Fathers with Sons: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on "Good Enough" Fathering Throughout the Life Cycle

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Abstract: This paper employs a life-span developmental framework to examine the role of the father in the life of his son. I propose a conceptual scheme (organized around twelve sequential phases) relating the developmental needs of the child with the specific aspects of the father's role functioning. This schema is based upon observational research, interviewing, and clinical analytic findings, and prominence is placed on the needs for, and contributions made by, fathers as containers, protectors, facilitators, models, challengers, initiators, sanctioners, and mentors. Competing psychoanalytic perspectives (including drive theory, object relations, self psychology, and intersubjectivity) are integrated under the roof of the life-span framework. Emphasis is placed on the father as a real person and internalized presence, enabling the formation of a sufficiently differentiated, caring paternal

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imago on which sons can draw throughout the life cycle. The basic “good enough” fathering task is explicated for each phase, and an internalized “paternal imago” that results from its successful completion is defined. Case vignettes are used to suggest particular clinical consequences of the absence of such good enough fathering at selected developmental junctions. Examples from literature, mythology, and culture further illustrate the impact of fatherly provisions and deprivation on their sons’ development.

All the world’s a stage . . .
And one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages.
At first the infant, mewing and puking in the nurse’s arms.
Then the whining schoolboy, . . . creeping like snail unwilling to school.
And then the lover, . . . with a woeful ballad made to his mistress’ eyebrow.
Then a soldier, . . . jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel, . . .
And then the justice, in fair round belly with good capon lined, . . .
Full of wise saws and modern instances; And so he plays his part.
The sixth age shifts into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side, . . . and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes and whistles in his sound.
Last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
(Shakespeare, (1599), As You Like It, p. 87; II, vii, 139–165; emphasis added)

Fathering: The Unmapped Domain

Shakespeare imparted a comprehensive perspective of a man’s life in offering his wisdom on the “seven ages.” An important omission in this poetic litany reveals, however, that of man’s seven ages, no mention has been made of fatherhood. This exclusion reflects both a classical and contemporary Western truth, namely that fatherhood is
disregarded as an important developmental phase. This neglect of fatherhood occasions the failure to address those aspects of a child’s development that require provisions from a father.

This article is not about fatherhood, however, nor will I examine specific characteristics of male development as the stages of fatherhood are reached and traversed. Instead, I venture into the uncharted territory of active, engaged fathering. Drawing from “the powerful microscope provided by the analytical method” (Colarusso and Nemiroff, 1981, p. xviii), I have inquired into the lives of individuals and built a general theory from my own and others' observations. This idiographic, intersubjective, and hermeneutic approach complements the nomothetic data-gathering methods of many researchers whose work I will discuss, and together comprise the sources of information from which I will approach the large and unmapped domain of fathering.

I shall formulate a set of working hypotheses about the nature of fathering and its development and functions within the father-and-son arena. While the father–daughter relationship will not be examined, I do believe that many, but by no means all, of the fathering functions would similarly apply to fathers with their daughters.¹

The subtle, yet rich dynamics of paternal influence and involvement on both the intrapsychic structure and external lives of their offspring extends across all phases of development, from conception through dying. Fathers are always psychically present, even in fatherless children (Buckley, 1985; Michaels, 1989; Gill, 1991), and the nature and construction of each son’s paternal imago play an essential role in traversing the “seven ages.” Paternal import goes far beyond the well-accepted oedipal influence with its triangular dynamics represented by Jocasta, Laius, and Oedipus. We are beginning to understand the need for fathers (or their surrogates) to serve as containers, protectors, facilitators, models, challengers, initiators,

¹Relative to the far more extensive investigation and direct observation of mother–child interaction, psychoanalytic examination of fathering functions vis-à-vis daughters is likewise scarce. Benjamin’s (1988, 1991) recent contributions are an exception to this marginalization of the father, as she addresses the important role played by fathers with their daughters, particularly during the prelatency phases, whereas Hand (1994) anticipates more specific oedipal and latency phase contributions.
sanctioners, and mentors *throughout the life cycle*, and there is considerable cross-cultural evidence that negligence, absence, or the lack of active, involved fathering is related to many individual, social, and familial ills (e.g., Mitscherlich, 1969; Herzog, 1982a; Comer, 1989; Lansky, 1992).

**A Contemporary Developmental Perspective on Fathering**

The cornerstone of my work arises from Benedek's (1959) groundbreaking contribution on parenthood as a developmental phase, as well as from contemporary life-cycle developmentalists influenced by Erik Erikson (1963), including Vaillant (1977), Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978), and Colarusso and Nemiroff (1981). These writers have examined how adult development interacts with and mutually influences the simultaneous evolution of parental capacity, and more specifically, that of fatherhood. These two developmental lines are further interactively affected by the spouse's and child's (or children's) development. It is only within this familial, developmental context that the evolution and impact of fathering can be fully examined and understood as an important step in the "journey toward the complete man."

Parenthood is often a watershed along this maturational road, partly because parenting may well be "the most difficult, challenging and gratifying undertaking life offers" (Cath, Gurwitt, and Gunsberg, 1989, p. xxii). One might say it is even more "impossible" than Freud's (1937) three "impossible professions" of government, education, and psychoanalysis. For fathers with sons in particular, parenting causes considerable emotional turmoil as competitive struggles with their sons reawaken old narcissistic injuries and conflicts. Fathering is frequently unsettling since men are typically unaccustomed to complex affective, relational upbringing and the profound depth of feelings not easily put into words that are evoked by their children. Yet, fathering may also be restorative because fathers eventually have an opportunity to reconnect with their own fathers and the sense of generativity. At the same time, they are afforded additional occasions for working through their own unresolved issues which occurred at
comparable developmental periods to those arising for their sons (Osherson, 1986; Pruett, 1991).

Few theoretical constructs have been conceptualized to examine development throughout the life cycle. The Oedipus complex has historically served as the primary organizing construct for psychoanalytically oriented developmentalists (e.g., Rangell, 1953; Blos, 1978). More recently, however, the separation-individuation construct has been used (Colarusso and Nemiroff, 1981), and today, as Abelin (1971) and Greenspan (1982) contend, even the Oedipus legend can be reinterpreted to indicate the importance of the child's individuation and movement away from the mother as facilitated by the father. The oedipal tragedy is then more fully understood by appreciating the absent Laius' failure to help his son accomplish this task while attending to the pathological, "dark sides" of his fathering, as Ross (1982c) suggests.

The Hamlet drama likewise has been elegantly reinterpreted as "the tragedy of the dyadic son" (Blos, 1985). This reframing contrasts with the classically triadic, oedipal portrayal involving love and hate, conquest and patricide, and incest and guilt. Hamlet's indecisiveness and procrastination instead reflect his need for a peoedipal father, represented by Claudius and his own idealized father, to protect him from his possessive, engulfing mother, the widowed Queen, who threatens to annihilate his masculinity. Hamlet's central fear is thus of his archaic mother, a projection of his own regressive libidinal yearnings.

This rendering is bolstered by recent work suggesting at least four individuation crises: (1) during infancy and early childhood as a stable sense of self and capacity to relate to others are established (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975); (2) in adolescence when independence from internalized infantile objects and active disengagement from the parents is strengthened (Blos, 1967); (3) in early and middle adulthood as continuous self-elaboration and object differentiation are structured by parenthood (Colarusso, 1990); and (4) during grandparenthood and late life when more finite issues of separation and death must be resolved (Cath, 1989; Colarusso, 1990).

A developing model involving paradigmatic shifts in understanding early child-parent experiences of emotional intensity and exchange is further emerging from recent infancy research. Drive
theory-based metaphors reflecting instinctual gratification/sublimation, as well as ego psychology and object relations constructs pertaining to the task of separating from others, are being augmented by relational, intersubjective perspectives emphasizing reciprocity, connection, and recognition based on mutuality. Thus attunement and otherness constructs supplement oedipal as well as separation-individuation developmental metaphors.

I share with S. Mitchell (1988), Benjamin (1988), Pine (1990), and Aron (1996) the belief that the intrapsychic and intersubjective psychoanalytic theories are complementary rather than oppositional ways of understanding the psyche and its development. I consequently stress the father’s role in facilitating his son’s psychic development from these varying psychoanalytic perspectives according to the salience of a particular perspective at a particular developmental junction. A brief historical digression is necessary to better understand the father’s role in facilitating his son’s successful journey along this path.

A Historical Perspective on the Study of Fathering

The study of fathering is quite new, particularly within psychoanalytic developmental theory. After being almost forgotten, fathers are becoming appreciated as significant, real objects in their children’s development. Historically, the reliance on the oedipal myth as the organizing developmental metaphor led to an overemphasis on the father as a symbolic figure for masculine identification, particularly during the oedipal phase (Ross, 1982a,b). Fathers were seldom portrayed as real people capable of making major contributions to their children’s development. Only when there was paternal absence, neglect, abuse, or other overtly negative dynamics, was a father’s influence likely to be studied (Layland, 1981; Cath et al., 1989). This

*I am suggesting that differing theoretical perspectives have varying salience at particular developmental junctures. These coexisting perspectives are reflected by the diversity of psychoanalytic authors influencing my synthesis. Such intrapsychically oriented writers as Abelin, Blos, Loewald, and Mahler hardly march to the same drummer as intersubjectivists like Benjamin, Bowlby, Stern, and Winnicott. They are nonetheless all part of the same parade when it comes to understanding psychoanalytically the father’s contribution to his son’s psychic development.*
indifference has been the case since Freud’s study of Schreber and the Wolf-Man.

Although the phallocentric bias of classical psychoanalysis and its limited view of female development has been cogently articulated both from within and outside the psychoanalytic framework (e.g., Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1970; J. Mitchell, 1974; Schafer, 1974; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Benjamin, 1988), there has paradoxically been a matricentric bias in developmental theory, particularly as preoedipal development has been formulated. “Mammocentric” conflicts having to do with symbiosis, separation, and the need for nurturance characterize this evolution within psychoanalysis.³

Although not well studied empirically until the observational research of Spitz (1965), Bowlby (1970), Mahler et al. (1975), and Stern (1985), mothers have been held mainly accountable for their children’s development and fathers have been relegated to the background, primarily as vague figures without substance. This intense focus on the mother–child dyad, while necessary for an understanding of child development, is not sufficient and, as Arlow (1981) argued, inadvertently bolsters the historical tendency to “blame” the mother while exonerating fathers. Only now are we beginning to recognize “the father’s seemingly preordained contribution to this inevitable family struggle through generations” (Cath et al., 1989, p. 554).⁴

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³ This matricentric view is partially reflected in the prevailing dyadic conceptualization of psychoanalytic practice. For example, Stone’s (1961) classic analog employs the mother–preverbal child relationship while omitting reference to the paternal dimension and the patient’s early fatherly ties. I believe that the analytic situation can be more fully examined by employing father–child developmental analogies within an oscillating dyadic and triadic organizing matrix.

⁴ The myth that only one parent matters is perpetuated by this incomplete, matricentric view of development. The social consequences of this neglect of fathering, particularly since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, are far reaching across Westernized cultures and subclasses. Such “fatherlessness,” although beyond the purview of this article, has greatly contributed to generations of young men lacking in primary male relationships as well as mature male role models and mentors (cf. Mitscherlich, 1969). An excess of contemporary popular writing, drawing its intellectual foundation from mythology, anthropology, and Jungian psychology, has focused on men’s arrested sense of masculinity. Such masculine identity issues are presumably caused by the lack of significant male mentoring, a deprivation producing a culturally endemic form of hunger for the father in addition to an unattainable masculine mystique (Bly, 1990; see also Betcher and Pollack, 1993).
In contrast, interest in a broader exploration of fathering during the last decade has flourished. This new concern has been stimulated by: (1) social changes, as, for example, the rise in dual career families, which has led to enhanced sex-role flexibility and increased needs for male parenting involvement; (2) technological changes in obstetrical and pediatric practice, involving fathers more directly in pregnancy, delivery, and pediatric care; (3) feminist theory and postmodern deconstructionist ideas, influencing a new generation of prominent researchers, clinicians, and theoreticians; (4) broadening theoretical perspectives, represented by the influence of attachment theory, the object relations and self psychological psychoanalytic schools, and family systems viewpoints helping to elaborate the "two-person," intersubjective aspects of development along with its particular preoedipal foundations; and (5) burgeoning of direct observational research of infancy and father–child interaction, stimulated by important methodological advances (Lamb, 1981; Parke, 1981; Ygman, 1982; Herzog, 1982b; Pruet, 1987).

The study of fathering is in its infancy, nonetheless, and we must remain wary of drawing premature conclusions. Moreover, there is evidence that the character of fathering differs more from society to society, as well as across primate species, than does mothering (Cath et al., 1989; Tripp-Reimer and Wilson, 1991). Still, there is "surprising unanimity" in what is observed and described. Fathering is not equivalent to mothering, even when the father assumes the primary nurturer’s role (Pruett, 1987). There is now an enriched appreciation of the father’s uniquely significant role in healthy family development at all points along the life span.5

An exploration of fathers and sons throughout the life cycle requires that we recognize the mutual and reciprocal influences each has upon the other. Each passes through critical transitions as his respective developmental processes unfold from birth until death.

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5 This recent research interest in fathering, contending as it has with a lengthy tradition of neglect, has however not resulted in meaningful change within clinical practice (Cath, 1986; Gunsberg, 1989; McWilliams, 1991). For example, in contrast to the considerable interest concerning the female analyst’s pregnancy, there is a dearth of literature examining the equally meaningful, though less biologically manifest, effects on the analytic process of a male analyst’s becoming a father (see Sachs [1995] for an important exception where he considers countertransference issues for therapists who are also new fathers).
and each is influenced by the other’s “normative crises” (Erikson, 1963; Colarusso and Nemiroff, 1981). Thus the soccer exploits of a 15-year-old son, which greatly contribute to his individuation and adult genital desire, may engender feelings of envy, loss, aging, and the finiteness of time in his 45-year-old father who is seeking to adapt to the turmoil produced by his own bodily changes. This may precipitate the father’s “normative crisis of midlife,” which may well lead to his intrapsychic reorganization and developmental progression following the regressive turmoil. Such dialectical understanding, incidentally, gives new meaning to the insight originally stated by Wordsworth and previously illuminated by Freudian theory along less interactive lines. In more ways than one, “the child is father to the man.”

Overview: Paternal Influence on the Son’s Development

Paternal influence is understood to operate always within a family context, as well as within a socioeconomic milieu shaping potential involvement. The mother (or her substitute), acting as “gatekeeper” to fatherhood, is of particular significance, as she may support or obstruct the father’s active engagement as well as the nature of her son’s attachment to him (Atkins, 1982, 1984). Good fathering requires good mothering, and vice versa, from the “alliance of pregnancy” (Diamond, 1986) through the “parenting alliance.” The mother’s conscious and unconscious attitudes toward the father, which partly reflect her identification with her own father, are crucial to the son’s ability to internalize a father’s presence (Ogden, 1989; Kirshner, 1992). Children need to experience their parents as a couple in an interacting, nontraumatic partnership. The beneficial effects of highly involved fathers is primarily a result of two caretakers

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6 It remains to be discerned more specifically how sons (and daughters) influence their fathers in ways contributing to the father’s development and subsequent fathering functions. A common mythic theme bears upon a son’s healing his wounded father, as for instance, in the Grail legend (p. 285). The precursors to such paternal restoration are expressively conveyed in a 7-year-old boy’s poem to his father (cited in Blos, 1985, p. 55):

You are like a strong kite waiting for the wind
and the sweet snow that loves me
and the hurt tiger that needs my help.
rather than one engaged caretaker with the consequent increased fulfillment for each and an improved familial system (Abelin, 1975; Herzog, 1982a; Kirshner, 1992; see also Lamb and Oppenheim, 1989). Care must be taken not to take father-son issues out of this broader context.

Paternal imagoes are intrapsychically built upon both real and fantasized relationships within the family and serve to orient children in adaptive and defensive ways throughout their development (Gunsberg, 1989; Lansk, 1989; Michaels, 1989). The “internalized father,” always an amalgamation of fact, fantasy, and familial and cultural folklore, influences the son from infancy through senescence. Hamlet’s ghost-father, protecting him from his regressive maternal yearnings, exemplifies the generality of the father representation in a need-fulfilling, idealized, and distorted countenance.

As implicitly suggested, however, it is the real person of a “good enough” father and the son’s object ties with him that enable the formation of a sufficiently differentiated, nourishing paternal imago. Such an imago simplifies the son’s requisite developmental tasks as phase-inappropriate fantasies and folklore are weakened throughout maturation, accompanied by the recovery of omitted observations and memory traces of the more objectively perceived father. Fathers thereby help their sons achieve good use of the “father object,” while frequently serving as their son’s lifelong self-objects.

I wish to concentrate on the father both as a real and internalized presence for his son throughout the life cycle. I will introduce a schema for considering the phase-specific tasks of a “good enough” father, borrowing from Winnicott’s term, good enough mother. My focus will not specifically address paternal absence, deprivation, seduction, and the abusive “darker” sides reflected in the “bad” father’s prototypical “Laius complex,” the experience of which involves the father’s acting out of his competition with his son through violence and abandonment (Ross, 1982c). I believe, however, that “father hunger” (Herzog, 1982a) or “thirst” (Abelin, 1971), in addition to more pervasive male psychopathology (e.g., Steele, 1982; Ross and

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7 Of course the “real” person (i.e., external object) of both the “good enough” father and mother are determined substantially by the unconscious, internal father imago carried by each parent. As Ogden (1989) indicated, parenting has much to do with each parent’s internal father figures.
Herzog, 1985; Limentani, 1991; Phares and Compas, 1992; Betcher and Pollack, 1993), results partly from insufficient or problematic father-son interactions during these phases.

**Heuristic Schema: The Tasks of the "Good Enough" Father**

My proposed schema is drawn from direct observational research, interviews, and reconstructions made in the course of adult psychoanalytic treatment pertaining to specific paternal contributions during the following developmental periods: (1) *prospective fatherhood*, from pregnancy through parturition (e.g., Gurwitt, 1976; Herzog, 1982b; Diamond, 1986); (2) infancy and early childhood, pertaining to *preoedipal development* (e.g., Stoller, 1968; Abelin, 1971, 1975, 1980; Gaddini, 1976; Greenspan, 1982; Herzog, 1982a; Tyson, 1982; Blos, 1985; Pruett, 1987; Benjamin, 1988, 1991; Lamb and Oppenheim, 1989; Shopper, 1989); (3) the *oedipal period* (e.g., Loewald, 1951; Herzog, 1982a; Ross, 1982c); (4) middle childhood and *latency* (Ross, 1982d; Sarnoff, 1982; Pruett and Litzenberger, 1992); (5) *adolescence* (e.g., Blos, 1967, 1978; Esman, 1982); (6) *young adulthood*, including marriage and parenthood (e.g., Osherson, 1986; Colarusso, 1990, 1995; Diamond, 1995); (7) mature adulthood and *midlife* (e.g., Colarusso and Nemiroff, 1982; Guumann, 1986; Diamond, 1998); and (8) *later life*, including grandparenthood and senescence (e.g., Cath, 1982, 1986, 1989).

I suggest that the good enough father is available to help his son with unique tasks, each of which facilitates the child's development by establishing particular paternal imagoes, from the son's birth, up to and beyond his father's death. I argue, moreover, that the absence of such good enough fathering produces unmistakable consequences at each developmental junction. This culturally bound, historically specific model is inferentially derived and heuristic in its offering hypotheses intended to invite dialogue and, more importantly, to further research. The model is based upon an epigenetic, life-cycle developmental perspective that does not presume a linear, continuous trajectory. The tasks are separated for expository purposes since they overlap considerably and build upon one another in the vibrant world of the living father-son relationship.
The model represents an "ideal" and no father accomplishes each task equally well. Such a schema has heuristic and clinical value, both in discerning areas of impairment where the more broadly based, matricentric theories of development are inadequate and in suggesting directions for major revisions in our psychology of male development. Prevention, education, and psychoanalytic treatment can benefit when such a normative model of adaptive, father-son interaction has been subject to the rigors of clinical and experimental validation.

I propose a dozen phase-specific functions and accompanying paternal representations that the active, involved father helps shape in his son's development. Each addresses an important aspect of a male child's development that requires fatherly provisions. The predominant tasks, established paternal imagos, and corresponding phases in the son's development are summarized in Table 1. I will briefly sketch each in chronological order, using examples from analytic treatment to illustrate the impact of deprivation in such fatherly province.9

THE PROVISIONS OF A "GOOD ENOUGH" FATHER WITH HIS SON THROUGHOUT THE LIFE CYCLE

Provision of a Holding Environment for Dyadic Mother-Child Attachment

A father provides a timely and nurturing holding environment for the mother and the developing fetus, infant, and small child during

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9 I caution the reader of the danger in overapplying this model ad absurdum. In this aggrandizement, the "ideal" father is viewed as skillful, strong, and selfless, having no interests of his own other than the formidable requirements of fathering his children well.

9 I suggest that this chronological journey through father-and-son time is potentially recapitulated for a male patient and his analyst, particularly within the father transference, in a successful psychoanalytic process. The course of treatment, its transference and countertransference developments, and the requisite phasic tasks involved tend to unfold in a manner that roughly parallels this twelvefold schema. These unique tasks, moreover, are most germane for understanding the emergent paternal transferences to either a male or female analyst.
## TABLE I
The Tasks, Paternal Imagos, and Developmental Phases Requiring Provisions from a "Good Enough" Father with His Son

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fathering Task</th>
<th>Paternal Imago</th>
<th>Son's Phase (&amp; Ages)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Provision of holding environment for dyadic attachment</td>
<td>Protecting, providing container for primary dyad (&quot;protective watchfulness&quot;)—&quot;holding father&quot;</td>
<td>(Primary mutuality) 0–1 year</td>
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<td>2. Serving as alternate attachment figure</td>
<td>Exculing (&quot;second&quot;) other; &quot;mirror of desire&quot;; &quot;reflective object&quot;—&quot;dyadic father&quot;</td>
<td>(Early separation-individuation) $^{1/2}$–2 years</td>
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<td>3. Facilitating separation-individuation (1st individuation)</td>
<td>Liberator for differentiation; powerful, playful &quot;ideal&quot; (representing separateness and desire)</td>
<td>(Rapprochement/individuality consolidation) $^{1/2}$–3 years</td>
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<td>4. Modulating negative and aggressive affect</td>
<td>Facilitator of instinctual mastery (representing &quot;sheltered&quot; male strength)</td>
<td>(Separation-individuation/preoedipal/anal) 2–4 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Providing male mode of toilet training and valuing phallic masculinity</td>
<td>Model; facilitator of bodily-genital mastery; sanctioner of phallicism (interior as well as external)</td>
<td>(Preoedipal/anal/phallic) 2–5 years</td>
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<td>6. Supporting gender/gender role development</td>
<td>Facilitator of congruity, sameness, and affection (&quot;homoerotic identification&quot;); container for optimal (progressive) maternal differentiation</td>
<td>(Preoedipal/phallic through adolescence) 2 $^{1/2}$–Teen age</td>
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<tr>
<th>Fathering Task</th>
<th>Paternal Imago</th>
<th>Son's Phase (&amp; Ages)</th>
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<tr>
<td>7. Serving as oedipal challenger</td>
<td>Challenger (representing restraint, discipline &amp; self-control); authority (“judge”)—“triadic father”</td>
<td>(oedipal) 3½–6 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Initiating and mentoring instrumental and expressive masculinity as well as</td>
<td>Initiator; teacher; leader</td>
<td>(Latency/midchildhood) 6–12 years</td>
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<td>group relations.</td>
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<td>9. Supporting adolescent individuation (2nd individuation)</td>
<td>Container for paternal deidealization and optimal differentiation</td>
<td>(Adolescence) 13–19 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Mentoring transition to young adulthood (3rd individuation)</td>
<td>Initiator and sanctioner of adult masculinity</td>
<td>(Young adulthood) 20–30 years</td>
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<td>11. Facilitating paternal development and (further) reconciliation in adulthood</td>
<td>Mentor of generativity and otherhood; mutuality and equality</td>
<td>(Mature adulthood) 25–45 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Playing important roles in midadult and later life development (4th</td>
<td>Facilitator of integrated masculinity and healing (“wise elder”); “declining”</td>
<td>(Mid-late adulthood) 45 years–</td>
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<tr>
<td>individuation)</td>
<td>father in reversing roles (“genetic immortality”)</td>
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the period when the mother–child relationship, characterized by primary attunement, is essential for the development of what Bowlby (1988) termed a “secure base.” In serving as the dyad’s original "protective agent," the father shields the mother from impingement and interference from without, while she carries, bears, and suckles their infant. Thus, particularly before the infant can make use of him in other ways, the “watchful” father frees the mother to devote herself to their baby. In “holding” the mother–infant dyad near the end of pregnancy and for several weeks after the baby’s birth, the father is able to promote the mother’s necessary “primary maternal preoccupation,” which becomes the basis for the infant’s ego establishment (Winnicott, 1956).

In “watching over” his progeny as a delegate of “the outside world,” the father provides for and serves as an external beacon to his wife and child, protecting their intense, primary mutuality with one another (Stern, 1985; Benjamin, 1988). There is considerable evidence, moreover, that this fatherly “watchful protectiveness” (Diamond, 1995, 1997a) is both ubiquitous across cultures and reflects duties that are basic to manhood (Gilmore, 1990).

The quality of the mother–infant relationship is also influenced considerably by the father’s presence. For the mother, the father plays a crucial role in her fantasy that she can allow her infant to demand a fusional relationship with her without her having to become stifled by it. For this reason, the father’s allied relationship with the mother is one of the prerequisites for a positive mother–infant dyadic connection (Quinodoz, 1994). In the realm of the earliest holding environment then, there can be no mother without the father, to paraphrase Winnicott once more. I propose that it is this very representation of the father’s presence (in alliance with the mother) that enables the infant’s internalization of otherness to commence.

The holding father must be able to perceive his child as representing an opportunity for self-enhancement (i.e., increased self-love) and as being a means for attaining immortality. This requires that the father adaptively elevates his infant (along with the infant–maternal bond) by projecting his ego ideal onto the infant and then treats the baby (and infant–mother dyad) as complete. The radiance of the infant as the ego ideal falls upon the father who is then able to become “engrossed” in, and protective of, his newborn with whom
he feels a "loving union" while concurrently experiencing the infant's "otherness." The father's longing for the primitive sense of fusion is consequently manifest principally as an attachment to his infant as a differentiated object.

Healthy narcissism in the form of paternal, "adaptive grandiosity" is crucial since it entails both the father's projection of his special, ideal self onto his child (e.g., in ways he feels or wanted to be extraordinarily special himself), as well as his capacity to differentiate himself from his baby (Wolson, 1995). Lacking such adaptive and reality-oriented narcissistic abilities, which I regard as "narcissism in the service of connection," more omnipotent, maladaptive grandiose expressions render some fathers unable to maintain empathic sensitivity with their wife and baby as separate individuals. Fathers who are deficient in adaptive grandiosity are unable to provide the necessary holding functions because they are both threatened by exclusion from, and overly needy of inclusion into, the mothering dyad (Diamond, 1995, 1997a).

Freud (1930) stressed the gravity for the child of such paternal protectiveness when he stated: "I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection" (p. 72). Children of fathers who are unable to provide sufficient protective agency during the earliest phases of their lives are less likely to receive important fatherly provisions at the later stages, even though there are subsequent opportunities for reparative paternal contributions.

An infant is fortunate indeed to have both the mother's ordinary "primary maternal preoccupation" and the father's sufficient "protective agency," in combination with adequate physical endowment and freedom from unforeseen external trauma. Such an infant is shielded from those primitive annihilation threats to personal self-existence, stemming from experiencing an overwhelming sense of helplessness involving terrors of falling apart and dissolving. These threats severely compromise subsequent cognitive, affective, and intrapsychic development. The fetus and then infant provided with good enough initial mothering and fathering is thus likely to "go on being," largely unriddled by the more primitive anxieties interfering with each subsequent developmental task (Winnicott, 1956).

A clinical example that I have discussed in more depth elsewhere (Diamond, 1995, 1997a) will illustrate the painful internal struggle
of a father, who, though initially unable to provide the necessary paternal holding, was able to use his analysis to begin to develop an internal “watchful” paternal presence that was necessary for his fatherliness.

Clinical Example: Rich

Rich entered treatment at the age of 34, shortly after his wife became pregnant. He felt “particularly depleted” by the excessive pressure of running his own business. Although quite successful, Rich felt driven to add extra accounts in order to “prepare for all the rainy days that lie ahead.”

Early in therapy, he often spoke concerning his considerable misgivings about having a child. He explained, however, that he needed to accede to his 38-year-old wife’s desires, since “her biological clock is running short and she’s a ‘natural mother’.”

Following his son Daniel’s birth, Rich became more agitated and depressed and arranged for increased traveling and other activities that kept him busy outside the home. Despite having fathered the son that he “had always wanted,” Rich nonetheless felt terrible about himself “as a man.” As he explained, things had become more and more unpleasant for him at home because his wife, Nancy, when not exhausted, “always seemed busy with their infant.” Rich complained vehemently about Nancy’s “devotion” to Daniel and he angrily deplored her “lack of interest either in me or in sex.”

Rich was well into his second year of analysis when his son, Daniel, was about 8 months old. Rich’s wife had become increasingly enraged over his absences from the family and continued unavailability. She resented his “constant neediness and demands while being so unable to give.”

Rich struggled with how ashamed and cowardly he felt about his withdrawal. He realized that he was repeating his own father’s pattern, which he recalled as “leaving me all alone in the hands of my crazy mother, who poked me incessantly.” “Thank God that Nancy’s not crazy,” he added, “but still I can’t stand watching her give so much love to Daniel while I feel so unloved and devalued.”

In exploring Rich’s shameful withdrawal, he realized that he had made Nancy into an “ideal” version of his mother. He concurrently
had recreated the sense of being left alone without a father's watchful protection (i.e., without an adequate dyadic, paternal identification). Lacking an internal, "watchful" paternal presence, Rich could not safely be alone without the idealized ("breast") mother he made Nancy into and desperately clung to.

Rich could only experience himself as a "whole man" when he was able to relive the illusion of completely satisfying his own mother, and consequently, reexperience himself as having recovered the "lost paradise" of being inside her. He stated, "I was Nancy's only man for so long and she was so there for me. It hurts to admit it." Rich continued, "but I don't want to share her because she'll just replace me with Daniel and I'll be all alone again." The "rainy days" that Rich had been compulsively preparing for could be understood as reflecting his infantile anxieties of being "left out in the cold," a "cold" that rendered him feeling unprotected and inadequately provided for as if violently torn away from the warmth and comfort of a forever shattered, human connection.

We were analyzing how his sense of masculinity and accompanying self-esteem were linked to his fantasy of having his wife all to himself and in turn, experiencing her as the source of his longed for return to an ideal state of happiness. Rich became more able to recognize, disclose, and bear his deep sense of shame and abandonment in his analysis as his experiences were connected to his "phallic" ideals born out of childhood grandiosity. As a result, Rich's need to withdraw from Daniel and Nancy could lessen and he began to identify with Daniel as a self-extension in need of protective, involved fathering. Rich recognized how much his son needed a father who could "be the umbrella for Danny and his mother." He mused as to how Daniel would need him in the years ahead, while genuinely appreciating Nancy's capacity to give so much love to their son.

In a session just after Daniel's first birthday, Rich proudly described the deepening father-son bond while noting his own increased acceptance of his differentiation from Nancy. He next turned his thoughts toward his relationship with his wife and observed that he was no longer draining her with his own neediness. He stated somewhat delightedly, "You know, now that Nancy isn't so tired all the time, I can even imagine her lusting after me again." Rich then playfully indicated both his steadily increasing differentiation from
and connection to Nancy when he added the punch line, "But you know what? I just might not be in the mood myself!"

**Serving as an Alternate Attachment Figure**

Fathers exemplify the "second other" or "second object" (Greenspan, 1982; Limentani, 1991) to their sons and daughters. A father plays with his infant in more stimulating and novel, less soothing ways than does a mother (Yogman, 1982). The father's nurturing tends to be experienced in a more exhilarating "interactional," rather than "caretaking" fashion (Greenberg, 1985). To the infant, father often evokes the response, "party time!" (cf. Pruett, 1987). As a differently responding libidinal and self-object figure, fathers traditionally play a pivotal, representational role in introducing their infants to the exciting, larger outer world. When the father is able to render this function, both through his active presence and his wife's validation of his significance, then he, as the preoedipal, dyadic father of separation and rapprochement, serves as an important figure of identification for the boy (Freud, 1921; Greenson, 1968; Stoller, 1985).

Abelin (1971, 1975, 1980) elaborated on the father's earliest role vis-à-vis the mother in the child's struggle to differentiate from her. In this early triangulation, the child forms an internal structure as he becomes aware of a set of relations, involving himself, his mother, and another (i.e., the father). This object relational structure is distinguished by the fact that the child does not take part in the relationship between his mother and his father.

The father as "third" person ensures his son of transitioning from mirroring, one-to-one interactions to the realm of symbolic representations involving more than one object (and including the self). The paternal "third" allows for the establishment of what I term a **reflective object** and plays an important role in the development of the child's mental life (cf. Fonagy and Target, 1995). Lacan's (1966) conception of the "paternal metaphor" embodies this facet of the early paternal function for the child. The "name of the father" represents the lawfulness of the triadic system of relationships whereby the child is introduced to the world beyond his control.
This early paternal function, where the father serves as the "second object," thereby structures the child’s entrance into the culture’s symbolic reality. The "name of the father" consequently comes to represent cultural, symbolic reality. The father, in contrast to the mother, provides his infant child with an external perspective on the primary (infant–mother) relationship. The presence of this early fathering and more external representation is frequently required in order to release the child from a more pathological symbiotic relationship. Several analysts have demonstrated clinically how the intrapsychic disavowal of the father as a "third" in the early triangle impairs the establishment of the oedipal situation (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1985; Kirshner, 1992; Fonagy and Target, 1995). The boy's disavowal of his father serves as a major source of male psychopathology by keeping the child removed from his culture's "reality" while preserving the little boy's dyadic illusion of being paired with his mother.

In considering the specific nature of the father's involvement, Benjamin (1988, 1991) has expanded on Abelin’s position by articulating the father’s unique role in facilitating his child’s struggle for recognition through identification. My own perspective on the early preoedipal father takes its inspiration largely from Benjamin's more encompassing developmental outlook involving both separation and recognition.

Early separation through rapprochement subphases of development involves the child's realization of gender and genital difference as he symbolically distinguishes between mother and father in the psyche. Benjamin (1988) contends that under our present parenting arrangements, fathers symbolize a different kind of object, more of a "mirror of desire" who can more appropriately satisfy those needs than can a mother, who represents the "source of goodness." A father, then, is experienced less as a self-object and more as an "other" who wants and acts to satisfy his wants. Fathers are endowed with these particular attributes as a "projection of the child's own desire" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 151). In sum, while we cannot know precisely what occurs in the infant's mind, we can extrapolate that mothers represent attachment and parental attitudes of holding, listening and mirroring. Alternatively, fathers, who are introduced more as an other who serves as a subject of desire, stand for the
recognition of independence and desire as reflected in parental attitudes of stretching the child's adaptive capacities, challenging children to conquer obstacles, as well as confronting the child with the world of differentiation and the demands of reality (Benjamin, 1991; see also Abelin, 1980; Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1985; McWilliams, 1991).¹⁰

This fatherly representation is presumed to occur even when the traditional gender divisions in parenting, in which the mother is the primary nurturing figure, are modified (cf. Ehrensaft, 1987; Pruett, 1987). The idealization of the father as a delegate of the outside world operates powerfully as a cultural representation even when the real parents do not reinforce it (Benjamin, 1988). Among the increasing number of families not reproducing this stereotyped gender split, children still create a "fantasy father hero," a "knight in shining armor," to represent the link to the exciting outside while assuming the role of standing for freedom, separation, and desire (Benjamin, 1991).

This "father principle" (Abelin, 1971) is depicted by the "sky father" myth, such as Zeus with thunderbolt in hand, separated from the intimately nurturing functions of earth. Like the sun god, the father brings the light of consciousness into the early realms previously dominated by the mother. An Indian tale conveys this theme as the mother holding the small baby says, "I will comfort you." The father then takes the baby to the mountaintop and proclaims, "This is the world; I will introduce you" (cited in Gunsberg, 1982, p. 65).¹¹

¹⁰ In this paper, I place parenting within a cultural, social context rather than a biological one. While either parent can serve both mothering and fathering functions, I agree with Benjamin (1988, 1991) that parenting tends to be organized so that mothers are "inside," caretaking figures of dependency and fathers are "outside," coming-and-going figures of independence. Moreover, the toddler's experience of this split between a "holding" mother and an "exciting" father begins as a way of resolving the conflict between dependence and independence. Once this constellation is modified or subverted, women and mothers can become "the second other." It remains unanswerable, however, as to what masculinity and femininity are, and far too early to speculate as to how the psychic representations of mothers and fathers will alter among both single and homosexual parents, and as the gender arrangements of parenting shift over future generations.

¹¹ A father's poem to his small son expresses this "second other" function and the internalization that accrues from a father's mode of "feeding" his child the "outside" world (Feinstein, 1986):

David, when you are baird (Though I hope you're not)
As you are now
And rocking in a hammock, remembering something that has no words
Pick up this poem that has your father in it:
A brief clinical vignette illustrates one consequence of the absence of an early paternal "third."

Clinical Example: Phil

Phil, a man in his late fifties, entered analytic treatment as a "last resort." He had been in and out of a series of unsuccessful treatments over the last twenty years and felt that suicide had become the only viable option if this treatment didn't "touch" him. I will discuss neither the complicated transference-countertransference matrix nor the course of treatment since I only wish to illustrate the effects of the absence of an internal, sustaining paternal object able to recognize a small boy's nascent affective states.

Although a successful attorney, Phil was living a life of emotional poverty. He had been married and divorced three times, was estranged from his only sister, and lived an isolated existence except for an occasional sport's outing with one of his grown children. He had engaged in a series of dissociated actions over the last decade that had resulted in his facing criminal charges and severing most of his professional and personal ties. Through the analysis, Phil's inner life was revealed as one where he felt dominated by a "Stone God." This omnipresent and punitive "God" served to destroy his humanity by rendering human emotion and impulse as "evil." Utterly lacking in compassion, this infantile, Judaic version of an early dyadic paternal object was described as a veritable "Moses/Abram lying in the bushes waiting to sacrifice me for thoughts that violate the 'Ten Commandments'." As a consequence, Phil's interior life was marked

I've just come home from traveling.  
I shake out my umbrella.  
I lift you from the darkness  
And rock you like a pendulum.  
You tug at my shirt, fascinated by the blue and purple rectangles,  
So I take it off.  
You stuff it in your mouth, as you will my virtues and my faults.  
The sun glazes and holds us like a photo in the moment  
As you hold this  
As I once held you. David [p. 482].
by persecutory anxiety, hopelessness, and guilt of dreaded proportion. His dreams frequently involved idealized figures who would righteously murder him for unspecified crimes.

The reconstruction of Phil's history indicated that his father, a poor Eastern-European immigrant who was seldom home in seeking to establish a life for his family in America, was not able to recognize his small son as an independent object in his own right. This specific form of paternal absence ran concurrent with Phil, as a young boy, being virtually left to an exclusively feminine world comprised of his aunt, grandmother, and sister along with an invasive, depressed mother. Neither his father, nor other caretaking surrogates, were available as the paternal "third" that might allow Phil to have established a "reflective object" that could modulate this child's introduction to the world beyond his control.

Phil's entrance into the culture's symbolic reality, consequently, was left to be structured by his own primitive ego and superego mechanisms. His intrapsychically contracted "Stone God (Father)" was unable to contribute an authentically external perspective on the primary (infant–mother) relationship. Such an external perspective based on the necessary early paternal representation, might have successfully released Phil from a more pathological symbiotic relationship by contributing to both the holding and molding of Phil's "humanity" by recognizing an infant son. Phil's "Stone God," instead, sought to obliterate the crime of his very existence.

*Facilitating Separation and Individuation*

As an alternate attachment figure and by virtue of encouraging his son's exploratory and early phallic attitude, a father helps disengage his child's ego from the regressive pull back to the primacy of the mother–child relationship. To the small boy in the throes of the rapprochement crisis with his mother, the father is a less "contaminated object" who cools down the mother–son libidinal intensity by shifting the son's interest and encouraging his autonomous exploration (Mahler et al., 1975).

By dint of both engaging his son and reclaiming his wife, the father protects his wife and child from lingering too long in a fusional
state. The father thereby facilitates the separation-individuation process while offering his son and his wife a dyadic relationship with him that is parallel to and competing with the mother–child unit (Campbell, 1995). In playing a friendly rival with his son and wife, the desirable and desiring father “stakes a claim on his child” (Campbell, 1995, p. 319) and enables his boy to move from the exclusivity of the infant–mother dyad into an inclusive position in the preoedipal triad.

The father’s responsive presence provides his boy with an experience of being protected against the powers of regressive needfullness and the dangers of “individuation undone” (Blos, 1985). Fathers moreover offer protection against the mother’s anxieties and influences (because he is less “contaminated” by conflicts around dependency), while reflecting and encouraging the mother’s independent otherness for his son. Accordingly, mothers need not be less accessible nor even disidentified with at this point (Benjamin, personal communication). The father’s availability as a new, separate object for identification, instead, provides the nexus for resolving splits in a context of triangular growth. An internalization of the strong dyadic father as a powerful, yet playful figure of liberation results in a lifelong source of security and safety in a manageable world.

Benjamin (1988, 1991) gives prominence to the dyadic father as the “second object.” By bringing in the excitement of the outside, he provides his son both direct recognition through approval as well as validation through symbolic identification with a powerful other (serving as the child’s ideal). The images of separation and desire are joined in the father ideal of this “first individuation.” As she (1991) describes it:

[T]he father’s entry is a *deus ex machina* that solves the rapprochement dilemma of having to get the confirmation of independence from the one the child still longs to depend on. Identification with the father is a vehicle for avoiding conflict as well as for separation, for denying helplessness and the loss of practicing grandiosity [p. 283].

This process of identification with the dyadic father requires the father’s reciprocity as he identifies with and makes himself available to his son. Recognition through identification is now substituted for
the more conflictual need to be recognized directly by the primary parent on whom the son feels dependent. When affirmed by the father, such identification enables the son to deny his rapprochement helplessness and confirm the core experience of being the "subject of desire" (Benjamin, 1991). Separation and gender identification hereby occur in the relational context of a strong, mutual attraction between father and son, a "homoerotic, identificatory love," which establishes masculine identity and informs the image of autonomy (Benjamin, 1991).

As the father also recognizes his son as a subject of desire, the boy's sense of masculinity is developed further by experiencing himself as actively initiating and seeking the fulfillment of his needs. As he seeks, so shall he experience the frustrated deprivation of his yearnings, particularly, as Abelin (1980) emphasized, concerning the regressive, primary mutuality provided by his mother. The good enough father structures the necessary disillusionment by ensuring that his son experiences optimal deprivation so as to keep the core experience of subjectivity alive.

This developmental transition involves object relations switching from dyadic to triadic as the full attainment of object constancy is achieved. During this furthering of early triangulation, the boy identifies with his desiring father and now can see himself as part of a triangle rather than a dyad. This early paternal identification enables the boy to fantasize that he is being the father toward a more differentiated mother and not her helpless baby (Abelin, 1980). A trusting, secure, and affective, preverbal relationship of mutual influence between father and son is required as well as fatherly restraint with regard to alignment.

The shared (preverbal) maleness with a father who recognizes himself in his son provides the son with a crucial early experience of

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17 Abelin (1980) introduced the idea of the boy toddler's need to represent himself as a subject who desires, albeit in relation to his mother (e.g., "I want mommy"). As a result of the son's identification with a father who desires the mother, the boy can move from a state in which the object is a source of attraction to a state wherein his subjectivity is the source of his own desire. Benjamin (1991) argued for a more "general wish to be recognized as a subject of desire rather than merely subject to a need" (p. 282; emphasis added). In disagreeing with Abelin's emphasis (and the boy's concomitant experience of his mother as depriving), Benjamin advanced the crucial observations that the son not only represents his father as subject of desire but needs and wants to be recognized as such a subject by that father.
another who is essentially like himself yet outside his omnipotent control (Kaf tal, 1991). Father becomes established as a secure "second other" on the shoreline offering his hand in mutual sameness to his son as he tries to swim to shore while fighting off the malevolent, preoedipal dragons of his own projected, regressive yearnings to omnipotently possess his mother (Greenspan, 1982). Thus, for the boy to move on developmentally, he must "push against the maternal fantasy of completeness...to win his independence" (Hand, 1994, p. 20). This struggle is dramatically portrayed in the Odysseus myth where he stops up the ears of his men with wax and then, serving as his own fatherly presence, orders the men to bind him to the mast of his ship so that he will not succumb to the temptation and be lured to destruction by the sweet singing Sirens.

Clinical Example: Kevin

The importance of sufficient fatherly provision during the separation-individuation phase is evident in the case of Kevin, a successful professional in his early thirties. He began analytic treatment by describing himself as "unable to enjoy anything and (being) even more neurotic than Woody Allen." He had been living with a woman for five years, yet was tormented by obsessive doubts about the relationship, unable to commit himself, and sexually removed.

Kevin described his mother as "the quintessential Jewish mother, capable of rendering any pleasure as dangerous and ill-advised. I was afraid to go to a ball game," he said, "because my mother always reminded me of how easily I could die if hit on the head by a ball." Kevin's father was portrayed as distant, uninvolved, and consumed by work.

As treatment progressed, Kevin's longing for his father to return and take him from his mother's influence and anxieties into a masculine world became accessible. He joyfully recalled his father's closeness when tucking him in bed as a small boy and playing "roughhouse" games, which they called "hold that line." Soon thereafter, his father seemed to disappear, and Kevin became upset when he remembered his mother protesting the roughhousing because "it's not safe."
Two more traditional interpretive approaches were found wanting until woven together with an appreciation for the needed dyadic father identification. "Oedipal" lines of interpretation, emphasizing Kevin's regression from the dangers of his incestuous desires, aggression, and castration anxieties, were inadequate. Similarly, matricentric interpretations along "separation-individuation" lines, stressing symbiotic yearnings as a retreat from (object loss) dangers associated with autonomy, did not fit. We began eventually to understand how the dangers of desire, excitement, and pleasure (as well as being an autonomous, "masculine" self) revolved around Kevin's lacking an internalized, strong dyadic father representing liberation. Kevin constantly struggled with being overstimulated by any libidinal desire since there was insufficient modulation by a second object with whom he could reciprocally identify. His preoedipal transference to me was anxiety-ridden and masochistic. The analysis of this transference indicated that Kevin had turned toward his sadistic older brother, primarily during adolescence and young adulthood, in a problematic, displaced quest to establish an absent, early dyadic identification with a "second other."

Modulating Negative and Aggressive Affect

The father's presence ensures that there is someone to love when the mother is hated. There is an oscillation between father-as-other (i.e., against mother) and father-as-lover of both mother and son within the now expanding matrix of father-as-container of the mother-son dyad. Negative and aggressive fantasy and affect become attenuated through such well-contained and adaptive splitting until the boy can better tolerate conflict and ambivalence.

Self psychologists have discussed the "second chance" afforded by fathers when the mother has failed in her early self-object functions causing a premature build-up of narcissistic rage and insufficient self-cohesion (Kohut, 1977). The father moreover has "the competence and capacity for restoring a good relationship to the primary object" (Limentani, 1991, p. 573). Fathers play a unique role in helping their children to stabilize basic ego functions including reality testing and secondary process functioning, affect modulation, mood and impulse regulation, delineation of self from other,
and focused concentration (e.g., Loewald, 1951; Greenspan, 1982; Herzog, 1982b). Intellectual, creative, and academic functioning as well as self-esteem regulation (versus depression) are significantly affected by the father’s active nurturing and playful involvement during this and latter phases of childhood.

Fathers also serve as “models” for the capacity to contain, master, and appropriately express aggression. Moreover, the modulation of aggression is the prototype for the boy’s regulation of affect (Shengold, 1993). When the son can learn from his father how to “shift gears” from one level of emotional arousal to another, a “state transforming caretaking” is said to occur (Herzog, 1982a; see also Betcher and Pollack, 1993). Poseidon, the mythological god of the sea, personifies the father’s power in this realm of instinct and emotion. As the earth’s husband, Poseidon provides the life-giving moisture to keep her fertile through creatively expressing his potentially disruptive emotions.

Modulated expression by the father promotes the boy’s learning of appropriate aggression, which of course can be significantly impaired if the father is either absent (Herzog, 1982a) or incapable of such “tough love,” and instead, represses his own aggression or traumatically overstimulates his son by abusive display. Inadequately tempered paternal aggression is unfortunately all too evident in clinical work. Fathers who are capable of “sheltering their sons with such male strength” promote the development of strong men without being destructive (Osherson, 1986).

The next case vignette illustrates the developmental consequences on a boy growing up with a father who could not be internalized as a modulator of aggressive affect. The example indicates the operation of this man’s ensuing paternal imago within the transference.

*Clinical Example: Peter*

Peter was a boyishly handsome, divorced father in his early forties. Though a successful artist, he was lonely and depressed, experiencing himself as “a little boy lost.” Women were drawn to his gentle sweetness only to become fed up with his passivity and lack of commitment. Peter dreaded conflict and self-assertion, bemoaned the absence of
male friendships, and felt troubled by his inability to be a strong influence on his 9-year-old son.

Shortly after beginning his analysis, Peter revealed how terrorized he was by a violent father who divorced his mother when he was 5. Peter spoke little of his father for a year as he agonized over his unsuccessful efforts to establish boundaries with his weak, yet invasive mother. He then tearfully recounted an incident shortly before his parents divorced when his father fired a gun in the house during an argument with Peter's uncle. Peter shook as he relived hearing gunshots and recalled seeing bullet holes in the ceiling (although no one was hurt). He looked toward me and said sadly, "I need to get angry, to feel angry with you, but I can't and I'm afraid I never will."

Aggression was terrifying because it seemed uncontainable, promising only destruction and abandonment. Peter wished for a strong, sheltering, and restrained father capable of tolerating conflict and ambivalence without becoming abusive. I focused increasingly on Peter's resistance to experiencing the negative transference, and he told me, "I am afraid of being dissatisfied with you because if I am, I'll get angry and there'll be nothing left but rage. That's all I'll be." I addressed his fears of my losing myself to my retaliatory impulses and thereby leaving him alone "without someone to help (him) shelter, restrain, and learn to both tolerate and express" his aggression.

Providing a Male Mode of Toilet Training and Valuing Phallic Masculinity

Boys require a different approach to toilet training than do girls. An involved father offers a male model of urinary (and later bowel) training characterized by an emphasis on play, skill, and mastery in the standing upright position; an identification with father (without an emphasis on "pleasing mommy"); and an increased valuing of the penis. Little boys relish watching their fathers shave and engage in other "bathroom activities," consuming all they can as to what adult males are uniquely about. Separation and feminine disidentification are thereby further encouraged, core gender identity supported, and phallic masculinity and gender role better established (e.g., Stoller, 1968; Tyson, 1982; Shopper, 1989).
Fathers teach their boys to enjoy “pissing in the wind,” “making bubbles like daddy,” and otherwise enjoying the touch, familiarity, and control afforded by aiming their penis like a newfound toy. The capacity for ingenuity and pleasure in autonomous mastery is directly reinforced as sons proudly display their phallic power by letting their “creative streams” flow in their fathers’ presence (Shengold, 1993). Moreover, toileting privacy becomes less important as the male mode of training provides an early inroad to father-initiated group relations. Fathers might be observed helping their small sons to adapt in public urinals by playing games such as “hitting the bullseye.”

Involved fathers also help their sons to discover the interior dimensions of their “phallic” masculinity, as embodied by the testicles (in contrast to the penis). A father’s valuing of his son’s “inner” body, specifically in the form of the open, receptive, and spatial aspects of inward bodily experience, helps to establish a foundation necessary for the maturing boy’s (and young man’s) subsequent ability to attenuate his fear of being psychically penetrated. This involves the father’s reciprocal recognition of both his son’s and his own “messy” impulsive and affective, intersubjective dimensions of the self that are inherently less well-defined and contoured. A shared father-son cognizance of an inner productive space wherein the more private, “masculine” self can be discovered and revealed, subsequently helps a son to diminish the male tendency to represent his sexuality as purely phallic. When a boy grows up without this more “interiorized” facet of his father’s reciprocal and bodily based, genital identification, an exaggerated form of male phallicism is more likely. I believe that this deficiency produces a defensive focus on the external body and an exaggerated need for mastery of the external world that, co-existing with a denial of the inner body and testicles, will inhibit mature gender identity development (Diamond, 1997b, 1998; see also Stein, 1988; Friedman, 1996; Elise, in press).

Supporting Gender and Gender Identity Development

A father is pivotal in establishing his son’s gender identities, roles, and object choices (e.g., Greenson, 1968; Stoller, 1968, 1985; Chodorow, 1978; Tyson, 1982; Fast, 1984, 1990; Diamond, 1997a). Fathers
help their prephallic boys to differentiate themselves optimally from the attributes of their mother that represent her "femininity," while affirming in them their own subjective sense of desire through identifying with their father's masculinity. However, this is not as simple as it might appear.

The fact that the boy has identified with many maternal attributes renders this disidentification process problematic, if not theoretically dubious (Pollack, 1995; Axelrod, 1997). Since the "feminine" is not eliminated from the boy's psyche, we might more accurately say that he forms an opposition to his maternal identifications. Grotstein (1993) coined the phrase, "oppositional identification" (p. 142) to designate identifications that take the form of rebellion or reaction formations yet which are still locked into a devoted relationship to the original object. This depiction often seems to capture the nature of the little boy's identificatory stance toward his mother (Schou, 1995; Diamond, 1997a).

From a different standpoint, Pollack (1995) has incisively questioned the use of the term disidentification in referring to what he considered as a normative male developmental trauma that results from the boy's "traumatic abrogation of the early holding environment" (p. 35). Boys do seem to experience a narcissistic wounding and concomitant sense of shame as they attempt to repudiate the loss of something crucial in their connections with their mothers. The boy's early task of abruptly separating from the dyadic relationship with his mother, consequently, leaves him with a sense of masculinity that is fundamentally both conflicted and fragile (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1985; Benjamin, 1988, 1991; Pollack, 1995; Schou, 1995).

I believe that the small boy's preoedipal trauma involves both the loss of an ideal state of primary narcissism and unity with the maternal object, and the premature loss and repudiation of his sense of connection with his mother (Diamond, 1997a). It is the "wound" associated with these important losses to which the boy child must adapt and work through in order to develop a healthy sense of gender identity. An available father is crucial in facilitating his son's adaptation to these losses and the boy's subsequent construction of his cohesive yet flexible masculine gender identity.

How might we understand the father's role in his son's gender-essential adaptations? I suggest that the father titrates this maternally
linked "wound" by empathizing with his boy's need to move away from his first (i.e., mothering) object while concomitantly welcoming his son's masculine identification through an affectionate presence. These fatherly provisions enable the boy to consolidate his earliest maternal-feminine identifications. I am stressing here this subtle and easily overlooked facet of the father's availability as an accepting, identificatory object for his son. In other words, the father's presentation as an identificatory object for his son's masculinity provides the son with the deepest reassurance that his identificatory connections to his mother will no longer have to be disavowed out of the boy's fear of not being masculine. An early context is thus fostered for the eventual integration of the multiple, differently gendered identifications. These incipient, preoedipal (maternal and paternal) identifications subsequently facilitate the adult male's consolidation of a mature, genital sense of his maleness that dialectically incorporates both core gender identity and the gender multiplicity of the multi-gendered self, as well as gender cohesion and gender fluidity (Bassin, 1996; Diamond, 1997a,b, 1998).

A strong, mutual attraction between father and son facilitates this masculine alliance and gender identification. A robust and sensual physicality, along with a sense of play, excitement, and discovery, help to reassure the son that the world of men includes pleasure, spontaneity, and vitality. An involved father championing male congruity and sameness helps his son consolidate a narcissistically valued, intact sense of male body image as well as a comfortable view of himself in his identification with an engaged father. Affection and body contact pleasure, typically involving large muscle activity with imitation of movement, consequently provide the roots for (homoerotic) identification (Benjamin, 1988)\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13} The role of sufficient fatherly exchange in "feeding" the son's masculinity is evocatively conveyed in Bly's (1990) metaphorical description:
The son's body—not his mind—receives and the father gives this food at a level far below consciousness... His cells receive some knowledge of what an adult masculine body is. The younger body learns at what frequency the masculine body vibrates. It begins to grasp the song that adult male cells sing... Slowly, over months or years, that son's body strings begin to resonate to the (harsh, sometimes demanding, testily humorous, irreverent, impatient, opinionated, forward-driving, silence-loving) older masculine body [pp. 93-94].
This aim-inhibited bond, saddled neither with sexual nor aggressive tension, is not to be confused with the notion of inherent bisexuality (cf. Stoller, 1985). Instead, this "homoerotic, identificatory love" (Benjamin, 1991) or "isogender attachment" (Blos, 1985) serves as the boy's vehicle for establishing masculine identity. A somewhat polarized, even rigid masculine gender identity (as a "boy" in distinct contrast to a "girl") serves an important, stage-appropriate developmental function that is necessary for the young boy's ego development, stable self-identity, differentiated object relations, and social demands (Lasky, 1989). However, such gender polarity will require transcendence later in development in order to fully achieve the male genital stage (Bassin, 1996; Diamond, 1997a,b, 1998). As I suggested (p. 272), a father's recognition and reciprocity toward his son's interior phallicism becomes an important precursor of a mature sense of masculinity. In essence, without sufficient father-son mutuality during the preoedipal phases of gender identity development, the boy will subsequently have difficulty in achieving the necessary integration of his earliest feminine and masculine identifications.

The outcome of this failure to integrate will become manifest in the boy's postoedipal and young man's postadolescent defensive organization of gender identity experience. This results in the development of unconscious gender ossification, which later becomes manifest as gender confusion or rigid certainty. Healthy adult (masculine) gender identity will require a satisfactory balance between such confusion and certainty, or what Ogden (1989) referred to as "the creation of a dialectical interplay between masculine and feminine identities" (p. 138). I propound that the nature of the preoedipal father-son identificatory attachment significantly affects this dialectical creation.

I am arguing that the availability of an affectionate, bodily involved father, in contrast to the less physically real, more symbolic father, sets in motion a process whereby the son's weaning from his mother is neither abrupt, traumatic, nor demanding of disidentification. Both an extreme form of "disidentification from the mother," as manifest by her son's repudiation and disavowal of his maternal identifications, and a problematic, highly conflicted pattern of counteridentification with the father against the mother, become unnecessary. Father-son bodily based identification instead attenuates the
son’s need to repudiate femininity in order to organize his gender identity (while idealizing a distant, still symbolic father). Progressive differentiation in relation to one’s mother, rather than opposition, predominates and masculine gender identity is founded more upon a reciprocal identification with an available father (Diamond, 1995, 1997a,b, 1998).

The son with such a paternal identification can more gradually renounce selected facets of his identifications with his mother (while retaining other features of his maternal identifications), particularly as the involved father furthers optimal gender identity consolidation throughout middle childhood and early adolescence. In short, in addition to providing a conventional focus for his son’s masculine identification, an available preoedipal father moderates his little boy’s defensive tendencies to disidentify from his mother in order to organize his gender identity in a fixed and impermeable way and instead, provides the foundation for a more secure and varied gendered expression of self (Benjamin, 1988, 1991; Diamond, 1997b, 1998).

Serving as Oedipal Challenger

Trustworthy yet restraining fathers enable triadic object relations to mature as the son takes on the role of one parent in relation to the other in a conflicted way. In its preeminent phallic-oedipal representation, the son shifts from being mother’s baby to being her lover and from being father’s baby to being his competitor and companion. The “genital father” then is totally differentiated from the mother as he helps his son develop into a healthy, civilized human being capable of creation, symbolization, sublimation, and a moral standard of conduct. Greek mythology symbolizes the supremacy of this triadic father as the father–son struggle becomes the important conflict. Castration anxiety is consequently manifest in fears of loss of love, punishment, and humiliation from the father, as well as in the loss of the capacity to feel desire itself (i.e., aphanisis). The primacy of the father’s support of the succeeding generation takes precedence, however, as he senses his son’s developmental trajectory and achievement in reaching this stage. This fatherly characteristic attenuates his
aggressive, rivalrous, and conflictual impulses toward his son. Consequently, good enough oedipal fathers are predominantly proud and accepting of their boy's normal "oedipal" growth.

Sons must find an adaptive way to channel their competitive impulses and aggressive wishes toward their fathers in order to attenuate their castration anxiety. The boy's sense of narcissistic inadequacy propels him further to identify with his oedipal father in order to diminish this sense and overcome his castration fears. Involved fathers who are neither overly seductive nor deprecating help establish a positive identification based on the real object ties of an overt alliance, rather than solely a defensive one based on the classic notion of identification with the (primarily symbolic) aggressor. The available father with whom the little boy can reciprocally identify and onto whom he can project his ego ideal, serves to attenuate the boy's sense of narcissistic inadequacy. The son has a "powerful" father who can destroy all adversaries (including the fathers of the other boys). This makes it easier for the child to accept the identity of a small boy without having to fear that this condition will be permanent (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1985; Manninen, 1992; Diamond, 1997a).

All sons must, nonetheless, wage a perpetual internal struggle between the seductive, grandiose power of phallicism and the more relative achievement of genitality that requires an acceptance of limitation and a synthesis of autonomy and connection. An internalization of the available oedipal ("genital") father weighs the struggle in the direction of genitality while diminishing the boy's sense of "phallic urgency" (Manninen, 1992). Development can consequently proceed gradually in line with reality, and "phallic illusions" no longer need be relied upon to reduce the gap between the boy's ego and its ideal in order to attain narcissistic equilibrium (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1985).

This positive identification with a restrained and appropriate challenger who actively demonstrates his love for his son by being proud and encouraging, facilitates the son's tolerance for intense feelings of passion and "erotic excitement." Positive, loving affect and fantasy toward the mother as well as the son's accompanying castration anxiety, are modulated by a restrained father's challenging, yet nonhostile and actively loving presence. Incestuous libido is turned away from sexual expression with the mother into new directions as the
son learns it is safe to "want a girl just like the girl that married dear old dad." This transition requires that fathers protect their sons from incestuous wishes toward the mother and sisters (Limentani, 1991).

An exchange observed between a father and his 4-year-old boy illustrates such a "restrained challenge" by a father reciprocally identifying with and making himself available to his son.

The son approached his father shortly after both parents emerged from their bedroom one morning. "I don’t like you Dad," the boy said, "I like mommy more." The father mimicked an angry face and jestfully replied, "Oh you do, do you?" before continuing, "That’s okay because I like you and I know you mostly like me." The boy, appreciating his father’s understanding, responded, "Well, I do like you, just a little bit." His father smiled and playfully lifted the boy towards him declaring, "I’m glad, son!"

Such positive identification with an involved father, who is both a competitor and companion (demanding prohibition and self-control), helps the son achieve a firm sense of belonging with a well-grounded sense of reality (Loewald, 1951). This process runs counter to the disproportionate idealization of the distant, abstractly perceived symbolic father whose distance contrasts with the mother’s closeness. Moreover, the previously established warm and constructive father-son isogender attachment, accompanied neither by homosexual nor oedipal tension (cf. Blos, 1985), is furthered by this positive identification. This more dyadic bond, moreover, attenuates both the son’s possible envy of his mother’s birthing capacities as well as his inverted oedipal wishes, as, for example, in wanting to have a baby in order to have his father (as mother does). Identification with the father’s nurturing and generative functions consequently encourages the development of a paternal identity, procreative ambitions, and eventual fatherhood (Ross, 1982b; Diamond, 1986).

The oedipal father, like Winnicott’s (1947) preoedipal mother, must also be able to hate his son in a contained manner. The filicidal, pederastic Laius, father to Oedipus and his tragedy, represents the outcome of unconscious, intergenerational rivalry enacted by a malevolent, vindictive father (Ross, 1982c). Loving fathers must also
know their own envy and competitiveness with their sons and sublimate their darker impulses by making efforts directed toward limit-setting and age-appropriate differentiation. Through this boundary structuring, fathers promote healthy identification, superego development, and the capacity to accept and tolerate aggression, conflict, and ambivalence. The good enough oedipal father is thereby established as a figure of benign authority.

Clinical Example: Raymond

Raymond, an African-American in his mid-thirties, began treatment following an incident of physically abusing his wife. He was depressed, remorseful, and feared destroying his marriage, "with the best woman I've ever known." Moreover, occasional episodes of alcohol and drug abuse threatened his career, causing him to worry that, like his father, he'd "make shit out of everything worthwhile."

His alcoholic father had abandoned Raymond and his infant twin brothers to his "loving but very doting" mother's care when he was 6. Though he "hung out with many coworkers," Raymond had enormous difficulty relying on other men unless they were joined together to "defeat another organization." His transference to me was marked initially by a charming veneer barely disguising his considerable distrust. Once our racial differences and his concerns about me as a "white man" were discussed, our work could begin to explore Raymond's deeper transferences and dynamics reflecting his sense of oedipal "conquest" and accompanying failure to establish triangular relations. "She was like my wife in a way," Raymond said in describing his mother, "and I was her 'special dude' who helped her raise the twins."

Raymond brought in a dream during our second year depicting his longing for a "genital" father connected to his mother, a triadic father with whom he could identify and yet be generationally junior to. In the dream, Raymond was a teenager playing basketball on his driveway with his much revered high school coach. They were playing "one on one" intensely when Raymond elbowed the older man away from guarding him. His elbow hit the coach's face and blood began pouring out. The coach dropped to the ground like a "wounded
bear" and Raymond was stunned and frightened. His mother had been watching and she ran straight to the bleeding coach, ministering to him. She looked toward Raymond as if to say, "I love the coach like a husband and I will take care of him even if you are scared." Raymond awoke feeling strangely upset yet relieved. This relief suggests that Raymond was searching for a good enough oedipal father so that he would no longer be so plagued by the unconscious burden of being the "child-father" with its accompanying sense of oedipal victory and excessive guilt.

Initiating and Mentoring Instrumental and Expressive Masculinity (as well as Group Relations)

The latency-age son in middle childhood requires his father's active mentorship and nurturing guidance to help in becoming masterly, persistent, and freed to fulfill creative wishes. Though resembling the earlier preoedipal dyadic bond, this phase of the father-son dyadic relationship evidences a progression with new forms. An interesting form of dyadic reciprocity emerges when the father acts fatherly in these respects and when the son is able to follow his lead. The son's filiality subsequently reflects both his response to his father's guidance and his identification with this particular paternal function. This provision, which occurs as the Oedipus complex wanes, permits the boy to advance toward a paternal identity (Ross, 1982b).

Fathers protect their prepubescent sons from inner and outer demands that are too much, too little, or inappropriate. This is no mean feat, however, and the fable of Icarus warns of the danger in exceeding a father's instruction in order for a son to fulfill his pressing oedipal impulses to surpass the father. Daedalus provided his son Icarus with wings of wax and feathers to escape from imprisonment in the Labyrinth of Minos. Recognizing the need to channel his young son's instincts, Daedalus cautioned him not to fly too near the sun. Nevertheless Icarus ignored his father's advice and fell to his death when the wax melted.

Fathers purvey a "pragmatic, instrumental masculinity" with its more advanced secondary process formations by stressing the functional and practical in responding to their sons' needs and desires
to study and make things (Sarnoff, 1982). It is important for fathers to be "good teachers" in order to facilitate their sons' acquisition of patterns of action and thinking that, in drive nomenclature, are "deinstinctualized." The boys' task is one of "removal" from the oedipal phase's incestuous, instinctual tie to the parents. Thus, masculine identification is further consolidated through successful paternal mentoring that establishes "rules" needed to channel instinctual demands. Both Luis Bunuel's Mexican film, *Los Olvidades*, and John Singleton's American film, *Boyz N the Hood*, powerfully convey the significance of such fatherly presence, direction, and focus in establishing a father imago among inner city, Mexican and African-American boys respectively.

A male mode of morality is thereby fostered emphasizing rule-bound fairness and justice, in distinction to a less abstract female mode stressing relationship and connection (cf. Gilligan, 1982). Likewise, a palpably male mode of feeling is encouraged where affects tend to minister instrumental, serviceable aims in contrast to female modes where expressive, revelational uses are promoted. This male mode, which is oriented toward instrumental and serviceable goals, is forcefully conveyed in fatherly tones by the thirteenth century, mystic poet, Rumi (1984):

Think that you're gliding out from the face of a cliff like an eagle.  
Think you're walking like a tiger walks by himself in the forest.  
You're most handsome when you're after food.  
Spend less time with nightingales and peacocks.  
One is just a voice, the other just a color [p. 15].

Fathers also initiate and subsequently mentor their sons in patterned group relatedness. This begins with the triangulation within the family and soon extends well beyond as fathers introduce their sons to the self-transformative world of play and sports. Latency boys tend to group with other boys while adopting negative attitudes toward girls. This segregation furthers boys' masculine identification and mastery while reducing their instinctualized ties to their mothers (who are often experienced in archaic ways as "phallic" mothers).
The conflicted impulses and affects of boys become expressed through their submergence of the self to the group's task.

Fathers are needed as mentors for these groups of boys to help them mold their instinctual impulses into social behavior, and indeed father-led athletic and activity-oriented groups flourish during middle childhood. Identification with these mentoring males helps to provide new outlets for the instinctual demands that boys experience, permitting ego satisfaction in addition to direct instinctual gratification. Both communal play and "spontaneous expressive masculinity" develop through this fatherly involvement. "Spartan" virtues of mastering fear and pain as well as pleasurable experiences often marked by tenderness accrue as mentored boys establish an internal brake on their aggressive and sexual impulses, combining them into new behavior forms, frequently involving playfulness, providing, empathy, and relationship.

The need for active paternal mentoring in groups is marvelously portrayed in William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1962). The story involves a group of unmentored late latency and early adolescent boys shipwrecked on an island where absolute freedom and the absence of limits and laws soon leads to a chaotic nightmare. The disappearance of and hunger for the fathering dimension is indicated by murder and the founding of a pagan cult worshipping a pig's head (i.e., "The Lord of the Flies"). Order and salvation appear to be restored only at the end when a British officer, symbolizing the absent masculine influence, arrives. The tragic absence of sufficient masculine direction and reciprocity is ironically revealed, however, when the naval officer fails to recognize his own unmodulated aggression as he gazes upon the besieged boys.

Supporting Adolescent Individuation

Gratifications and disappointments for the father exist throughout his son's development. However, they usually "peak" during adolescence, as the child begins to distance and remove himself from his family dependencies. The ebbing of the most active period of parenting is heralded by the multiple changes taking place. Fathers need to mourn as the son's "second individuation" transpires (Blos, 1967,
1978), while simultaneously experiencing gratification in the son's push toward independence. Fathers' identifications with their sons render this separation more likely because the parent can rework some of the disappointments and ambitions of his own youth while steering his son toward a more realistic self. Feelings of impotence, loss, and resignation are nonetheless inevitable as fathers gradually abandon the role as father of a "young boy."

The boys' task during this "second major era of self-definition" is to achieve adult genital desire (i.e., genital primacy), consolidate gender identity, and acquire the ego maturation and stabilization of interests that accrue from the loss and mourning involved in disengaging from infantile parental objects (Blos, 1967). Fathers are idealized and nonerotic, protective yearnings are revived in pre- and early adolescence, while by midadolescence, this same father is undervalued as his son seeks to break from his childhood. The dyadic, preoedipal father relationship becomes resolved as the teenage boy increasingly relinquishes his infantile, preambivalent, idealizing attachment needs in order to form an adult ego ideal (Blos, 1985). The father must bear his son's disillusionment and painful deidealization. Just as he once actively contributed to his son's identification with him (and an optimal distancing from the mother), the father now must engage, but in a more passive or peripheral way, with his son's gradual and repetitive differentiation from him. Fathers are moreover called upon to support with interested restraint their sons' experimentation with new identities as well as their engagement with "substitute" fathers who often stand in stark opposition to their own father. Fathers' consistency, integrity, and healthy (versus pathological) narcissism are crucial in this respect.

Clinical Example: Jeffrey

Jeffrey was the only son of a highly respected, small mid-Western town's beloved pediatrician. His father unexpectedly died from a massive heart attack when Jeffrey was 15, after which his mother began to openly denigrate his "VIP" father. Jeffrey went on to excel at an Ivy League college but subsequently dropped out of graduate school. He pursued a variety of career options, including the priesthood, engineering, and law. Each pursuit resulted, however, in his
stopping just short of finishing his degree or final credentialing (e.g., he failed the bar exam several times).

Jeffrey began treatment with me as a married 35-year-old with two small children. His latest career was failing and his marriage was floundering. He was very depressed, plagued by self-doubts, and concerned about increasing homosexual fantasies. He remained very close to but highly critical of his mother, while experiencing considerable conflict with and isolation from his father-in-law.

Within six months, Jeffrey became quite involved in our work together and his external life began to improve. Soon thereafter, he became extremely critical of the treatment and easily upset with me. He described his mother, wife, and father-in-law questioning him about his life plans and general lack of success. The value of his therapy was broached and in his words, "everyone agrees that I haven't made progress—and time's running out."

He began to allow himself to be enraged with me, and was able, for the first time (with me or any of his three previous therapists), to directly express his disappointment and rage with a once idealized, caretaking other. He became ruthless in his attacks upon me and I worked hard in order to understand and endure my intense countertransference experience. I interpreted that the way he felt about and was treating me was a mirror of his inner relationship—wishing and expecting things (from each of us) that couldn't possibly be realized, feeling disappointment in and eventual rage toward the "betrayal," and ultimately trying to then get rid of this "flawed," worthless entity as quickly as possible.

We gradually came to understand together how Jeffrey had been unable to experience the necessary process of deidealization and optimal differentiation from a father he saw "on a pedestal." His father's narcissistic needs and inability to tolerate his son's disillusionment, coupled with his sudden death and Jeffrey's mother's abrupt denigration of a revered father, interfered with Jeffrey's forming an adult ego ideal. Jeffrey could neither mourn his losses in disengaging from his infantile parental objects nor move into mature manhood without a father imago capable of bearing the deidealization and subsequently facilitating an integrated, mature masculinity. Our work progressed as Jeffrey gained an appreciation of the impact that this absent internalization exercised upon our relationship.
Mentoring the Transition to Young Adulthood

By the end of adolescence and the beginnings of young adulthood, the very difficult transition from boyhood to manhood is well underway. In order to become an independent adult, a loving spouse, and a parental presence himself, the young man must enter into a "third individuation" (Colarusso, 1990). This young and midadult process requires a continual elaboration of the man's self in the context of his further differentiating from his childhood object representations. Fathers, once again, are called upon to mentor, but this time more as role models for mature manhood as represented by the capacity for intimacy and fatherhood; an adult sense of object representation (where others are better seen to exist in their own right without reference to oneself); and as purveyors of mutuality and equality. Adaptations are required involving recognition and respect for the adult son's autonomy and achievements while relinquishing attempts to exert earlier forms of parental control. The father who can successfully engage with his son during this phase is likely to be internalized in ways that will greatly facilitate the son's own mature adult development, including a more integrated and developed sense of masculinity.

The midlife father and young adult son are each seeking an aim-inhibited or "isogender" attachment (Esman, 1982; Blos, 1985). This warm, loving, and constructive relationship is not saddled with oedipal or homosexual tension. It is modeled on the preoedipal father-son attachment and involves a younger and senior man's need and longing for one another. This transition to adult masculinity involves more of a male bond between equals (though at different levels of experience). Moreover, sons are often called upon to heal their wounded fathers, as rendered in the Grail myth where the knight-son’s virtuous acts restore the king-father and his languishing kingdom.

The Odysseus myth points to a son’s wish to find a sturdy father he can rely on, as well as to the deep yearning for each other in both father and son. In Homer’s saga (ca. 675–650 B.C.E.), the princely Telemachus is propelled into a confident sense of manhood only after his father, King Odysseus, returns and poignantly reveals himself
to his young adult son by declaring: "I am your father—the Odysseus you wept for all of your days, . . . No other Odysseus will ever return to you. That man and I are one . . . here after many hardships, endless wanderings, twenty years. I have come home to native ground at last" (1996, pp. 344–345).

Both men sobbed uncontrollably in their mutual compassion and soon, they ventured off together in bloody battle as Odysseus showed Telemachus how to be a man assured in his own strength. Interesting, this tale suggests further the value in an absent father’s return, even during the later phases of his son’s development.14

Fathers and older men from the extended family or community have traditionally initiated sons into manhood. These “male elders” (Gutmann, 1986) facilitate the transition into an integrated, mature masculinity. Through a ritualized passage, the male mentor helps the boyish ego to die, mourning for one’s youth to proceed, and manhood to begin. The growing son also requires his father’s approbation of the manhood he has attained. I suggest that this enables the son to further adaptively deidealize his father by taking back some of the power that he had previously projected into the father as ego ideal.

L. Frank Baum’s (1900) beloved fable, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, portrays the still boyish fixations of a cowardly Lion, a foolish Scarecrow, and a heartless Tin Man, who, with the help of a smart little girl, came upon a blustery humbug known as The Great Oz. The three misplaced travelers were nonetheless in dire need of such

14 It is illuminating to consider the intergenerational impact of these mythical events. While Odysseus’ return helped Telemachus to establish his own paternal imago for confident masculinity and subsequent fathering, the nucleus of such a paternal function had been established long before. I am grateful to Mort Shane (personal communication) for introducing me to Kohut’s use of what he referred to as the Telemachus myth to exemplify the loving, protective, and altruistic fatherly attributes contrasting with the murderous rivalry depicted by the Oedipus myth.

The myth is based on the tale told in the subsequent epic poem, The Cypris (see Homer, 1996, p. 516). This tale concerns Odysseus, who, in order to avoid conscription into the life-threatening Trojan war, pretended insanity. However, to ascertain whether he was malingering, a shrewd examiner named Palamedes placed Odysseus’ infant son, Telemachus, in the path of the plow that Odysseus was guiding. Determined to protect his son rather than himself, Odysseus created a wide arc with his plow around the boy’s helpless, infant body. Thus, Odysseus constructed a “semi-circle of health and protection” to save his son’s life though relinquishing his own cover of insanity. Parenthetically, I doubt that Odysseus’ well-developed capacity for the self-sacrificing role of fatherhood would have evolved without the protective care of his own father, Laertes.
male mentoring to sanction their manhood. Together (with the other residents of the Emerald Kingdom), they created the idealized image of a wise and wonderful mentor (i.e., The Wizard of Oz) who, by tolerating both being idealized and subsequently discovered, helped them uncover and then affirm their underdeveloped courage, brain, and heart respectively—all qualities needed for the passage into manhood. The Wizard’s (i.e., the father’s) generous acceptance of his own deidealization enabled the travelers (i.e., the sons) to acknowledge the limitations of their projected power into a “sham father.” As a consequence of taking back the power that he has projected into the father as an ego ideal, the son is able to achieve a more realistic, mature, and integrated masculinity.15

Facilitating Paternal Development and Further Reconciliation in Adulthood

Fathers continue to help their sons achieve generativity in adulthood by maintaining affectionate bonds with them as their roles shift vis-à-vis one another. Otherhood, comprised of healthy altruism, mature empathy, and the capacity to lose oneself in another, for the sake of another (Shane and Shane, 1989), is fostered as the midlife father is able to experience an additional degree of letting go when his son marries and becomes a prospective father.16

The good enough father of an adult son no longer requires his son’s needfulness to confirm his own worthiness. As both the father and his son’s adulthood individuation advances, the son’s new internal representation of himself, usually as a married man and father (and less so as a child and son), requires acceptance while the father must form a new object tie with his son’s spouse. An important consequence of an aging father’s involved presence is that the son can

15 This story reminds us that idealizing transferences among male patients and analysands may reflect adaptive, adult yearnings as well as unmet, narcissistic needs of early childhood.

16 Mature fathers who are or can become capable of more fully revealing themselves in a mutual, equal relationship to their sons facilitate their adult sons’ task of achieving otherhood by coming to see their “complete father.” As Osherson (1986) declared: “Until a man ‘names his father,’ sees him clearly, and accepts him for who he is and was, it is . . . difficult for him to grow up himself and become a father to his children, a husband to a wife, or a mentor to the younger generation . . .” (p. 43).
begin to establish an internal sense of equality with his progenitor. The son's capacity for paternal generativity along with his success in engaging the developmental tasks of adulthood are directly linked to these accepting, loving, and nurturing trends in his father (Erikson, 1963; see also Colarusso, 1995). Both the adult son and his aging father's representations of their relationship become transformed from one reflecting dependency to one that is characterized by mutuality and equality (Colarusso, 1995).

As the son becomes a father, the father himself becomes a grandparent and enters a new developmental phase characterized by an increased awareness of aging (Cath, 1982, 1989). The grandchild's birth and growth create an opportunity for reworking the father (i.e., grandparent)–son (i.e., new parent) relationship. For example, the son may resent his father's easy and grandfatherly acceptance of his grandson's activities, the very ones he could not easily accept in his own son. The elder father may, at the same time, come to see his own son in a new way as he observes his adaptation to parental responsibilities and his fatherly nurturance.

The opportunity to rework and further reconcile issues naturally requires good fortune and sufficient longevity. For many sons it can occur only in the intrapsychic realm due to the unavailability or death of the father. This process is touchingly portrayed in W. P. Kinsella's (1982) novel, Shoeless Joe, made into the film, Field of Dreams. In the story, an adult man, having lost his distant father in late adolescence and now finally settling into his own family and life-style, hears a voice saying, "If you build it, he will come." The man persists in building the baseball field despite many obstacles and accomplishes an unconscious need to find and reconcile with his father. The heart-rending film ends when the protagonist and his once again youthful father are playing catch on the ballfield the son built.

Playing Important Roles in Midadult and Later Life Development

The father's later life, involving retirement, bodily changes, illness, senescence, and death, affects his son in many ways. Aging sons become increasingly aware of mortality and death as they face the reversal of roles with their fathers (while often dealing with their own
separations from their adolescent and young adult children). A "genetic immortality" (Colarusso, 1995) is achieved when a father can trust that his provisions have been worthwhile and can know that he lives on in his son's mind as supporter for the son's continuing autonomous development. Internal representations are once again transformed as the relationship of mutuality and equality begins to convert to one where the declining father subsumes a more dependent position as the son will become his elderly father's guardian.

Like the mythological god Hermes guiding souls to the underworld, the aged father can facilitate his son's passage by accepting the need for going downward or inward to bring to light, and come to terms with, those parts of himself that were disowned largely out of fear of being deprived of his masculine gender identity. Illusions are thereby renounced and limitations more easily accepted. The aging father approaching death must wrestle with and contain his envious, murderous wishes toward his more youthful children (Shengold, 1993), confront his own "death anxiety" while relinquishing his manic-like early adult "lyricism" (Jacques, 1965), and more fully embrace previously rejected gendered dimensions of himself by giving way to the expressive, connective and disclosing modes of his being (Diamond, 1998). This furthers his son's consolidation of both the darker and softer, yielding sides of himself, rendering his own midlife task more harmonious as central psychic polarities are better integrated and a more balanced, yet fluid masculinity that favors true genitality rather than defensive phallicism is achieved.17

The elderly father, capable of maintaining an affectionate bond with his well-differentiated son, helps the son's eventual mourning process to proceed satisfactorily while furthering the sense of continuity through the "genetic immortality" that gives meaning to his son's (and grandchildren's) life. This process is touchingly related in the sentiments of a midlife son about his declining, "good enough" father, using the quintessential American father-son metaphor of baseball (Delp, 1991):

17 It is likely that an active, involved father, having established a sense of otherhood where his child's existence has become more important than his own life, is better able to accept his own demise. For such fathers, continuity arising out of his ("well-enough" fathered) children is undoubtedly more accessible.
It was always burn-out after dinner, thirty yards apart and both of us throwing speed... no mark on his face of how much I thought it hurt, the sting of sixteen years of muscle behind each pitch. When he threw back, the ball came like pure light, straight to the bone, and for an hour after we'd finished, I'd fight back tears.... He was forty then, working the factory, home every night at five for dinner.... Now, almost seventy, he sits in the half-light of the back yard, motions with his good hand for my daughter to stop the game of catch we're playing to move him out of the shadow of the house. From where I'm standing, he looks as if he's drifting out into the back field... and if I could, I would bring him home, take his mitt down out of the rafters, tell him to let one sizzle, and gladly dip my hand toward any fire to get him back [pp. 26–27].

The father's death, particularly for a man in midlife, forces yet another reworking of separation issues. Such loss involves relinquishing childhood introjects, reengages oedipal themes, and shifts the caretaking relationship to a surviving, aging mother (Colarusso and Nemiroff, 1982). Psychic structure inevitably alters as mourning proceeds. Even in death, however, the rich, unchanging intrapsychic legacy of being a father's son lives on. The denouement of the final stage unearths this everlasting connection. This is beautifully illustrated by Phillip Roth's pithy reflections following his elderly father's recent death. From Patrimony (1991): "if not in my books or in my life, at least in my dreams I would live perennially as his little son, with the conscience of a little son, just as he would remain alive there not only as my father but as the father, sitting in judgment on whatever I do" (p. 237–238).

**Conclusion**

I have examined the nature of fathering and its functions within the father-son relationship epigenetically across the life cycle. The good
enough father is available to help his son with unique tasks, each of which facilitates the child’s development by establishing particular paternal imagos, from the son’s birth, up and beyond his father’s death. The absence of such involved fathering, moreover, produces unmistakable consequences at each developmental junction.

Emphasis has been placed on the father as both a real person and an internalized presence that enables the formation of a sufficiently differentiated, caring paternal imago on which a son can draw throughout his life span. Aspects of male development requiring paternal influence are underscored within a sequential model and a contemporary psychoanalytic theory of male development is tacitly advanced. A major implication of this endeavor, then, is to further both an understanding of and ability to treat men.

Twelve phase-specific functions and accompanying paternal representations have been set forth and prominence is given to the need for, and contributions made by, fathers as containers, protectors, facilitators, models, challengers, initiators, sanctioners, and mentors for their sons. A brief summary of these phases in a son’s development and the accompanying representations of his good enough father helps to conclude this chronologically based excursion through father-and-son time.

A father initially provides a holding environment for his son’s dyadic attachment to his mother and thereby establishes a “watchful, protective” paternal presence. An involved, dyadic father next serves as an alternate attachment figure, representing an “exciting, second other” for his son during the earliest separation-individuation phase. During the “first individuation” of the rapprochement phase, a father who facilitates his son’s separation and individuation from the mother, helps his son to construct a paternal imago exemplifying a veritable “liberator for differentiation.” In addition, beginning also during this early period, fathers modulate their sons’ negative and aggressive affect, thus creating a fatherly imago as “facilitator of instinctual mastery.”

During the latter two preoedipal stages, fathers significantly impact their sons’ sense of masculinity. By providing a male mode of toilet training and recognizing his son’s phallic masculinity during the anal-phallic psychosexual phases, fathers advance an imago as “facilitator of bodily-genital mastery and sanctioner of phallicism.”
A father subsequently supports gender and gender identity development by fostering a reciprocal, "homoerotic identification" with his son. This helps to establish the fatherly representation as a "container for optimal (progressive) maternal differentiation," which attenuates his boy's more oppositional repudiation of his maternal identifications.

In the oedipal phase, a triadic father, who is capable of serving as an oedipal challenger, becomes internalized as a "restrained challenger and trustworthy judge." In the middle of childhood, fathers initiate and mentor instrumental and expressive masculinity (as well as group relations), and consequently, stand for paternal "initiators, teachers, and leaders." During his son's adolescence, a father supports adolescent individuation and accordingly exemplifies a "container for paternal deidealization and optimal differentiation" for the boy's "second individuation." A father next mentors the transition to young adulthood. This fatherly function during his son's "third individuation" helps to create a paternal imago as "initiator and sanctioner of adult masculinity."

The final two phases occur during a son's mature adulthood. A father facilitates paternal development and reconciliation in adulthood by embodying a paternal imago as "mentor of generativity and otherhood." An aged (or deceased) father cultivates his son's "fourth individuation" during the son's seasoned adulthood by playing important roles in mid-later life development. Such a father, whether physically present or not, is established as a "wise elder facilitating integrated masculinity," as well as a "declining father furthering continuity through genetic immortality."

References


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