise quickly "counteracted" the possibly negative description Michael was building around the term "reactive", with the terms loyal and affectionate, which were accepted and deployed by Michael in response. The close coordination of the couple is especially evident in this sequence. First, they say the phrase "But predominantly" simultaneously before Michael yields to Louise. Second, Louise performs a distinctive gesture - bringing both hands in toward her chest - as

she says "She's very...", and as Michael picks up his turn with "very loyal...", he also picks up and completes the gesture.

Summary: Part 2 (The Couple's Method of Constructing Family Myths)

From the preceding examples, it is apparent the couple have a distinct pattern through which they construct and present ideas. The pattern is as follows:

A(1): A partly negative statement or a statement that could be interpreted in a negative light.

B(1): Making the previous statement more positive, usually by adding another, more positive term or implication to the description, thereby making the previous description more "accurate" from the point of view of B.

A(2): Agreement with modification suggested by B(1). Agreement may be indicated by using the term suggested by B, and/or by smiling, gesturing toward B while saying, "Yeah", and so on.

The couple may assume either of these positions interchangeably. However, when Louise occupies the position of A, it is normally in connection with her family or origin, and Michael takes the position of B, modifying her descriptions and accounts as if to ensure they are positive enough. When Michael occupies the position of A, it is normally in connection with his

family of origin, and Louise takes the position of B, modifying his descriptions and accounts as if to ensure they are positive enough.

In this manner, family myths are truly "constructed" in and through the conversation, rather than simply expressed as if they were always present, though unstated, in substantially the same form. This pattern may be metacommunicative in so far as the modifications suggested by B convey not only the content of the modification itself, but also the message, "We are now describing people in our family, and we must be careful to avoid stating or even implying criticisms". By accepting the specific modification, A also accepts the metacommunicative frame. Furthermore, the next time the couple return to the topic A may communicate to B that the metacommunicative frame is still in place by including the modification offered earlier by B in the discussion currently taking place. The myth of Phillip's dominance and lovingness for example, begins with Louise offering the idea of dominance only. However, once Michael adds "very loving" to the description, Louise agrees and, in her next reference to her father's "dominance" she includes his "lovingness" as well. Both the modification and the metacommunicative frame are carried forward, and the pattern is "accepted".

Not only is the pattern accepted, but the contribution of Michael is accepted. In this way, the quality of the couple's relationship influences both the content and the method of

"construction" of the family myth. This is truly triadic; the description of one person is shaped by the quality of the current relationship of two others. Moreover, the construction of the description plays a part in the couple's negotiation of the amount of distance or inclusion they want in their relationship. To take the current example, if Michael were to disagree with Louise's description of her father, his relationship with Louise would be affected. Since the description itself is such a nodal point of agreement, the construction of the description highlights the "co-operativeness" of the couple.

Family Myths and Family Interaction

Research Question

This section is solely concerned with the third research question: According to family members, how do the family myths affect their day-to-day interactions (i.e., how do family members describe the interpersonal affects of family myths)?

The affects of family myths on the on-going interaction of the family were described in the reports of family members themselves. These reports were elicited by a circular questioning strategy known as "behavioral linking". Essentially, this strategy involves asking, "...and then what happens...?", and accepting only behavioral descriptions of what it is that happens next, rather than inferences about psychological states.

The data reported in this section occurred in five of the relatively small number of protracted discussions of the on-going effects of family myths. It simply was not possible during the interview to gather more of this information; first, because there was not sufficient time and second, because several family myths emerged in "bits and pieces" and were only identified by analysis of the videotape.

The Legend of Mary's Becoming

The legend of Mary's becoming is a complex narrative that is interwoven with at least three other family myths: (1) the explanatory myth of Mary's sublimating her own abilities, (2) the

legend that Louise was the most affected by Mary's "becoming" and the other changes that occurred following Phillip's death, (3) the premise or character myth of strong, loving, independent women, and (4) the legend of Phillip. The legend of Mary's becoming is the narrative that draws these less inclusive myths into a composite image, or rather, places them in the context of a coherent narrative form.

I: Well what's the effect in your marriage of this tradition in Louise's family...of all the kind of experience of Grace and of Louise growing up and watching that and of having a couple of sisters who sound pretty worldly and sort of independent and launched pretty successfully pretty early...seeing also the range of behavior that her Mom could adapt to. How does that effect her and you...together?

M: Well...I guess one thing...because of my strong positive feelings for my wife [laughs], because I love my wife very much, I feel...ummm...I don't know if the word is pity. I feel badly about what happened to her in those years when she lost her father and that sort of thing. And I guess observing what happened with her mother and all those sorts of things I...perhaps don't do it consciously...but...I certainly feel strongly about Leannette in this stage of our family about Louise pursuing her abilities and skills...and ah if something ever happened to me...which is very possible...I would want her to be in a position where she could

walk into a profession or is already in it. I guess that's one of the things.

Perhpas I'm not terribly...getting to my family [points at himself]...but my family is much more umm...you know by father claimed that he was never sick and if he was would never admit it during his life and so therefore I'm not very sympathetic I suppose...very often...to...to ah...bed rest [laughs, Louise smiling]...or to being ill too much...and so I look at Louise's Mom sometimes and feel that probably her Dad should've said, "Well, you know you've been sick long enough Grace, and now you need to get up. C'mon. Let's go.". Louise isn't that way but I suppose I have my defenses up just in case. [Michael and Louise both laughing]

I: So you have sort of...

L: Not allowed to be sick. [laughs]

I: ...so it makes you more sensitive to the balance between being a mother and having a career and all that kinda thing...that's one effect that it has on you in terms of how you think about your relationship.

M: Well one thing I see the real benefits Louise's mother had from getting involved in this career. She had wonderful self-fulfillment you know and still talks about it. I mean there were some negative things to it as well but I see what that does to any person let alone a wife and a mother.

The pragmatic, on-going effect of the legend of Mary's becoming is that Michael actively encourages, and states that he encourages, Louise's professional activities. He does so partly by stating very clearly his recognition of the important role those activities took on in Mary's life, but also by relating it to the practical matter of his possible death. This pattern "opens space" for Louise, is consistent with the premise of strong, loving, independent women, and can also be seen as a "corrective" in the sense that Michael is thereby not in a position of dominance, and Louise is not in a position of subservience or dependency, as Mary apparently perceived herself to be at times prior to Phillip's death.

The Myth of Tom's Shyness

The character myth of Tom's shyness is closely linked to Michael's statement that he was not able to participate much in outside (the farm) activities as a youngster, and that he consequently felt some shyness about participating when those activities were more accessible later on in his early adult years. Michael is therefore in a position to understand from first hand experience the potentially detrimental effects of not participating in different activities and therefore not gaining the confidence that such experiences can endow.

I: O.K. So he gets a little bit reluctant from time to time...to do things.

L: Yeah, initially.

I: So when he gets reluctant looking...like about doing something, what happens? Who notices it the most when he gets reluctant?

M: Probably Dad.

L: We do. Yeah.

I: You said you notice it a bit more. O.K. [Jerry returns from the bathroom through the door beside Tom, Tom hits him as he goes by] Why would that be that you notice it a bit more Michael? [Tom closes the door to prevent Jimmy from leaving the room, Louise, Michael, Annette, and the interviewer look at Tom]

L: [to Michael] Let him (Jimmy) go to the bathroom. [Tom pushes Jimmy's hand away robustly]

Annette: Tom! [a commanding tone]

M: Well...well I guess because ah...I ah...I see that ah... [Tom is sparring with Jimmy as Jimmy tries to get by]

L: [to Tom] Tom let Jimmy go out.

M: [leans forward in chair, he and Tom looking at one another, motions to the empty chair beside him] Tom, [in a stern voice] could you please come sit over here.

Tom: O.K. [gets up, walks over and sits in the chair next to Michael]

M: ...I guess its because I see in both of my boys [Tom actively adjusts the chair, the pillow and his posture] umm...that they are probably more capable [Tom sits down and begins to read a book again] than I was in certain...

I: Right.

M: ...certainly physical abilities at any rate...

I: Right.

M: ...and ...ah...[Tom adjusts chair, pillow and posture again]...it dates back again, when I was a child, my parents discouraged me from being involved in basketball and sports. I wanted to be and because I worked on the farm, and so they have the opportunity to be but they're more reluctant to be. [Annette leaves to play with the toys]

I: Yeah.

M: So...

I: Oh, I see.

M: ...you know...I guess it bothers me a bit when I see that Tom is one of the more physically capable students in his class...and...[looking at Tom]

I: So...so do you take up a position of kind of encouraging him when he...he gets a little bit hesitant looking or ah...

L: Yes.

M: Yes I try to.

L: Yes and occasionally forcing a little bit. [laughs]

M: Yes, pushing a bit.

L: A little bit...Michael doesn't force him very much.

I: No. No. So you agree that Michael takes a position of encouraging Tom? [Annette returns to talk to Louise]

L: Yes.

I: Tom, [Tom looks up, Michael reaches to take the book he was reading] do you ever notice that your Dad's encouraging you?

[Tom looks up, puts the book down, and looks at the interviewer]
Do you ever notice that your Dad's encouraging you?

Tom: Uh huh. Yeah.

I: Well, how does he do it? What does he do that's encouraging?

Tom: Just says, "Why don't you do this...?".

I: O.K.

Tom: ...and, "You'd probably enjoy it".

I: Right.

Tom: And stuff like that. [looks at Michael, then down again quickly, Annette laughs]

I: O.K. So when he starts to encourage you...right...what do you do? Do you sort of look encouraged right away or do you still look a little bit hesitant?

Tom: Probably still look a little bit hesitant.

I: You do hey? What do you do...that...that...well if I was to ask your Dad what you do that he interprets as being hesitant, what would he say? Is it a look that you have, or something that you say, or something that you do, or...?

Tom: Probably something that I say.

[Michael and Louise have been listening intently and motionlessly to the conversation between Tom and the interviewer]

I: O.K. Like what? What would it be? For example...?

Tom: I'd say, "I'm not sure I wanna do this..."

I: O.K.

Tom: ...it looks hard", or something.

I: O.K. So you might say, "Oh, I don't know if I'm ready for this."?

Tom: Yeah.

I: Sort of give him that kind of message?

Tom: [nods affirmatively]

I: O.K. So...and when you give him that kind of message, then he gets a little bit more encouraging with you...?

Tom: [shrugs]

I: Is that what he does?

[Annette laughs]

Tom: I think so. Yeah.

I: Alright, so when he gets more encouraging with you, what do you do usually?

Tom: [long pause] I don't know. [shakes head]

I: Do you get sort of even more encouraged? Or do you walk away? Or do you stay hesitant...like even more hesitant?

Tom: Yeah. I stay hesitant.

I: You stay hesitant.

Tom: Until I've really tried it.

I: Pardon me?

Tom: I stay hesitant until I've really tried it.

I: O.K. So when your Dad notices that you're staying hesitant...that you've got ah...[Michael puts his arm over the back of Tom's chair, begins to rub his hair and the back of his neck]

Tom: mmmm

I: Does he ahh...?

Tom: He just encourages me more.

I: He does hey? Well how does he encourage you? What does he ahh... How does he encourage you?

Tom: Talking to me...and...

I: O.K. So that's neat. It sounds like your Dad gets a little bit closer to you at these times hey?

Tom: Yeah.

I: What does you Mom do when she notices that you're... Well, who encourages you the most? I know that both your folks encourage you but...

Tom: My Dad probably does.

I: Your Dad encourages you the most.

Tom: [nods affirmatively]

I: What's your theory about why your Dad encourages you the most? How come him?

Tom: Ummm...probably 'cause he never tried anything when he was young...

I: O.K.

Tom: ...and he'd think I would really enjoy it then.

The myth of Tom's shyness gives Michael and Louise the opportunity of being encouraging parents, and has the pragmatic effect, both in the interview and frequently in the on-going life of the family, of bringing Michael and Tom very close together.

Both of the couple are encouraging, and they explain this, interestingly enough, by virtue of another character myth; Tom's well known ability and potential. "Encouragement" includes both gentle persuasion and "pushing a bit" from time to time.

This is a good example of how a family myth and the pattern of interaction associated with it are mutually constitutive; that is, Tom's shyness necessitates "encouragement", and the interpersonal effect of encouragement is, at first, more shyness as Tom clearly pointed out. The "adaptive" effect of the pattern is clearly identifiable, partly because it is so closely linked with positive descriptions of family members, other important family myths, and the experience of more closeness between Tom and his parents.

The Myth of Michael's Reactivity as a Parent

The myth of Michael's reactivity as a parent is closely linked with several other important family myths: (a) the character myth/legend of Michael's mother's reactivity, (b) the character myth/legend of Michael's, and his mother's, loyalty and affectionateness as parents, and (c) the organizing premise of the christian basis of the relationship of the couple.

I: O.K. How does Louise let you know, like when she has the idea that you're being a little bit reactive [Louise smiles] or something like that, [Louise looks at Michael] how does she let you know that [bigger smile from Louise] she notices that?

M: Tells me outright. [looks at Louise, Louise laughs]

I: She does hey?

M: [nodding affirmatively, looking at Louise] Yeah.

L: He can tell by the look on my face. [feigns grumpy look, then laughs]

M: [nodding affirmatively] Yeah, I can tell by the...that's basically...its not so much in the telling [gestures with finger coming out from mouth] as I see how she's reacting. [pointing at Louise]

I: She kinda gives you a look.

M: Yeah. It's a hurt look...a...[feigning furrow brow] kind of...yeah like...

I: Like, "What are you doing"?

M: Yeah. [smiles, Louise smiles] Yeah.

I: Oh. O.K. Something like that?

L: Yeah. Yeah. I feel the situation [Michael gets up to tell Jerry to calm down] could be better handled in another way and kind of look...and I express it to him as well. [Michael has separated Jimmy and Jerry and is telling them to sit down]

I: So...so...when Louise does that...[Michael is busy talking with the boys, Louise calls Jimmy and offers to scratch his back, Joes asks Michael a question and Michael answers, then begins to scratch Jerry's back]...ah...when ah...when Louise does that...you know she gets the idea that you're being a little bit more reactive that she like and she does something like say...well you

know..."What is that?", what effect does that have on you? What do you do then?

M: [laughs, looks at Louise, Louise laughs and looks at Michael, they both laugh loudly]

L: You've probably...

M: Probably [holds single finger up] yes.

L: ...hit the "soft spot" [said with "cheerfulness"] of our marriage - right here. [laughs]

M: Yes. That's probably the one time that...that I react really...I...how would I even express it...I don't like to see that. [points at Louise, then closes hand in front of chin, Louise looking at Michael]

I: You get more reactive...or...

M: [looks thoughtful, hand to chin, then nods slowly and affirmatively]

I: ...less reactive?

L: [smiles]

M: Not with the kids.

I: No. With Louise.

L: With me. [smiles]

M: But I certainly react to Louise, yes, yes.

I: So the effect is...oh. O.K. Well what does Louise do when you get reactive with her then at that time?

M: Well, she certainly stands up for her rights.

I: How does she do that?

M: Ummm...I guess just as I talk to her, she just defends her rights and then I guess at that point I realize there's nothing more that needs...that can be said because of the situation, and so we simply don't talk.

I: And so you're quiet with one another.

M: Yeah.

I: After Louise sort of says, like, what would she say that you're telling me is standing up for her rights - or do you know - it wouldn't necessarily be say but it might be do. [Michael reaches over and tells Jimmy to go and sit by Louise]

M: Umm...well, Louise would probably...have a hurt look on her face [Louise looks at Jimmy and laughs], and I would say something like, "There you go again, now you're getting involved in this, you're...you're..."

L: You interpret it as lack of support.

M: Yes. [a "that's it, eureka" gesture to Louise] Lack of support. "You're not supporting me now..."

I: Right.

M: ...as I deal with this situation."

I: O.K. Right.

M: And ah [laughs]...then, I'm quite sure what she would say to that but ah probable, "Yes I do support you but I don't agree with this particular situation". I...you know, "Therefore, I'm letting you know that", and I would probably go away...most times.

I: Then you go away.

M: I would go away, and as I'm working, think about it, and within a couple of hours...

I: O.K.

M: ...of ah...

I: What would've happened to the immediate...like say you were in an interaction with one of you kids who was doing something, say with Jerry for instance, and Louise gets the idea that you're too reactive, then you sort of say that to Louise and she'll sort of...ah...do what?...and then what'll happen with Hoel in the meantime...like...

M: Well...Louise doesn't...I mean very rarely have we interfered in the actual situation.

I: Yeah. I was just...no...I wasn't trying to intimate that in any way...

M: She would...she would...ah...probably indicate her disapproval by her look while it's going on...

I: O.K.

M: ...and then talk to me afterwards about it.

I: Oh I see. So what was...is happening between you and Jerry wouldn't be effected?

M: Not necessarily.

I: You'd kind of carry on doing what you were doing...

M: That's right. [nods affirmatively]

I: ...and then later you would...

M: Perhaps temper...

L: [interrupts] Occasionally you'll say, "O.K. you deal with it then". [big smile] Occasionally.

M: Yeah. [softly]

I: O.K. Once in a while. Oh I see. But then you'll sort of go off and think about it. Right/

M: [nods]

I: You'll be separate from one another for a while. Then what'll happen after you've been away for a while?

M: Well, usually then we sit down and talk about it, perhaps heatedly...for a bit.

I: Alright. Yeah.

M: Talk about it and...and ah...usually it would work out...would work itself out.

I: How do you mean it would work out? What would be the effect? You'd sit down and have a conversation, maybe even an argument, it might be heated, right, and what would happen then? [Michaelg looking at the ceiling]

L: Well neither of us are great grudge holders [smiles]...

I: Right.

L: ...so...it...it ummm...you know you tend to cool off when you sort of look at it and umm...

I: Who cools off the quickest?

L: [looks at Michael and smiles]

M: I don't know.

I: Or is it one of those things that you manage to do simultaneously?

L: Yeah probably...more simultaneously.

M: Its been more that way.

The sequence begins with Michael responding to one of the children in a way that Louise interprets as too reactive. Louise shows her disapproval, usually with a "look" that Michael clearly understands. He becomes upset with Louise and reacts to her disapproval because he interprets her actions as a lack of support. He will usually finish what he was doing with the child, and then express his unhappiness directly to Louise over her disapproval while he was in the process of responding to one of the children. The couple then state their positions to one another and reach an "impasse". They then don't talk for a while - about two hours sometimes. Finally, they sit and talk, perhaps heatedly at first, and they manage to cool off simultaneously.

The next sequence, the organization of faith, explains from the couple's perspective, why it is they are able to reconcile so quickly and cool off simultaneously.

The Organization of Faith

In this sequence, Michael and Louise describe how their faith provides guidelines that effect the way they experience and resolve disagreements. Part of the function of this organizing principle is to encourage the acceptance of different perspectives in the relationship; that is, despite the divergence of opinion in the couple, this principle provides for an overriding unity.

L: But because...because...of our common faith...

I: Yeah.

L: ...because we...pray together...and you see...[Michael starts to talk but stops]...you don't have a relationship with God and have a crummy relationship with other people.

I: Yeah.

L: And so because that's the primary motivation in our life, our relationship with God,...

I: Yeah.

L: ...ummm...you know we daily pray and take time to study God's word and that kind of thing. Well you can't...you can't hold grudges, so you tend to be much more...uh...willing to...to...work things out. I...I think I have learned though...Michael is fairly dominant in certain ways and I've learned to sort of umm agree to disagree. I...I've usually come sometimes to a place where I say, "Well, I just want you to know that I really disagree with this". But you know generally, you see, we get along very well, and he's very loving a supportive. So as we age, I'm much more able to say you know he may see that...but I see it this way...and we've just gonna agree to disagree...and generally...because we have this common bond and because there's so much richness...ah...in the scriptures...as far as practical help with our attitudes and that kind o' thing...things generally work out very well.

M: What effects me in these situations is...I say this because its absolutely true...but over the years I've developed a respect for Louise.

I: Yeah.

M: A professional respect, just a personal respect,...and so therefore because I have that general respect, what she says is important...and I do have to stop and listen to it...and I mean you know from a Christian perspective again, I feel that God has again, I feel that God has talked to me through Louise very often.

I: Right.

M: Very often.

I: O.K. O.K.

M: And...and...so therefore, I need to listen to what she has to say to me...

I: Oh, O.K.

M: ...because I do respect her.

The Legend of Phillip

The legend of Phillip is bursting with meaning for this family, as their statements will show. Several very positive patterns between the couple, the couple and children, between Mary and the children, and between Mary, Louise, and Michael, are linked to this legend.

L: Yeah...I would say he definitely is...a very ah...appealing character...

M: Yes. His influence has lived on.

L: ...and influence...and is still living on...

I: Well what happens when you...oh, sorry, go ahead.

L: ...I was going to say he is influencing his grand children.

I: Yeah, his grand...

L: His grandchildren are sitting in this...you know listening to this...this eulogy to their grandfather, and...

I: Right.

L: You know my mother has a picture...and you know Tom looks like me and I look like my Dad, and...

I: Oh, is that right?

L: ...and you know we tell him, "You look like your Grandfather", and you know this kind of thing. Jerry is Jerry Phillipin...and so I...you know... [Michael smiling all this time, looking at Louise, no interruptions as she tells this story, Tom is listening quietly, also looking at Louise]

...he's an inspiring figure...he probably...as far as inspiring figures go...he's dead, [Michael laughs] and although he was, you know, a very good man when he lived...[Louise nods "loudly" while speaking]... as well.

I: So there are some ways the family has of remembering Phillip.

L: Yeah. [nods]

M: [nods]

I: And ah...and kind of including his...he still contributes really actively to the family.

[Louise and Michael both nodding affirmatively]

L: I think so, yeah.

I: Yeah, and has a...

L: [interrupting] Yeah, my Mom is married to Phillip Williams...

I: Yeah.

L: ...[smiles]...so...not you know...and ah her "Just Married" picture is up...and ummm you know we...we...[Tom gets up and goes to train set, leaving Louise and Michael alone]...well like for instance, in our church we ah...

(a few minutes later)

I: Well how does your family keep that alive exactly. Sounds like part of it is sort of reminding people of the lineage...you know...of the history...of the tradition.

[Michael assumes synchrony with Louise, Tom and Jerry lean back in their seats at the same time]

L: Well...its in our hearts you know. The girls, the three daughters, still remember of course...their Dad so much. And there's my Mom, so...all of us speak of it and ah...you know...and occasionally the kids will ask...well you know...they wanna know too...and so you talk. [Louise makes gesture with two hands encircling and holding something, just in front of her chest, as if holding or defining the family]

I: So you sort of share stories a little about Phillip...it gets told.

L: Yeah.

I: At what times do these stories kinda get told? Like about...is there a...?

M: Sitting looking at pictures perhaps.

L: Lots of pictures...ummm oh yeah, we have...

I: Yeah.

L: ...or just when Grandma comes...or yeah, sitting around in the evening...just naturally they sort of come up at times...different times.

I: So what kind of a time is that when that happens. What sort of ah...what effect does that have on your family? It sounds like that's a close time...a real sort of special time for your family, to do that sort of thing.

L: Yeah. [looking at Tom and Jerry] Well what do you guys think? [laughs, looks at the interviewer] Should we ask them? [laughs]

Jerry: What? [lifts head from book and looks at Louise]

L: When Grandma talks about Grandpa or something, what kind of a time is that?

Tom: Special. [smiles, shrugs, looking at Louise]

Jerry: [shrugs, looks at Michael, then at Tom]

L: [smiles at Jerry and Tom]

I: Special.

Tom: Yeah, its like... ummm...[looks at Jerry]

Jerry: Well just thinking about your Grandpa. [looks at Louise]

L: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

(a few minutes later)

I: So they...

M: [simultaneously with interviewer] It's ah...

I: Yeah...yeah.

M: I've just got a comment that I think that one of the reminders, as an outsider in the family, is...is...the fact that when I look at pictures and what not I see that Tom, our oldest, in particular, looks very much like his grandfather.

I: Oh yeah.

M: And as the kids, as the grandchildren get older, of course their reflections...

I: Yeah.

M: ...looks wise...

I: Yeah.

M: ...because one of Louise's older sister Iris's girls, Judith, who also looks like him...so these are reminders.

I: Yeah.

M: But...but I can't say that you know, he is an imposing figure in our family.

I: Oh...no. I didn't mean it like that at all. No. What I meant was more like ah...

M: It's a good memory.

I: Yeah. Exactly.

M: Yeah.

I: You know how good memories have the effect of making families feel good about themselves. You know...[Michael and Louise nodding "loudly" and affirmatively]...and how...

M: Yes...yes.

L: Definitely. [still nodding affirmatively]

M: And I definitely hope that my sons are like him...

I: Yeah.

M: You know.

I: Well what do you do to encourage that? I mean, it sounds like there's a lot that goes on that we've discussed already.

M: Yes. Everything from [laughs] on the one hand...you know as a christian,I certainly pray that that will be the case. Ummm...to I suppose on the lower end of the scale [laughs] saying to my son once in a while, "Now listen son", you know, "now if your grandfather was here [laughs], how would he feel about this"?
[laughs loudly]

The legend of Phillip has several interesting interpersonal effects. First, it creates an added sense of closeness between Louise, particularly, and her mother. Second, it provides "guidelines" (in the most general sense) for the children to follow, and a tradition of commitment and christian behavior to be appreciative of and loyal to. Third, it provides an added ingredient in the parenting priorities Louise and Michael have agreed upon. And finally, when the legend of Phillip is discussed, it creates very close moments in the family as a whole, particularly it seems, when Mary talks about those days while going over the photo album. In addition, the family as a whole are still involved with activities that honor Phillip and his years of work in the Church. So not only does the legend create meaningful patterns in the family, it also gives the family a special bond with a much larger family.

Summary

The family's reports are self-explanatory. In each case, there is a strong connection established between an identified family myth and a pattern of interaction that is well-known to the family. In fact, the family myths discussed in this section appear to be very influential in the sense that they encourage and prescribe whole classes of behavior. The strategy of behavioral linking was particularly well-suited to obtaining these reports.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion, Limitations, and Discussion

Conclusion

Family myths were identified in a normal family with a moderate to high level of reliability (83 % overall) despite less than ideal rater training procedures and the abstract nature of the concept. The operational definition of family myths successfully described a complex but discrete interpersonal phenomenon (family myths) that raters had little difficulty identifying. In addition, agreement between raters was highest with respect to family myths judged to be most important in understanding the family.

The results also indicate that the expression of family myths has an immediate impact on the interaction of family members, although raters' descriptions were somewhat minimal due to the time required to score interpersonal behavior and the fact that the raters were volunteering their time. The intricate interpersonal process of constructing and presenting the family myths was particularly interesting, partly because it was not anticipated that this study would capture those "negotiations" in such detail.

Family members clearly linked family myths to patterns of interaction that recur in the daily life of the family. These reports tend to confirm the notion that family myths "control

entire classes of behavior" or, to be more precise from the standpoint of this study, family myths appear to support "recurrent sequences of interaction".

The combination of circular questioning, a flexible topics protocol, and the three-step procedure used to identify family myths and track their affect on the interaction of family members was successful both in eliciting many family myths and in gathering the reports of family members. However, the three-step identification and tracking procedure was not useful in those cases where the family myth emerged in "bits and pieces" by the comments of family members at different points in the interview. A two-part interview may be useful in these cases.

As the transcripts show, many of the family myths identified emerged as the result of a specific combination of circular questions; beginning with (a) a difference question (e.g., "Who is the closest to Louise's mother?"), followed by either (b) a "why" or explanatory question (e.g., "Why is Louise the closest to her mother?"), or (c) a behavioral information question (e.g., "Well, what do they do together that gives you the idea that Louise is closest to her mother?"), followed by (d) a behavioral linking question (e.g., "When they are doing something to get close, what do the children do?" "What do you do?" "Then what happens?", and so on.). This sequence of questions moves back and forth between the world of "behavior" and the world of "explanation", thereby connecting family myths with concrete examples of interaction.

Limitations

The main source of disagreement between raters was the lack of a clear-cut procedure for identifying agreement and disagreement between family members. However, even decision rules are not always helpful with such abstract decisions. A second source of disagreement was the lack of a clear statement, initially, that ideas introduced primarily by the interviewer (and not discussed by the family beyond their agreement with the idea) should not be scored as family myths. A third source of disagreement was the lack of a clear statement that agreement by family members on statements of fact should not be scored as family myths.

Another issue related to scoring was that too much time was required of the raters; as a result, there was a lack of detail in the raters' descriptions of family interaction accompanying the expression of family myths. In fact, the amount of time required to score the videotape may pose a practical limitation on the selection of these procedures for future research. In future studies, raters will have to be paid for their work.

With respect to reliability, the level of agreement on the identification of family myths was lowest between the rater dyad that did not involve the principal investigator. Although this may suggest experimenter bias, it is hardly a surprising result since, as mentioned, the raters were minimally trained and had no opportunity to become closely calibrated in their interpretations of the operational definition.

Discussion

With appropriate refinements, the set of interviewing and scoring procedures used in this study may be used in future studies of family myths with a variety of clinical and non-clinical populations. Though time consuming, moving to a larger "N" design would be helpful in assessing the reliability and validity of these procedures, and comparing the content and interpersonal affect of family myths across families and groups of families. These procedures create a very positively biased, interactional view of family functioning, since in order for there to be a family myth, at least two members of the family must agree.

The design of this study presumed that family myths would be "expressed" by the family as the result of specific interviewing strategies. Instead, the results show that family myths were "constructed" in and through the conversation, by virtue of at least one identifiable pattern of discursive practices. It is apparent that family myths are not simply a "reality" recorded by the interview, but one provoked by its activity. The interviewer participated in the construction of the family myths that emerged; in fact, rather than a property of the family *per se*, the family myth may be a product of the discourse that includes the interviewer and the family.

Two general views of family myths are more clearly distinguishable as a result of this study. In the first, family myths are shared beliefs or premises that underlie patterns of

interaction. This view suggests the existence of a hidden or "deep" structure that may inhere in interaction or guide the behavior of family members, even across generations. In this view, family myths exist independently of discourse; they are truly hidden structures. If they occur in discourse at all, they are simply "expressed" and relatively unaffected by the context in which their expression occurs.

A second view, one that is strongly supported by the present study, focuses on the discursive practices by which family myths are constructed, including the modification of descriptions and accounts, and the immediate interactive effect of the family myth's "presence" in the discourse. This view takes the focus deeper into language, and closer to the phenomena of face to face interaction because the construction of family myths involves much more than "language". Family myths are not hidden or merely implied; they are performed. This view builds on the work of Pollner and McDonald-Wikler (1985) who described the discursive practices used by one family in the maintenance of a family delusion.

This study demonstrates that apparently discrete "family myths" have a place in more complex narrative forms, consisting of legends, explanations, myths of character, and organizing premises. Individual family myths rely on their position in the nest of other family myths for their "authority"; if they were not supported by other ideas, they would not "exist". This is a view that is true to the complexity of the phenomenon.

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APPENDIX A

Circular Questioning

Several distinct questioning strategies will be utilized, each corresponding to the type of information sought. There is an ample literature on the applicability of these questions to systemic interviewing, and the development of systemic hypotheses about family interaction. Ugazio (1985), for example, describes the relationship of circular questions to an attempt by the interviewer to bring forth the family premises myths. Tomm (1985, 1987) relates circular questions to cybernetic and systemic epistemology. Nelson and Fleurides (1986) describe several distinct categories of circular questions, and relate these to the intentionality of the interviewer. Selvinni-Palazzoli, Boscolo, Prata, and Cecchin (1980) describe the principle of circularity applied to family interviewing, and the evolution of circular questions. Penn (1985) discusses future and past hypothetical question, and Hoffman (1988) applies the principles of second order cybernetics and constructivism to circular interviewing. The reader is referred to these sources.

1. Investigative or Fact-Finding Questions

These are the "five W's". Who is in the family? When were they born? Where do they come from? What do they do? When was the family formed? Who is in the extended family? This type of questioning is applied mainly in the opening stages of an

interview or as required. With the help of a genogram (see Presentation of Families) this kind of information can be obtained quite quickly; the process of asking these fairly safe questions can help everyone relax. It can be enjoyable to ask the husband to give the names and birthdates of the wife's extended family and vice versa, or to involve the children in guessing the ages of their aunts and uncles.

2. Behavioral Sequencing Questions

Creating a behavioral sequence entails question of the general form, "Then what happened...?". The effect of this technique is to connect behaviors to one another in either a lineal or circular chain. For instance:

Q: How does your brother show his independence to his mother?

A: By disagreeing with everything she says.

Q: When your brother disagrees with your mother, what does she do?

A: Usually, she tries to ignore him.

Q: Then what does your brother do?

A: Usually, he'll start to moan and groan and look pitiful.

Q: Then what happens?

A: Then Mom starts to laugh at him.

3. Difference Questions

Bateson (1968) pointed out that "a difference is a relationship". By bringing forth various types of differences and distinctions through questioning, relationships are defined. Because difference questions are well described in several recent papers (Tomm, 1985; Penn, 1985; Selvinni-Palazzoli et al., 1980), I will give only a few examples of the kinds of differences that can be created. Generally, differences are created by asking people to make comparisons. For instance:

Q: Which of your children is the most sensitive to changes in your marriage relationship?

Q: Since Tom left home to attend college, which of your parents misses him the most?

Q: (to the husband) How do they show closeness in the family your wife grew up in, as compared to your family?

4. Triadic Questions

Known also as "gossiping in the presence of..." (Selvinni-Palazzoli et al. 1980), triadic questioning involves asking one person about the relationship of two others (Tomm, 1985). For example, "Tom, how did your parents' style of parenting change when your sister got old enough to know her own mind?" Or, "Tina, as your brother Tom has gotten older, particularly in the last year, has your mother gotten even more involved with him, or less involved?" As a follow-up the interviewer might pose the following: "Mr. Brown, do you agree with your daughter Tina that your wife has become less involved

with your son Tom in the last year?" Another possible follow-up: "Tina, who agrees with you that your mother and Tom have become less involved with one another?"

In this way, several kinds of differences are established and may be elaborated - differences in "time", in "involvement", etc. - and one type of difference can be amplified into several others. For instance, "Mr. Brown, after Tom and your wife decided to become less involved with one another, who did Tom become more involved with? Who did your wife become more involved with?".

The process of triadic questioning is particularly well-suited to "bringing forth" changes and differences in relationships and tracking the consequences of those changes. The increased distance between Mrs. Brown and her son Tom will have instigated a series of other changes in the family. Mrs. Brown may have used her "left over involvement time" to get closer to Tina or her husband, a move which would have had consequences for the relationship between Tina and Mr. Brown. For his part, Tom may have been able to spend more time with his best friend, whose increased time with Tom will have had effects on one or more of his relationships. And so on.

"Gossiping in the presence of..." is intensely engaging for the people being gossiped about. For the parents to learn what their children think of their parenting or of their relationship, or for Tom to hear what his father thinks about his mother's relationship to him, has the effect of stimulating interest in the questions and, sometimes, lively debate. Triadic questioning

implicitly creates a context in which differences in opinion are not only permissible but sought after. Children who may be reluctant to question the family doxa under normal circumstances, can become animated and precise when asked by the interviewer to (meta) comment on the relationships of others. Triadic questions can be constructed to include almost any theme or content: the basic form of the question (asking A to comment about the relationship of B and C) can accommodate any "issue" - developmental change, family rules, roles, "pathology", past and future, intimacy, intra-family and inter-family relationships, etc.

5. Past and Future Hypothetical Questions

Although questions can be formulated about the past and the future, the answers to those questions must always reflect the current pattern of interaction. The past is flexible and can be utilized to explain almost any set of circumstances in the present tense: Tom is this way or that because as a child...., etc. Similarly, the future invokes the present inevitably because predictions are made in the present tense and the reasons for predicting one event over another must represent current forms of understanding and interaction. Families may respond to past or future hypothetical questions in one or more of an infinite variety of ways. As Helm Stierlin (1973) pointed out, families tend to have certain myths about themselves in relation to time; some families see themselves as doomed to repeat the past, to

replicate their current conditions forever into the future; others see themselves as having overcome or transcended the past, and have the vision of themselves as continually breaking new ground. These ideas constitute a set of constraints on interaction and the perception of difference.

Hypothetical questions require family members to consider a set of past or future conditions that they had not likely considered previously. The effect of such questions can be to make more distinct, more evident, the current network of presuppositions the family is operating with. For example, returning to the Brown family: "Mrs. Brown, suppose that your son Tom had not become such a good athlete but instead had gotten very interested in music and art. How do you think the relationship between Tom and his father may have been different?" Or, in relation to the future: "Mr. Brown, when your son and daughter have both left the family home, when they are on their own, will they spend much time talking together about you and their mother, about how you are doing without them?" "Which of your children will take on the most responsibility for keeping everyone informed about how everyone else is doing in the family?" "Suppose that Tom runs out of money a year after he has left home. What would he be more likely to do - tough it out on his own, or return home and give you the chance to help him out?"

Past and future hypothetical questions are well-suited to making distinctions in time, separating one developmental phase from the previous one for example. Distinctions of this sort

"bring forth" the family's set of assumptions, including myths of character, ideas about the appropriate time and distance for graduating children, and so forth, that in-form the interaction of the family members with one another which, reflexively, inform the set of assumptions.

6. Explanatory Questions

Explanatory questions are the technique of asking people to give their theory or explanation for the occurrence of a particular event or behavior. For instance:

Q: When your father gets sad, why does he not show it to his children?

Q: How do you explain the fact that Tom went off to trade school at seventeen, while John has preferred to stay closer to home?

etc...

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

Family Composition

This includes birthdates, deaths, location of family members, types of employment, legal and extended family relationships, at the present time and across a minimum of three generations.

Developmental Transitions

These include the formation of the family by the founding couple, how they met, their courtship, changes following pregnancy and childbirth, including the effects in the extended family and grandparents, entrance of children to school, the graduation of children from the family home, deaths and expected illnesses, etc.

Key Events

These events may be planned, accidental, and completely unexpected; for instance, sudden deaths, divorce or separation, remarriage, separation of close family members, moves to other locales, changes of career, reversal of roles, unexpected pregnancies, abortions, infant deaths, etc.

Family Rituals and Traditions

Methods of involving the entire family in a way that consolidated or expresses something about the nature of the relationships, methods of defining the couple or the children as

together and distinct; may include traditional dinners, outings, annual holidays, weekend events, evening games, etc.

Legends or Fables

These are "stories" that families very often have about one another, and often they come to typify for everyone the "character" of the "hero". They may also include famous outrageous yarns, stories of tragedies or important incidents that are told periodically.

Relationships Outside of the Nuclear Family

Reiss (1971) has shown that families differ more or less systematically in terms of how they view the world outside of the family. The premises families have about the world outside affect relationships inside the family because they determine what kinds of demands are made of one another for closeness, intimacy, and so on.

The Future: Anticipated Changes

What important events is the family looking forward to, and how do they anticipate those events will unfold? Ideas about the future are always linked to current circumstances and relationships; therefore, asking a family to comment on its future brings forth their views on the present.

APPENDIX D

Consent to Videotape

Please indicate below the way(s) in which I may use the videotape made during this study. You may select some and not others -- or none at all. The videotape will not be used in any way(s) other than that which you indicate. The researcher will explain in detail what each might consist of.

Your tape would be identified only by a pseudonym. The sheet that connects your name with this pseudonym will be kept separately in a secure place. Obviously, however, videotapes are not anonymous to anyone who knows you.

_____ Analysis by the research team alone.
(A. Wade, N. Chovil, D. McGee)

_____ Analysis by the research team and the researcher's research
committee. (Dr. D. Knowles, Dr. F. Ricks, Dr. G. Hett)

_____ Both of the above

_____ Neither of the above

I understand that the principal investigator, A. Wade, may contact me in the future regarding the use of the videotape. I have been given a copy of this, the completed, consent to videotape form.

This consent will be considered valid for one year from the date of the interview.

Signature

Researcher

Name

Name

Subject No.

Date

APPENDIX E

Letter of Consent

I, the undersigned, agree to participate in the research project, "Family Myths and Family Interaction", conducted by Allan Wade, a student at the University of Victoria.

I understand that my participation in this project is completely voluntary.

I understand that I may withdraw from this project at any time.

I understand that the following measures will be taken to protect my identity: my name and address will be kept in a secure place, separate from the videotapes, and any other written information about the project; written records will use a false name instead of my real name, and any unusual information that could identify me will be deleted from the written information and the videotape; use of the videotape is restricted to the uses I specified (Consent to Videotape form); I may withdraw my permission for the videotape to be used in any way, at any time in the future.

 Signature

 Signature

 Name

 Name

 Signature

 Signature

 Name

 Name

 Date

 A. Wade

APPENDIX F

Parental Consent for Participation by a Child

I _____, give my permission for my child,
 _____, age _____, to participate in the research project, "Family Myths
 and Family Interaction", conducted by Allan Wade, a student at the University of Victoria.

I have given this permission to participate voluntarily, and I understand that I may
 withdraw permission at any time.

I understand that the following measures will be taken to protect my child's identity:
 his/her name will be kept in a secure place, separate from the videotapes, and any other
 written information about the project; written records will use a false name instead of
 his/her real name, and any unusual information that could identify him/her will be deleted
 from the written information and the videotape; use of the videotape is restricted to those
 specified on the Consent to Videotape form; I may withdraw permission to use the videotape at
 any time in the future.

 Parent's Signature

 Parent's Signature

 Parent's Name

 Parent's Name

 Date

 A. Wade

APPENDIX G

Complete Lists of Confirmed Family Myths

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Family Myths Identified

1. Mom was initially attracted to Dad's faith.
2. Mary is a kind and sensitive person.
3. Mary's becoming; including the story of her doing less as a Minister's wife than she was capable of, and of her blossoming through social work, etc.
4. Mary "sublimated" her abilities, was unfulfilled, and thereby became prone to illness.
5. Louise's parents had a very happy marriage.
6. Phillip was both dominant and loving.
7. Louise was the most affected by the changes in Mary following Phillip's death.
8. They are a family of strong, independent, but not abrasive women.
9. Mary paved the way for the girls in the family, regarding the importance of career and fulfillment.
10. The legend of Phillip; including his successfulness, lovingness, kindness, notoriety as a "Godly" man, and his status as the family "hero".
11. Michael enjoyed being an older brother more than being a younger brother.
12. Michael is closer and more similar to his older brother.
13. Louise and Michael became "one" in Tom.
14. Tom and Jerry will become best of friends as they mature.
15. This is a family that includes others.
16. Tom is more similar to how Louise was as a teen, including being rambunctious.
17. Tom is shy, like his Dad.

18. Michael was much closer to his Dad when he was little, and his Dad was more affectionate with little ones generally.
19. Michael's Dad was preoccupied much of the time so Michael became closer to his Mom.
20. Michael's Dad was very affectionate, especially with Michael - due to personality fit.
21. Michael is more outspoken now.
22. Michael is seen as a conciliator in the family.
23. Michael has been more influenced by his mother's parenting style, including her tendency to be reactive, loyal, and affectionate more than by his father's parenting style.
24. Michael's Mom was a loyal and affectionate parent.
25. "Because we pray together...", we are able to solve conflicts and maintain our relationship to God.
26. Meal and holiday times are close times.

RATER #1: Family Myths Identified

1. Mary preserves her energy
2. Mary is a kind person
3. Mary is a giving person
4. Mary was a very capable person
5. Phillip was dominant and loving
6. Frace changed after Phillip's death
7. Louise was affected the most by changes in Mary
8. Louise is a member of a family of strong, independent women
9. Mary was a positive motivator for her daughters
10. Societal expectations kept Mary at home
11. Mary may have been more outgoing if less happily married
12. Mary was under a lot of stress
13. Phillip was fun, loving,...
14. Phillip's influence lives on
15. Phillip's grandchildren know what he was like
16. Michael prefers "older" brother role
17. Older kids become more "parental"
18. Michael is closer to his older brother
19. Tom and Jerry are becoming close (friends)
20. The family home is an "open" home
21. Louise and Michael became "one" in Tom (re: Tom's birth)
22. Tom will be more like Louise as a teenager
23. Tom is shy
24. Michael is shy

25. Michael's Dad was preoccupied
26. Michael as a boy was close to his Dad
27. Michael's Dad was affectionate to the young kids
28. Michael's Dad was more affectionate with Michael
29. People see Michael as a "peacemaker"
30. Michael's younger brother is less outspoken than Michael
31. Michael is not outspoken
32. Michael was more influenced by his Mom's style of parenting
33. Michael is reactive
34. Michael's Mom is reactive
35. Relationship to God is an organizing factor
36. Meal and holiday times are "close" times

RATER #2: Family Myths Identified

1. The principles of christianity are important to this family. This family was founded because of these principles.
2. Amazing Mary has the ability to be both a little helpless and very competent as the situation requires.
3. Mother made herself sick because she was unhappy (unfulfilled) being subservient to father.
4. Mary is very kind, a good heart, cares about people.
5. Louise's childhood home was an open home.
6. Phillip dominant/Mary subservient.
7. Louise was the most affected by the remarriage of her mother.
8. This is a family of strong, loving, independent women.
9. Louise was rambunctious, outgoing, etc. as a teenager.
10. Phillip was a "Godly" man, the family hero.
11. Louise and Michael got closer after Tom was born.
12. Tom is shy like his Dad.
13. Michael was closer to his Mom; his Dad was always working hard, and preoccupied.
14. Michael's father was more loving when the kids (Michael in particular) were little.
15. The first baby is "high strung". Michael was a very good natured and happy as a second child.
16. Michael is a conciliator.
17. Michael now speaks his mind more.
18. Michael and his younger brother see eye to eye completely.
19. Michael's brother is more shy than Michael.
20. Michael is generally shy.
21. Michael's brother is more outspoken to their parents, and their parents accept more outspokenness from the brother than from Michael.

22. Michael's mother was affectionate and loyal with the children, like Michael.

23. Michael is sometimes reactive with the children, like his mother.

24. God has talked to Michael through Louise.

25. We try not to let the urgent take away from the important.

VITA

WADE, Allan

Born: 01/05/1955

Duncan, B.C.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED:

Douglas College	1974 to 1975
Simon Fraser University	1976 to 1980
University of British Columbia	1980 to 1982
University of Victoria	1982 to 1989

DEGREES AWARDED:

B. GS.	Simon Fraser University	1980
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Title of Thesis:

Development of an Emprical Procedure for the Study of
Family Myths



ALLAN WADE (Author)

Dec. 20 / 81.

Date