

# Fathers and Sons: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on "Good Enough" Fathering Throughout The Life Cycle\*

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All the world's a stage, ...  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
Then the whining schoolboy, ...  
Creeping like snail  
Unwillingly 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 (1968), *As You Like It*, p. 87; II, vii, 139-165 (my italics).

## 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, nary a 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 my venture tentatively paths the uncharted territory of 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, it appears from the interactive, developmental perspective, that many, but by no means all, of the fathering functions would equally apply.<sup>1</sup>

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 (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, 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 social and familial ills (e.g., Mitscherlich, 1969; Herzog, 1982a; Comer, 1989; Lansky, 1992).<sup>2</sup>

### **A Contemporary Developmental Perspective on Fathering**

An appreciation of the nature of fatherhood as an aspect of male life span development is essential to achieve a more complete perspective on those facets requiring paternal influence. The cornerstone of my work stems from Benedek's (1959) groundbreaking contribution on parenthood as a developmental phase, as well as from contemporary adult developmentalists influenced by Erik Erikson (1963) -- including Vaillant (1977), Levinson et al (1978), Gould (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 effected 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 examined and understood as an important step in the "journey toward the complete man."

Parenthood is a watershed along this road, partly because parenting may well be "the most difficult, challenging and gratifying undertaking life offers" (Cath et al, 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, it "unsettles" and causes considerable emotional turmoil since men are typically unaccustomed to complex affective, relational upbringing and the profound depth of feelings not easily put into words which are evoked by their children. Similarly, fatherhood "wounds" as competitive struggles with their sons reawaken old narcissistic injuries and conflicts. Yet, it also "heals" as fathers have a chance to reconnect with their own fathers and the sense of generativity while being afforded additional opportunities for working through their own unresolved issues occurring 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 Oedipal 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 & 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, as Ross (1982c) suggests, to the pathological, "dark sides" of his fathering.

The Hamlet drama likewise has been elegantly reinterpreted as "the tragedy of the dyadic son" (Blos, 1985). This 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 preoedipal 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 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 et al, 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 is 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 Mitchell (1988), Benjamin (1988), and Pine (1990) 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.<sup>3</sup> 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, and appreciation of fathers as significant, real objects in their children's development is finally emerging. 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; 1982b). 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 father's influence likely to be studied (Layland, 1981; Cath et al, 1989), as indeed has been the case since Freud's study of Schreber and the Wolf-Man.

Although the phallogocentric 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; Mitchell, 1974; Schafer, 1974; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Benjamin, 1988), there has paradoxically been a matricentric bias in developmental theory, particularly as pre-oedipal development has been formulated. "Mammocentric" conflicts having to do with symbiosis, separation, and the need for nurturance characterize this evolution within psychoanalysis.<sup>4</sup>

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).<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, interest has flourished during the last decade in a broader exploration of fathering. This new concern has been stimulated by: (1) social changes, leading to enhanced sex-role flexibility and increasing needs pertaining to male parenting involvement (Pruett, 1987); (2) technological changes in obstetrical and pediatric practice, involving fathers more directly in pregnancy, delivery, and pediatric care; (3) feminist theory, influencing a new generation of prominent researchers 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 intersubjective aspects of development; and, (5) burgeoning of direct observational research of father-child interaction, stimulated by methodological advances. Important research contributions on the effects of fathers have come from such key workers as Lamb (1981), Parke (1981), Yogman, (1982), Herzog, (1982b), and Pruett (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 & 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.<sup>6</sup>

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 unto death and each is influenced by the other's "normative crises" (Erikson, 1963; Colarusso & 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 mid-life," hopefully leading 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."<sup>7</sup>

#### Overview: Paternal Influence on The Son's Development

Paternal influence is understood to operate always within a family context, as well as within a socio-economic 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 beneficial effects of highly involved fathers is primarily a result of two caretakes rather than one engaged caretaker with the consequent increased fulfillment

for each and an improved familial system (Lamb & Oppenheim, 1989). Care must be taken not to take father-son issues out of this broader context.

Paternal imagos are intrapsychically built upon both real and fantasized relationships within the family system and serve to orient children in adaptive and defensive ways throughout their development (Gunsberg, 1989; Lansky, 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 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.<sup>8</sup> 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. Leaving aside paternal absence, deprivation, seduction, and the abusive "darker" sides reflected in the prototypical "Laius complex" of the "bad" father (Ross, 1982c), I will introduce a schema for considering the phase specific tasks of a "good enough" father, borrowing from Winnicott's term, "good enough mother." "Father hunger" (Herzog, 1982a) or "thirst" (Abelin, 1971), in addition to more pervasive male psychopathology (e.g., Steele, 1982; Ross & Herzog, 1985; Limentani, 1991; Phares and Compas, 1992), results partly from insufficient or problematic father-son interactions during these phases.

#### Hypothesized Schema: The Tasks of the "Good Enough" Father

My proposed schema is drawn from observational research, interviews, and clinical analytic findings pertaining to specific paternal contributions during the following developmental periods: (a) prospective fatherhood, from pregnancy through parturition (e.g., Gurwitt, 1976; Herzog, 1982b; Diamond, 1986); (b) 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 & Oppenheim, 1989; Shopper, 1989); (c) the oedipal period (e.g., Loewald, 1951; Herzog, 1982a; Ross, 1982c); (d) middle childhood and latency (Ross, 1982d; Sarnoff, 1982); (e) adolescence (e.g., Blos, 1967; 1978; Esman, 1982); (f) young adulthood, including marriage and parenthood, (e.g., Osherson, 1986; Colarusso, 1990); (g) mature adulthood and mid-life (e.g., Colarusso & Nemiroff, 1982; Gutmann, 1986); and, (h) 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 imagos, from the son's birth, up to and beyond his father's death. The model is inferential and offers hypotheses intended to invite dialogue and, more importantly, further research. 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. Moreover 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.<sup>9</sup>

**TABLE 1**

**The Tasks, Paternal Imagos, and Developmental Phases  
Requiring Provisions From A "Good Enough" Father With His Son**

**TASK PATERNAL IMAGO PHASE (& Ages)**

- 1. Provision of holding environment for dyadic attachment Protector; Container for Primary Dyad -- "Holding father" (Primary Mutuality)  
0 - 1 year**
- 2. Serving as alternate attachment figure Exciting ("Second") Other; "Mirror of Desire" -- "Dyadic father" (Early Separation Individuation) 1/2 - 2 years**
- 3. Facilitating separation-individuation (1st individuation) Liberator for Differentiation; Powerful, Playful "Ideal" (representing separateness and desire)  
(Rapprochement/Individuality Consolidation)  
1-1/2 - 3 years**
- 4. Modulating negative and aggressive affect Facilitator of Instinctual Mastery (representing "sheltered" male strength) (Separation-Individuation/ Pre-Oedipal/Anal)  
2 - 4 years**
- 5. Providing male mode of toilet training Model; Facilitator of Bodily-Genital Mastery (Pre-Oedipal/Anal/Phallic)  
2 - 5 years**
- 6. Supporting gender/gender role development Facilitator of Congruity, Sameness and Affection ("Homoerotic Identification") (Pre-Oedipal/Phallic Through Adolescence)  
2-1/2 - Teen ages**
- 7. Serving as Oedipal challenger Challenger (representing restraint, discipline & self-control); Authority ("Judge") -- "Triadic father" (Oedipal)  
3-1/2 - 6 years**
- 8. Initiating and mentoring instrumental and expressive masculinity as well as group relations. Initiator; Teacher; Leader (Latency/Mid-Childhood)  
6 - 12 years**
- 9. Supporting adolescent individuation (2nd individuation) Facilitator of Dis-identification (Adolescence)  
13 - 19 years**
- 10. Mentoring transition to young adulthood (3rd individuation) Approbator; Initiator of Adult Masculinity (Young Adulthood)  
20 - 30 years**
- 11. Facilitating paternal development and (further) reconciliation in adulthood Mentor of Otherhood (Mature Adulthood)  
25 - 40 years**
- 12. Playing important roles in mid-adult and later life development (4th individuation)**

## **Facilitator of Integrated Masculinity and Healing ("Wise elder") (Mid-Late Adulthood) 40 years -**

### **1. Provision of a Holding Environment For Dyadic Mother-Child Attachment**

Fathers provide a timely and nurturing holding environment for the mother and her fetus, infant and small child during the period when the mother-child relationship, characterized by primary attunement, is essential for the development of what Bowlby (1988) termed, a "secure base." A father's respect for and protection of this "mothering dyad" is crucial in his child's relationship with mother as the "first other." This fathering station encompasses both his providing function and empathic responsiveness to the child's dyadic needs (distinguished by the particulars of maternal biological contact and feeding). This reflects the "psychobiological, instinctual" basis of fathering (Benedek, 1970), wherein in his "husbandry" function, the father serves as an external beacon to his wife and child, protecting their intense, primary mutuality with one another (Stern, 1985; Benjamin, 1988).

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. 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, 1993). Lacking these adaptive and reality-oriented abilities, more omnipotent, maladaptive grandiose expressions render such 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.

### **2. Serving as an Alternate Attachment Figure**

Fathers exemplify the "second other" or "second object" (Greenspan, 1982; Limentani, 1981) to their sons and daughters. Fathers play with their infants in more stimulating and novel, less soothing ways than do mothers (Yogman, 1982). The father's involved nurturing tends to be experienced more in a stimulating, "interactional," rather than "caretaking" fashion (Greenberg, 1985). To the infant, his father's appearance often connotes, "It's party time!" (cf. Pruett, 1987). As a differently responding libidinal and self-object figure, fathers thereby traditionally play a pivotal, representational role in introducing their infants to the exciting, larger outer world.

This preoedipal, dyadic father of separation and rapprochement has been recognized as an important figure of identification for the boy (Freud, 1921; Greenson, 1968; Stoller, 1973). Abelin (1971; 1975; 1980) elaborated on the father's earliest role vis-a-vis the mother in the child's struggle to differentiate from her. Benjamin (1988; 1991) expanded on Abelin's position in 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 involve the child's realization of gender and genital difference as he symbolically distinguishes between mother and father in the psyche. Benjamin (1988) contended that under our present parenting arrangements, fathers symbolize a different kind of object, more of a "mirror of desire" who can want and act appropriately to satisfy those wants than can a mother, who is the "source of goodness." While we cannot know whether this is so in the infant's mind, we can extrapolate that mothers represent attachment and parental attitudes of

holding, listening and mirroring. Alternatively, fathers 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).<sup>10</sup>

This fatherly representation is presumed to occur even when the traditional gender divisions in parenting, in which the mother is the primary nurturing figure, is 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 nurturant 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).

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 (Feirstein, 1986):

David, when you are bald  
(Though I hope you're not)  
A you are now  
And rocking in a hammock, remembering  
Something that has no words  
Pick up this poem  
That has your father in it:  
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 blazes  
And holds us like a photo in the moment  
As you hold this  
As I once held you, David [p. 482].

### 3. Facilitating Separation and Individuation

As an alternate attachment figure and by virtue of encouraging his son's exploratory and early phallic attitude, fathers help disengage their 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).

The father's responsive presence provides his boy with an experience of being protected

against the powers of regressive needfulness 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). An internalization of the strong dyadic father as a powerful, yet playful figure of liberation, ensues as a lifelong source of security and safety in a manageable and alluring, yet bewildering wider world.

Benjamin (1988; 1991) gives prominence to the dyadic father as the "second object." By bringing the excitement of outsidership, 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:

... the 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, such identification enables the son to deny his rapprochement helplessness and confirm the core experience of being the "subject of desire" (Benjamin, 1991).

As the father 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.<sup>11</sup> 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. Fathers structure the necessary disillusionment by insuring that their sons experience optimal deprivation so as to keep their core experience of subjectivity alive. 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).

This developmental transition involves object relations switching from dyadic to triadic as the full attainment of object constancy is achieved. The boy now can see himself as part of a triangle, rather than a dyad as he fantasizes that he is being the father toward a more differentiated mother, and not her helpless baby (Abelin, 1980). A trusting, secure, and affective, pre-verbal relationship of mutual influence between father and son is required as well as fatherly restraint with regard to alignment.

The shared (pre-verbal) maleness with a father who recognizes himself in his son, provides the son with a crucial early experience of another who is essentially like himself yet outside his omnipotent control (Kaftal, 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 (Greenspan, 1982). This is beautifully portrayed in the Ulysses myth where he, serving as his own fatherly presence, orders his men to bind him to the mast of his ship so he won't be lured to destruction by the singing Sirens.

#### Clinical Example: Kevin

The importance of sufficient fatherly provision during this phase is evident in the case of Kevin, a successful professional in his early 30s. 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 "rough-house" 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 rough-housing 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, were gradually eschewed as ill-fitting. 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 over-stimulated by an libidinal desire since there was insufficient modulation by a second object with whom he could reciprocally identify. He subsequently turned toward his sadistic older brother in a problematic quest to establish an identification with a "second other."

#### **4. Modulating Negative and Aggressive Affect**

The father insures 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 thereby helping their children to stabilize basic ego functions including reality testing, 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). 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 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).

#### Clinical Example: Peter

Peter was a boyishly handsome, divorced father in his early 40s. 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 nine 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 five. 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 poignantly, "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 uncontrollable, instead 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.

#### 5. Providing A Male Mode of Toilet Training

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 dis-identification is 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 new-found toy. The capacity for ingenuity and pleasure in autonomous mastery is directly reinforced as sons proudly display their phallic power by lettering 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.<sup>12</sup>

#### 6. Supporting Gender and Gender Role Development

Fathers are pivotal in establishing their son's gender identities, roles, and object choices (e.g., Greenson, 1968; Stoller, 1968; Tyson, 1982; Fast, 1984). Fathers help their pre-phallic boys dis-identify with their mother while affirming in themselves their own desire through identifying with their father's masculinity. Involved fathers championing male congruity and sameness help their sons 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 tender roots for (homoerotic) identification (Benjamin, 1988).

A strong, mutual attraction between father and son facilitates gender identification. Such an aim-inhibited bond, saddled neither with sexual nor aggressive tension, is not to be confused with the notion of inherent bisexuality (cf. Stoller, 1973). Instead, this "homoerotic, identificatory love" (Benjamin, 1991) or "isogender attachment" (Blos, 1985) serves as the boy's vehicle for establishing masculine identity. Lacking sufficient mutuality, unconscious gender ossification develops, which manifests itself later as gender confusion or rigid certainty. Healthy (masculine) gender identity requires a satisfactory balance between such confusion and certainty.

Father-son bodily based identification consequently attenuates the son's need to repudiate femininity (while idealizing a distant, still symbolic father). Instead, the son can more gradually renounce the identification with his mother, particularly as the involved father furthers optimal gender identity consolidation throughout middle childhood and early adolescence. The achievement of this "phallic narcissistic" phase provides the foundation for the son's positive, "phallic-oedipal" stage shift from being mother's baby to being her lover and from being father's baby to being his competitor and companion.

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 [p. 93-94].

## 7. 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. This "genital father" 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. This fatherly characteristic attenuates the consequences of intergenerational strife as such fathers are predominantly proud and accepting of their boy's normal "oedipal" growth.

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 a defensive one based on the classic notion of identification with the (primarily symbolic)

aggressor. This positive identification with a restrained 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 are modulated by a restrained father's challenging, yet non-hostile 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 requires that fathers protect their sons from incestuous wishes toward the mother and sisters (Limentani, 1991).

An exchange observed between a father and his four-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 runs counter to the disproportionate idealization of the 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. This more dyadic bond attenuates both the son's envy of his mother's birthing capacities as well as his inverted oedipal wishes, as for example wanting to have a baby in order to have his father (as mother does). Identification with the father's nurturing and generative functions consequently encourage 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 oedipal father is thereby established as a figure of benign discipline.

#### Clinical Example: Raymond

Raymond, an Afro-American in his mid 30s, 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 dotting" mother's care when he was six. Though he "hung out with many co-workers," 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 his deeper transferences and dynamics reflecting Raymond's 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 other 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.

#### **8. 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. This permits the boy to advance toward a paternal identity (Ross, 1982b).

Fathers protect their pre-pubescent 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. 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 failed to heed his father's advice and fell to his death when the wax melted.

Fathers purvey a "pragmatic, instrumental masculinity" 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 the son's 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, and thus masculine identification is further consolidated through successful paternal mentoring establishing "rules" needed to channel instinctual demands. Both Luis Bunuel's Mexican Film, *Los Olvidados*, 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 Afro-American boys respectively.

A male mode of morality is thereby fostered emphasizing rule-bound fairness and justice, in distinction to a female mode stressing relationship and connection (cf. Gilligan, 1982). Likewise, a palpably male mode of feeling is encouraged where affect tends to minister instrumental, serviceable aims in contrast to female modes where expressive, revelational uses are promoted. This male mode of being is exquisitely conveyed in fatherly tones by the 13th 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 group relatedness and patterns. This begins with the triangulation within the family and soon extends well beyond. 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). Fathers are needed as mentors for these groups of boys to help them mould 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, which permit 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 and combine 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 turns into a chaotic nightmare. The disappearance of, and hunger for the fathering dimension is indicated by murder and the founding of a pagan cult worshiping 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, as the naval warship officer fails to recognize his own unmodulated aggression as he gazes upon the ravaged boys.

## 9. 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 passage 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 nonetheless are 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 non-erotic, protective yearnings are revived in pre- and early adolescence, while by mid-adolescence, 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, pre-ambivalent, idealizing attachment needs in order to form an adult ego ideal (Blos, 1985). The father must bear the disillusionment and painful deidealization. Just as he once actively contributed to his son's identification with him (and a dis-identification from the mother), the father now must engage, but in a more passive or peripheral way, with his son's gradual and repetitive dis-identification with him. Fathers are moreover called upon to support with interested restraint their

sons' experimentation with new identities and "substitute" fathers often standing in stark opposition to their own. 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-midwestern 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 several 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 thirty-five-year-old with two small children. His latest career was failing and the marriage highly troubled. He was very depressed, plagued by self-doubts, and concerned about increasing homosexual fantasies. He remained very close with, 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 "betrayers," and ultimately trying to then get rid of this "flawed," worthless entity as quickly as possible.

We gradually understood together how Jeffrey had been unable to experience the necessary process of de-idealization and dis-identification 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 de-idealization and subsequently, facilitating an integrated, mature masculinity. Our work progressed as Jeffrey gained an appreciation for the impact of this absent internalization as it surfaced between us.

#### 10. 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. 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 which will greatly facilitate the

son's own mature adult development, including a more integrated and developed sense of masculinity.

The mid-life 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 more 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 (Osherson, 1986). In Homer's (1963) saga, the princely Telemachus is propelled into a confident sense of manhood only when his father, King Odysseus, returns and wisely reveals himself to his teenage son by declaring, "I am that father whom your boyhood lacked and suffered for lack of. I am he..." (p. 295). Together they venture off in bloody battle as Odysseus shows Telemachus how to be a man confident in his own strength. Interestingly, this tale suggests further the value in an absent father's return, even during the later phases of his son's development.<sup>13</sup>

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 of one's youth to proceed, and manhood to begin. The growing son also requires his father's approbation of the manhood he has attained.

L. Frank Baum's (1900) beloved fable, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, portrays the still boyish fixations of a cowardly Lion, foolish Scarecrow, and 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 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.<sup>14</sup>

## 11. 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-a-vis one another. Otherhood, comprised of healthy altruism, mature empathy, and the capacity to lose oneself in another, for the sake of another (Shane & Shane, 1989), is fostered as the mid-life father is able to experience an additional degree of letting go when his son marries and becomes a prospective father. The son's new identity, usually as a married man himself (and less so as a son), requires acceptance while the father must form a new object tie with his son's spouse. The son's capacity for paternal generativity is directly linked to these passive, loving, and nurturing trends in his father (Erikson, 1963).<sup>15</sup>

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 envy 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 however, it can occur only in the intrapsychic realm due to the unavailability or death of the father. This 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 lifestyle, hears a voice saying, "If you build it, he will come." The man persists in spite of many obstacles to accomplish what he knew unconsciously, namely to find and reconcile with his father. The heartrending film closes typically to an audience of males in tears as they watch the protagonist and his once again youthful father playing catch on the ballfield he built.

## 12. Playing Important Roles in Mid-Adult 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). 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. Thus, the aging father approaching death must wrestle with and contain his envious, murderous wishes toward his more youthful children (Shengold, 1993), while more fully embracing the expressive, connective and revelational modes of his being. This furthers his son's integration of both the darker and softer, yielding sides of himself, rendering his own mid-life task more harmonious as a more balanced masculinity is achieved. The son's transition to full adulthood is further supported by the father's capacity to confront his own death anxiety while relinquishing his manic-like, early adult "lyricism" (cf. Jacques, 1965).<sup>16</sup>

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 giving meaning to his son's (and grandchildren's) life. This process is poignantly related in the sentiments of a mid-life son about his declining, "good enough" father, using the quintessential American father-son metaphor of baseball (Delp, 1991):

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, ...  
No, 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 mid-life, forces yet another reworking of separation issues. Such loss involves relinquishing childhood introjects, reengages oedipal themes, and alters the caretaking relationship to a surviving, aging mother (Colarrusso & Nemiroff, 1982). Psychic structure inevitably alters as mourning proceeds. Even in death however, the rich, unchanging intrapsychic footing in 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 [pp. 237-238].

### Summary

This paper, stemming from the work of contemporary adult developmentalists, examines the nature of fathering and its functions within the father-son relationship. A perspective is offered on those aspects of male development requiring paternal influence. Emphasis is placed on the father as a real person and internalized presence, enabling the formation of a sufficiently differentiated, caring paternal imago on which their sons can draw throughout the life cycle. A schema based upon observational research, interviewing, and clinical analytic findings is proposed, giving prominence to the need for, and contributions made by, fathers as containers, protectors, facilitators, models, challengers, initiators and mentors. Twelve phase specific tasks, and the accompanying representations of the "good enough" father throughout the duration of the father-son relationship, are discussed. Examples from literature, mythology, film, and analytic treatment illustrate the impact of fatherly provisions and deprivation on their sons' development.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Relative to the far more extensive investigation and direct observation of mother-child interaction, psychoanalytic examination of fathering functions vis-a-vis daughters is likewise scarce. Benjamin's (1988; 1991) recent contributions are an exception to this marginalization of the father as she addresses fathers' pre-latency contributions to their daughters' development.

2. A nascent, social change movement known as the "mythopoetic men's movement," drawing its intellectual foundation from mythology, anthropology and Jungian psychology (e.g., Eliade 1959; Bly, 1990), is attempting to delineate a more positive masculine identity by stressing what men "can be" when their development is not arrested. It focuses on the underdeveloped, stunted masculinity 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.

3. These co-existing perspectives are reflected by the diversity of psychoanalytic authors

influencing my synthesis. Such intrapsychically oriented writers as Abelin, Blos, Loewald, and Mahler hardly march by 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.

4. This matricentric view is partially reflected in the prevailing dyadic conceptualization of psychoanalytic practice. For example, Stone's (1961) classic analogue 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.

5. The myth that only one parent matters is perpetuated by this matricentric, incomplete view of development. The social consequences of the neglect of fathering, particularly since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, are far reaching across westernized cultures and sub-classes. 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).

6. 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. A companion paper is in development where the clinical issues and technical implications of a deeper appreciation of fathering as well as both the analysand's and the analyst's fatherhood will be discussed.

7. 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 (see p. 37). The precursors to such paternal restoration are expressively conveyed in a seven-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.

8. 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 everything to do with each parents' internal father figures.

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 twelve-fold schema. These unique tasks, moreover, are most germane for understanding the emergent paternal transferences to either a male or female analyst.

10. In this paper, I place parenting essentially 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. 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"). 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 -- my underlining). In disagreeing with Abelin's emphasis (and the boy's concomitant experience of his mother as depriving), Benjamin advanced the crucial observation 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.

12. I will never forget taking my small son to the men's urinal at an entertainment activity and as we stood next to one of our mutual heroes, the baseball player Darrell Strawberry, my son turned toward him and declared, "I can hit the bullseye, can you?"

13. It is illuminating to consider the intergenerational impact of these mythical events. The "myth of Telemachus" demonstrates convincingly that Odysseus' return helped Telemachus to establish a paternal imago for confident masculinity, which reciprocally facilitated his own subsequent fathering. I am grateful to Mort Shane for introducing me to Kohut's use of the Telemachus myth to exemplify the loving, protective, and altruistic fatherly attributes contrasting with the murderous rivalry depicted by the Oedipus myth. In the myth, Telemachus, who wished to avoid conscription into a life-threatening war, pretended insanity. However, to ascertain whether he was malingering, shrewd examiners placed his infant son in the path of the plow that Telemachus was guiding. Determined to protect his son rather than himself, Telemachus created a wide arc with his plow around the boy's helpless, infantile body. Thus, he constructed a "semi-circle of health and protection" to save his son's life though relinquishing his own cover of insanity (Shane, personal communication). Correspondingly, I doubt that Telemachus' well-developed capacity for the self-sacrificing role of fatherhood would have evolved without the return of his own absent father, Odysseus.

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

15. Mature fathers who were or become capable of more fully revealing themselves to their sons facilitate their adult son's 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]

16. It is likely that an active, involved father, having had 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 residing in the existence of his ("well-enough" fathered) children is undoubtedly more accessible.

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