7-28-2009

Psychological Influence of Dysfunctional Parents on Adult Children, Sibling Groups, and Romantic Partners in Three Woody Allen Films: Interiors, Hannah and Her Sisters, and Alice

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DOI: 10.25148/etd.FI12072708

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

ENGLISH

by

Rita Fidler Dorn

2009

To: Dean Kenneth Furton
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Rita Fidler Dorn, and entitled Psychological Influence of Dysfunctional Parents on Adult Children, Sibling Groups, and Romantic Partners in Three Woody Allen Films: Interiors, Hannah and Her Sisters, and Alice, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Richard A. Schwartz, Major Professor

Date of Defense: July 28, 2009

The thesis of Rita Fidler Dorn is approved.

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Dean Kenneth Furton
College of Arts and Sciences

_____
Dean George Walker
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2009

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving, supportive husband, Jeffrey---scholar, poet, bibliophile---who never stopped encouraging me during this challenging process and who was as determined as I to see it happen.

It is also dedicated to the memory of my brother, Eric S. Fidler, film buff and Woody Allen aficionado, who promised to attend my graduation, with Woody in tow. Furthermore, it is written in memory of my parents, Beatrice and David Fidler, who taught me to love literature and instilled in me a deep respect for education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Heartfelt thanks are extended to my directing professor, Dr. Richard A. Schwartz, who consistently helped me produce my best writing. He models true excellence in his craft and was a pleasure to work with. Warm gratitude goes to my two other committee members, Dr. Maneck H. Daruwala and Dr. Philip Marcus, for their insightful suggestions and enthusiasm. Pamela Dorn Sezgin, Ph. D., receives sincerest appreciation for her valuable counsel on issues of research and resources, as well as for her repeated votes of confidence. The skill and dedication of these four people contributed to my success with this thesis in the most meaningful ways.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLUENCE OF DYSFUNCTIONAL PARENTS

ON ADULT CHILDREN, SIBLING GROUPS, AND ROMANTIC PARTNERS

IN THREE WOODY ALLEN FILMS:

INTERIORS, HANNAH AND HER SISTERS, AND ALICE.

by

Rita Fidler Dorn

Florida International University, 2009

Miami, Florida

Professor Richard A. Schwartz, Major Professor

The purpose of the research of this thesis was to determine how and toward what goals Woody Allen shows the influence of dysfunctional parents and families on their adult children, sibling groups of those children, and those children's romantic choices in Interiors, Hannah and Her Sisters, and Alice. Methodology includes the ideas of noted psychological pioneers as well as the results of current scientific studies. Relationships in these films mirror findings which reveal that dysfunctional parents produce both well-adjusted and troubled children and that offspring are more likely than parents to overcome emotional challenges. It is useful to realize that sibling groups are often the strongest family relationships, in part, because they are typically the ones that last the longest.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

1. AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
2. CHC	Center for Health Care
3. COA	Children of Alcoholics
4. DSM	Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
5. FFM	Five Factor Model of Personality Traits
6. OCD	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Introduction

Anyone who has seen even a few of Woody Allen's films recalls his frequent references to Sigmund Freud and notices that key characters are often in therapy. Furthermore, viewers most likely realize that many of the couples, sibling sets, and family units are in dysfunctional relationships. What is not so obvious, however, are the ways in which parental disorders influence the children, sibling bonding and conflict, and the adult children's choices of lovers. *Interiors, Hannah and Her Sisters*, and *Alice* are the three films which will serve as the canvas upon which the analysis of this thesis will be drawn. Addiction, dependency, depression, infidelity, insecurity, repression, sexual issues, and suicidal tendencies haunt the couples and the siblings. Thus, all of these films reveal challenging family dynamics, contain sisters (one pair and two trios), and were produced in three different decades.

"Woody Allen has clearly joined the top circle of American humorists---Franklin, Twain, and Thurber..." according to the noted scholar of American humor, Hamlin Hill, (Schwartz). His name and works are known to generations of movie-goers. During the past four decades, he has created more than three dozen major films, most of which deal, to varying degrees, with love and all the complications that it entails. My thesis will explore psychological aspects of love and family relationships in the film listed above. These particular films were selected for three reasons. First, each film features sisters and raises questions about their interactions. Second, all three families have very close parent-adult child relationships, despite their conflicts, and include fragile mother-daughter bonds. Third, each film came out in a different decade, thereby providing opportunity to show change from 1978 (*Interiors*), to 1986 (*Hannah and Her Sisters*), through 1990

(*Alice*). Thus, each film brings both connection and uniqueness to the exploration of the topic.

The films feature unsuccessful couples whose lives are fraught with mental, emotional, and social dysfunctions. For example, in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Hannah, the most successful and seemingly most "normal" of the three young women in this film, is unaware of her husband Elliot's affair with her sister, Lee, but is concerned because she feels that something is amiss with their marriage. When she encourages Elliot to open up, she immediately asks what she has done wrong. Lee strays from her own boyfriend to have an affair with Elliot. Holly, the third sister, suffers from low self-image, depending on cigarettes and alcohol to "calm down." She is the unfocused sister, unable to organize her life, her career, her money, and her men; these conditions infringe on her ability to maintain a satisfactory relationship with her siblings. Characters in the other two films are similarly inhibited by their insecurities and disorders from developing successful romantic relationships.

Moreover, the daughters in each family treat their parents in contrasting ways. For instance, Hannah and her two sisters disagree about the care of their drunken mother and philandering father and the positions in which their parents' weaknesses place them. "Perhaps because she is the daughter of alcoholics, Hannah has become an "enabler" and her relationships with loved ones often revolve around her assuming an enabling role" (Schwartz 116). Conversely, Alice eventually acquires self-knowledge, which frees her from long-time marital frustration. "She is led to confront her repression by an alternative form of psychoanalysis" from Dr. Yang (Yacowar 280). In her youth, Alice had followed the advice of her alcoholic mother by marrying for security instead of love, and she

suffers the consequences. Nevertheless, Alice glorifies the memory of her mother, in contrast to her sister Dorothy who has a more realistic view of their mother. The daughters in *Interiors* range from Joey who hovers over her mother protectively and tries to be realistic with her to Renata who maintains a certain distance from her psychotic parent to Flyn who is cheerful but plays a removed part in her parents' lives. These are a few representations of how disorders impact close relatives. My thesis will examine the dynamics and implications of dysfunctional relationships with parents, siblings, and love partners in these films.

I will use current scientific studies and standard personality theories as a basis for understanding mental health in these films. Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Harry Stack Sullivan were forerunners in the areas of personality and family dynamics. Freud deems neurotic behavior goal-oriented, rather than random. In addition, he purports that "everything comes down to the individual's past: family, relationships between members, repressed sexual longings, and confusions" (M. Hill 2). Jung's approach to family reactions centers on the collective unconscious as the key to personality (M. Hill 2). Moreover, Sullivan's works reflect that "the personality of an individual could never be studied in isolation" (Engler 108). My thesis will use the ideas of these pioneers in psychology, in part, to help explore the characters' relationships.

In *Interiors, Hannah and Her Sisters*, and *Alice*, Allen shows how parents' insecurities, neuroses, and other disorders shape the lives of their daughters. In particular, he illustrates how the parents' emotional problems create trauma for their daughters, which, in turn, influence the daughters' relationships with one another and with their lovers. I contend that these characters' destructive behaviors, shown by

dialogue, personal choices, and romantic selections, are the result of toxic relationships with and the damaging traits of their parents.

I will explore a number of questions that relate to emotional dysfunctions in these three Woody Allen's films. How does Allen show the effect of parents' emotional dysfunctions on their children? How do the parents' emotional problems influence their children's sibling relationships? In what ways are the adult children's romantic choices swayed by their parents' relationship to each other? How do the adult daughters' own emotional issues color their romantic choices? Answers to these and similar queries illuminate understanding of personal relationships and dysfunctional behavior in these films.

For each decade, I will point out individual behaviors and social trends. Moreover, I will interpret the significance of these conditions in each film, as a representation of the decade in which it was produced. I will also draw some conclusions as to what the films say about contemporary life, as well as what Woody Allen is attempting to convey to his audiences. For the convenience of the readers, I provide appropriate family grids for each film, throughout the thesis.

Chapter 1: The Legacy of Dysfunction

Chapter 1 will examine the primary dysfunctions of the mothers in the three films, present critical commentary on these disorders, illustrate how each mother exhibits those disorders, and determine what impact the disorders have on the daughters. The mothers' personality problems impact their daughters in ways that elicit both negative and positive results. The sisters' dialogue displays their attitudes toward their parents and toward their own places in the parents' lives. Even though the fathers are not analyzed separately, their negative behaviors are part of the picture of parental dysfunction and are illustrated as such. Finally, Chapter 1 will consider Woody Allen's treatment of the relationships between dysfunctional parents and their adult children. To facilitate readers who may have varying degrees of familiarity with these three films, a relevant family grid is provided for each film. In addition, an overview of each mother's role in the film appears at the beginning of each subsection.

THE MOTHERS "And here, unforgettably, were women. . . .how beautifully he [Allen] could write a part and tap into real sisterly neurosis. . . .Allen's Chekovian highpoint. Men drift into view. . . .but women are virtually their own solar system, torn by a gravity that makes their career and love problems feel like symptoms of a greater challenge" (Rothkopf 637).

TABLE 1.1

Family of *INTERIORS*
Parents: Eve and Arthur
Daughters: Renata (Frederick); Joey (Mike); Flyn

Eve: An Overview

Eve is a woman in her late fifties or early sixties with three grown daughters. Once an artist of note, she is married to a lawyer and exerts strict control over her family.

Eve is devastated by her husband's request, after many years of marriage, for a divorce. She is not comforted by her three daughters, who offer her varying degrees of support; and she has lost the will to live. Eve's deterioration is sparked by the divorce and by her husband's rapid remarriage, as well as by the fact that her daughters have their own lives. Being a controlling woman, she feels empty and unproductive, since there is nothing left for her to orchestrate or control.

Discussion

Eve, in *Interiors*, in psychoanalytic terms, is an obsessive/compulsive (OCD), depressed, and ultimately suicidal person, who tries desperately to control her world by repressing unpleasant emotions. Repression, according to *American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*, is the "unconscious exclusion of painful impulses, desires, or fears from the conscious mind; the classical defense mechanism that protects one from impulses or ideas that would cause anxiety by preventing them from becoming conscious." Eve represses her true emotions in the church she and Arthur are visiting when he admits that he has met someone else and wants to finalize their divorce. Eve cuts off further discussion by saying, in anguish, "Oh, never mind. Just don't talk about it. I don't want to hear anymore." She represses her painful feelings at his confession because she cannot accept the idea of losing Arthur or of the impending change in her life. She represses the angry words she cannot say, but expresses her emotions by smashing the red votive church candles on their way out.

Psychological morbidity is a way in which OCD patients "place an emotional burden on their family members" (de Abreu Ramos-Cerquiera, et al. 1020) as seen in Renata's focus on death. "Morbidity" is defined as "the incidence of disease" or "the

condition of poor health," which can be physical or mental. Comorbidity is the combination of more than one disease or one causing another. For example, Renata's strong concern with death may be the result of her mother's OCD condition; Renata tends to be moody and isolated. "Anxiety, mood, impulse-control and substance use all significantly predict subsequent suicide attempts (Nock, et al. 29, 2009).

Obsessive/Compulsive Behavior (OCD)

An obsessive/compulsive disorder (OCD) "involves an unwillingness to endure upsetting emotions, thoughts, memories, and other private experiences" (Abramovitz 160). As such, although not typically, OCD can be fatal. According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* and the way that term will be used here, a disorder is "statistically unexpected stress or disability." It is further defined as "an attempt to operationalize two basic principles: that a disorder is harmful and that a disorder is dysfunction (i.e., an inability of some internal mechanism to perform its natural function).

The Mayo Clinic Health Manager calls OCD an anxiety disorder with the following division of symptomology: A person with OCD will have unreasonable thoughts (i.e., the obsessions) that [sometimes] lead to repetitive behaviors (i.e., the compulsions). Despite being separate entities, [one is internal and one is external] thoughts and behaviors are related to each other and causative. For example, a person with OCD experiences thoughts and fears that are disturbing. In attempt to alleviate this discomfort, he or she will demonstrate compulsive behaviors. Attempts to ignore the bothersome thoughts, if the person realizes that they are unreasonable, only increase the anxiety. "The OCD person is afflicted with replays of uncomfortable thoughts as well as

a powerful need to execute actions, which he or she cannot resist. . . . Both obsessive ideas and compulsive manifestations may center around a particular theme like cleanliness, physical symmetry, or the person's own concept of orderliness." In addition, "obsessive/compulsive personality traits may be associated with cognitive disorganization. . . . That is, individuals presenting with pronounced OCD may rigidly adhere to rules and procedures in an attempt to compensate for cognitive disorganization" (Aycicegi-Dinn 4).

Eve manifests obsessive/compulsive disorder symptoms, controlling what she can, like small things related to placement and sound, to compensate for the larger issues, like people, which she can no longer control. Eve's compulsion to place a lamp in Mike and Joey's house in the bedroom is an example of her compulsively pursuing her own desire for order as she sees it, rather than looking at the situation from a functional standpoint or submitting to the preference of Mike, whose house it is. She insists that the lamp Mike feels would get more use in the [his] hallway "really belongs in the bedroom;" in her mind, it is out of place in the hallway, and she cannot endure that notion, which she finds upsetting. Another instance of her compulsivity occurs when she brings an expensive vase to Mike and Joey's house, defending it with, "These are becoming increasingly rare." She ignores the strain that the vase will place on her children's budget, in order to satisfy her own compulsive craving to present a fine, artistic accessory. At the end of that conversation, she asks Mike to close the window because "The street noises are just unnerving." She feels unsettled by the street noises because they are beyond her circle of influence. Another blatant instance of Eve being compulsive is when she seals doors and windows of her apartment with bizarre precision, as she prepares to commit

suicide with gas from the oven. When she uses up the roll of black masking tape, she completes the tiny amount of area left with white adhesive tape, not wanting even the smallest space to be left unsealed. Eve feels compelled to carry out the rituals which occur to her, making her the prisoner of her own inflexible desires. Thereby, she is the controlled as well as the aspiring controller.

The above examples are lesser in comparison to the greater issue of controlling people. Emotionally, she is unable or unwilling to accept the upsetting premise of Arthur leaving her and her position on this topic eventually leads to her death. Unrealistically, she continues to grasp at the hope that he will return after the trial separation. Furthermore, Eve becomes enraged at Joey's reticence to ask her father about reconciliation. Joey says, "He's a grown man. He makes his own decisions." Eve then lashes out at Joey, retorting, "Why are you always so reluctant to help me?"

Realizing Eve's inability to extricate herself from these obsessive attitudes helps one understand her difficulty in attaining inner peace and maintaining smooth family relationships. In the light of Eve's OCD behaviors, one can see how Eve thinks of herself as bereft of options and can empathize with her increasing anxiety. The descriptions of OCD enable one to imagine the distress Eve experiences in the absence of her daughters' dependency on her and about the departure of her husband; she is a person who not only controls, but needs desperately to control. The word, 'desperately' qualifies Eve's control issue as a disorder.

Instead of successfully controlling her world, Eve loses the control she requires for her comfort level and becomes what Freud calls "a bad mother." For many years, Freud worked on establishing a theory of depression; later, Ruth K. Abraham wrote a

description that points out the absence of good/bad concept in Freud's work. Abraham maintains there is an unconscious hatred directed at the mother who is "experienced as bad but longed for as good," a central issue in the condition of depression.

Eve is a toxic non-nurturer because her influence is negative and she cannot project love to Arthur, Joey, Renata, or Flyn. For example, Joey wants to love Eve, but does not. She wants to be loved by Eve, but is not. Joey's experience as Eve's daughter is an unsatisfactory one, but Joey continues reaching for success. Early in the film, Joey asks Mike to stop picking on Eve because "She is a sick woman," thus, not able to nurture, and Joey is still trying to learn not to expect it. Later on, Renata accuses Joey of hating Eve, by saying "Look. . . .I can't help it if you feel guilty about your feelings toward Mother. I mean you, you, you can't seem to do enough to make up for it." Despite Eve's disdain for Joey and critical opinion of Joey's boyfriend, her middle daughter still yearns for a loving mother, which ironically, she does not get until after Eve dies, when Pearl, her father's new wife, easily assumes that role. Eve comes to the beach house, to the darkened downstairs where Joey is sitting alone, thinking of her mother, and murmuring aloud. Pearl comes by, hears Joey say the word, "Mother," and replies, "Yes."

Even Arthur is deprived of any warmth from his relationship with Eve. He recalls Eve when he first met her as "Very pale and cool in her black dress. . . .And distant. Always poised and distant." Eve is a person who emanates coldness.

The disorder of OCD leaves behavioral and emotional impacts on family members. One psychological study shows that "families of OCD patients suffer impaired functioning" [of their own activities] in general effectiveness and particularly in communication. (Black et al. 441). Findings in a University of Chicago dissertation

reveal that daughters of female OCD patients "often adopt parental roles and feel responsible for preventing further deterioration of their mothers' [mental and physical] health." In addition, in response to parental OCD, "the daughters are often frustrated, fearful, anxious, and stressed and may struggle with their [own] identity development," (Belman 1911). Joey clearly takes this role with Eve, by supervising her mother's physical and emotional well-being.

The behaviors described by Black et al. and Belman above are clearly seen in Joey, who assumes charge of her mother's condition. Joey is a person who lacks definition and thereby acts in conflicting ways. Despite the fact that Eve neither respects nor appreciates her middle daughter, Joey is the one who comes to Eve's rescue in assuming "primary responsibility for looking after Eve when Arthur moves out" (Schwartz, 137). Joey flounders in her despair about Eve's condition and in her own unsuccessful search for a stable professional path. When Joey and Mike discuss Joey's attempts at jobs in editing, acting, and photography, none of which satisfied her, she admits, "I feel a real need to express something, but I don't know what it is I want to express. . . or how to express it."

Joey may be conscious of the contrast between how precisely her expressive artist mother controlled her family and how undefined Joey herself is. As the daughter of an OCD mother, Joey tries to find or create order in her own life, and her inability to do so pains her because she likely sees her mother's procedures as a standard which she cannot meet. When Joey admits to Renata, "My whole life I only wanted to be her,"[Eve], Renata replies, "Well, for awhile there, you were her, weren't you?. . .All those

headaches every time she'd come home from the hospital." Joey assumed Eve's maladies in attempt to share her identity and become closer to her mother.

Being aware of Eve's OCD behaviors helps one to understand Joey's personal distress with herself because of the differences between them. Eve had been an accomplisher with a strong professional identification, and Joey not only jumps from job to job, but has no solid career direction. At one point, Renata describes Joey to her father with, "She hasn't found herself yet." When Joey tells Mike, "I want to quit my job," he is exasperated because this is not the first time she has lost interest in yet another position.

Joey's revelation that she wants to be her mother shows a paradox. One part of Joey resents the responsibility for her mother that she voluntarily took; the other part of her wants to share her mother's values and achieve a closeness which remains elusive; Eve is blind to Joey's desperate attempts to earn her love and even accuses Joey of being destructive and unsupportive. Thus, Joey has a hunger for something from her mother which she never receives; Joey's lack of success in her own life further diminishes her chances of ever obtaining Eve's praise, because Eve highly values success.

Eve's obsessive and compulsive need for control produces contrasting responses in Renata, her oldest daughter, and in Flyn, her youngest. Renata seeks order and control, and considers herself very separate from Eve, even though she mirrors her mother's values in esteeming success and disdaining failure. Renata has become an accomplished writer as her mother was a successful artist, but Renata maintains distance (physical and emotional) from her mother's problems, just as Eve backs off from unpleasant situations. However, she does not repress painful emotions, as Eve does, but rather dwells on them.

Eve's disorder and Renata's accomplishments explain Renata's drive to excel. Renata, as the daughter of an OCD mother, also needs order in her life, which she creates with her poetry and with her attempt to "organize" or control her husband, as she saw Eve do with Arthur. By being highly critical of her own published poetry, illustrated by her ongoing revisions, Renata shows that she has high standards, like the ones she saw her mother set. When Joey compliments Renata on one of her poems that was published in *The New Yorker* magazine, Renata replies, "It's an old poem. I redid it. Now when I reread, I find it much too ambiguous. Na, I may redo it again." She is never satisfied.

The ways that Renata and Eve create their work and deal with their husbands are similar, even though Renata prides herself on the notion that she and her OCD mother do not share fundamental values or exhibit similar behaviors. Being married to a successful lawyer, Eve did not need to work as an artist but did so because she loved it, i.e. "art for art's sake." Conversely, Renata probably needs to work because her husband Frederick's writing is less acclaimed by the critics than hers is, and presumably less lucrative. However, Arthur subsidizes Renata every month so she can have the luxury of writing and not be concerned with earning a living, a gesture which Frederick resents; ". . . .the check that arrives from Daddy every month so you can write yourself into immortality. . . ." Renata has no problem with that money, as she reveals with the words, ". . . .I'm not ashamed to be subsidized either! I turn things out!" Arthur's money enables Renata to create what she chooses, as Eve did.

The film raises the questions of whether Eve's OCD causes Renata to emulate her mother in so many ways or that Renata just copies what she saw her mother do. Renata is annoyed that she cannot control Frederick by convincing him to drink less, have

confidence in his written work despite negative critical response, or go a party she is attending, for which she has already arranged a baby sitter; she tries to control Frederick in both large and small ways.

Understanding the critical need of those with OCD to control enables one to comprehend Eve's and Renata's inner and external conflicts. Only by keeping some distance from her mother can Renata maintain the illusion that she is controlling herself, rather than being subject to Eve's desires, as she had to be in her childhood. As an adult, Renata does not want to be controlled by Eve any longer. In a voice-over in the film, Arthur recollects, "By the time the girls were born, it was all so perfect, so ordered. Looking back, of course, it was rigid." He continues, "The truth is. . . . she'd created a world around us that we existed in. . . oh, great dignity I will say. . . . it was like an ice palace."

Although Renata is neither blatantly depressed nor suicidal yet, her dark, isolated, mournful persona foreshadows a future that may include those traits. In a flashback to a scene in her psychiatrist's office, Renata says, "Actually it started happening last winter. Increasing thoughts about death just seemed to come over me. . . .a preoccupation with my own mortality." She continues with "I can't seem to shake this, the real implication of dying. It's terrifying." Then, Renata sighs and crosses her arms in front of her, as if in defiance of and protection from death.

Flyn uses distance and drugs to escape the toxicity of her intellectual, dysfunctional, wealthy family; Flyn is less intellectual, less successful, less compulsive, and less accessible. In contrast to Renata, who is smart and literary, Flyn knows her strength is in her beauty rather than in brains and that she is an actress who has achieved

only modest success. She lives the farthest away and sees her parents less frequently than her sisters do. Flyn visits, but is not an integral part of the family politics.

Why does Flyn live on the opposite coast from her family? She may reside in California to promote her acting career, but she may also need the distance to maintain her mental health. Her lack of proximity to her family is both a disadvantage and an asset. By keeping her distance, she misses the opportunity to be closer to her sisters and to her parents in their advancing years. On the other hand, she is less contaminated by their disorders.

Flyn clearly understands her own limitations; she admits, "I know who I am. I'm not treated seriously. When really classy parts come along, I get passed over. If it weren't for the stupid television industry, I wouldn't make enough to live." It is likely that she lives far from her parents because she is embarrassed about not being as wealthy as they are or because she wants to avoid criticism from her mother about the men she dates. Eve already degraded Flyn's sisters' choices in men and Flyn may not want to subject herself to the same treatment. Eve had said about Joey's boyfriend, Mike, "I had always hoped for more for Joey;" she complains that his aftershave is too strong and even proposes that she buy him something else, i.e. a fragrance that she prefers. These comments exemplify Eve's compulsive obsession to control her daughters' lives.

Failure to measure up to her family's intellectual levels and financial expectations may also contribute to Flyn's decision to live so far away. Furthermore, she likely uses drugs to escape the impact of her mother's disorders. Despite amiable conversations with her family members, Flyn apparently needs the numbing effects of cocaine when she is

physically close to them. She seems happy with her career and content with life in general, but if she is a drug user, then she is seeking a missing element.

Less conflicted about her mother than her sisters are, Flyn is able to grieve openly and sincerely at her mother's casket. Flyn was less traumatized by her mother's institutionalization because she was much younger than her sisters were when this event occurred. Her youth and her distance lessen the impact of Eve's dysfunctions on her. One can understand how her distance from her parents has helped her. Her relationship with Eve is far less complex than those of her sisters. Two of Eve's daughters--Renata and Flyn-- employ distance to deal with their mother's controlling nature, while Joey uses proximity to strive for an intimacy with Eve which she cannot achieve.

Depression

Of eleven classic symptoms of depression (Grohol 1), eight characterize Eve, especially in the time shortly before her death. She prefers pale, muted colors, which she calls "My beiges and my earth tones" and wears a suit which Renata deems "ice gray." She is 1-"sad, anxious, and [in an] empty mood," and especially after Arthur's announcement that he wants to finalize their divorce rather than reconcile, she exhibits 2-"feelings of hopelessness [and] pessimism." She also shows a 3-"helplessness" and an 4-"inability to make any decisions" about her life. Feeling ineffective, she asks Joey to speak to Arthur, on her behalf, about reconciliation, instead of initiating the conversation herself. Eve experiences 5-"decreased energy [and] fatigue," illustrated by her slow steps. Toward the latter part of the film, she moves lethargically and talks to her daughters in a low, controlled monotone, exemplifying the need to control even herself; her voice is

nearly devoid of any expression. Also, 6-"insomnia [and] early morning awakening" reflect the depressive's behavior, as shown when Eve comes to what had once been her house the night after Arthur and Pearl's wedding and proceeds to walk into the raging ocean, to her death.

Early in the film, in a psychiatrist's office, Renata recalls her childhood and her mother's nocturnal pacing. She was always a difficult person, but Eve's 7-"irritability" increases and she acts upon suicidal ideation with two 8-"suicide attempts," the second of which is successful. At Arthur's confession that her doctor told him she could handle it [the divorce], Eve verbalizes her humiliation with the words, "Oh, I just want to die." While her words may be merely an expression, considering her depressive state, they may be subconsciously foreshadowing what is to come.

Eve's depressive mood is greatly reinforced by the settings in *Interiors*. The dark filmic interior and exterior scenes plus Eve's bleak outlook on life are reminiscent of the stark Bergmanesque *chiaroscuro* technique of contrasts**.**" 'Chiaroscuro' refers to a strong, self-conscious juxtaposition of light and shade which results in the stunning visual effect in a work of art (Netto)**.** The chiaroscuro technique was conceived and started by Leonardo de Vinci, continued by Caravaggio, and perfected by Rembrandt who created a sense of gloom and mystery with his calculated management of light and shadow. He achieved three effects with this effort: dramatic intensity, rhythmic visual harmony, and psychological depth. The third one, with the use of faces deeply marked with shadow, conveys "a strong sense of something serious going on in the minds of these figures, but the precise nature of their thoughts and feelings, is, at best, only darkly implied" (Netto). *Random House Dictionary* describes chiaroscuro as the "use of deep variations and subtle

gradations of light and shade, especially to enhance the delineation of character and for general dramatic effect." Such cinematic attempts are effective in this film by coordinating character mood with colors and tones.

Starkness abounds in this film, from the severe styling of Eve's black hair, to her love of white (colorless) roses. "I like white roses better than any other flower on earth," Eve says when her birthday bouquet from Arthur is delivered. Even the beach views show unforgiving contrast of black and white. No vivid painting or green plant inside the house relieves the morose hues. When Arthur says at the end of a visit to Eve in her apartment, "We'll talk," one notes the deeply, shadowed tones on her face and her pensive expression, indicating that something " serious and . . . .darkly implied" is happening in her mind. Her nasolabial lines and shadowed neck, closely edged by her black sweater, further express her bleak mood.

The many shots of the inside of the house display more depressive black and white, which coordinate with Eve's depressed perspective. In the opening camera shots of the film, windows and the outdoors particularly characterize gloom. Even the panorama of the sea and the beach, as seen from the windows, is drab. So the interior of the house and the melancholy interior of Eve's mind coordinate, and both of them are connected by the film's title, *Interiors*. "The title alludes to Eve's obsession with room interiors and metaphorically to the characters' inner emotional states" (Schwartz 135).

Allen further highlights Eve's somber qualities with visual contrast to Pearl. Eve and Pearl identify themselves by the colors they choose for their clothing and home decor. The abundance of black and white representing Eve contrasts with Pearl's bright attire and her intent to paint the house because "it's a little pale." Even shapes contribute

to each woman's statement. Eve's hair is smooth and tightly pulled back, suggesting a strict, closed outlook, and the lines of her outfits are straight, while Pearl's hair-do is fluffy, and her dresses are loose and flowing, symbolizing softness and openness. The two women's exteriors reflect their interiors.

Adult depression impacts adult children emotionally, physically, socially, and functionally. A study by Christine Timko at the Center for Health Care (CHC) in Indianapolis determined that adult children of depressed parents exhibit depression of their own, which includes the characteristics of being unmarried, reliance on emotional discharge, physical pain, disorganization, and central involvement in family discord to a greater degree than adult children of non-depressed parents. Results published in another study in the *Journal of Affected Disorders* showed that these subjects experienced more severe depression than subjects of non-depressed parents (Timko et al. 2008a, 64). An article by Timko about the status of adult children of depressed parents followed in a different study, conducted over a 23-year period, reveals more pronounced disorders in social and physical functioning, disability, and utilization of help and coping than adult children of non-depressed parents. Their issues include concerns "in a number of domains: psychiatric and behavioral problems other than depression, physical functioning and pain, social function, and hospitalizations and medication" (Timko et al. 2008b, 344).

Conclusive commentary determines that adult children of depressed parents experience problems in the above areas, but "not . . . necessarily debilitating effects in other life domains" (Timko et al. 2008b, 350). It is important for such subjects "to recognize their elevated risk of clinical depression and potential need for help" (Timko et al. 2008b, 350). Yet another article reviews interviews conducted with adult children of

mothers with chronic depression; the researchers acknowledge the "mounting evidence that children of mothers with depression are at risk for psychopathology and disturbed family relations" (Baik np). The purpose was to examine disclosure patterns of the mothers' disorder, and results show that disclosure varies with increasing age of the children and is a repeated process; the types were self-disclosing, first disclosing, and selective disclosing. The Timko study addresses the shame and secretive aspect of having a parent who is mentally ill. Eve's family seems to openly accept her affliction, at least, to each other.

The contagion of Eve's depression is manifested differently in each daughter. It spreads to Renata, who is often moody, introspective, and somewhat troubled. At one point, Renata tells Joey, who suggests that they socialize more, ". . . .I've been having some work problems. I need isolation. I need to be alone. The. . . . the creative thing is a very---It's very delicate. . . ." She also reminds Frederick that they had a child because he wanted a family. She says, "I also raised the family you thought you wanted. . . . It wasn't my idea!" Joey's depression is shown by her own inability to perform, professionally, as well as her parents do and by her feelings of guilt about her mother, as explained earlier. Flyn, the youngest and most distant, is the also the most cheerful. Her sunnier outlook exists either by chance or is an attitude which Flyn has adopted to compensate for her mother's cold persona.

Suicidality

Finally, Eve's decision to end her life because she feels it is no longer worth living results in her completed suicide at the beach. A recent study published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* has determined that "rates of suicide among older adults in the United

States are higher than that of other age groups; the term, "older adults" refers to those "60 years of age or older" (Cukrowicz et al. 12). Furthermore, the *Journal of Affective Disorders* study indicates that "depressive symptoms contributed significantly to change in thoughts of suicide" and that "increasing age was associated with significantly greater reports of suicide ideation" (Cukrowicz et al. 12). Sigmund Freud, in "Mourning and Melancholia," likens profound depression to the loss experienced in bereavement. Depression about a divorce, for example, will trigger grieving feelings about the "death" of the relationship.

The divorce and her inability to feel productive, perhaps coupled with Eve's age, contribute to her desire to die. Eve appears to be in her late 50's or early 60's, so she is in a typical age group for adult suicides. More important, having once been a successful artist, she knows the feeling of accomplishment, which she now feels is beyond her reach. Most significant, however, believing that her life is worthless without Arthur reveals her opinion that a man validates a woman's existence, and more specifically, that she must have a husband in order to have a meaningful life. These values signify her low self-esteem. Her inability to keep Arthur makes her feel less feminine, less alluring, and especially less powerful; for her, power equals control. As an OCD, Eve requires power. Understanding Eve's values about men and marriage explains her despair and suicide. Knowing that control is the foundation on which Eve has always functioned and depended, one can see why, without it, she feels worthless.

Low self-esteem is evidenced in Eve's belief that her inability to convince Arthur to reconcile is a mark of her own uselessness. Arthur is one of her personal achievements, and she sees being single as an indication of failure. She does not consider her daughters

as a support system, nor any measure of comfort, even though they offer her varying degrees of both. She is feeling old and ineffectual. When Arthur first announces to the family his desire to separate, Eve says she will be the one to move out and then, gritting her teeth, adds, "I can't live alone." At some time before her death, Eve, grimacing and with tears in her eyes, admits to Flyn, "I have nothing to live for anymore." This admission foreshadows her suicide, as might Eve's less obvious but significant comments at other times; they were "I like the sea" and "I miss the sea." It is clear that Eve had been depressed and was thinking about suicide for some time, since her intentional drowning is her second try; she was rescued and taken to the hospital by ambulance after her first attempt to take her own life in her apartment.

Eve's impact on her daughters discourages them from emulating her life choices. Joey exhibits her total rejection of motherhood when she says to Mike, "Sometimes I think if we had a child. . . .Oh, God, I. . . . and, and that really makes me anxious. I mean. . . .it's totally irrevocable." Renata fears aging as she notices the despair and depression her mother must confront. She experiences recurring panic attacks from time to time, to which Frederick reassuringly responds, "Hey, you're not going to conk out. . . .You've got to put those kinds of thoughts out of your head." She describes the disturbing dreams in this way: "I suddenly became hyper aware of my body. Uh. . . .I could feel my heart beating and began to imagine that---. . . .I felt precarious." Flyn displays a positive outlook, but, now that she is an adult, flees family intimacy, by removing herself physically and verbally from their conflicts. She maintains a non-combative stance, as illustrated by her acceptance of her father's marriage to Pearl, in contrast to Joey's strong disapproval.

Joey responds to Eve in contradictory ways, reflecting her paradoxical feelings about her mother. Perhaps as the daughter of a dysfunctional mother, Joey jumps at the chance to parent her mother, as her mother did not do not very well, for her; Joey wants to control her mother as she saw Eve control Arthur. Joey also struggles unsuccessfully to establish control over her own life.

In summary, Eve's triad of disorders leaves its impact on her daughters, with Joey in conflict about control, Renata obsessed with aging, and Flyn craving support. As Eve ages, she presents a clearly negative role model to her daughters about getting older, accepting reality, and adapting to change. Joey, who seems to want to totally direct Eve, complains to Renata that "You're hiding behind your work, Flyn's never here, and I inherited mother!" Joey has conflicting feelings about her involvement with her mother; she wants to control Eve, as Eve used to control others, but sometimes she resents that responsibility. Possibly, by controlling Eve, Joey can enjoy a purpose and feeling of worth, which she has not found in a job. She loves her mother, in theory, but hates Eve's opinion of her. Eve comes to the beach house on the night that she will drown, and Joey speaks from her deepest thoughts, to and about Eve. In part, she says, "I am so consumed with guilt. . . I care for you so, and you have nothing but disdain for me. . . .I feel guilty. . . .I think you are, uh. . . really too perfect to live in this world. . . .What happens to those of us who can't create? . . . .I feel such rage toward you. . . .You are not just a sick woman. . . There's been perverseness. . . . in many of the things you've done."

Renata notices her mother aging ungracefully and says to Frederick, "I'm not far from the age at which she began to show signs of strain." Renata is concerned with aging, her own death, and her looks. Out with Flynn one day, Renata compares herself to her

youngest sister. "I look in the mirror every day and I feel discouraged [translation: older] And look, now I see you, and you don't change at all." Renata's dark outlook and strong concern with death may be resultant of her mother's OCD and depression; in addition, Renata is drawn to melancholia and isolation, herself.

Flyn tells Frederick that Acapulco is her idea of a fantasy spot, where she can "Lie around on the beach. Get waited on, hand and foot." Flyn seeks pampering and attention, which she is still missing. Apparently, Eve did not shower upon Flyn the babying and spoiling that youngest children often receive from their families, especially from their mothers. Also, Flyn may still feel some of the deprivation that she experienced in childhood, because so much attention went to her mentally ill mother.

TABLE 1.2

Family of *HANNAH AND HER SISTERS*
Parents: Norma and Evan
Daughters: Hannah (Elliot), Holly (Mickey), and Lee (Doug)

Norma: An Overview

Norma is a married woman in her 60's and the mother of three grown daughters. She is an active, debilitating alcoholic and a blatantly flirtatious, unfaithful wife. A semi-retired actress, whose husband also acts, she and her husband constantly voice their acerbic complaints about each other, especially on the topics of alcohol abuse and infidelity.

Discussion

The mother of the title characters in *Hannah and Her Sisters* is an unfaithful alcoholic who blames her husband for their marital problems. In his book, *Private Lies:*

Infidelity and the Betrayal of Intimacy, Frank Pittman, M.D., defines infidelity as "a breach of the trust, a betrayal of a relationship, a breaking of an agreement. There are many kinds of infidelity. . . . but sexual infidelity in a marriage or a monogamous relationship that is tantamount to marriage" is the one being discussed here. "Most couples agree to strict [sexual] exclusivity within the marriage. . . . , insisting that whatever else happens with other people, i.e. flirting, petting, etc, the genitals stay out of the hands . . . . of outsiders" (Pittman 19). Psychologists list several kinds of infidelity---cyberspace, emotional, and sexual being the most popular ones. Of these, emotional infidelity is the most difficult for the faithful female spouse to bear, while sexual infidelity infuriates the faithful male spouse the most

In this film, both Norma and Evan express their anger at the sexual infidelity of the other spouse. "Fidelity, while related to trust, implies the keeping of vows. Examples. . . .[exist] of infidelity that did not involve sex" (Goldberg 449). Furthermore, Goldberg states that while life style disruption and loss of a sense of order [resulting from infidelity] may seem to be [comparatively] small issues, they can render some marriages non-functional. These issues of life style and order have not destroyed Norma's marriage to Evan yet, but the breaking of trust, shown by Evan's questioning Hannah's paternity, takes its toll. From a social standpoint, Evan is embarrassed by his wife's aggressive conduct toward a young salesman with whom she was flirting. His discomfort qualifies as a loss of a sense of order in his life.

Infidelity

Norma displays her unfaithfulness before her family members and admits that she likes to flirt in order "to stay young. . . . . at heart." Infidelity and alcoholism are tied

together in her husband's complaints about her. Her infidelity and lack of respect for Evan is portrayed by her flirtatious behavior and by Evan's genuine concern about the paternity of his children. Evan recounts an episode to Hannah in which her mother had made advances to a young salesman they met. Evan says, "Your mother was throwing herself at him in a disgusting way, and when she found she was too old to seduce him, that he was just embarrassed by her, well. . . ." Furthermore, Evan accuses his wife of so much infidelity that he is not sure of his children's paternity. He says to Hannah in front of Norma, "I just hope you are mine."

Children of unfaithful parents, according to research, see disrespect and damaged trust in the adults' relationship, which they sometimes copy. "Infidelity effects all children in the marriage, not only the youngsters but adult offspring, as well" (Lusterman: 1440). Lusterman suggests that, in Western cultures, monogamy, trust, and intimacy are part of the marital contract, which are expected to be reserved for the marriage partner and not shared with anybody else. He goes on to say that adult children of cheating parents usually notice the tension and press their parents to reveal the source of it. While there is no proof that infidelity is genetically inherited, children of a marriage that contains infidelity often grow up to be unfaithful spouses or partners themselves, as Lee does. Lusterman points out that all affairs involve lying, which is the most hurtful aspect of unfaithfulness because it means that trust has been broken.

Hannah remains calm in the face of her father's accusations to his wife and her mother's inebriated state, but acknowledges her mother's habits; "You probably were flirting." Norma defends herself by insisting that she just likes to joke around and have fun, but "he gets angry because I get the attention." She further complains that "He's

gotten sourer and sourer as he's gotten older," whereas her desire is to maintain her youth, and remain "young. . . . .at heart."

Insecurity and jealousy are underlying, causative factors of infidelity, according to recent research. The authors of *Sex Differences in Jealousy: A Matter of Evolution or Attachment History?* cite jealousy as "historically, a consequence of low self-esteem or even neurosis" (Levy et al.). A chapter in *The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships* discusses the incidence of infidelity as a determinant of jealousy and a factor closely associated with extradyadic sexual involvement (Buunk and Dijkstra pp 533-555). "The changing construction of jealousy in Western societies has transformed a socially sanctioned response to infidelity into a form of personal pathology that is the outward expression of immaturity, possessiveness, and insecurity" (Mullen 593). Finally, two University of Texas psychologists published results of a study that asks the question, 'Why do people have sex?' The altruistic "I wanted the [other] person to feel good about himself or herself" is one of several answers received (Meston and Buss 477). The same article adds that the three insecurity sub-factors include a self-esteem boost (i.e., low self image), duty/pressure, and mate guarding (jealousy). Based on these works, one can see that insecurity engenders jealousy, which promotes the possibility of infidelity. The quote from Norma of her husband's unhappiness about the public attention she attracts (even if it is negative attention) implies that she thinks he is jealous of her, but her behavior toward the young salesman suggests that her own self-esteem is low. If she feels insecure beneath her cheerful exterior, one might then deduce that her cheerful, outer persona is merely a facade.

The impact of Norma's infidelity on her three daughters emerges in three different ways. [Although this segment of the discussion focuses on effects of infidelity, substance abuse is linked to the results. Scientific commentary on children of alcoholics will appear later.] Norma creates clear impressions on her daughters about infidelity and substance abuse, but all four women suffer from some low self-esteem: Norma needs attention, alcohol, and lovers to feel good about herself; Hannah hides her needs from Elliot; Holly uses cocaine until she can establish herself as a success; and Lee is an unfaithful partner, as well as a recovering alcoholic. While the daughters' manifestations vary, Norma's legacy to all of them is insecurity.

One may note that the progression away from traditional family values moves from the oldest daughter to the youngest: Hannah is the most traditional and Lee is the least. Unlike Norma, Hannah, the oldest, honors her marriage vows and does not abuse substances. She is a competent wife and mother, who was once a successful actress. She is faithful to Elliot, as she probably was to her first husband, Mickey. Having seen her mother do a less than satisfactory job, she performs differently. At one point, Hannah reflects on her parents in this way: "They loved the idea of having us kids, but raising us didn't interest them that much."

The following dialogues show the ineffectiveness of the communication between Elliot and Hannah. She asks Elliot if he finds her "too giving" or "disgustingly perfect." Hannah does not reveal to Elliot that she has "tremendous needs" until the latter part of the film; in the meantime he pursues Lee, who willingly admits her need to be taken care of. Elliot tells Hannah "I need someone I can matter to. It's hard to be around someone who gives so much and needs so little in return!" She replies with information that is

apparently new to him, "You matter to me, completely!" So Hannah's independent behavior earns her the verbal praise of her family but contributes to her husband falling in love with Lee, who is needier. Elliot is attracted to Lee because he sees her need for him, a quality which Hannah does not exhibit. Elliot struggles with a wife who is not needy enough to make him feel necessary.

Holly copies her mother's substance abuse, but is not unfaithful, mainly because she is not in a single, committed, romantic relationship during most of the film. Holly's inability to find a suitable partner may reflect a deeper fear of making a poor choice, having witnessed her mother's marital unhappiness. She once admits her low self-image to Hannah by saying, "I know I'm mediocre." While Norma's alcoholism is still present in her older years, Holly appears to have given up cocaine by the time she finds success as a writer. The last scene in the film, when Mickey tell Holly how happily married he is to her and she tells him that she is pregnant, shows that she is capable of being part of a healthy relationship.

Lee's departure from "old-fashioned" values is revealed in her alcoholism, her cohabitating with Frederick, and her cheating on Frederick by having an affair with Elliot. Lee is a recovering alcoholic and becomes unfaithful to Frederick, with whom she is living. Thinking their relationship is committed and monogamous, he is shocked when she admits that she has been with someone else. Lee, who craves nurturing and stimulation, which the introverted Frederick no longer provides, has an affair with Elliot, her brother-in-law and Hannah's husband, because he nurtures and pampers her. Lee tells Frederick that they need to make some changes, that "I'm not your pupil. I was, but I'm not." Lee, bored with Frederick's negativity and needing to be cared for emotionally, is

attracted to Elliot, who has a need to nurture. Lee moves from Frederick, the artist who was once intellectually and artistically stimulating, to Elliot, who buys her the poetry of e. e. cummings, to Doug, the college professor, whom she eventually marries.

Alcoholism

Norma is not only an unfaithful wife but a habitual alcohol abuser. The Diagnostic Statistic Manual (DSM) finds an increase of the incidence of female children of alcoholics (COAs), in comparison to male COAs; the difference is described as "slightly over half." Yet, "important trends in the research in the past decade indicate that women are affected equally or as greatly by familial alcoholism as are men. . . . Familial alcoholism is very widespread, with 53% of adults. . . . reporting an alcoholic relative" (Jennison and Johnson 6). In addition, these two authors allege that the transmittal from parental alcoholism is increased when marital distress, as well as alcoholism, is present in the family setting. Al-Anon, an offshoot of the earlier established Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), a support group for alcoholics, was later created to provide support for friends, families, and children of problem drinkers. It is estimated that each alcoholic affects the lives of at least four other people; ". . . . alcoholism is truly a family disease " (www.al-anon.alateen.org.). "Alateen is for young people whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking."

Marital discord is depicted in the marriage of Hannah's parents when Norma degrades her husband for his mediocrity, infidelity, insufficient income, and superficial values. She complains that "He's ruined me with his ego, his philandering, his--- his, his, his, mediocrity. . . .his expensive haircuts and hairdos and clothes. He's all show. . . . This non-person, this haircut that passes for a man. He could never support us!" Her

criticism of Evan as all show and no substance brings to mind the description from Frederick, Renata's husband in *Interiors,* about Flyn when he describes her as "a perfect example of form without any content."

Norma's insecurities show how she attempts to garner strength and satisfaction from alcohol, especially in the face of stress and criticism from her husband, which increase her anxiety. One study of geriatric use of alcohol and other substances shows that identifying alcohol and substance abuse in older populations is sometimes difficult because legal and job related clues do not exist as dependably in this group as in younger groups (Trevisan 28). Drinking patterns to constitute abuse may range from one drink a day to a binge drinking session once a month (Trevisan 28).

The film does not reveal how much or how often Norma drinks, but evidently it is often enough to be part of her identity within her family. Evan describes her as "drunker and drunker." She is not in treatment, but everyone is aware of her addiction, and they accept it rather than make a concerted effort to get her to change. Tending to the drunk Norma in the kitchen, Hannah says, very gently, "You promised to stay on the wagon," as she takes away Norma's alcoholic beverage and gives her some coffee. Following the dialogue when Evan relates the incident about Norma's flirtation with the salesman, Hannah tells her father to go into the other room so she can take care of her mother. Hannah responds to Norma's alcoholism by repressing her own needs so she can be competent and available to others, which Norma apparently did not do.

One may ask if Hannah is enabling her mother by not insisting that she change her ways, thereby doing her mother a disservice by accepting her addiction. "Perhaps because she is the daughter of alcoholics, [her father is known to drink a lot too], Hannah

has become an "enabler" and her relationships with loved ones often revolve around her assuming an enabling role" (Schwartz 116). When Hannah admits to Elliot that she has "tremendous needs," he retorts in frustration, "Well, I can't see them and neither can Lee or Holly."

Alcoholic parents leave their marks on children and spouses. Alcoholism is defined by the *American Heritage Stedman Medical Dictionary* as "the condition whereby a person drinks alcoholic substances habitually and to excess." Alcohol addiction or an alcohol-related disorder is caused by "numerous biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors," according to the *Professional Guide to Disease.* Furthermore, "an offspring is seven to eight times more likely to become an alcoholic than is a peer without such a parent." Psychological contributions to the likelihood of becoming addicted to alcohol include anxiety, avoidance of responsibility, and attempts to increase self-esteem. Knowing information like the facts above helps one sympathize with Holly's low self-esteem and realize her increased risk to abuse substances.

While Hannah escapes the proclivity for substance abuse, her sisters succumb to it. Research has shown that children of alcoholics (COAs) are at a marked increased risk of alcoholism. Numerous scientific sources concur that young and eventually adult children of alcoholics have a greater chance of becoming heavy drinkers or alcohol abusers at some point in their lives than do children of non-problem drinking parents, although the age of addiction onset varies widely.

Lee's and Holly's addictions are not new. Lee has had time to abuse alcohol, suffer whatever motivated her to seek assistance from Alcoholics Anonymous, and begin

to recover. Holly has been using cocaine long enough for Hannah to know about her addiction, as it is an ongoing issue. Although Lee had been abusing alcohol and Holly is abusing drugs, both of them most likely inherited the dependency tendency from their mother.

The Professional Guide to Disease asserts that "psychoactive drug abuse commonly results from a combination of low self esteem, peer pressure, inadequate coping skills and curiosity. Most people who are predisposed to drug use have few mental or emotional resources against stress, an overdependence on others, and a low tolerance for frustration." Knowing that Holly and Lee see themselves with limited mental and emotional resources helps one predict their vulnerability to substance abuse, especially as the children of alcoholic parents and in contrast to their stable, high-achieving sister, Hannah. The 1987 *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-iiiR) presents "psychoactive drugs" as a category of drugs being the first to give equal diagnostic value to behavioral and physiological factors.

Norma conveys the message to her daughters that infidelity and alcohol abuse are acceptable, because she role-models both. Hannah has created a life for herself that is the opposite of her mother's; she feels she has to take charge and accomplish what her mother did not. While Holly and Lee have inherited their mother's predilection for substance abuse, Hannah, the oldest sister, responds to her mother's dysfunctions by becoming strong, self-sufficient, professionally successful, and nurturing. She reminds Elliot, "When we met, you said your life was chaos" and that she brought order to his existence. However, she may have overdone her competence image because Elliot seeks out Lee

when he does not feel that Hannah needs him enough or provides an outlet for his own need to nurture; ergo, her high level of self-sufficiency works against her.

Holly, the second daughter, uses cocaine to ease her own pain of not being able to establish a steady career path or find a suitable, steady boyfriend. She most likely viewed her mother's drinking as a way to ease the pain of an unhappy marriage and of aging. Hannah knows of Holly's addiction and occasionally asks her about it, to which Holly always replies, shaking her head "No. I swear. I swear [I'm not using]." Another time, she avers, "I haven't done drugs in a year." Despite her denials, she seems to be actively still using. The cost of cocaine probably contributes to her constantly shaky financial condition, causing her to often borrow money from Hannah. Holly asks Hannah to lend her two thousand dollars to start a new business and to pay off some old debts; Hannah agrees, but asks about Holly's cocaine use, which Holly vehemently denies. Holly drinks alcohol socially, but her addiction of choice is to drugs.

Lee, the youngest, is a recovering alcoholic. When Elliot is pursuing Lee prior to their actual affair, he meets her on the street one day as she is on her way to an AA meeting. Lee seems to have her addiction under control, since she is attending meetings. Unlike her mother who had a career, Lee has no solid career plan in place, but is bright and appreciates art (Frederick, the artist) and literature (Elliot, who gifted her a poetry book, and Doug, the college professor).

In summary, seeing Norma face the personal consequences of her addiction and indiscretions helps one to understand her insecurities. Norma's low self image results in her inappropriate overture to a stranger and her need to become drunk. Earlier criticism links insecurity to infidelity, but alcoholism is also related to infidelity. The connection

between alcoholism and infidelity is shown by the following recent statistic: "The extramarital relationships of married alcoholics . . . . were compared with those of a demographically matched community sample of married non-alcoholics. The proportion of alcoholics who reported one or more extramarital affairs in the previous year (14%) is a significantly higher number than that of the community sample (4%). (Hall, et al. 287**).** Being part of a dysfunctional family affected by several psychological issues, Norma and her daughters are at greater than average risk for involvement with these disorders. By the film's end, however, Holly and Lee are successfully managing their substance addictions and their personal relationships. Only Norma, the mother, shows no interest in changing her destructive behaviors.

TABLE 1.3

Family of *ALICE*
Parents: Mr. and Mrs. Janssen
Daughters: Alice (Doug) and Dorothy

Alice's Mother: An Overview

Alice Janssen Tate's mother was, during her lifetime, the unsatisfied wife of a man whom she did not respect and the mother of two daughters. She had no personal, professional, emotional, or financial resources. Insecure, she was a failed actress, who turned to alcohol when her husband died. Having faced economic challenges, which left their marks on her, Mrs. Janssen strongly advised her daughter, Alice, to marry a wealthy husband. She valued money and financial security more than love or passion.

Discussion

The mother of Alice Tate in the film, *Alice*, is a victim of emotional and financial insecurity, which engenders her low professional self-image as an actress, her materialism, and her alcohol addiction. Regarding insecurity, "Individuals who feel highly inadequate may be suffering from an inferiority complex, that is, a feeling of not being as good as others, an emotion they often try to conceal" (Engler 102). "Actors receive more interest from the general public than almost any other social group. . . ." (Nettle 1). "Actors are of psychological interest not just because of the public approbation they excite, but also because their profession has unusual characteristics," many of which are ego related, in that success and self-esteem are co-dependent (Nettle 1). A "materialist" is defined by *The American Heritage Dictionary* as "a person who is markedly more concerned with material things than with spiritual, intellectual, or cultural values.

Alice's mother had been an actress and was impacted by the often related emotional and financial insecurities of actors. "There is no shortage of entrants to the profession. . . . On the other hand, median earnings are extremely low, and actors can expect to spend most of their time economically insecure, short of work, and subsidizing their chosen profession by some other means" (Phillips p.133, 1991). Also, "groups of artistic creators, such as writers, poets, and visual artists have received considerable attention and the consensus is that they tend to be high on the five-factor dimensions of neuroticism. . . ."(Nettle 3). "The Five-Factor Model (FFM), a potential basis for delineating the structure of personality, is composed of openness, neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness" (Engler 290). Neurosis is defined as "an emotional disturbance," but one "not usually so severe as to prevent the individual

who has it from functioning in normal society" (Engler 30). Alice's mother suffered from typical emotional and financial instability, characteristic of artistic people, which gave way to her low self image, materialism, and eventual alcoholism.

Insecurity

Alice's maternal role model was a woman with neither marketable skills nor emotional reserves, a combination which contributed to her feelings of inadequacy before, during, and after her marriage. Alice's mother's low self-esteem surfaced during her brief movie career, when she knew she was not talented, and continued into her marriage, which she used as a crutch. She recalls, "I was never more than a pretty face. And when it began to wrinkle, the studio stopped calling. . . . I was lucky your father came along. I was so used to having someone look after me." By marrying, Alice's mother was able to conceal the fact that she had not been a successful actress. She depended first on her looks and then on her husband. "I would have killed myself if it wasn't for him. That's why it's so important to marry a substantial man. . . ." When Alice's father died, her mother had no skills and no profession. One can understand how a sinking career, coupled with a failing marriage, contributed to her plummeting self-esteem, increasing insecurity, and alcoholism. Because the family apparently was never economically secure, one also can see why Alice's mother emphasized to Alice the importance of marrying for security.

Materialism

Alice's mother's materialism influenced her daughters in both positive and negative ways. Before Alice married Doug, she rejected a passionate painter named Eddie whom she loved (negative result) because her mother said that "some struggling,

left wing artist in Greenwich Village" would never be able to support her. Alice follows her mother's advice. Although Alice finds Doug handsome, she marries him primarily for his money, enjoying financial security for many years (positive result), but feeling bothered that her life has no real meaning (negative result). "I'm never happier than when I am helping out in some way," Alice tells her sister Dorothy. Having experienced a moneyed marriage devoid of meaning (negative), Alice gains some insight toward herself (positive) and a realistic view of her parents' marriage for the first time (positive) when she takes Dr. Yang's herbs. Unlike her mother, Alice discards her shallow marriage to Doug and begins to pursue a writing career to develop herself, (positive) whereas her mother remains in her compromised marital and professional state.

Repression

Alice is sexually and professionally repressed, the latter due to her mother's influence, and she does not realize her potential in either of those areas for many years. Her girlfriends gossip about Alice's lack of visible sexuality; they say that if Alice were having an affair it would be "with the lights out." They acknowledge that her husband Doug cheats on her and imply that he could not be satisfied with Alice, whom they call "Miss Mouse." Alice admits to Joe, her lover, that there is no passion in her lovemaking with Doug. Alice says, ". . . . Doug and I do have sex, but. . . .not the way we used to. Which is probably my fault. Somewhere along the line, I just lost interest. . . Anyway, we rarely seem to do it." With Joe, however, her sexuality is unleashed. Some hours after one occasion of lovemaking, he tells her, "You were so relaxed this morning, back at my place. Very uninhibited. Nothing sexier than a lapsed Catholic." Alice had attended

Catholic school and once wanted to be a nun. So with Joe, her sexuality emerges, revealing the contrast between fulfilling sex with Joe and boring sex with Doug.

As a result of the insights she gains over the course of the film, Alice overcomes her mother's repressive influence and responds to her suppressed urge to develop herself professionally and live the values in which she genuinely believes. She says, "I regret not going to college." She rejects her mother's materialism and no longer wants to be "one of those women who just shops and has pedicures." Alice attempts to pursue a writing career by visiting Nancy Brill, her so-called friend who was just promoted to a position in a publishing company, where she buys scripts. Nancy shows no enthusiasm for the story lines Alice describes. Alice then proposes taking some writing classes, to which her husband agrees, but does not encourage. He says indifferently, "You wanted to take some writing courses, I said OK." With no encouragement from those around her, she tries to develop her writing skills by enrolling in a class, where her teacher, Professor Davis, provides the impetus she needs. "I think the professor thinks I have some promise," Alice tells the visiting Muse.

Alcoholism

Alice's mother had lacked the ability to improve her unhappy, unsatisfactory life. Alice and her sister Dorothy are fortunate to escape COAs' increased risk of becoming alcoholics. In a mental conversation with her deceased mother, Alice recalls the time when her mother was unable to cope and says, ". . . then, after Dad died, you drank yourself to death with margaritas." Her mother's helplessness and flippant attitude are shown in her reply, "I couldn't help it, darling. You know, I never could resist the taste of

salt around the rim of a glass." Alice is either just not drawn to alcohol or, perhaps subconsciously, takes her mother's addiction to it as a warning.

Self-Knowledge

Alice suffers physically and mentally from her mother's mistakes. She endures the physical manifestation of back pain coming from the frustration of an empty marriage and undeveloped intellectual potential, as well as sexual repression. Until her visit to Dr. Yang, Alice has no understanding of herself. Dr. Yang immediately tells Alice her pain is not in her back but "here and here," he says, pointing to his head and heart. Among the herbs he gives her is one that removes her inhibitions, permitting her to seduce Joe, the handsome, divorced, saxophone player whose child goes to the same private school as Alice's children do. Later, Alice is amazed at her aggressiveness with Joe. She is the one who takes the initiative, suggesting "We should get together to talk about Edna [St. Vincent] Millay," whose works they both admire. In addition, she flirts with him, touches his chin, smiles seductively, and piques him with questions about what size saxophone reed he uses. When he looks surprised, she clarifies the reed reference by saying suggestively, "Between the lips, Joe."

Additional self-knowledge provides Alice with a more accurate view of her parents' unhappy marriage; moreover, she benefits from Dorothy's and the Muse's realistic view of their parents. Both clarify, for Alice, missing elements in her own life. Alice had thought of her mother as a glamorous actress and was thrilled by the fact their father, a former naval officer, cut their birthday cakes with his sword. Dorothy deems their mother a third rate actress who was a "loser" and their father "a drunk" and "a bore." The Muse, too, calls Alice's mother "a loser." Also, she gives Alice a realistic view of her

supposed friend, Nancy Brill, and of Alice's professor, whom Alice deems "deep," but who the Muse claims has only a sexual interest in Alice. Alice takes all this advice seriously.

Alice receives a clearer picture of her parents' relationship after her visits to Dr. Yang, who prescribes herbs, and to her sister, who offers realistic reminders of their parents' marriage. Both of them lead her to realize the personal and professional deficits in her own marriage. It is useful to notice how Alice applies the flaws in her parents' lives to what she sees as missing in her own, and how she takes steps to correct what she sees as "errors."

In Alice's mental conversation, her mother reminds Alice that "you had stars in your eyes when it came to your father and me." Like Alice who idolized her parents, Mia Farrow states in her biography, "I loved my parents with a ferocity and incomprehension that was terrifying" (qtd. in Schwartz, 3). "Alice. . . . demonstrates similar devotion and idealizes her parents' dysfunctional marriage," (Schwartz 3), at first, unable to see how the imperfections in their relationship damaged her attitudes toward her own existence.

Alice's mother's disorders influenced her other daughter, Dorothy, differently. Seeing her mother in an unhappy marital relationship without a career or resources, Dorothy became and is now a fulfilled, self-sufficient attorney; married, she does not evidence any marital conflicts. Having observed her mother's materialistic values and marital discontent, Dorothy makes the choice to live a modest lifestyle, and she devotes her law practice to helping those in need. From a positive perspective, their mother's dysfunctions result in eventual productivity and contentment in both daughters, who benefit from her poor choices.

The sisters' closeness in their youth dissolves with their differing adult lifestyles and particularly their contrasting views about the spending of money. Upon a dreamed visit to her sister, Alice asks, "Gee, Dorothy, what happened to our house? It's so run-down," regarding the condition of their parents' home. Unlike the mother who claimed to have "sacrificed a career for marriage," and unlike Alice who obeyed her mother's advice to marry for money, Dorothy's profession and value system satisfy her. She complains to Alice that "People are starving and you fill their [Alice's children's] nursery with every conceivable toy." She adds, "Oh, God, your closet. Clothes, and a hundred shoes, and all that stuff!" At this point, Alice is beginning to re-evaluate her lifestyle. Dorothy plays the role of a conscience for Alice, by implying she does not approve of Alice cheating with Joe, or even planning to do so.

It is valuable for one to notice that these daughters profit by departing from their mother's alcoholic behavior and professional failure, and by ultimately rejecting her advice to marry for money. Alice's mother's most damaging weakness was her lack of emotional strength, even more than lack of money. One can get a deeper look into her character by realizing how her low-self esteem grew worse during her brief career, unfulfilling marriage, unproductive widowhood, and eventual alcoholism.

In summary, Dorothy's emotional strength helped her establish her value system early. For Alice, this process occurs much later, when she discovers her sexuality with Joe, enrolls in school, divorces Doug, goes to India to work with her longtime heroine, Mother Teresa, and comes back to the United States to do volunteer work, with a restructured view about the meaning of her life. "I want to give my children good values," she tells Dorothy.

Woody Allen, the Relationship-Maker

Woody Allen's films address the basic emotional needs of human beings as they interact in their relationships. "Woody Allen attempts to captivate his audience by bringing both intellectual concepts and real-life scenarios into a comedic crucible utilizing the human instinctual drives for lust, love, and happiness as his major catalysts. Allen's films offer a dialectical approach to the study of human sexuality as good and bad, humorous and dramatic, lustful and emotional, fearful and fearless, fulfilling and frustrating" (Philaretou 133) He does all of the above by basing his many premises on the often shaky frameworks of long and short term relationships.

In addition to Philaretou's perception of Allen's effort to infuse his films with love, lust, and the pursuit of happiness, Allen's treatment of relationships shows a wide contrast between traditional values and more current life styles in living arrangements, fidelity, substance use and abuse, attitudes toward parents, and the ability to change. His message asserts that everybody has dysfunctions of some sort (even those who seem to be perfect), which create both positive and negative evolutions. Some people, like Eve, succumb to their disorders as she does to her depression, ineffectuality, and inability to cope. Hannah's parents are not going to change their relationship to each other or their individual behaviors, while their daughters, Lee and Holly, after great effort and many errors, overcome drug abuse and find husbands with whom they can establish seemingly healthy partnerships. Alice is the one who progresses the most, and her new, balanced mental health will wholesomely affect her children, as her own mother's lack of mental stability negatively impacted Alice.

In each film, Allen places at least one person who, despite the disorders in self or a significant other, is determined to improve himself or herself: Arthur, in *Interiors* states his intent to do this early; Lee, in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, does the same about half way through the film, and Alice eventually reaches that point toward the end of the film, which bears her name. All three family units contain dysfunctional characters and people whose personas or family relationships undergo metamorphosis. However, the parental dysfunctional legacies of addiction, alcoholism, infidelity, materialism, and insecurity are bequeathed to the adult children, becoming obstacles which take great effort to surmount.

Terry Gross interviewed Allen on National Public Radio's Fresh Air segment (12 June 2009). Allen recalled the social separation of his own parents when he was a child, growing up in Brooklyn in the 1940s. After dinner, in the summer, his family and their neighbors brought bridge chairs and card tables downstairs to the street, where the men played gin rummy or poker and the women sat together and talked, isolated from the men. Allen described the absence of "male and female intimacy or romantic passion or interpersonal socialization" in those gatherings. He defined his parents' marriage, "like others, as a long truce." His mother's and father's relationship, he said, lacked the high expectations people later had for romantic liaisons in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

These three films bring up the questions of whether all parents suffer dysfunctions and whether their disorders make them more "real" and "believable" than if they were less flawed. Despite tendencies to follow parental behaviors, some of the adult children escape their parents' characteristics, at least eventually. Flyn, Hannah, and Dorothy thrive because they departed from their parents' images and were willing, unlike the neighbor in Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," to "go behind his father's saying." Allen conveys a strong

message that the adult daughters in these films are more likely to overcome their disorders than are their parents: Flyn, in *Interiors* does; Hannah, Holly, and Lee do; and Alice does so most comprehensively.

Chapter 2: Am I My Sister's Keeper?

Whereas, in Chapter 1, the adult children are viewed as daughters in relationship to their parents' disorders, in Chapter 2, they will be considered primarily as siblings who bear the marks of earlier dysfunctions of their parents. Chapter 2 examines the effects of the parental disorders upon the grown-up sisters; it observes how they interact with each other and how they respond to change and stress, as part of the sibling group. Dialogue and actions reflect their positions on life and family, while voiceovers reflect their unspoken emotions. The different ways that each daughter feels and behaves with each of her sisters in *Interiors, Hannah and Her Sisters,* and *Alice* will be illustrated. Finally, current citations on birth order, traits of children of dysfunctional parents, and adult sibling relationships will shed some psychological light on the family dynamics of the two trios and one pair of sisters. A sibling grid, as an introduction to each subsection, will remind the reader of the relationships and of the mothers' disorders.

TABLE 2.1

Renata, Joey, and Flyn- *INTERIORS*
The three sisters remember being close as children, but, as adults, are separated by distance and outlooks. Each considers herself independent from her sisters; their only socializing is at family events, which include their parents, and most of their conversation relates to the parents.
MOTHER: EVE- obsessive/compulsive, depressive, suicidal
Renata and Joey
Renata and Flyn
Joey and Flyn

Discussion

Birth order of siblings makes a difference in sibling harmony. According to Alfred Adler in Barbara Engler's book, *Personality Theories*, "Family constellation refers

to one's position within the family in terms of birth order among siblings" (Engler 99). He further hypothesizes that "the positions of oldest, middle, and youngest . . . are apt to be quite dissimilar simply by virtue of the different experiences that each child has as that particular member of the family group." Furthermore, he purports that oldest children tend to be more achievement oriented, conforming, intelligent, and affiliative. The second child often feels a need to catch up with the feats of the first child; although competitive, he or she is not overly concerned with power. Late-born children tend to be more dependent, flexible, and sociable; last-borns who are spoiled and pampered may grow up to be helpless and dependent into adulthood.

Not all children of dysfunctional parents grow up with their parents' disorders; some of them are able to depart from the role models of their parents. David Hamburg et al. (1994) cite from a longitudinal study conducted by University of California professor, Emmy E. Werner, that four traits characterize children who grew up in dysfunctional families, but nevertheless developed healthy personalities [as adults]. These resilient youths possessed "1-an active, vigorous approach to problem-solving; 2-a tendency to perceive their experiences constructively, even if they included pain and suffering; 3-the ability to gain other people's positive attention; and 4-a strong ability to maintain a positive vision of the meaning of life."

Adults who have sisters and/or brothers are generally siblings longer than they are spouses or active parents. "Relationships with siblings are the longest-lasting in most people's lives and become more important as people grow older" (Papalia, et al. 527). Over a life span, sibling relationships generally adopt the form of an hour-glass, with the greatest amount of contact at both ends: childhood at one end and middle/late adulthood

at the other. Papalia, et al. identify geographical and emotional closeness as well as a sense of responsibility for each other's welfare as the most important influences on frequency of contact with siblings. While coping with the [physical and emotional] care of aging parents brings some siblings closer together, it creates resentment among others (Bengtson and Achenbaum., 1993). Moreover, the closer the siblings, the more they agree in assessing their respective contributions to their parents' care (Lerner, et al.). In a recent study involving 95 married daughters of [aging] parents . . . . siblings were shown to be a strong source of support as well as the most significant cause of interpersonal stress" (Suitor and Pillemer 1993, 527)

Renata and Joey

Like the first-born children in Adler's description, Renata is intelligent and a high achiever, but definitely not power-hungry. Her intelligence is appreciated by Eve, who approves of excellence. The favorable criticism elicited by Renata's poetry documents her achievement. Finally, her absence of leadership in her family reflects her clear lack of desire to hold a position of power. Renata is envious of Joey's relationship with their father, Arthur, who has always favored his middle daughter.

"Much of *Interiors* is devoted to revealing the dynamics spawned by parents' unequal treatment of their children . . . .though . . . .[one] might expect the child who was most favored by a particular parent to show greater loyalty to that parent, the reverse is often true" (Schwartz 137). In this film, the reverse is true, in Renata's preference for Arthur despite Eve's favoritism of her and by Joey's preference for Eve, in spite of Arthur's favoring her. Renata separates herself from Eve who approves of her, while Joey

now distances herself from her father, with whom she long enjoyed closeness, in favor of Eve, for whom Joey has become an advocate since Arthur moved out.

Renata and Joey feel and exhibit internal and external sibling rivalry. When Arthur tells Renata, ". . . It seems to me that there's always been some antagonism between you two," Renata replies, "Well, you know Joey. She tends to be competitive with me." Joey longs to be the achiever that Renata is. Joey's desire to excel is fueled by the approval that Eve bestows on Renata for her success, and to which Renata is indifferent.

After Arthur's announcement to his three daughters of his intention to marry Pearl, and in the face of Joey's strong objection, Arthur says to Joey, "Why do you do this to me? You know how much your opinion means to me!" Shortly thereafter, he adds, "Joey, I count on you." Renata begs Joey to give their father her approval, and when Joey says, "He certainly had no trouble getting yours," Renata admits coldly, "It doesn't mean as much as yours."

Renata recalls a childhood so rigidly structured that it was oppressive. Perhaps for that reason, even as the oldest daughter, she does not assume control of her sisters, not wanting to be "the boss." Eve's depression impacts Renata's relationship with her siblings by isolating Renata from them, so she can be alone in her melancholy. When Joey asks, "Rennie, why do you keep pushing me away?" Renata replies, "I don't. . . . I've been having some work problems. I need to be alone. I need isolation." Eve's melancholia keeps Renata more distant from Joey than Joey says she would prefer.

Childlike and ineffectual, consistent with Adler's view of middle children who don't pursue power, Joey doesn't have a solid career path where she can direct, much less

dominate, others. The only way that Joey is competitive, as per Adler, is in her quest for her mother's approval, with Renata as her rival. Joey complains about the burden of Eve, but she does not insist that her sisters share the responsibility for their fragile mother or design a plan whereby each daughter could contribute in some way. Renata is unhappy with the way Joey speaks to Eve, which Joey says is realistic but which Renata feels is harsh and cruel. So Renata does not take charge or take action as Eve did; even Flyn, the youngest, escapes taking charge by taking flight. Renata is unhappy with Joey's treatment of Eve; Joey is intimidated by her mother's achievements but is depressed by Eve's depression, which spreads to her dealings with her sisters when they discuss their mother.

Renata and Flyn

Although Adler suggests that last born children may be spoiled, Flyn does not fit this description in the usual sense. Only by treating herself to luxurious items like expensive leather boots could one say that Flyn spoils herself a bit. She appears genuine and not overly self-centered. Since Flyn was neither spoiled nor pampered, she has not grown up to be helpless and dependent. Despite not achieving the intellectual or financial levels of most of her family, she does appear to be self-supporting and living a productive life.

These two sisters genuinely care for each other. Renata admires and envies Flyn's youth and beauty, while Flyn easily acknowledges Renata's talent. One should note the difference between Renata's negative response to Joey's praise of Renata's poem in *The New Yorker* magazine (earlier quote in Chapter 1, Eve section) and Renata's positive response to Flyn's ". . . You're the gifted one in the family." The two sisters put their arms around each other as they walk on the beach, and Renata says to Flyn, "I wish you lived

here, I mean, I really do." Renata, like the aging Eve, places great value on visual beauty. She and the non-competitive Flyn enjoy each other and exhibit no conflict. The moody Renata seems to open up and sparkle a little bit in the presence of Flyn's sunny personality. Eve's dark influence on Renata does not show up when Renata is with Flyn.

Joey and Flyn

Joey seems to begrudge Flyn only her physical distance from the family unit. Otherwise, she is pleasant with Flyn, and expresses happiness to see her sister who has flown in from California to visit the family. Despite insecurity about not measuring up to her accomplished mother, father, and oldest sister, Flyn appears easy-going and her close relatives are comfortable with her. Joey and Frederick both admit how pretty Flyn is. When Frederick comments, "I can't get over how sexy Flyn got," Joey comfortably answers, "Yeah, she looks beautiful, doesn't she?" Consistent with Adler's description of last-born children as social and self-accepting, Flyn has escaped the dark outlook on life that characterizes her mother and oldest sister. Flyn's physical distance, probably caused by Eve, keeps her from having too deep a relationship with anybody in her family, thereby avoiding familial conflict.

It is useful to notice that the sisters who have been negatively impacted by Eve's disorders behave somewhat differently, depending on which sister each one is with. Renata has no problems with Flyn, nor has Flyn any difficulty with Joey, but Renata and Joey do exhibit deep-seated conflict over success and parental favoritism. Flyn, at an emotional and geographical distance from her core family, is denied familial intimacy as well as familial conflict with them.

Consistent with Lerner who says that siblings who live farther away from the

parents are less involved with the caretaking process than those in closer proximity, Flyn, since she lives so far away, expresses no opinions or complaints about the supervision that Renata and Joey are giving their now single mother.

TABLE 2.2

Hannah, Holly, and Lee- *HANNAH AND HER SISTERS*
A recent photograph of the title characters laughing and leaning against each other supports the interpretation that these sisters are close as adults and have genuine, underlying affection for each other. Each considers herself an active part of the triad; they shop, cook, and meet for lunch, enjoying a strong sibling relationship, separate from their bond as daughters.
MOTHER: NORMA- alcoholic, unfaithful; critical of her husband with whom she stills functions as part of a couple, within the family structure (i.e. singing, playing the piano, attending holiday dinners).
Hannah and Holly
Hannah and Lee
Holly and Lee

Discussion

In conjunction with Adler's description, Hannah, the oldest daughter is an intelligent, high achiever who, although not power-hungry, uses her abilities to impose order on her life and on the lives of her sisters. Similarly, consistent with Adler's description of middle children, Holly is competitive but not concerned with exerting power. Adler points out that last-born children tend to be spoiled, and Lee expresses her desire simply to be taken care of. According to the *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, "As . . . . children grow, sibling rivalry can lead to extremely competitive or aggressive behavior, which may become generalized to other life experiences (e.g., careers). Sibling rivalry is by no means universal or inevitable, but seems to depend, in part, upon how parents balance the sometimes competing needs of offspring."

In 2008, University of Hawaii researchers at Manoa presented a study to the Family Communication Division for the meeting in that year of the National Communication Association in San Diego. The study, which surveyed 205 participants, explored behavioral and cognitive aspects of jealousy, envy, and rivalry among adult siblings. Undergraduate students between the ages of 18-40 were asked to rate the level of relationship satisfaction with their siblings. Results revealed that 56% of those questioned reported jealousy, envy, or rivalry. It reinforced what researchers had found in prior studies, that siblings . . . . compare themselves on the qualities of "attractiveness, intelligence, and success. Furthermore, study results indicated that these three traits are salient by many individuals beyond childhood
. . . ." (Berube). And indeed, these are major issues of rivalry in the relationships of siblings in *Interiors* and *Hannah and Her Sisters*.

Hannah and Holly

Hannah, as the oldest, tries to support and encourage Holly, but in the process, becomes an enabler for Holly's weaknesses. On the other hand, Holly, who exhibits the competitiveness Adler attributes to second born children, both appreciates Hannah's support and resents it, even as she resents Hannah's superior acting talent, her professional success, and her ostensibly successful marriage. Holly's attempts at acting and singing are not successful, she has no other strong career goal, and she has no significant male in her life.

Holly's use, in the book she wrote, of intimate details from Hannah's marriage, the ones Hannah feels no one should know about, represents an expression of Holly's

resentment and competitiveness. It is an unconscious way for Holly to show that Hannah is less than perfect, and that her marriage has flaws. Thereby, Holly exhibits very conflicted feelings about her nurturing sister. One evening when both of them are in the kitchen, Hannah tells Holly, "I am very upset about what you wrote," and "It [Holly's script] is obviously based on Elliot and me." That comment was one of the rare times that Hannah expresses anger. Holly says it is a made up story, a claim which Hannah angrily attacks with the words, "No, it's real exact! The situations, the dialogue, everything! It's full of intimate details between Elliot and me. Which I don't see how you could possibly even know about. A conversation we once had about adoption." Holly had to have learned these secrets from Lee, who heard them from Elliot. Therefore, by writing about Hannah's personal life, Holly flexes her own competitive muscles in the face of a usually unflappable Hannah, putting Hannah down in the guise of fiction, and exercising her own personal prowess. While Holly is not successful, her competitive nature surfaces in writing this book. Revealing her genuine affection for her sister's comfort, though, after writing this controversial manuscript, Holly discards it, instead of publishing it, and goes on to write a new less inflammatory one. Holly finds Hannah's seemingly perfect control of her life irritating.

Unlike Renata in *Interiors*, Hannah, as the oldest child, assumes a leadership role for her sisters, something that their mother, busy flirting and drinking, most likely did not do in their childhood. Their mother's non-nurturing behavior impels Hannah to look after her two siblings. However, in the process of nurturing Holly, Hannah enables her, by repeatedly lending her floundering sister money and not being stern enough in her questions about Holly's cocaine use; conversely, when Hannah attempts to be realistic

abut Holly's chances at success at a singing audition, Holly lashes out by accusing her sister of being critical and discouraging; "Boy, you really know how to cut me down" and "Nobody but you can do that to me."

The second complaint exhibits Holly's low self esteem in that she sees herself as a victim. The relationship between Hannah and Holly is the most bitter because Hannah is the most successful of the three siblings and Holly is the least successful. Consistent with Adler's commentary on second-borns, Holly is always trying to catch up with Hannah. Holly's substance abuse, likely a tendency from her alcoholic mother, distances her from Hannah, who does not use drugs and disapproves of Holly doing so.

Hannah's accomplishments, in response to her mother's lack of nurturing and in contrast to Holly's history of failures with careers and with men, strain their relationship. Hannah tells Holly, "You make it sound like I have no needs or something. You think I am too self sufficient?" Holly replies, "Uh, yeah, everybody relies on you for so much. You're so giving. It's not a criticism. We love you. We're grateful." But that comment is not true. It is a criticism, because Hannah's widespread skills emphasize her younger sisters' weaknesses; and, as seen in the tableaux described above and forthcoming, they are not always grateful.

Hannah and Lee

The strongest connection between Hannah and Lee is Lee's affair with Hannah's husband, Elliot, unbeknownst to Hannah. Lee expresses mixed feelings about betraying her sister. On the one hand, Lee and Hannah are always friendly with each other, but not profoundly involved. Furthermore, the fact that Lee is sleeping with Hannah's husband says something about Lee's attitude toward Hannah. Although not expressed in voice-

over feelings or in dialogue, Lee, like Holly, feels inferior to Hannah's seeming ability to do it all. Granted, Lee resists Elliot's initial overtures, but soon believes or chooses to believe that her sister's marriage is nearly over anyhow, based on Elliot's avowal of his love for her (Lee) and on his promise to divorce Hannah.

As a last born, Lee has a deep desire to be cared for and pampered, both of which Elliot promises and fulfills. He is gentle, romantic, poetic, fueling their shared appreciation of e.e.cummings's poetry. As per Adler, Lee is somewhat helpless, as seen by the persona of her older, mentoring boyfriend, Frederick, who in the early stages of their relationship took care of her on many levels, romantically and intellectually being the most obvious ones. Elliot struggles with his conscience about his love and lust for Lee, but experiences guilt when he comes home to the wholesome Hannah after being with Lee, whom he finds exciting.. In the end, it is Lee who ends the affair because Elliot is not free, and because she, too, is consumed with guilt for betraying her sister. So despite their infidelities, both Lee and Elliot must confront some moral values, which tug at their consciences.

Neither Lee nor Elliot tells Hannah of their affair, but Lee's conversation in the restaurant with Hannah and Holly reveals her affection for Hannah and/or her remorse for betraying her sister. As Holly rants about how the men Hannah sets her up with indicate that Hannah thinks Holly is a loser, Lee comes to Hannah's defense. She says, "Oh, will you stop attacking Hannah? . . . . She's going through a really rough time right now." Hannah's "rough time" is that her husband is sleeping with Lee, and one wonders how Lee would answer if someone asked her to explain. Now sniffing and crying, Lee continues, "You know, you've been picking on her ever since she came in here. Now, just

leave her alone for awhile. I'm just suffocating." Shortly thereafter, Lee admits to a sudden headache and dizziness.

If this luncheon is the first time in awhile that Lee has had to face Hannah, one can perhaps understand the physical manifestations of Lee's stress. Not being able to compete with Hannah's professional or personal excellence, Lee must have felt "successful" for awhile by being able to "borrow" Hannah's husband. The panning of the camera from one sister to the next shows Hannah, thinking she is in control, as always, Holly revealing her "poor-me, I'm-a-loser" persona, and Lee feeling a mixture of affection toward Hannah well as tremendous guilt. Lee, as the youngest child, displays what Adler professes are typical traits of children born in that birth slot---helplessness, dependency, and being a bit spoiled. Her weaknesses permit her to indulge herself at Hannah's expense.

Hannah nurtures her sisters, in a general way, in response to her mother's addiction and flirtatious actions, but she is usually reluctant to verbalize strongly critical opinions. Hannah's good deeds, with what most would view as resulting from pure intent, incite the envy and dissatisfaction of her less skillful sisters. Despite apparent affection, much of which is genuine, both younger sisters resent Hannah's goodness and lack of visible needs. So the nurturing that Hannah does in response to her mother's failure in this area separates her from her siblings. Holly expresses her displeasure with the manuscript she writes about Hannah and Elliot's life, and Lee has an affair with Hannah's husband Elliot. It is useful for one to realize that sometimes even good acts, proper behavior, and excellent performance do not elicit totally positive results, gratitude or appreciation.

Holly and Lee

Holly and Lee, while friendly to each other, do not have a strong, identifiable relationship, independent of Hannah. Their conversation centers on small issues of the moment and they spend no meaningful time alone together. Holly feels less insecure with Lee than she does with Hannah because Lee is less accomplished than Hannah. During most of the film, Lee has a steady boyfriend, Frederick; Holly does not. Hannah is the cohesive element which binds the sisters and everyone in the family together. Genuine familial affection is their bond. In both *Interiors* and *Hannnah and Her Sisters,* the oldest daughter has the significant relationship with each of the "underlings," who do not have ongoing interaction with each other. Furthermore, one might find it useful to ask why the oldest daughter (high achieving, success-oriented, intelligent, even if not power-seeking) is the one who bonds with each of the younger ones, rather than the younger siblings finding comfort in each other, based their shared youth and more modest skills.

In summary, sibling dynamics operate on different levels and in response to varied stimuli. One notices that any sibling group generally contains one strong member who assumes control of the others and provides direction; critical commentary asserts that this is usually the eldest. In *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Hannah, the oldest, is that person. The "take-charge" person is the one who is best qualified, seeks power, or needs to prove something. Perhaps Hannah's need to nurture her sisters (Holly more so than Lee) is a response to her mother's lack of nurturing. In viewing a sibling group, one would find it valuable to identify the directing sibling. One might also ask what motivation is driving that sibling to be at the helm.

TABLE 2.3

Alice and Dorothy- ALICE **The two adult sisters lived very different lives for many years, but Alice attempts to bridge the gap with Dorothy when she acquires self-knowledge. Their new relationship is based on values and lifestyles, rather than on emotions, materialism, or family nostalgia.** **ALICE'S MOTHER: failed actress; emotionally and financially insecure; discontent wife, alcoholic widow** **Alice and Dorothy**

Discussion

According to Eve Goldfarb, a counseling psychologist based in Somerville, Massachusetts, whose clientele is composed primarily of actors, actresses, and band musicians, "Many performers in those careers do not earn enough money to support themselves from their creative jobs and must supplement their incomes with funds from non-creative jobs;" examples would include a singer who also works in a retail store or a rock musician who moonlights as a waiter. Additionally, many creative people hold a variety of short term positions, which typically offer few benefits.

Furthermore, Goldfarb says, "Actors and actresses suffer from a higher than usual incidence of insecurity, stemming from constant exposure to younger, more attractive competition." She also mentions that sometimes a performer's insecurity even comes from unfavorable comparison with a spouse or partner. Goldfarb attributes insecurity to an over-focus on youth and appearance in this country, which translates to performers feeling "older and fatter" than others or than they were in their own youth.

She goes on to add, "In 25 years of practice, I have rarely seen a person in a performance career, who, at one time or another in his or her professional life, has not struggled with alcohol, drugs, or addictive behaviors."

Alice and Dorothy

As the daughter of a woman who was an unsuccessful actress, an insecure, discontent wife, and eventually an alcoholic, Alice receives her mother's clear message that she should marry for security and not end up like her mother, with nothing. The "nothing" her mother had was not only a deceased husband and paltry funds, but the absence of fortitude. When Alice realizes her dead mother's advice is no longer working, she seeks out her sister Dorothy and tries to reconnect. Therefore, her mother's faulty advice indirectly influences Alice to re-establish some intimacy with Dorothy; it is also, however, the reason that Alice and Dorothy originally drifted apart.

The film offers no dialogue or information which definitively indicates the birth order. However, Dorothy, as an attorney, fits Adler's designation of first borns being intelligent, high-achieving, and committed to their values. Although not power-hungry, Dorothy certainly wants to influence her clients and her sister, Alice, in constructive ways. Moreover, Adler points out that last-born children want to be taken care of and well-provided for, an expectation which Alice clearly has of her husband, Doug. For many years, Alice has been spoiled and totally dependent on her husband's income; with maturity and the help of Dr. Yang, she comes to reassess her values. During her first visit to Dr. Yang, she tells him, "I've become one of those women who just shop all day and get pedicures." Thus, Alice is already critical of her own lifestyle.

Alice is the more central of the two sisters in exhibiting effects of parental disorders. As the film opens, she is repressed, extravagant, and unhappy, suffering back pain as a manifestation of mental and emotional distress. Consistent with Adler's description of last born siblings being flexible in addition to being dependent, Alice is

open to change and willing to adjust her viewpoints. Like typical first born siblings, Dorothy appears to be more achievement-oriented and possibly more intelligent.

Throughout the film, Alice's insecurities, inherited from her mother, dissolve. Her dream visit and actual encounters with her sister initially elicit surprise, which evolve into acceptance of Dorothy's corrections of how things really were with the parents whom Alice idolized. She also eventually accepts Dorothy's criticism of her lifestyle and values. Alice initially followed her mother's advice and married for money; she then swings the other way, not to poverty but to a moderate life style, low on material possessions, but rich in personal meaning. Unlike her mother who had no replacement goals when her acting career ended and, later, when her husband died, Alice's professional hopes evolve from a youthful interest in theatre costuming to her later intentions of becoming a writer, and finally to doing work which helps others.

Alice relinquished her career when she married, like her mother did; Dorothy, conversely, pursues a career along with her marriage. Contrasting lifestyles and spending habits separate the two siblings. Alice admires her sister, referring to her in Dr. Yang's office, as "a fine attorney." Asking for sisterly advice, Alice verbalizes a desire to be close to Dorothy. Alice, however, intuits that Dorothy does not really accept her and asks, "Is there any way you can respect me?" In doing so, Alice admits her own flawed values, even as she acknowledges some competition between them.

Unlike their weak mother, Dorothy has achieved much and has centered her life around her core values of honesty and her integrity. In contrast, Alice, probably the last born, has failed to honor her own deepest values, subordinating her wishes to those of her husband. As the film opens, Alice is giving up her preference to attend an antique show

in deference to the tennis match that her husband, Doug, wants to see. "Value" is sociologically defined by the *American Heritage Science Dictionary* as a "a principle, a standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable; an item held in high esteem or worth; an important meaning; a force; significance." An additional definition relates to the "ideals, customs, institutions . . . . of a society," values which may be positive or negative.

Alice eventually becomes unhappy with a lifestyle she comes to view as empty. Alice ultimately sees her mother being discontented in her marriage and endures her own declining marital relationship for 16 years. She remains faithful to a wealthy husband who trivializes her, but eventually breaks her marriage vows, with Joe. Her cheating on Doug distances her from Dorothy who does not approve. "You used me as an excuse to get out of the house tonight," Dorothy notes. From her disapproval of Alice's infidelity, one would assume that Dorothy has been faithful in her marriage.

Dorothy pursues a profession, in contrast to her mother's sacrifice of her theatrical career. One assumes that, as a lawyer, she commands a reasonable income in contrast to her father whose income, according to his wife, was not dependable. As such, Dorothy was not subjected to the financial insecurity which plagued her mother. She criticizes Alice for buying an overabundance of toys for her children and 100 shoes, in the face of world wide hunger and starving multitudes.

One may find it helpful to view these young women's dysfunctional mother and her shallow advice as a learning experience. Her influence became positive in her daughters' departure from her words and her actions, as illustrated in some of the earlier commentary. Furthermore, Alice's return to her sister results in Alice's adopting

wholesome values. Thus, in this case, a mother's negative and dysfunctional behaviors engender a positive outcome.

In summary, siblings' professional and personal success, or lack of, are often attributed to their birth order. What is going on in the family impacts different-aged children in different ways, as Flyn's youth at the time of her mother's tenure in a mental hospital influenced her less than it did her two older sisters, Joey and Renata, in *Interiors.* Other times, the quality of a sibling's performance is a result of dysfunctional parental behavior and/or advice, which causes both adherence to and departure from the parental role models. In still other circumstances, a sibling's self image colors the tone of the sibling relationship; as was pointed out earlier, a person may act one way with one sibling and entirely differently with another one. A certain amount of sibling rivalry remains, even in adulthood. Based on critical research cited earlier, success, intelligence, and appearance are the universal items of evaluation of which siblings are the most conscious and about which they are the most competitive.

Chapter 3: Lovers and Spouses: Healthy and Unhealthy Choices

Chapter 3 examines the romantic liaisons that each daughter forms and discusses them in connection to her emotional issues and dysfunctional parental heredity; it also includes her motivations for selecting each man and shows how these selections feed her emotional needs and goals. The grid below shows the reader the maternal disorders, the daughters, and each daughter's partner(s). Relevant segments of the grid will appear again at the start of each subsection.

TABLE 3.1

***INTERIORS*- mother Eve: OCD, depressed, suicidal**
Renata and husband Frederick
Joey and live-in boyfriend Mike
Flyn and ____
***HANNAH AND HER SISTERS*- mother Norma: unfaithful, alcoholic**
Hannah and 1st husband Mickey, 2nd husband Elliot
Holly and boyfriend David, husband Mickey
Lee and live-in longtime boyfriend Frederick, lover Elliot, new husband Doug
***ALICE*- mother Mrs. Janssen: financially insecure, alcoholic**
Alice and teenage boyfriend Eddie, husband Doug, lover Joe
Dorothy and husband

Discussion

Sociologists and family therapists concur that certain elements are found in healthy marital/romantic relationships. In his review of the book, *Getting it Right the First Time: Creating a Healthy Marriage,* by B. McCarthy and E. J. McCarthy, Jonathan Davis acknowledges the explosion of myths about "key processes . . . . in almost all marriages (e.g., career, sexuality, childbearing, conflict management, money, transition to parenting)." Furthermore, he relates those issues to the "essential qualities of respect,

trust, and intimacy" as critical to marital styles. Consistent with the above processes, the characters in the romantic relationships in the three films, *Interiors, Hannah and Her Sisters,* and *Alice,* must confront the above six concerns (Davis 271).

"Four positive aspects of marital relationships--forgiveness, commitment, sacrifice, and sanctification--function as self-repair or self-regulatory processes in healthy relationships," thereby producing transformative benefits (Amato 305-309). Additionally, this article notes that "couples who engage in behaviors that place the stability of the marriage above their own personal needs are more likely to have happy and successful marriages."

"Just as marriage occurs in [almost] every culture, so does infidelity," asserts Kristen H. Greene, in her doctoral dissertation. [One exception is the matriarchal society of Mosua] Her research results determined that parental infidelity does not necessarily [negatively] influence the level of commitment found in the romantic unions of children, college age and older. Infidelity was examined on three levels: adult children not aware of their parents' infidelity; adult children who suspect parent infidelity; and adult children who are confident of their parents' infidelity (Greene). Parental unfaithfulness, does, however, when known, create a deep disruption of family life; the younger the children are, the greater the disruption.

Renata and Frederick

It is useful for one to realize that children copy the actions of dysfunctional parents, not consciously, and more in adulthood than in younger years. In *Interiors*, Renata already exhibits controlling and emasculating actions with her husband. Creative

but compulsive about her environment and those in it, Renata is married to Frederick, who is insecure about himself and his work; in addition, he is jealous of Renata's writing success. His wife sincerely compliments his writing, but he has so little self-confidence that he does not believe her. Frederick tells Flyn, as he is trying to rape her, "It's been so long since I made love to a woman to whom I didn't feel inferior." Frederick equates making love with a rape, an act of violence. Also, Frederick's remark is a criticism of Renata's treatment of him and of his marriage, as well as a revelation of his own low self-image. Frederick's words "so long since" suggest that he is has been faithful to Renata and that she is the only woman to whom he has made love during the tenure of their marriage, although the possibility exists that he has had extramarital lovers to whom he also felt inferior. So, Renata did not make a wise choice with Frederick who is a drunk, a would-be rapist, and an insecure individual. He and Renata share a passion for their craft (writing), but vary greatly in self-esteem levels. Renata admits about Frederick, "He is teaching at Barnard, but would rather be writing." Renata sees herself as skillful and talented, whereas her husband does not have a positive view of himself, nor is he an admirable person.

Frederick's comment about Flyn raises the questions of why he feels inferior to Renata, but more important, why she has chosen a man who does not consider himself her equal. One might ask if she intentionally or subconsciously selected a man whom she could control, as her mother had done with her father. Renata views
her mother as a person with compulsively high standards for herself, for art, for her husband, and for her daughters. On the other hand, Renata shares with Frederick a love of writing and respects the quality of his work. In a conversation about the critics'

response to their writings, Frederick says, "It's because you are so damn good." Renata tries to reassure him with "But so are you. All right, I mean, the [your] book did not get the response that it deserved. I hate to tell you how many times they've missed the boat." She adds, "You have so much to offer." Frederick thinks she is lying to him, an opinion which reveals not only his low opinion of himself but lack of trust in Renata.

Renata does not approve of his excessive drinking and tells him so. She lashes out to him, in frustration, "Don't come [to the party]. Stay home and drink yourself unconscious. That's one of the clichés of being a novelist you've had no problems with!" Frederick takes her criticism of any single aspect of his behavior and applies it to himself in total, resulting with a poor overall self- image. The more she criticizes his drinking, the more he drinks.

Renata is gradually reconstructing her parents' relationship in her own marriage. Like her mother, Renata is married to a man who needs a lot of encouragement and improvement, thereby giving her the opportunity to direct him and manifest her own need to control. Renata knows that Eve was pleased to be married to an attorney. Early in the film, Arthur admits that he had dropped out of law school and until Eve urged him to go back and finish. Thus, even though Renata considers herself distanced and different from Eve, she clearly copies some of the behaviors Eve exhibits with Arthur. Frederick is a man who needs Renata's control, but is not a healthy choice as Renata's husband because he will not likely reach the standards she expects of him, and not because of inadequate writing talent, but rather because of his low self-esteem.

Costuming is revealing in a film, in that each character's garb speaks to the image that she wishes to present to the world, often bearing influence of a parent and of that

character's relationship with the parent. Renata's dresses are solid colors, unimaginative, devoid of much style, and somewhat dark, like her own mood and that of Eve; also, like Eve's outfits, they are not provocative. So, in her choices of attire, Renata reflects Eve and presents a reserved image to her husband, which may have been another intent of Eve in her classic but not very feminine couture.

Renata's plain clothing may reflect her desire to be viewed as a serious writer rather than as a person who wears trendy or fashionable clothes, which she may consider a shallow value. Only when Renata and Frederick are in a boutique to select a birthday blouse for Eve does Renata show any interest in clothes, and then, not her own. Eve, while preferring classic looks, seems less oblivious to clothing than Renata. Eve describes an ice gray outfit she owns as one which makes her look like "the ice queen." Furthermore, after Eve finishes taping all of the windows in her apartment and turns on the gas stove, she retires to the sofa wearing what the script calls "an elegant robe."

Joey and Mike

Joey, living with Mike, pursues control and fears commitment. Despite Joey's appearance of being unfocused in many strata of her life and her lack of personal definition, she has chosen a man whom she can control, in the tradition of her mother and older sister, Renata. Commitment, which she views as synonymous with irrevocability, scares Joey deeply, whether it is allegiance to a job, a baby, or even her serious boyfriend, Mike. He once suggests that they get married, and when Joey tells him that she is pregnant, indicates that he doesn't think it would be so bad to keep the baby. "You know, we could have a kid. It wouldn't be the end of the world," he says. Even though he

states his desire "to settle down," he acquiesces to her desire to remain unmarried and childfree.

In addition to noticing Joey's fear of being controlled by motherhood, one might ask exactly how controlled by Eve Joey had felt as a child. Either she does not want to be controlled by having to be a parent or she does not think she can take charge, as her strong mother did. Mike's job is the editing of political documentaries, a social action position he finds meaningful, but he is tolerant of Joey's spotty work history. Thus, Joey chose a boyfriend who does not force her to commit and ultimately submits to her needs; her father, Arthur, did the same by returning to law school in response to Eve's urging. One might ask if Eve encouraged Arthur to do so totally for his benefit or so that she could be married to a lawyer, which she likely considered a mark of status. Joey is involved with a working boyfriend, rather than an unemployed one; thus, for all her dissimilarities to Eve, Joey has a caring, sober, mentally healthy, and income-producing male in her life.

It appears that director Allen is playing with the viewer somewhat regarding the issue of Joey's pregnancy. In a few scenes following Joey's announcement that she is pregnant and is "damned annoyed" about it, she wears a loose jumper, which may indicate that she has decided keep the baby. Joey and Mike's discussion about their possible actions in response to her being pregnant is inconclusive, ranging from his words "of course, we can take care of it" to "it wouldn't be so bad." Since there is no further reference to the pregnancy in the film, however, one might reasonably assume that Joey prevails.

Despite Joey's devotion to Eve, she is her father's favorite and identifies with him more closely. Her clothing is classic, made of tweed and corduroy, and unisex rather than feminine, frilly, or sexy. This may be a subtle way for her to show her identity with Arthur, even though she does not want to be controlled by a spouse as her father was by his, and even though she initially expresses strong disapproval of his marriage to Pearl.

Joey exhibits no indications of OCD or depression, nor does it appear that these disorders will necessarily develop, possibly because it seems, by the end of the film, that the optimistic Pearl will become the mother that Joey had been seeking in Eve. In assuming control of Eve's physical and emotional health, Joey resists Eve's control. Still feeling un-mothered (i.e., un-nurtured), Joey's vehement objection to motherhood may reflect her opinion that she is not finished being a child yet herself, a process which must occur before she can progress to full adulthood.

Joey's relationship with Mike is in a mild state of flux; based on her mother's disorder, her parents' dissolving marriage, and her own lack of focus, one can appreciate her fear of commitment. Perhaps with Pearl as her new maternal role model, Joey will evolve into a stronger, less worried person, one able to be a more complete partner to Mike. Therefore, Mike is a healthy choice as Joey's romantic partner because he role models positive behaviors, while being tolerant of her fears and insecurities.

Flyn and ___

Flyn's lack of a visible, significant male in her life makes one of two statements: Either she did not like what she saw in her parents' marriage and does not wish to be married or involved, or more likely, she has boyfriends, but does not want to share them with her family for fear that they will not measure up to her sisters' men, Mike and

Frederick, intellectually or financially. Furthermore, she may not want to subject them to the critical scrutiny of her mother. One may recall Eve's negative references to Mike: "I had hoped for something better for Joey"(vague) and "His cologne is way too strong" (insignificant). Thus, Flyn opts out of being put in such an unenviable position. Eve prefers Renata's Frederick, the alcoholic, who has no confidence and is jealous of his wife's success to Mike, who is supportive of Joey's flaws.

Frederick feels inferior to Renata, but not to Flyn. His comment to Flyn as he is trying to rape her," It's been so long since I made love to a woman to whom I didn't feel inferior," degrades Flyn. However, her resistance to Frederick implies her morality in refusing the advances of her sister's husband, which is more than Lee in *Hannah and Her Sisters* does. Another time, Frederick admits to Renata that he had harshly reviewed the writing of a colleague, far more viciously than he needed to, and, furthermore, took pleasure in his literary assault. Therefore, Flyn, if not intellectually superior to Frederick, certainly has higher ethical values. Frederick once said to Renata regarding Flyn, in anticipation of a family visit where Flyn would be present, "We'll have to hear about her weight and hair and the last piece of TV junk she did . . . . ," suggesting that he finds her shallow.

Flyn's attire is consistent with her location of residence, her profession, and her single status. Living out west, being an actress (a profession whose members are known for having a strong concern with appearance, clothes, etc.), and being single justify her casual and feminine garb (tight jeans, leather boots, form-fitting tank top). Flyn, an actress, is concerned with her appearance and mentions her boots, for which she paid two hundred dollars and which "kill my feet." Flyn does not copy her mother's covered up,

classic look in clothing, nor her severe hair style; Flyn's hair is long, loose, and casual, (translating to open and approachable).

Granted the difference in their ages, Flyn's ease with being single contrasts sharply with Eve's depression and suicide in response to the idea of being unmarried. Flyn appears comfortable with Mike and, except for the scene in which Frederick is drunk and tries to rape her, with him, too. She is accepting of her father's desire for happiness and his intent, albeit rather quickly, to marry Pearl. Flynn exhibits no discomfort with not having a date for family events while she is in town. Because there is no male with Flyn in this film, it is not possible to evaluate her romantic choices, in response to her mother's OCD, depression, and suicide. Her mother's dark mood toward life, herself, and her family does not seem to have filtered down to Flyn.

TABLE 3.2

***HANNAH AND HER SISTERS*- mother Norma: unfaithful, alcoholic** **Hannah and 1st husband Mickey, 2nd husband Elliot** **Holly and boyfriend David, husband Mickey** **Lee and live-in boyfriend Frederick, lover Elliot, husband Doug**

Hannah and Mickey and Elliot

Hannah's two marriages, in *Hannah and Her Sisters,* evolve in opposite ways. Faced with Mickey's infertility and Hannah's eventually giving birth to twin boys from the sperm of Mickey's best friend and partner, this marriage, shown in a flashback, does not survive. Hannah is typically nurturing and supporting of Mickey when they hear the doctor's opinion that Mickey is infertile, but Dr. Smith's revelation comes true. He says, "My experience is that many fine marriages become unstable and are destroyed when faced with this sort of a problem." In Mickey's voice-over, early in the film, he reflects,

"So you had my ex-partner's baby. Twins. Maybe that did cause some trouble, but I think we were drifting apart anyhow." This marriage dissolves, while it appears that Hannah's marriage to Elliot will survive, despite his affair with Lee, in part, because Elliot comes to realize his commitment to Hannah.

Hannah has chosen two husbands who were drawn to her competence and warmth. Both of them needed her orderliness, structure, and caring manner.. Mickey and Elliot do not appear to be particularly similar, but both of them are searching. When confronted with his own mortality, Mickey seeks immortality and the meaning of life by shopping for the perfect religion, browsing in Catholicism and Hare Krishna. [Woody Allen, revealing his own discomfort with the concept of death, in an on-line review of an interview with Stig Bjorkman, said he did not accept the idea of living on in his art; "I'm not interested in living on in the hearts of my countrymen; I'd rather live on in my apartment." Another time, Allen was quoted on the topic of death, by saying that the way he wanted to achieve immortality was by not dying.] Mickey comes to the conclusion that, according to Tolstoy and as shown on one of the chapter placards, "The only absolute knowledge attainable by man is that life is meaningless." His outlook on life, during the time he was married to Hannah and sometime thereafter, is gloomy; only when he meets Holly, does he become more optimistic. His gloominess, along with his sterility, may have contributed to Hannah's decision to end the marriage, since she is so much more life-affirming.

In the meantime, Elliot finds an opportunity to nurture the needy Lee, which he does not have with Hannah because she is so competent and has imposed order on Elliot, whose "life was in chaos," when she met him. After cheating on Hannah with her sister,

Lee, however, Elliot is overcome with guilt. His confession that despite his lust for Lee, "I would rather hurt Lee than devastate Hannah," indicates some moral fiber and an allegiance to his marriage. Hannah, unlike her parents, values fidelity and sobriety. Although she does not cheat on either husband, one of them, Elliot, is unfaithful to her. However, Elliot will probably turn his need to nurture toward Hannah, now that she admits, "I have tremendous needs," and become a healthy choice of a husband for her.

One might ask where the influence of Norma's disorders of alcoholism and infidelity is found in Hannah's choice of romantic partners. Hannah married Elliot, who, unbeknownst to her, was unfaithful, as both of Hannah's parents had been. The dialogue sparks one's interest to learn what Hannah's reaction to Elliot would have been, had he admitted his infidelity. She says, "I would be devastated" in answer to Eliot's supposedly hypothetical question, "Do you think I am seeing someone else?" Based on her sincerity, morality, and trusting nature, her prediction sounds logical. Norma claims openly that Evan had been unfaithful, and he neither denies her accusation nor exhibits remorse. Elliot, conversely, is overcome with guilt about cheating on Hannah with Lee, but not guilty enough to stop; Lee is the one who ends the affair. In this case, Hannah, the daughter of unfaithful parents, values marital fidelity.

Holly and David and Mickey

Holly is a flighty, unrealistic, unfocused person with low self-esteem who is searching for a suitable man and a workable, creative career path. Telling Hannah about an upcoming singing audition, Holly quickly admits, "But I'll probably never get it." Holly dates David, who is unavailable on two counts. First of all, he is married, and his allegation that he plans to divorce his wife next year is weak. Second, David dates her

friend April, too; after only one date with David, Holly is excited by him as a prospective boyfriend, and feels disappointed by his lack of exclusive interest in her.

Norma's bitter complaints about Evan's unfaithfulness may have begun as disappointment and evolved into the anger she demonstrates in the film. Holly and David appear to share an interest in opera and architecture, which Holly views as a foundation for a viable relationship, since she comes from a creative and intelligent family. However, Holly's genuine interest in either field is unconvincing; more likely, her interest in David sparks her interest in opera and architecture, rather than the other way around. Her response shows how desperate she is to find a partner and how unrealistic her expectations are about her true compatibility with David. Later, one notices that, on her first date with Mickey, her taste in music is far removed from opera, leaning toward hard rock.

During Holly and Mickey's first date, they are in conflict about musical styles, the audience members in both of the clubs they visit, Holly's cocaine use, and every conversational topic they attempt. Their verbal lashing out at each other is as vicious as the verbal taunts of Holly's mother and father. Neither one of them appreciates the other one's position or interests.

Their second date, several years later, is more successful, largely because of the timing; both of them are in different places in their lives. Mickey has left his stressful position as a television producer while Holly, previously unfocused, now has a fledging writing career underway. She has gotten her act together in that she is devoted to her creativity, has given up drugs, and is, thus, much more receptive to Mickey's positive attributes. After hearing Holly refer to the new manuscript she has written, Mickey is

willing to come to Holly's apartment the very next day to read it; when he convinces her that he genuinely likes it, she is thrilled. Mickey is a likely candidate as a healthy romantic choice for Holly because their attraction to and interest in each other are genuine; they are compatible.

Both men with whom Holly becomes involved are creative: David, the architect, and Mickey, the former producer. Holly herself, even while searching for a stable career, dabbles in catering, singing, and writing. Along with her creativity, however, goes the emotional insecurity that sometimes affects artists of all types, consistent with the commentary from psychologist Eve Goldfarb.

Lee and Frederick and Elliot and Doug

Frederick and Elliot are intelligent and both demonstrate attentive and caring behaviors, which Lee needs. Frederick is an artist, while Elliot is a poetry-lover and a (self-described) "dignified, financial advisor." Doug, her future husband, is a college professor. All of these men are bright and creative, which is consistent with the kind of partners to whom Lee would be drawn, coming from the family she does.

Lee lives with Frederick, who is an artist and somewhat older than she is; he had been her mentor and provided her needed tutelage. Frederick admits, "I'm trying to complete an education I started with you five years ago," but she has outgrown him. The following two changes have occurred: he has become more introverted, and Lee has grown into a sophisticated, outgoing woman, with new requirements. She says, "I'm not your pupil. I was, but I'm not any longer." It seems apparent that during the course of their tenure, Frederick has become more isolated, less social, and increasingly testy. He does not attend family gatherings at Hannah's house and offends Dusty Frye, a wealthy,

young celebrity whom Elliot has brought to buy some of Frederick's paintings, (a move by Elliot, likely designed to gain points with Lee). When Frederick begins another tirade, criticizing the modern world, Lee responds impatiently, "Oh, Frederick, could you please lighten up? I'm not in the mood to hear a review of contemporary society again."

Moreover, whereas Frederick initially cared for her (a quality on which she thrived), increasingly, he requires her to care for him, a role she does not wish to assume. Her bond with Frederick, once based on art and intellectual matters, has faded. As a result, Lee is bored, and her brother-in-law's attention is now very appealing to her. She tells Frederick, "We're going to have to make some changes. . . I'm suffocating. . . I have to move out." [Lee uses the phrase, "I'm suffocating" twice to represent great frustration. The first time was at the restaurant (in Chapter 2) when Holly was verbally attacking Hannah, and the second time is when she tells Frederick she cannot not endure living with him any more.]

Voice-overs by Elliot, as the film opens, reveal his strong sexual attraction to Lee, whom he originally met at family gatherings. "God, she's beautiful. She's got the prettiest eyes, and she looks so sexy in that sweater." He goes on to vent his intense emotions: "I just want to be alone with her, and hold her and kiss her and tell her how much I love her and want to take care of her." His desire to care for her complements her deep need to be cared for. Lee's behaviors and needs are consistent with Adler's birth order commentary from Chapter 2, about late-born and last-born children who become social but dependent and helpless grown-ups.

Elliot is caring, loving, and romantic, assuring Lee that his marriage to Hannah is failing. Lee believes him when he says he plans to divorce Hannah, but when he does not,

she ends the affair. So even though she cheats on the committed Frederick by having an affair with Elliot, her guilt motivates her to end the relationship with Elliot. Her distress seems caused more by the fact that Elliot is Hannah's husband than by her own unfaithfulness to Frederick.

After leaving Frederick and breaking up with Elliot, Lee returns to college where she becomes involved with her literature professor, Doug, and eventually marries him. The daughter of actor parents, Lee appreciates Frederick's art, Elliot's love of poetry, and Doug's literary profession. Lee is probably the most intellectual one in her sibling group. On the other hand, however, Lee abused alcohol as her mother and father had, and copies their unfaithful behavior by cheating on Frederick with Elliot. Thus, her lack of adherence to a romantic commitment and attempt to find comfort in alcohol are behaviors which imitate those of her parents. Unlike Norma and Evan, though, Lee is in recovery from alcohol addiction and seeking a healthier relationship with Doug than she had with Frederick and Elliot. Despite the fact that no information about Doug is revealed, other than his profession, one realizes that the nihilistic artist Frederick and the cheating, married Elliot are not viable candidates for a healthy partnership. After overcoming her addiction, Lee's effort to have a satisfying relationship with Doug, shows a constructive bent in her, which her parents lacked.

TABLE 3.3

***ALICE*- mother: -Mrs. Janssen: unsuccessful, financially insecure, alcoholic** **Alice and boyfriend Eddie, husband Doug, lover Joe** **Dorothy and her husband**

Alice and Eddie

When Eddie was the teenaged Alice's boyfriend, she was religious and subject to

feelings of guilt. She says, "I used to pray with my arms out because it hurt more." Furthermore, she felt guilty about the reckless way in which Eddie made love. Since children are subject to the activities and values which their parents provide, it is likely that her youthful intention to become a nun stemmed from the presence of religion in her parents' home. So despite an upbringing of Catholic structure, Alice was having sex with Eddie. Thereby, she did not, even a teenager, obey all the rules. In her dreamlike vision of Eddie, he urges her to find out how she really feels about Joe and asks what may be a key question in this and perhaps all three films: "If you had the chance to do your life over would you do it differently?" By the time *Alice* ends, the main character would probably answer yes to that question. One might reasonably predict that Alice would have married Eddie, gone to college, and enjoyed a creative and meaningful career.

However, unlike her mother, who remained locked in an unsatisfying marriage, with values which she did not support, Alice breaks out of the imprisonment of her own empty marriage and adopts a lifestyle in which she believes and which gratifies her. Now conscious of what she really wants, she has the fortitude to pursue her goals. She is motivated to make changes by this series of events: envisioned visits with her deceased mother and dead boyfriend Eddie, real visits with Dr. Yang and with her sister Dorothy, and the herbs which permit her access to illuminating self-knowledge. This last feat is brought about by Allen's use of magic (the herbs, causing invisibility and decreased sexual inhibitions), a construction which, in an otherwise totally realistic film, is somehow acceptable.

Alice and Doug

Unlike Eve in *Interiors* who is devastated by her divorce, Alice embraces the freedom her divorce from Doug affords her. She grows and emerges as her own person as the result of the divorce. The difference in the responses of Eve and Alice to their divorces may reflect the changes in society's view of divorce from 1978 to 1996, as well as the different personalities of these two women. Even though she chose a wild, reckless boyfriend in Eddie, Alice followed her mother's advice to marry for money and security, which she did, with Doug. Her mother felt the anguish of monetary deprivation in her own marriage, but offered no advice about the kind of character Alice's husband should possess; she required only that he be rich. The Janssens' marriage evidenced no infidelity, but Doug's romantic escapades are well-known to Alice's girlfriends, who voice amazement that Doug could be sexually satisfied with someone as bland and mousy as Alice; they even dub her "Miss Mouse."

When Doug and Alice first met, he told her, "You are very beautiful," to which she replied, "And you are very rich." He denied having any money, saying it was all his family's wealth, but promising, "I want to make it on my own." Alice could surely figure out that his father's money would eventually become Doug's and hers. Whether money came from Doug's family or his own earnings is not revealed, but their lifestyle is easily upscale enough to satisfy Alice's mother.

In addition to engaging in extra-marital affairs, Doug demeans Alice by trivializing her career inspirations. When she shares with him that she would like to do some kind of work, he tells her that a friend of his is opening a sweater boutique for his wife to manage and suggests that Alice help out there, part-time. When she says that was

not what she had in mind, he does not ask her what she would like to do instead. At that point, she probably did not know, but at the end of the film, when she does work, it is social work, i.e. is helping others. She states, "I was always happiest when I was helping out, in some way." Being of service was a value of hers from childhood, and one with which she had lost touch during her marriage to Doug.

Alice copies her mother's decision to give up a career and professional aspirations for marriage. Regarding having sacrificed a career to get married, Alice describes to Dr. Yang her current "job" as Mrs. Douglas Tate. "I'm the wife, you know, I take care of the kids. . . .I host the dinner parties. . . .arrange the social schedule . . . . I try to look pretty . . . .but now I want to be more. There's more to me." Therefore, during her marriage to Doug, she evolves into a person who identifies her values and demands more for herself. Moreover, she takes steps to achieve the personal satisfaction to which she feels entitled.

Alice and Joe

Alice chooses three men who lived on the wild side--Eddie did so blatantly, Doug does so surreptitiously, and Joe cheats on Alice with his former wife as a prelude to eventually returning to his marriage, information Alice learns by observing them when she is invisible. Her lover, Joe, a saxophone player (creative, like her parents were) helps Alice find and accept her own sexuality; she admits to Joe that she and Doug rarely make love anymore. Alice's selection of these men reflects the weakness and dysfunction of her parents on three planes: poverty, addiction, and discarded career goals.

When Alice takes the herbs from Dr.Yang that diminish inhibitions, she develops the nerve to flirt aggressively with Joe. She grills him on what number saxophone reed he uses; when he seems surprised at her question, she continues in a sexy manner, "Between

the lips, Joe. Between the lips." Later, reflecting on their dialogue, the effects of the herbs having worn off, Alice tells her friend, Nina, that she (Alice) had been pushy with Joe. "I was so forward, too. I can't believe it. So obnoxious." Alice's comment of remorse shows her surprise at her own ability to be provocative and sexually assertive. The herbs empower her to express her romantic desires.

Money and career are two aspects of her parental legacy that are relevant for Alice. According to her mother, Alice's father was a poor provider; and her mother became an alcoholic with no career goals after her husband's death. Alice's childhood in a home with insufficient funds and her mother's repeated advisory to marry well led Alice to marry Doug, whose family had a lot of money. Alcoholism never became an issue for Alice. She may have viewed her mother's failure to attempt to recapture her acting career as lost potential, and Alice benefits from this lesson in her own return to college, with career goals clearly in mind.

Eddie's youth, wild ways, and uncertain ability to earn a dependable income made him a poor choice of a long-term partner for Alice. Doug's financial stability kept Alice with him for 16 years, but she eventually realizes that she needs more meaning in her life. Joe, whom Alice found fun and sexy, is a poor choice because he is not honest with Alice about his flings with Veronica, his ex-wife, who ultimately wants him back. Just at the time when Alice decides to divorce Doug for Joe, Joe tells her that he has decided return to his ex-wife. Thus, he, too, is an unhealthy choice as a permanent romantic partner for Alice. Her youth, then shallow values, and inexperience led her to these men, but maturity, self-knowledge, and a reconstructed lifestyle will likely help her find a more suitable partner for a healthier relationship, with values which they can share.

In summary, Woody Allen's view of male and female relationships when the woman comes from a dysfunctional family presents several meaningful conclusions. Self-esteem emerges as a crucial issue for both men and women. Low self-esteem seems to doom a couple's success, whereas strong self-images encourage the development of healthy relationships. Divorce, instead of being seen by society as a social stigma and a sign of failure, is now presented as a positive opportunity to move forward in life; Alice's decision to leave Doug clearly exemplifies the latter view.

TABLE 3.4

***INTERIORS*- mother Eve: OCD, depressed, suicidal**
Renata and husband Frederick
Joey and live-in boyfriend Mike
Flyn and ____

***HANNAH AND HER SISTERS*- mother Norma: unfaithful, alcoholic**
Hannah and 1st husband Mickey, 2nd husband Elliot
Holly and boyfriend David, husband Mickey
Lee and live-in longtime boyfriend Frederick, lover Elliot, new husband Doug

***ALICE*- mother Mrs. Janssen: unhappy, financially insecure, alcoholic**
Alice and teenage boyfriend Eddie, husband Doug, lover Joe
Dorothy and husband

In some cases, positive changes in self-esteem engender positive changes in a current relationship (like for Hannah) or new, healthier relationships (like for Alice, probably). When Hannah admits that she has needs, she appears more approachable to Elliot, who wants to do some nurturing too. By admitting her needs, Hannah's self image grows better, as she realizes that she does not have to be perfect (to compensate for her mother's failure to be a flawless parent); she can be acceptable to herself and her husband as she is.

Improved self-esteem enables one to create a more satisfying life-style, even if it is later in life when a person has grown more self-accepting (as Alice and Holly do). Alice's new confidence enables her to change her life, establish a career, and not stay locked in an empty marriage. Holly's writing success improves her chances of a happy marriage with Mickey, despite the failure of their first date, years earlier.

Low self-esteem contributes to male infidelity (Frederick, the writer, and Elliot) and to women tolerating unsatisfactory unions (Renata, Norma, and Alice). Frederick's low opinion of himself creates conflict with his wife, Renata; they argue about his writing success, which she deems worthy and he sees in an unsatisfactory light. He attempts to rape Flyn, whom he considers trite and shallow, so he can escape feeling inadequate. Elliot pursues Lee, in order to feel validated, because he does not feel important to Hannah. Alice is a prime example of a woman who tolerates a displeasing marriage until her image of herself as a woman and as a person improves.

The inadequacies of the parent couples generate low self-esteem too. Arthur takes lovers while Eve is in the mental hospital, and one can understand how he may feel inferior in contrast to the steely perfection which is a large part of Eve's core. Norma remains married to Evan for many years, even though she harbors serious and seemingly justified complaints about him, with no indication that she can or wants to end that marriage and find joy with someone else.

These films may also raise the question of whether one partner's flaws, rather than low self-esteem, encourage unfaithfulness of the other person. The perfectionism of Eve, Renata, and Hannah as well as Norma's high spirited personality could trigger unrest in their men, even though these women's traits of competence and enthusiasm seem to be

positive ones. How the men in question manifest their unrest in the face of strong women varies. Both Doug's and Alice's indiscretions seem to emerge from a lack of meaningful communication and from the dwindling interest between them, as well as Doug's superior attitude toward Alice and Alice's inferior view of herself. However, these flaws return to the basic issue of poor self image. Thus, Allen's message to the viewer may be that a strong mental evaluation of oneself contributes to a solid romantic relationship between two people, and that the reverse is true, as well.

Chapter 4: Morality, Messages, and Mental Health

Chapter 4 will summarize, analyze, compare, and interpret the themes and conflicts portrayed in these films. In particular, it will address specific impacts of parental disorders on the adult children, on the adult children as part of sibling groups, and on the adult children's choice of romantic partners in *Interiors, Hannah and Her Sisters*, and *Alice.* Moreover, it will consider the applications of these realizations.

TABLE 4.1

Family of *INTERIORS*
Parents: Eve and Arthur
Daughters: Renata (Frederick); Joey (Mike); Flyn

Family of *HANNAH AND HER SISTERS*
Parents: Norma and Evan
Daughters: Hannah (Mickey, Elliot); Holly (David, Mickey); Lee (Frederick, Elliot, Doug)

Family of *ALICE*
Parents: Mr. and Mrs. Janssen
Daughters: Dorothy (husband) and Alice (Eddie, Doug, Joe)

Chapter 1 addresses the impact of dysfunctional parents, especially mothers, on their daughters. Eve's obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), depression, and suicidal tendencies leave lasting marks on her three daughters in *Interiors*. Perfection was a reflection of her own self-image and strict control was her method of achieving that perfection in herself, her home, her husband, and her daughters. Renata begins to copy her mother's dark mood and exclusive acceptance of excellence; her preoccupation with death foreshadows a possible suicide. Joey flees from control, responsibility, and commitment of any kind; she neither wants to control nor be controlled. Flyn's likely

intentional geographical distance from the family frees her from the impact of their disorders; yet Flyn seeks comfort from cocaine to quiet other demons. Despite the fact that all of the daughters exhibit basic moral values, like honesty, fidelity, and respect for their parents, Eve's inability to cope with aging, change in marital status, and imperfection bequeaths to her children a negative message about reality and coping. Her weaknesses impart weakness to her children. Arthur's strength and mental health, shown by his desire to find happiness with Pearl, does not filter down to his daughters as a positive behavior for them to emulate.

Norma's alcoholism, infidelity, and vicious verbal conflict with her husband, in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, engender both positive and negative outcomes in the lives of her three daughters. Hannah steps in, to do the nurturing her mother did not, but her actions provoke her husband to have an affair to satisfy his own need to nurture. Her lack of neediness, however, does not exonerate Elliot from the blame for his infidelity. In addition, her image of being a perfect person causes resentment in her younger sisters. Holly lashes out at Hannah by writing a novel that includes thinly disguised intimate details of Hannah's marriage, while Lee exhibits unconscious jealousy toward Hannah's seemingly idyllic marriage by having an affair with Hannah's husband, Elliot. All of the young women eventually adjust their behaviors in constructive ways. Hannah reveals her "tremendous needs" to Elliot; Holly and Lee overcome their substance dependencies and move toward valid careers. None of their dialogue, even in anger, ever reaches the level of malice heard in that of their parents' tirades against each other. Thus, even though Hannah, Holly, and Lee "suffer the slings and arrows" of somewhat unstable childhoods

with weak parental leadership, they all evidence a much stronger will to survive by overcoming their challenges and correcting their flaws than Norma does.

In *Alice*, the title character shows the greatest growth, first by following her mother's advice and then by deviating from it. Alice's mother, an alcoholic with a failed theatrical career and a financially and emotionally poor marriage, advises Alice to marry for money, which Alice does; she eventually abandons that marriage in attempt to add more meaning to her life. Because of her flexibility and willingness to open her mind, she grows. Her most valuable strength, one not inherited from her mother, is the ability to identify, accept, and follow her goals, and not, like her mother did, give up. As a result of her various acts of self-confrontation, Alice's self-esteem grows strong enough for her to depend upon herself, rather than on others.

The issues of maternal disorders in the films suggest that a mother who exhibits personality failings can create children who handle the impacts of her disorders differently. First of all, they may emulate dysfunctional behaviors, as Renata in *Interiors* does (negative results). Otherwise, they may, by design, depart from their parents' unsatisfactory role models, like Dorothy does, in *Alice* (positive results).Yet another response is that of taking imprudent advice, suffering, and eventually having an epiphany, as Alice does, ultimately producing beneficial outcomes.

Chapter 2 addresses the ways in which maternal disorders interfere with successful sibling relationships. As was stated from the research, sibling groups are the most important family bonds because they are frequently the longest. Eve's disorders, in *Interiors*, play havoc with her daughters' chances at sisterly harmony because each of them bears such deep wounds from Eve's non-nurturing style of motherhood. The

daughters have no warm role model, which prevents them from nurturing each other. Thus, rather than drawing together in the face of such challenges as Eve's mental illness, their parents' divorce, and Arthur's impending re-marriage, they remain individuals, with separate views of the forthcoming changes and no family unity; they must rely solely on themselves for strength, rather than on each other. It is valuable to notice that their childhood, described as "chilly and cold," despite its benefits of structure, organization, elegance, financial comfort, and the illusion of perfection, does not bring forth warm, loving, or caring feelings of any depth.

Hannah and Her Sisters portrays Norma, despite being an unfaithful alcoholic who hurls emasculating accusations at Evan, as a humorous, musical, family-oriented mother. She sincerely compliments Holly's first novel, by admitting how much she loves the mother's character, "a boozy old flirt with a filthy mouth." On the other hand, the unfaithfulness of both parents sends mixed messages to the daughters. Hannah makes a point to remain faithful to both of her husbands, while Lee fails to value fidelity. Hannah criticizes, although gently, Holly's use of cocaine. However, Norma's lack of serious leadership during her daughters' childhoods has left Holly and Lee depending on drugs when they felt unable to cope, and impelled Hannah to be an overly perfect person.

Hannah's perfection both strengthens and infuriates her less accomplished sisters. In response to a mother who was not dependably in control, Hannah becomes the directing sibling for three reasons. The first is because she sees the need in the others for a leader; the second is because she has the ability; and the third is because she has the desire in herself to do so. It is helpful to realize that leadership is taken by those whose competence permits them to be the leaders. The negative aspect of Hannah's tender

ministrations to her inebriated mother and financially imprudent sister Holly is that Hannah's efforts may be interpreted as enabling them to continue their destructive activities. So, a person who takes charge should be cognizant of the perils of enabling, while in the process of directing or nurturing others.

In *Alice*, Alice's mother's "marry for money" mantra motivates Alice to enter an unfulfilling marital union. Only after Alice recognizes her lack of spiritual fulfillment and re-establishes a connection with her sister, Dorothy, can Alice adopt a more realistic view of their mother and father. Dorothy is the nurturing sibling in this duo, because as the older, more achievement-oriented sister, she encourages Alice to restructure her value system, which constructively and profoundly impacts Alice's life.

The selection of a romantic partner is not typically viewed as a process that, in modern times, includes obvious parental influence, but Chapter 3 shows that, in these films, it does, in healthy and unhealthy manners. Eve's controlling habits, in *Interiors,* include the control of her husband, Arthur. Very likely, Eve's tight rein on him is a contributing factor to his decision to leave, one made in the best interests of his own mental health and as a justifiable quest for happiness in his later years. He substantiates his discontent with Eve's OCD and depression with his contrasting description of Pearl as open, warm, loving, and happy, all qualities to which he is attracted and which Eve lacks.

Renata, Eve's oldest daughter, a person for whom excellence is a requirement like it is for Eve, has chosen Frederick, who is less accomplished than she is and an active alcoholic. His inadequacies offer Renata the opportunity to control and direct, for which she, like her mother, has an obvious need. Even Joey, the middle daughter, lives with Mike, who submits to Joey's needs, desires, and fears. Joey is not brashly assertive, but

controls Mike in a passive aggressive way, amid her quest for herself. Joey avoids all controls--- those of job, motherhood, and marriage. Unlike Eve, who is gloomy with Arthur, Joey's demeanor with Mike is usually sunny, as long as topics she finds fearful are not being addressed. Mike is a healthy choice for Joey because he permits her to do what she needs to do, with the least amount of stress. Flyn has not shared her romantic partners with her family, probably in order to avoid their control and their criticism. Thus, Renata openly copies Eve's controlling ways with her husband, Joey does so less aggressively, and Flyn perhaps hides her boyfriends from her family. One would notice from this film that a controlling, oppressive mother imposes varying influences on her children's romantic choices, in myriad ways, as illustrated in *Interiors*.

Norma's dysfunctions in *Hannah and Her Sisters* motivate her daughters to choose partners who permit them to exhibit their needs to nurture or be nurtured, to be creative, and to pursue intellectual paths. Hannah finds Elliot, whose life was in chaos and who needs her organizational skills. Holly pursues relationships with inappropriate men until she finds herself. Only then is she able to form a healthy successful relationship with Mickey. Lee, like Holly, abuses substances on her journey toward personal success. Also, like Holly, once she comes to know herself better and adopt the personal views in which she believes, can she form a successful relationship with a man.

Alice exhibits adherence to her dysfunctional mother's advice, in *Alice* (discards career goals for marriage, marries for money, and endures an unhappy marriage but departs from it). Her mother's creativity may have influenced Alice to appreciate Eddie, the artist, and Joe, the saxophone player, but her experience with the instability of a life dedicated to creativity leads her to push Alice to seek out and choose security over

personal fulfillment. Dorothy, conversely, views her mother more realistically than Alice did, much earlier, and chose a suitable husband the first time, by not listening to her mother's advice. The value found in the romantic selections of these two sisters is cathartic, particularly for Alice, who learned that mistakes do not have to be permanent. With realism and understanding of self, which Mrs. Janssen did not have, growth is possible, as it was for Alice.

From the examination of all of the relationships in these films, several useful realizations become evident. As seen in *Interiors*, controlling mothers with depressive outlooks cause damage that is very deep and thereby difficult for offspring to overcome. Even such serious challenges as addiction and infidelity can be viewed as learning experiences, which they were in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, and used as springboards for progress. In *Alice*, Alice Tate proves that erroneous life choices, despite long term involvement with them, can be corrected with self-understanding and perseverance to realize new goals. Thus, sibling groups are impacted by dysfunctions of their parents, but do not need to be permanently imprisoned by those legacies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I.

Notes and Quotes

1. The film, *Interiors,* was originally entitled *Windows*, in connection to the many scenes shot through and from windows in the house. Also, the concept of windows indicates clarity, viewpoint, moving from inside (interior) to outside, escape, freedom, change, vision, and more than one perspective, all themes applicable in this film.

2. After the completion and distribution of *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Woody Allen was dissatisfied with the too happy ending and wishes he had not tied it up so neatly; he feels that a less pat conclusion would have been more realistic.

3. Dialogue colors the relationships of the characters so heavily in these films. Allen recollects eating childhood dinners alone, earlier, before his parents did because his father came home from work late. He said, "I liked to eat alone. I enjoyed the solitude and could read a comic book while I was eating." Gross asked him is if he talked to his mother during his meal, to which Allen replied, "I was 10 years old. What would I have to talk to my mother about? Stickball? I had nothing to say to her." (Terry Gross on National Public Radio interview June 2009).

APPENDIX II.

The Decades

TABLE A

***Interiors*, 1978**	**Eve and Arthur; Renata, Joey, and Flynn**
infidelity, divorce, family values, career values, enabling	
***Hannah and Her Sisters*, 1986**	**Norma and Evan; Hannah, Holly, and Lee**
addiction, infidelity, divorces, family values, career values, enabling	
***Alice,* 1990**	**Mr. and Mrs. Janssen; Dorothy and Alice**
infidelity, divorce, career values, family values	

Although the films exhibit varying approaches to social issues and societal values, they all contain addiction or substance abuse, infidelity, and divorce, conditions which characterize the latter part of the 20th century. Dedication to marriage and family values is shown by most of the 22 characters, in both older and younger generations. Two characters enable others to continue destructive behaviors. Finally, careers play a pivotal role in all the families.

Addiction. Drug abuse occurs in all three films from the three decades.

70s- Frederick- alcohol; Flyn - cocaine

80s- Norma, Evan, and Lee - alcohol; Holly - cocaine

90s- Mrs. Janssen - alcohol

Infidelity. All three films contain instances of marital infidelity.

1978-Arthur; 1986-Norma, Evan, Lee, Elliot; 1990-Alice and Doug

Divorce. Each film contains the dissolution of a marriage.

1970s-Arthur from Eve 1980s-Hannah from Mickey 1990s-Alice from Doug

Enabling. Two enablers in these films are Hannah and Mike.

The stronger enabler is Hannah, enabling her mother's alcoholism and sister Holly's cocaine use and poor money management. Mike's acceptance of Joey's work ineptitude creates a comfortable environment for her to continue her unproductive behaviors.

Marriage and Family Values. Of the 22 characters, 17 value marriage while 5 do not. The characters below whose names are underlined are single, preferably or willingly.

In the 1978 film, *Interiors*, 5 characters value marriage and 3 do not. All of the characters of the older generation do; the 3 daughters do not, but their 2 male partners do.

-Eve values marriage so much that she cannot face being single and kills herself.

-Arthur shows his appreciation of marriage by wedding Pearl.

-Pearl also values marriage, since Arthur will be her third husband.

-Renata reminds her husband Frederick that she agreed to have a baby because of his desire to do so; she is a reluctant parent and wife.

-Frederick (the writer) is a willing father, according to Renata's account of his wishes.

-Joey lives with Mike but refuses to marry him or have children.

-Mike would like to marry Joey and have a child.

-Flyn seems content to be single and is not visibly seeking a partner.

Of the 9 characters from *Hannah and Her Sisters* in 1986, 8 value marriage.

-Norma and Evan stay married and function as a couple, despite serious conflicts.

-Elliot reveals his desire to stay married to Hannah who admits she needs him.

-Hannah married twice.

-Lee leaves Elliot because he won't divorce Hannah and marry her.

-Doug is willing to marry Lee.

-Frederick (the artist) may not value marriage, as he was content to live with Lee.

-Holly is delighted to marry Mickey and have a baby.

-Mickey, too, values marriage; he wed 2 sisters in the same family.

Four of the 5 characters from the 1990 film, *Alice*, value marriage.

-Mrs. Janssen left a career in her youth for a marriage, showing she valued it.

-Joe exhibits his value of marriage by returning to his ex-wife.

-Doug Tate liked having Alice "by his side" as his wife.

-Alice leaves a weak marriage to become a single mother, wanting to give her children strong values; she put her own goals aside to marry Doug, which shows that she valued marriage when she was young, but by the film's end she does not feel obligated to be married; more significantly, she does not feel defined by her marital status.

-Dorothy, Alice's sister, is married throughout the film.

Careers: 1978. Eve and Renata seem to pursue their careers more for artistic purposes than for revenue; Eve is married to Arthur, a lawyer, whose family's lifestyle suggests a substantial income. Renata's writing is subsidized by her father, Arthur, about which her husband, Frederick complains with his bitter reference to "the check from daddy every month." Joey is unable or unwilling to find or create a satisfying profession.

1986. Norma and Evan work part time in their later years. Hannah stops acting when she marries Mickey; she verbalizes her "decision to stay home and raise a family."

1990. Most of Alice's wealthy girlfriends, during her marriage, do not work. Dorothy is a lawyer; Alice, by the film's end, does socially valuable and satisfying work.

The above data show that substance use, infidelity, and divorce occur in all the films in all decades, as those conditions do in real life. Drug use is overcome by Lee and Holly. The marriages affected by infidelity survive it. Divorce is presented, as with Eve and Arthur, Hannah and Mickey, and with Alice and Doug, as a constructive move, offering the ex-spouses a chance to progress to healthier relationships. Marriage is valued by all but 5 of the 22 characters examined. Thus, infidelity continues and the institution of marriage is surviving; drug use is either endured or overcome. Careers are valued by everyone, even by Joey who feels guilty about not having one.

In the 1978 film, Flyn uses cocaine, but in 1986 Lee and Holly are eventually drug free; no substance abuse is evidenced in the 1990 film.

Arthur's daughters criticize his unfaithfulness in 1978; Norma's and Evan's infidelities in 1986 are accepted by their family. Hannah never learns of Elliot's affair with Lee, which does, however, give Elliot some insight into his marriage to Hannah. Alice's infidelity in 1990 contributes to her decision to leave Doug, a life-affirming move.

One may ask if the wives of the unfaithful husbands did anything to encourage the men's infidelity or whether the husbands are solely responsible for their actions. Surely, Eve's cold, controlling manner made Arthur feel unloved. Hannah's perfect image, as stated earlier, caused Elliot to feel unneeded. Alice's reluctance to speak up likely let Doug think that her desires were unimportant. However, it would be hard to place all blame on the wives. Thus, the combination of the wives' actions and the husbands' unmet needs contribute to the results.

Divorce destroys Eve; the two later films present divorce as a learning experience. 1978-Eve kills herself mainly because Arthur did not want to be married to her anymore.

1986-Hannah marries Elliot after divorcing Mickey.

Mickey marries Holly after divorcing Hannah.

1990-Alice divorces Doug and embraces her independence.

The divorces in the 1978 and 1986 films are followed by remarriages, while Alice's 1990s divorce precedes her welcoming becoming single again. Divorce, infidelity, and substance abuse, by the 1990s, produce constructive results, forecasting expectations of healthier relationships. These life events, once viewed by popular opinion as strictly negative behaviors, all have the ability, as documented in these films, to be surmountable challenges, at the least, and triggers for improvement, optimally.