FATHER ABSENCE, THE MYTHICAL FATHER, AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON AFFECT MATURITY

by

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the influence of father absence on a son's ability to experience emotion in mature, differentiated ways—to show affect maturity. According to Anne Thompson (1986), affect maturity "determines how an individual will experience and cope with his or her feelings" (p. 212). This, according to Thompson (1986), has consequences for tolerating negative affects, reflecting on possible decisions instead of acting impulsively, and reality testing one's emotions.

This study was founded upon the notion that the father, whether present or not, is internalized by his son and therefore plays an essential role in identity formation and the regulation of intense affect. Consequently, it was hypothesized that a father's absence would have deleterious affects on his son's attainment of these developmental milestones, and affect maturity. Interviews of young men who responded to Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) cards were quantitatively analyzed using Thompson's (1986) Affect Maturity Scale (which measures affect from the most primitive to the most mature). Additionally, subjects' responses to the TAT, and to questions about their early relational experience with their fathers, were qualitatively analyzed to help understand the father's role in shaping their son's internal world.

Contrary to what was predicted, affect maturity scores of young men with regular father contact growing up were significantly lower than those with no father contact growing up.

Furthermore, neither subset experienced a loving, nurturing, and supportive father—a good enough father—who could be internalized and then serve as an identification figure and to regulate emotion. However, those with regular father contact appeared to be additionally impaired by the consistently problematic interaction with their father.

In this regard, this study's results suggest that it is not simply the father's presence or absence that impacts affect maturity, but the quality of the relationship. Similarly, they suggest that consistent interaction with a benevolent, nurturing father is an important variable in determining a son's affect maturity. The lack of a group in this study with positive father-son interactions, and the possible influence of social class, poverty, and peer groups on the findings limit the certainty that results are due solely to absence of a good-enough father. Nevertheless, the notion that a benevolent and nurturing father is important for healthy development is consistent with existing research and theory and has wide-ranging implications for clinical practice.

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I owe the deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Steve Tuber, whose unremitting mentorship on this project, and throughout my training, provided me with the guidance, encouragement, and insight necessary to grow. It is of no small coincidence that my relationship with Dr. Tuber is representative of the very type of fathering this research suggests is essential for young men to experience in order to progress developmentally.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Dr. Arietta Slade, whose expertise in child development and theories of attachment enriched the ideas put forth in this research and their relevance to clinical work. Great appreciation is also due to Dr. Paul Wachtel, who offered to be a part of this project without hesitation. His generosity is a reminder of the power of benevolence, and his insight was an invaluable addition to this work.

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Lastly I would like to express my gratitude to my family: to my father and mother whose love, playfulness, and determination are reflected in my reaching this point in my life and in the

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The following study was an investigation of the effect that father absence has on a son's representational and affective world.

I first became interested in the role that a father plays in his son's emotional life while doing psychosocial assessments of adolescent boys seeking rehabilitation for emotional and behavioral difficulties. In order to facilitate these young men's rehabilitation, the psychosocial assessment was used to help understand the etiology of their struggle, and the ways in which it contributed to behavior that was the result of a diminished ego capacity and an inability to regulate affect. Almost without exception, I found that the young men I interviewed grew up extremely impoverished and had been exposed to a variety of familial and/or social stressors including poverty, violence, substance abuse, legal concerns and/or familial mental illness. It seemed, without question, that all of these factors contributed to these young men's struggle. It was another consistent, and seemingly related pattern, however, that stood out—most of them had little to no contact with their fathers.

The relevance of this phenomenon became evident during an interview with a young man who, in the course of reflecting on experiences that contributed to his circumstance, began recounting the relationship he had with his father. He described a man who was the "king of his block"; a feared and lauded drug lord, full of charm and wit, but also uncontainable anger. Seemingly outside of consciousness, his illustration was strikingly similar to the traits that he either embodied (he was arrested for assault and selling large amounts of illicit narcotics) or was seeking to personify. His admiration, if not idealization, of his father conveyed that there existed a strong connection between the two of them. The most astonishing facet of this young man's

story, however, was that he had never actually met his father. It appeared to me that he had unconsciously identified with a father that he created in his own mind— a ***mythical father***.

His experience, which proved to be nearly ubiquitous among the young men I interviewed, seemed to suggest that there is something unique and important about sons having a father (or father figure) in their life. So much so, that if a father does not exist in reality, a son will create one in fantasy. In fact, Neubauer (1960), Gill (1991), Krempe (2003), and Krueger (1983) have all proposed that some inner representation of a father exists whether or not the father is present[1]. In this way, the experience of this young man (and his cohorts) underscores one of the central tenets of this study—regardless of whether a parent (father) is present or not, a child forms a representation of them that is distinct from (although informed by) their actual experience with that parent (father).

Psychologists beginning with Freud have noted the importance of this phenomenon in psychological development, suggesting that the internalized experience of others often takes the place of external objects and the relationships to them (Ogden, 1983). In this same vein, Greenberg & Mitchell (1983) have suggested that the ways in which internalized representations of objects (usually caregivers) are represented internally in one's psyche are dynamically shaped by previous interactions with the caregiver. At the same time, they shape ongoing interactions with these figures (objects) and the environment. These internalized relationships, then, have a profound impact on the formation of self, the self in relation to other, and the ability to understand and regulate emotions. It seems, then, that the representation of the father, real or imagined, becomes part of the son's internal (representational and affective) world, and

[1] These ideas will be elaborated on in subsequent chapters

significantly influences psychological development, including the ways in which he experiences and manages affect (emotion).

While early psychoanalytic ideas were especially focused on the role that the father played in child development, contemporary psychoanalytic literature has focused almost exclusively on the mother-child dyad to understand the development of object relations and the way that affect is experienced and regulated. As a result, there is less known about the effect that the father has on the individual's representational world, or on the way he contributes to a son's experience and management of affect. A notable exception has been the work of Herzog (2001). Herzog (2001) has suggested that the absence of a benevolent, nurturing father in one's life leads to "father hunger." He defines father hunger as an "affective state experienced when the father is felt to be absent" (p. 51). According to Herzog (2001), father hunger results from not having a father to be "the organizer and modulator of intense affect paradigms" (p. 51).

More specifically, Herzog (2001) believes that the father is essential to the management of aggression and the "consolidation of a boy's masculine sense of self" (p. 22). He suggests "without a father to help him integrate it and modulate it, a boy's aggression appears as a foreign force" (p. 22). And he proposes that in the absence of this experience, attempts to master one's aggression fail, and an inner emptiness or deadness can result.

Herzog (2001) cites numerous examples from his clinical work with children and adults to support his conviction that fathers play a crucial role in the management of aggression, and the development of identity formation for their sons. For example, he provides an account of a young boy who had recently lost his father, and became unduly concerned about his own safety. When Herzog asked the boy what he could do to help, the boy said "Get daddy…he is like the boy. He can help because he knows the boy. He is not a mommy" (p. 25). In another account of

his work with a boy who had lost his father, Herzog noted that the boy had developed a phobia of dogs. It eventually came to surface that the boy "needed to have a Bubu (Dad) to control Baba (dog) in order to not be afraid of Baba. Bubu could then become part of Boy-Boy because the were *alike*—not the same—but alike" (p.26). We see in each of these accounts that the absence of a father creates a rupture to the process of identification and the regulation of affect. As Herzog points out, "underneath all these phenomena a child desperately seeks help from his father" (p. 22).

The centrality of the father-son relationship, and the particular pain of its absence, has been the subject of some of the most important literary works ever written. Shakespeare's Hamlet (1600), for example, portrays the experience of what happens to a young man when his father (the King) is killed. In mourning the loss of his father, Hamlet vacillates between a state of existential reflection and a state in which he is overcome with anger. By reflecting on his emotions Hamlet is able to have an integrated experience of himself and others, and consequently refrain from acting on his anger. There are moments, however, when Hamlet's emotions overwhelm him and his experience is defined solely by the present event. It is in these moments that Hamlet becomes irrational and impulsive, and eventually commits murder. Paradoxically, Hamlet is highly conscious of the fact that the loss of his father is exactly what prevents him from consistently acting in a reflective, restrained, and resolute way. And, it is this awareness (and his capacity for reflection) that is often Hamlet's only means of combating his impulse to act on his feelings (especially his anger).

In this same vein, Homer's Odyssey (Fitzgerald, 1963) is a portrayal of the consequences of Odysseus' twenty year absence on his family, particularly its effect on his son Telemachus. The struggles Telemachus endures in the wake of his father's absence come to a climax just as

he begins his transition from boyhood to manhood. Bereft without his father, Telemachus sets out on a journey to find him. While on his search, Telemachus's interactions with those who knew, or knew of, his father help him to come to know his father. The model that is portrayed of Odysseus serve, along with the support of a mentor, to help Telemachus come to know himself and find his place as a man in the world (which emulates his father's).

Joyce's Ulysses (1990), like that of Hamlet and the Odyssey, also examines the emotional impact that a father has on a son's life (and the consequences of his absence). Through the two main characters, Stephen and Bloom, Joyce appears to suggest that a father is needed to strengthen one's sense of self as a man–one's masculine identity. And, according to Joyce, if the father is absent from his son's life, it seems that a son will be in perpetual search for him (and thus for himself).

In fact, in a reference to Hamlet, Joyce seems to imply that Hamlet's agonizing struggle for his sense of self finds resolution through Hamlet's realization that the Ghost Father (which Hamlet conjured up in ***fantasy*** after his father's death), is a construction of his father and himself. That is, Joyce seems to be conveying the idea that, in many ways, the male self is formed by the ghost of one's father. In this way, Hamlet's struggle to find himself parallels, and is a function of, the loss of his father. Through the process of recognizing that he is an amalgam of his father *and* also his own man, Hamlet is able to come to terms with the loss of his father, which, in reciprocal fashion, is what allows him to find himself (his own identity). In this same vein, Stephen and Bloom's inability to hold onto their experience of themselves (self-representation), when there need for a father is not met through one another, highlights how powerfully a son needs a father to know himself.

The experiences of Hamlet, Telemachus, and Stephen suggest that fatherless sons endeavor to hold in mind some internal experience of a father, even in the father's absence, to facilitate emotional development and identity formation (perhaps through some special kind of containment unique to the father). With this in mind, this study was an attempt to show that affect maturity (Thompson 1986), emerges not just out of the relationship with the mother, but as a function of the relationship with father, as well. It is proposed that a father's absence from his son's life is likely to inhibit the development of affect maturity, while his presence is likely to facilitate it.

To help understand the role that a father plays in the development of his son's representational and affect world, this study will investigate the motivation and process involved in the creation of a mythical father by paternally orphaned sons. It will also address ways in which adolescent boys internalize a father figure, real or imagined, and how this internalization is called upon by sons to serve as a model for self and self in interaction with others. Finally, it will demonstrate that these internalized representations significantly impact the development of affect maturity, and become particularly troublesome for sons who grew up without a father during the adolescent stage of development.

In order to measure the impact that the father has on the development of his son's affective world, this study employed Thompson's Affect Maturity Scale. The Affect Maturity scale quantifies the experience of emotion (affect) in increasingly complex levels, from the most primitive (an undifferentiated experience of emotion) to the most mature (a nuanced and highly differentiated experience of emotion).

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Affect Maturity

The concept of affect maturity is based upon Fast's event theory, which proposes that the basic units of experience are "events." Fast (1985) defines events as experiences in which the self is in interaction with the non-self[2]. Through repeated interactions between self and non-self, self-other constellations come to exist, such that the child, for example, in the process of being held by the mother, may experience the self as warm in relation to a mother (non-self) who is nurturing. Similarly, the child may have an experience of self as frightened in relation to an impatient mother. Thus, the warm self/nurturing mother and the frightened self/impatient mother become "events"- internalized experiences of the self and self in relation to the other (self-other constellations).

Initially, According to Fast (1985), *events* are experienced purely as action schemes in that they are driven by affects (i.e. hunger, pain…), which motivate an action, and result in an interaction between self and other (usually baby-mother) (Fast, 1985). A hungry baby, for example, cries and elicits his mother's care and feeding. These early experiences are organized together in sensorimotor experiences, lead to psychic organization, and constitute the development of object relations (of one's internal world) (Fast, 1985). And, in these early interactions the self is experienced as an agent, but undifferentiated from the object and the event in which the interaction occurs—"In this initial undifferentiated event or scheme, the self aspect is ineluctably joined to an other complimentary to it in a given action" (Fast, 1985, p.76). The

[2] Fast use of the term "non-self" incorporates both animate and inanimate in the environment, although interactions with "non-self" is thought to mostly occur with caregiver (s).

warm self, for example, is ineluctably joined to the tender mother, and the frightened self is ineluctably joined to the impatient mother. The initial experience of undifferentiated, "unitary" events or actions schemas (warm self/tender mother) lays the foundation for cognitive organization. And, each attainment of an action scheme or event aids in the eventual differentiation of self and other. This attainment promotes "psychological development (and) is the result of differentiation of elements of events and the integration of those elements into new conceptual entities." (Galatzer-Levy 1988, p. 532).

So, the events that are initially experienced as undifferentiated (tender self/nurturing mother and frightened self/impatient mother) are the building blocks that lead to the child's ability to experience the tender mother even in her absence or the absence of a particularly self-other constellation state—that is, the tender mother still exists in the internalized experience of the child even if the nurturing mother is not present. Furthermore, the "unitary event," warm self-tender mother, is "gradually differentiated and associated with other events yielding experiences of a self, action, object and emotion" (Galatzer-Levy 1988, p. 532). With the achievement of this capacity, the child is able to hold multiple representations of the experience of the other despite the particular self-other state or event that is presently being experienced. In this way, there is a gradual differentiation of the self from the non-self, and there is a "de-differentiation of experience." (Fast, 1985, p.58)

Fast's thinking is akin to the seminal work of D.W. Winnicott (1958), who suggested that, as a result of "good-enough" mothering, in which the mother is consistently reliable and available to the child, the child eventually comes to expect that he/she will be taken care of, even in her absence. In fact, it is through benign failures of the mother that the child comes to access the internalized experience of mother as a self-soothing technique. When the mother is not there

for a moment, the child is called upon to conjure her. In this way, the child can elicit the internalized experience of the tender mother, and thus a comfortable self, even in her absence (Winnicott, 1958)

Essential to this notion, and to the concepts that underlie affect maturity, is the idea that, from the beginning, affect occurs within a matrix of object relations and emerges as a result of *interactive experiences*. Additionally, the development of mature affect, within event theory and as measured by Thompson's Affect Maturity Scale (Thompson, 1986), integrates Piaget's cognitive developmental model, which highlights the structural and cognitive aspects of emotion and proposes that early experiences are organized in terms of affects (Fast 1985; Galatzer-Levy 1988).

Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson (1999), referring to the theory of conflation, propose that subjective experience, such as the subjective experience of affection (an emotion), is at first simply a sensory experience of warmth. In the experience of affection (warmth), for example, non-sensorimotor and sensorimotor domains are conflated and give rise to what might be considered an undifferentiated state. In their conceptualization, such repeated experiences of self and other (including both animate and inanimate objects) give rise to associations that are built up and are then referenced as metaphor to elicit the mental imagery from sensorimotor domains—such as the subjective experience of affection. Lakoff and Johnson's (1999) concepts also borrow from Piaget and Inhelder (1971), and their seminal work on symbolic representation, to underscore how experience is symbolized**.**

In this same vein, The Boston Change Process Group (2008), at the forefront of recent relational ideas in the psychoanalytic community, have described the concept of "implicit relational knowing," which they describe as procedural representations of how to proceed or how

to do things, especially in regards to relationships and experiences with others (objects). Central to their work is the belief that the "knowing" is both *affective* and *cognitive*, and occurs largely in unformulated experience.

Thompson's theory of Affect Maturity

Thompson (1986) suggests that the schema or events proposed by Fast (1985), which are internalized representations of self and other, form the basis for the inherently cognitive aspects of emotion. Like Fast, Thompson (1986) proposes that affects are intentional in nature in that "emotions are intrinsically directed to objects" (p.207). So, "if one is angry, one is angry at someone or something" (p.207). In this conceptualization, emotion is partly a cognitive structure, and something that takes place within the context of object relations.

Thompson (1986) proposes, therefore, that "the internal representations of self and other within the realm of affective experience and the extent to which these representations are individuated form an important aspect of the ability to experience emotion in its mature form" (p.208). She proposes that emotions (affects) mature in a developmental process, which interact with, and are influenced by, other aspects of development, including biological and/or psychic developments (Thompson, 1981). In this way, the same affect (e.g. anger) can manifest at various levels of development, but its "organization and structure would differ" (p. 208) depending on the level. Thus, anger, or any other emotion, can exist "at different levels of affect maturity, from the most primitive to the most mature." (Thompson, p.208)

She likens the development of affect maturity to systems and developmental theory in that its development is contingent upon several facets, such as biological and/or psychic

developments and relational experiences with caregivers[3], as well as the way each of these facets interact with one another. Thus, Thompson's theory is a developmental theory, in which various stages of emotional development (affect maturity) are affected by various changes and progression in physiological and psychological realms, as well as interaction with the environment/objects (which mainly refer, although not exclusively, to people) .

Thompson (1981, 1986) incorporates Piaget's cognitive stages of development, as noted above, to account for the cognitive changes that are embedded in her theory of affect maturity. Werner's (1948) orthogenetic principle which suggests that the development of emotion occurs through a process of differentiation, integration, and hierarchicalization has also influenced Thompson's theory. In referring to the concepts described by Werner, Thompson (1986) says that *primitive* affective experience does not go through the process of differentiation, integration and hierarchicalization, and thus "remains unintegrated (not organized into hierarchical systems) and segregated, rather then systematized" (p.209).

As a result, primitive emotion is "rendered wholly dependent upon the total affect-event in which they are embedded, and have psychological reality only so long as the affect-event exists" (Thompson 1986, p.209). This experience, in which affective experience has not been differentiated from the event, profoundly affects self and self-other representations because a particular self-representation or self state may be "wholly dependent upon a particular affect event" (Thompson 1986, p.209). If the affect-event changes, then so will the associated affect state.

Thompson's (1986, 1981) ideas here are very much in line with Fast's (1985) event theory in that Thompson sees primitive emotion beginning from a more global and diffuse

[3] Thompson does not make explicit reference to relationship with caregivers, although her theory is grounded in an object relations framework and so it can be implied.

(undifferentiated) state and advancing to more mature, differentiated states. In the primitive affect experience the affect is "all there is" such that "all experience of self and reality takes on the dynamic coloring of the affect-event and is dynamically dependent upon it" (Thompson 1981, p.210). In this primitive state, the cognitive changes of reality, self, and object that are associated with the event disappear when the event disappears.

Hamlet's impulsive stabbing of Polonius brilliantly illustrates Thompson's (1986) suggestion that primitive emotional thought is a "thing of affect"—Hamlet becomes so consumed by the affects of anger and revenge, which for him are embedded in an event that is associated with the loss of his father, that all other self-representations, including the deeply contemplative reflective self that Hamlet often presents (and one in which his affects are hierarchically organized), are non-existent in this highly charged moment. Instead, his anger is experienced as a global and overwhelming "thing-of-affect."

Hamlet's ability to be reflective at times, but consumed by a "thing-of affect", as described above, also illustrates a central component to Thompson's theory—that the integration and differentiation of affect into systematized and hierarchical structures is relative and can exist at various levels in some situations or experiences while not in others—that is, different events (especially interactions of self with other) and/or emotions can manifest in mature or primitive forms according to the present interaction with the environment. Anger, as previously noted, can exist in a mature form or a primitive one. The moments in which Hamlet is able to reflect on his anger, and his feelings about life and death in relation to the loss of his father, constitute a more mature form of the experience of anger in contrast to the primitive affective experience exhibited with the stabbing of Polonius.

Components/Elements of Affect Maturity

Thompson (1986) proposes several concepts to account for the development of affect maturity: each of the concepts are, in fact, tasks which are acquired in developmental progression in accord with Piaget's cognitive stages of development. They begin in the sensorimotor period (0-2years), when the experiences that the infant has with caretaker are, as Fast (1985) suggests, fused. Correspondingly, experiences for the infant/child, at this stage, are sensorimotor experiences that are embedded in the event, like a "*thing-of-affect*." Through gradual experiences of differentiation between self and other, and in accord with the cognitive changes associated with this stage, the establishment of physical object constancy becomes possible. The ability to evoke the image of a nurturing mother even in her absence, to refer to an earlier example, is a function of the mother's "good-enough" caretaking *and* the cognitive changes that are occurring for the child.

However, Thompson (1986) suggests that the "*thing-of-affect*" experience continues into the pre-operational stage (2-7years). The pre-operational stage is marked by the child's inability to see any perspective other than his own (***egocentric***), his experience that any single aspect of an event colors the entire experience of that situation (***centration***), and his "***irreversible***" thought process. This last tenet, ***irreversibility***, is the lynchpin of Thompson's (1981) theory, and suggests that a child is unable to "carry out transformations in thought," or to experience 'mixed' or 'contradictory' emotions. Applied to emotion, irreversibility occurs, as it did for Hamlet, when an individual is in one affect state and "cannot conceptualize his or her relation to other affect states or other evaluations of the object" (p.210). In this case, a hated object, according to Thompson (1986) is a hated object and cannot be conceptualized as anything but that.

The experience of the self that is bound to this hated object, for example a guilty self, a depressed self, or an angry self[4], also becomes irreversible, such that no other experience of self or other exists in these highly charged moments. When new events arise they bring with it new emotions, new experiences of self and other, which all happen without a trace of previously felt aspects of self, other or event. When this occurs, and an emotion is unable to be objectively evaluated, then it is necessarily tied to the situation in which it is being experienced (Thompson, 1986).

The capacity for "reversibility" of emotion is usually acquired during concrete operations (7-11years). During this stage of development the child begins to be able to understand that feelings are dynamic in nature, and that his/her feelings are not necessarily a reflection of objective reality. With the capacity to differentiate between what is felt and what is real, the child is able to reality test their emotions. However, contradictory feelings are still difficult for the child to tolerate, and often contradictory feelings can become subject to minimization or suppression. Additionally, emotions begin to be recognized as belonging to internal states, although they are seen or experienced in superficial, generalized ways. For example, people are often seen in light of their roles, such as who they are professionally or personally, without much depth to their character.

It is during the next phase of development, the formal operational period (11-15 years), that the self and others are experienced in more nuanced, unique ways with enduring emotional states. When contradictory feelings do arise, they can now be experienced in relation to additional available representations of self and other, and to the feelings associated with these representations.

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[4] These are just a few, although common, of the many possible self-representation that can be tied to the absent-other. The self-representations formed as a result of such absence will be discussed later in this chapter.

All of these concepts lay the groundwork for Thompson's (1981, 1986) affect maturity scale, which assesses affect maturity on a five point scale from the most primitive to the most mature, with each level reflecting more differentiated representations of self and other and their associated affects.

Internal Working Models

The idea that the constellation of early self-other interactions serve as procedural representations for later interactions (how to proceed/interact) has its roots in attachment theory and the seminal work of John Bowlby (1980).

The attachment relationship has been described as "the emerging pattern of dyadic regulation of emotion that determines the self-regulatory process and finds its inception in the interactional 'affective bond' that occurs between the child and caregiver(s) (Demick and Andreioletti, 2003, p. 376). As such, behavior is thought to "emerge and (be) organized around an available and interactive caregiver" (Carlson & Sroufe, 1995, p. 584). That is, because of the importance of the attachment figure and the attachment relationship for emotional and physical survival and affect regulation, the child will mold his or her behavior and thoughts in order to maintain the attachment relationship (Slade, 1999a).

Bowlby (1980) suggested that, from the beginning, the attachment relationship is an interactive process and that the interactions between self and other form mental schemata, or expectations about the self, other and interaction between the two. Bowlby (1980) referred to these mental sets as "internal working models." According to Bowlby (1980) such schemas operate on an unconscious level, forming a template for future relationships by shaping implicit relational expectations. Carlson and Sroufe (1995) have described internal working models this way: it is "the early pattern of physiological regulation in the caregiving relationship (that) serves

as a prototype for later psychological regulation characterized by the behavioral sequences of behavioral interactions" (Carlson and Sroufe, p. 585)

Slade (2000) helps to describe the development of internal working models through the work of Mary Main: "Main suggests that the infant's experience of his parents response to fear, proximity seeking, anger, and satisfaction is *encoded first in an action sequence* (Main, Kaplan and Cassidy 1985); slowly, interiorized action sequences become working models of attachment" (p. 1157). This idea, which bears a striking resemblance to the notions inherent to event theory and affect maturity, is supported by Carlson & Sroufe (1995), who have suggested that within the attachment relationship(s), "the specific meaning of perceptions and actions is shaped through affective as well as cognitive experiences with specific others (Sroufe, 1979b, 1990b)." Thus, internal working models call upon the internalized images of the self in relation to the other, and the affects associated with those representations. In this way, the various self other interactions which determine differentiation also shape the development of internal working models.

Within Bowlby's notion of attachment, the quality and nature of the development of self-other representations serve as the foundation for templates or prototypes for how to manage future interaction. If a child experiences his relationship with his caregiver(s) as one in which the caregiver is consistently available and reliable, soothes negative affect states, and has the ability to tolerate the child's varied emotions (Herring & Kaslow, 2002) then the child subsequently comes to expect future experiences with others to be benevolent and rewarding.

Furthermore, Carlson and Sroufe (1995) have suggested that, "what is incorporated from the caregiving experience are not the specific behavioral features, but the quality of patterning of relationships, mediated by affect…(such that) cognitive and affective processes become

organized, with respect to the regulation of emotion, around the primary caregiver(s). Emerging patterns of dyadic regulation guide behavioral organization and the sharing of intimate experience; in time these patterns become characteristic modes of individual regulation" (p.594). In this same vein, Bowlby (1980) has suggested that the development of the self-other interactions that define one's internal working model, must be based on real, repetitive experiences with caregivers, rather than fantasies of those experiences (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994).

Main expanded on the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth, particular in regards to internal working models, by shifting the focus away from looking at behavior as the sole way to understand the attachment process and instead focus on the "level of representation" (Main, 2000). In conjunction with Carol George and Nancy Kaplan (George, Kaplan, and Main,1984), Main designed the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)—a semi-structured clinical interview that asks participants to provide descriptions of their childhood relationships with attachment figures. This was the first reliable measure for assessing the "state of mind with respect to overall attachment" (Main, 2000, p. 1079) in adults. Because the AAI is structured in a way that asks participants to reflect not just on their early attachment relationships, but also how they feel their relationships to attachment figures contributed to whom they are as adults, it tends to "surprise the unconscious" (Main, p. 1077, 2000).

In this respect, Main (2000) believed that adult attachment organization could be assessed on the basis of the quality and nature of a person's narrative regarding these questions. She was interested in the ways language (narrative) reflects internal representations of one's internal working model, and suggested that meta-cognitive monitoring, which is "the capacity to think about one's thinking and to-as a consequence-represent the complexity of emotion and memory without distortion," allows for "narrative clarity and emotional 'truth' (which) reflect the relative

absence of defensive attempts to keep intolerable affects and memories at bay" (Slade, 1999, p. 801). In this regard, Main (1991) has suggested that early failures to integrate painful experiences, such as trauma, neglect, and abandonment into internalized representations of attachment figures result in poor meta-cognitive monitoring. As a result, more surface level, idealized descriptions of relationships to one's caregivers are likely to occur, and will be evidenced in inconsistent, contradictory narratives of those representations (Slade, 1999).

Slade (2000) goes on to suggest that representations of experiences with caregivers are embedded within the structure of the representations themselves. Thus, the quality and nature of a son's narratives about his relationship, or lack there of, with his father will correspond to the quality and nature of the original relationship between a son and a father. In this way, "Patterns of representation reflect not just the facts of early childhood, but also the quality of the representation of early experiences" (Slade, 2000). The organization and integration of the narrative is, therefore, likely to reflect the degree to which the early experiences, including experiences associated with the loss or absence of a father, are organized and integrated within the individual's emotional, affective world.

Main (2000) identified four different categories, or "states-of mind", of adult attachment that can be distinguished from the narratives provided in the AAI: secure-autonomous; dismissing, preoccupied, and unresolved-disorganized.

Individuals who are classified as "secure-autonomous" display a clear valuing of attachment figures and attachment relationships, and present a relatively objective view of their descriptions of these relationships. Secure attached individuals clearly understand how their attachment relationships contributed to their adult personality, and they exhibit a rich capacity for meta-cognitive monitoring and affect regulation (Main, 2000). Individuals who are classified

as “dismissing” tend to downplay the importance of attachment relationships. In this same vein, they tend not to acknowledge or discuss negative life events, often claiming that they only made them stronger (Main, 2000). Their descriptions of early attachment figures and their relationships with them tend to be idealized, and are often unsupported or contradicted throughout the AAI. Those classified as “preoccupied” presented as “too preoccupied with early and/or current relationships with their own parents to clearly describe and evaluate them” (Main, p. 1081, 2000). “Preoccupied” individuals often display increased affect during the interview which reflects their overall struggle with the ability to regulate affect. Finally, individuals classified as “unresolved-disorganized” tend to show significant lapses in meta-cognitive monitoring. These lapses often occur during the recollection of traumatic memories, and tend to reflect the individuals’ inability to integrate the experiences and/or affects associated with those experiences in a coherent, organized manner. According to Fonagy et al. (1995) these failures reflect a failure of defensive strategies in respect to experiences of trauma or loss.

These categories reflect the experience and quality of the attachment relationship. In this way, the self-other experiences with attachment figures that shape one’s internal working model are likely to be correlated with the development of affect maturity.

The Mythical Father

In line with Bowlby’s contention that the development of internal working models is contingent upon real, repetitive experiences with caregivers, rather than fantasies of those experience, Thompson’s (1981) theory of affect maturity suggests that the acquisition of more mature forms of emotion, while being a “a construction out of its perceived real qualities and our own emotional meanings” is contingent upon relational interaction with “objects that are taken to be part of the real world” (p.24).

The creation of a mythical father by the young men who participated in this study may, in fact, suggest that the father is indeed a needed attachment figure. And, as such, the mythical father may be the son's attempt to create a substitute for a real, but absent, father, as an attempt to provide the "real, repetitive experiences" necessary for the development of more mature forms of relating and affect.

So how is the object experienced when the real world object is absent? And, what are the ramifications, if any, of this on the development of affect maturity for sons whose fathers have been absent from their lives?

The Creation of the Mythical Father

Anna Freud and Burlingham (Neubauer, 1960) studied fatherless children in the Hampstead Nurseries during wartime and found that children were "compelled to create in fantasy what does not exist in fact" (p.288)**.** The children observed in this study, it seemed, created a fantasy father to serve as a primary attachment figure in place of their real, but absent, father. Numerous others (Gill, 1991; Greenspan 1982; Neubauer, 1960; Krempe, 2003) have made reference to a similar phenomenon in which the experience of a father's absence compels children to create an image of a father in fantasy. Krempe (2003), for example, suggests that we all have an "inner father" that is a construction composed of many images from both real and imagined sources. She refers to this phenomenon as the "Father Imago," which according to Laplanche and Pontalis' (1973), is the "unconscious prototypical figure which orientates the subject's way of apprehending others; it is built up on the basis of the first real and phantasized relationships within the family environment" (p.211). In elucidating her ideas about the creation of an inner father, Krempe (2003) employs St. Claire's (1986) understanding of object relations to suggest that the inner father is made up of "the ways in which the individual intrapsychically

represents the father and the images and attended feelings connected to mental representations of him" (p.1).

Consistent with the tenets of object relations theory, and those of affect maturity, the internalized mental representations of the father seem to be called upon to serve as a model for self and self in interaction with others and the environment. Gill (1991), in fact, suggests that fatherless children create "a fantasized father, relate to this introject, and identify with both its positive and negative qualities." (p. 245)

Krempe (2003) also refers to Piaget and Inhelder's (1971) work on symbolic representation to help account for the ways in which internal representations of the father manifest. She integrates Piaget's concepts of schemata with the internal working models put forth by attachment theorists (Bowlby, 1980; Carlson and Sroufe, 1995) to suggest that the internal images one has of one's father (including the feelings associated with those images) serve as a map of how to experience and interact with the external world. Furthermore, Krempe (2003) suggests an idea important to the concepts underlying affect maturity—that the mental images or representation that one has about their father are "*affect-laden*."

The aforementioned ideas, according to Krempe (2003), are based upon the belief that "the individual actively constructs this imagery out of real-world experienced events" (Krempe 2003, p.2) While the absence of a father is a real world, experienced event, how exactly the father's absence affects his son's "internal map," and the affects associated with it, is not so explicit. To be sure, the image of one's father, even if he is absent, is never constructed in a vacuum. Images, cultural representations, stories passed down from the family, and others' experience of the father, especially the mother's experience, all contribute to the father image or imago that gets constructed in the mind of their sons (Lanksy,1989). In fact, Chiland (1982), in

describing a child's experience of an absent father, argues that, "a mother-child couple does not exist without a father somewhere," (p.369) even if it is in the mother's psyche. Thus, there is always a father present, even if he is absent.

Gill (1991) makes some progress in helping to explain the inner, affect-laden, experience associated with father absence. He suggests that the phenomenon of incorporation, introjection and identification, all concepts inherent in the ongoing development of object relations, contribute to the "internalization of an absent father" (Gill, 1991, p.243). In explicating these constructs, Gill implies that the process of introjection, in which "the relationship with the object is replaced by one with an imagined object inside the subject's self" (p.243), helps to form a relationship with the absent object in one's mind. Consistent with Freud and Burlingham's (Neubauer, 1960) findings in the Hampstead Nurseries, in which the child replaces in fantasy what cannot exist in fact (an actual attachment to a real father), Gill (1991) notes that an *introject* can serve as a defense against separation anxiety, and can "facilitate…growth and autonomy" (P.243).

Gill (1991) emphasizes that children, especially in later developmental periods[5], *identify* with this introject (of their father), whether real or imaginary. And, he states that "identification is a process of internal organization and synthesis, involving conscious or unconscious fantasy of being or becoming like another person…" which, "leads to a modification of the self-representation in line with the perception of the object" (p.243). The mythical father, which seems to replace a real, but absent one, thus seems to share the same properties, and may in fact reflect the need for the father to foster emotional (and physical) well-being and development. Of

[5] While Gill does not explicitly say which later developmental periods, adolescence seems particularly relevant. These ideas will be expanded in the next section.

course, it is these same attachment relationships that are part and parcel of the development of the self-other differentiation process necessary for the development of affect maturity.

When the father "object" that is being internalized and identified with, however, is a real object, there is an opportunity to check one's fantasy against reality. Through this "validation" process, the internalized object is able to be modified and de-idealized into more realistic, manageable and forgiving constructs (Krueger, 1983). If, however, there is no father present, there is no model against which to compare this fantasy, and everything that the child imagines, including his wishes and fears, never get placed in check by the boundaries of reality: "When fantasy becomes the heir of the lost parent," according to Krueger (1983), developmental transformations fail to occur and a "personal myth then comes into existence…which is full of omissions and distortions of reality...One's self perception, certain aspects of one's mode of life, successes and failures, all may be regarded as repetitions of these fantasies of the personal myth" (p.584).

In this same vein, Krempe (2003) argues that "the lack of fit between the innate sense of father and perceptions of the personal father (real father) generates a dissonant image, *laden with negative affect*[6]" (p. 6). As an example, it has been suggested that fantasies about the loss of a parent (father) often involve storylines (internalizations of self and self-other) that incorporate self-blame and self-denigration that result from a child's belief that the father's absence is a function of their own (the child's) unworthiness (Krueger 1983; Neubauer 1989). This is especially true if the father's absence occurs during Piaget's pre-operational stage of development, in which the egocentric nature of a child's thinking makes a child particularly vulnerable to self-blame in regards to the absence of a parent (Secunda 1992). Likewise, Burgner

[6] Italics Added

(1985) suggests that when father absence occurs at a time when the child is developmentally engaged in omnipotent thinking it results in strict superego and developmental regression later in life.

These storylines get incorporated into self and self-other constructs, and because of the discordance between fantasy and reality, there is a disruption in the healthy establishment of self and self-other representations, associated affects, and the boundaries between these representations that occur in the process of internalizing (introjection and identification) a father (object). Put another way, they disrupt the ability to establish the self-other differentiation necessary for the development of affect maturity. When there is no actual parent to test reality against, an essential component to affect maturity, the ability to reality test one's emotions is significantly impaired and the self-other representations of father become partly infused with negative affect all of which impact the developmental achievements of *centration, reality testing* and *irreversibility* of emotion inherent to more mature forms of affect.

In his clinical work with a patient whose father was absent, Fenichel noted that "an identification with an idealized fantasy father" (Neubauer 1960, p.292) resulted in the patient's continual disappointment with people, who could never live up to the fantasized father. Similarly, Gill (1991) has noted that in his clinical work with patients whose fathers had been absent from their lives, there exists an unconscious identification with both an idealized father and a deserting father. He observed that these particular self-other representations (idealized father/devalued self and deserting father/unlovable self, for example) get re-enacted in the world, and are manifested in the consulting room as transference.

As these vignettes suggest, when the self-other (son-father) representations go unchecked against a real father object they become rigidly bound to the fantasized images of father and of

self in relation to father. The fatherless self may, for example, become linked to an angry self, a depressed self, and/or a worthless self. Consequently, the affects and cognitions associated with the father's absence become ripe for transference onto other situations and people. And so, when an affect-laden event triggers emotions associated with father absence, like Hamlet's mistaking Polonius for his father's murderer, a fatherless son is bound to become thrown into an affect storm in which all other representations of self, other, and reality can disappear. Thus, boys who grow up without a father present are not only afflicted by the loss of a real father *but also* by the ramifications of their reliance on a substitute fantasy father. It seems, then, that a son who has grown up without a father present does not experience the repetitive, positive exchanges (with a real father) to serve as a (internalized) mental map of the world, including how to engage with others and how to regulate affect.

While many of the ideas discussed so far have referenced early stages of development in defining the effects of father absence on a son's emotional maturity, this study is based on the assumption that the effects of father absence on affect maturity come to a head during the adolescent stage of development, when these early interactional experiences are called upon in order to further define oneself and form more intimate relationships.

Adolescence

According to Erikson (1968),"true engagement with others is the result and the test of firm self-delineation" (p. 167), and is a process that occurs when the self finds meaning and coherence through interaction with others. Erikson (1968), like Gill (1991), saw the formation of identity as an ongoing process, but as beginning early in a child's life by means of incorporation, introjection and identification. It is early interactions with caregivers, occurring under the umbrella of trust that provide the child with his/her first sense of "I" (Erikson, 1968).

Eventually, the introjection of these self-other representations serve as the foundation for one's identity through a process of identifying with the caregiver's images and characteristics. And it is in adolescence, a period of extreme physiological and psychological change, that mature forms of identity formation become possible by incorporating certain self-other representations into one's self and discarding others (Kroger, 2004).

The retention of some and the discarding of other internalized representations is a process akin to the intrapsyhic restructuring that Blos (1967) has proposed is central to the period of adolescence. What ensues in the adolescent stage of development, according to Blos (1967), is a shaking up of previous "infantile" object representations (the internalized early interactions with caregivers) in what he has referred to as the *second separation-individuation process*. In the "first" separation-individuation process, according to Mahler, Pine and Bergman (1975), if all goes well, there is a movement from a state of merger to a state of separateness, *and* an establishment of intrapsychic autonomy and individuality, from primary attachment figures (Kroger, 2004). The significant psychological changes that occur during these first years of life resemble, and are partly a function of, the rapid biological developments inherent to Piaget's (1983) sensorimotor stage. In accordance with the ideas underlying Thompson's (1981) concept of affect maturity, the overlap of the considerable biological and psychological changes, as they occur within the context of interaction with the environment (including others), promote the development of self-other differentiation and self-delineation.

Rather than a loosening of the ties to parental objects inherent in the first separation and individuation phase, the second one requires a disengagement from the internalized parental (self-other) representations that have already been established (Blos, 1967). Adolescence, too, is a stage defined by massive physiological and psychological changes, which, through the

individual's interaction with the environment, promote the attainment of self-other differentiation. The period of adolescence, and the intrapsychic reorganization of previous internalized objects that occurs during it, thus becomes a crucial determinant not just of identity and character formation, but the ability to experience affect in its mature form. Indeed, Kroger (2004) argues that there is a direct link between an adolescent's identity configuration and the capacity for self-other differentiation—"Identity achievements are characterized by an intrapsychic organization in which self and object representations are clearly distinct" (p. 72).

Up to the point of adolescence, the child is largely dependent upon the parent and parent representations to help in the service of his own ego deficiencies (Blos 1967). According to Blos (1965, 1967, 1972), through healthy negotiation of the "second" separation-individuation process, significant changes to the psychic structure occur: the superego, which is made up of the constellation of internalized self-other representations, loses some of its influence over the individual and becomes less rigid. This allows for more variation in experience of self and other, and the associated affects.

It is, therefore, through the restructuring of previous object representations and successful establishment of self-other differentiation, that the adolescent is able to establish ego constancy which promotes "the self-regulation of feelings, urges and values" (Levy-Warren, 1996, p. 11). In this way, the parents of childhood are left in the past, and more differentiated, realistic, and less-idealized representations of self and other come to exist (Levy-Warren, 1996). Adolescent individuation is, thus, a direct reflection of the structural changes that accompany "emotional disengagement from internalized infantile objects" (Blos, 1969, p. 164). And, therefore, the "maturation of the child's ego goes hand in hand with disengagement from internal representations of caretakers" (Kroger, 2004, p. 60)

Burgner (1985), in her analytic work with adolescents, sees the constant threat and fear of termination that are so prevalent in the transference, as stemming from the inability to successfully negotiate "psychic separateness from their internal primary objects" (p.184). In this same vein, Burgner (1988) proposes that her ultimate goal in working with adolescents is "continuing a process in the transference which the adolescent, at least in the healthy part of his/her ego, is simultaneously striving to complete the definitive move away from the internal and external parental objects of infancy and childhood" (p. 180). In order for this to occur, however, Blos (1965, 1967, 1972) has noted that *regression* to earlier affective and object related states must, and does, occur. Kroger (1990), as well as others (Josselson 1982; Orlofsky and Frank 1986), have, in fact, provided empirical support for the notion that there exists in adolescence a wish to "individuate from parents while simultaneously wishing to remain fused (regress) with their internalized parental representations" (p. 73).

Blos's (1967) suggestion that "regression in adolescence is a precondition for progressive development," (p. 178) assumes that the adolescent will necessarily re-experience the affect-laden internalized events of his childhood—a sort of regression in the service of the ego. What this entails for the adolescent boy who has grown up without a father present in his life, is a revivification of the affect laden memories associated with his loss. And, because of his already weakened ego, and the continued absence of the father, he maintains a deepened vulnerability to becoming entrenched in the defenses associated with the original loss. This is in keeping with Gill's (1991) contention that the internalized mythical father can serve as a defense against separation anxiety. However, it is also important to note Gill's assertion that a mythical introject can serve to "facilitate…growth and autonomy."

Indeed, in Schafer's (1973) critique of Blos' theory, he makes the argument that "only an already highly individuated person is capable of giving up his infantile relations to other" (p. 43). Schafer's suggestion implies that earlier difficulty in negotiating the first stage of separation-individuation, which disturbs the attainment of self-other differentiation, renders the second separation-individuation stage of adolescence (necessary for developing mature forms of relating and affect), impossible. To be fair, Blos (1967) and Kroger (2004) seem to address this very issue in speaking about the regressive aspects of adolescence: "The regression process leads to a development of a firm sense of self, different from that of the parents, not overwhelmed by internalized superego demands and more capable of self-support" (p.60). However, because there is a regressive aspect to adolescence "where ego organization has been deficient through infant-separation subphases, such deficiencies are laid bare with the removal of parental props during adolescence" (Kroger 2004, p.62). Furthermore, both Blos (1962) and Kroger (2004) suggest that because adolescence involves a consolidation of character it can offer the opportunity to rework or master childhood trauma. Kroger (2004) sums it up this way, "infantile traumas are not removed but rather (optimally) integrated into the ego… (such that) the individual is able to find satisfying ways to cope with what was originally an unmanageable childhood ordeal" (p.64).

If we follow Blos's logic, because a regression to the internalized experience of original attachment figures is a necessary and unavoidable part of adolescence and the ability to relinquish ties to those attachment figures (internalized relationships) is necessary for developmental progression, a father's absence will be revisited by the fatherless son. Moreover, a father's continued absence, during adolescence, will have significant ramifications on a son's

ability to revisit and rework his earlier experience with his father's absence, and his ability to emotionally mature.

Indeed, Levy-Warren (1996) suggests that in order for the necessary process of separation in adolescence to take place parents must be "stationary targets" (p. 292). Otherwise, according to Levy-Warren (1996), there may never be the opportunity to de-idealize parental figures and form ego-ideals grounded in reality. Moreover, the lack of "stationary parents" disrupts the necessary process of identification and mourning, promoting the chance that *highly charged negative affects* (such as anger) will cultivate within self-other representations (Levy-Warren, 1996).

Furthermore, Levy-Warren (1996) refers to Laufer's (1966) contention that "interferences in normal mourning keep affects originally connected to the lost parental objects in an unchanged state, thus requiring layers of additional defenses to be erected to keep the affects repressed" (p.297). Indeed, Laufer (1966), suggests that such interference is a function of *object loss* (father absence, for example), which sets the stage for a continued reliance on the internalized representations of parental objects, that are often idealized (and in the events of earlier loss/trauma even more so), stay idealized, and thus hamper the "adult identifications necessary for the maturation of the ego ideal" (p. 297).

For a boy whose father has been and is still absent, the father becomes an eternally peripatetic "target." Thus, the normal process of comparing the internalized object representations of one's father to the father that exists in the real world (who the father actually is), which gives the adolescent an opportunity to set up realistic identifications and experiences of self and other, is stifled. A paternally orphaned son is left comparing the internalized mythical father imago to itself. As a result of the previous and current absence (loss), undifferentiated,

and highly charged negative affects will continually be infused in the self-other (son-father) representations.

Thus, what has been deemed a second-chance at re-working earlier childhood conflicts (Slavin,1996), can instead become a re-experience of the original trauma of father loss, without any viable solution if there is still no father, or father figure, present. Fatherless sons who reach adolescence can "symbolically mourn the various aspects of childhood that they are leaving behind by engaging in the adolescent developmental process simultaneously with engaging in a mourning process for someone who is both symbolically and actually lost to them" (Levy-Warren 1996, p. 300). This creates an enormous bind for the adolescent son who does not have the necessary resources to repair or work through his loss. Kroger (2006) notes that "childhood trauma can have both positive and negative effects on character formation. Individuals may attempt to reactivate trauma, remembering and reliving it for integration into character as described above, or they may avoid the entire process" (p. 255). And, "adolescents who choose this latter option do not allow themselves the opportunity to come to terms with trauma, but rather remain under its directive in defensive maneuvers during the years that follow" (Kroger 2006, p. 64-65).

Paternally orphaned sons who are unable to come to terms with the loss of their father are, therefore, more likely to struggle with the ability to tolerate more painful and primitive emotions that is a condition necessary for exhibiting mature forms of affect. According to Thompson (1981), this may result in contradictory feelings which are difficult to tolerate, and often result in one of the contradictory feelings getting minimized or suppressed.

A son who has created a mythical father as an attachment figure to replace a real, but absent one, may, therefore, be forced to continue his reliance on the mythical father (if he can not

find a surrogate one) both as a substitute for the real father, and as a defense (denial) against the affects associated with his absence (a denial of the separation). Indeed, Burgner (1985) noted that in fatherless children there is often "a persistence of modes of behavior from earlier phases" (p.312). As Levy-Warren (1996) has pointed out, this has the additional ramification of thwarting the de-idealization necessary for the restructuring of the self-other internal representations (self-other differentiation) that occurs in adolescence. If there is a continued inability to establish self-other differentiation, as a result of past, and current, deficiencies in the parent-child (father-son) relationship, Blos (1967) suggests that the regression of adolescence will fail to serve its purpose in developmental progress, thus precluding individuation and ego maturation. And, "where such adolescent intrapsychic restructuring does not occur, the young person, at best, may merely substitute the original infantile attachment with a new love object, leaving the *quality* of the attachment unaltered" (Kroger 2004, p. 60).

It seems probable, then, that if the mythical father that served as an "attachment" replacement for the original father is the same "father" called upon by the adolescent son to relinquish and restructure his idealized representations, there will be a continued reliance on that mythical father (who is a constellation of all the boy's wishes and fears), in order to leave the quality of the relationship to the mythical father unaltered, and as a defense against the affects associated with his absence. Additionally, because the mythical father served, in part, as a denial of the separation/loss of the father's absence, the reliance on a mythical father and previous forms of defense are likely to get crystallized as a son increases his need for identification with a father figure to help him navigate through his adolescence into adulthood. There may, therefore, be some rupture to the developmental tasks associated with each of the separation-individuation phases. As a result, it is likely that there will be a diminished capacity to establish the more

mature self-other representations necessary to experience affect as independent from external sources (Blos, 1967)

Summary

This study was an attempt to investigate the impact of father absence on adolescent boys' affect maturity. The development of affect commences at the beginning of life as undifferentiated interactional experiences between infant and caretaker(s) (self-other). In initial encounters, affects are ineluctably tied to the self-other representations and the interactive events from which those representations evolved. Repeated and multiple self-other interactions, if they occur under the umbrella of nurturing and trust, establish integration of the various part self-object representations and their associated affects into cognitive-affective hierarchies. As such, they can be decoupled from the particular affect-laden event, and self-other representation, in which they were originally embedded. This allows for multiple self-other representations, and their associated affects, to be elicited within the individual (cognitively) despite the particular affect-laden event and/or self-other constellation of the moment.

In this vein, the various self-other experiences that foster differentiation determine the level and form of centration and the capacity for reality testing and irreversibility of thought. These capacities contribute to emotion, which is always directed toward objects, being experienced in mature, differentiated forms. For a son who is, and has been, without a father, all son-father representations are constructed in relation to a mythical father. The mythical father, which is created by the son to serve as a surrogate attachment figure, however, is primarily a projection of all the son's wishes and fears, and precludes the integration of affects related to his absence into hierarchically organized and differentiated schemas. Instead, the affects embedded in the son-father representations, stay confined to those associated with his loss.

In this regard, sadness (depression), anger (rage), and worthlessness are all affects that are commonly tied to a father's absence. It has been found, for example, that children who experience a sustained period of living without father display increased depression (Dubowitz et al 2000). Anger, also a normal and, at times, healthy response to loss, can serve to counter the depression by filling the void of the absent father (Williams, 2008). In the extreme, anger can become a part of what helps fatherless sons feel psychically alive. Feelings of worthlessness, if they occur, get incorporated into the omnipotent fantasy that they (the son) were not worth the father staying around for.

These affects become inextricably and rigidly bound to particular self-other constellations, in part, because there is no real father to help differentiate them. As a result, the *primitive* affective experience associated with the loss of the father does not go through the process of differentiation, integration and hierarchicalization. Anger, sadness, and other primitive emotions are therefore, "rendered wholly dependent upon the total affect-event in which they are embedded, and have psychological reality only so long as the affect-event exists" (Thompson 1981, p.209). This has important ramifications for the adolescent boy who is often in a tumultuous affective state, in part, because the original self-other representations, and the affects embedded within them, are being called upon in the service of creating a more synthetic and differentiated experience of oneself, and therefore, others.

As previously mentioned, Gill (1991) has suggested that children, especially in later developmental periods[7], *identify* with the introjects of their father, which they develop through an "internal organization and synthesis, involving conscious or unconscious fantasy of being or becoming like another person" (p.243). This leads to "a modification of the self-representation in

[7] While Gill does not explicitly say which later developmental periods, adolescence seems particularly relevant. These ideas will be explicated in the next section.

line with the perception of the object" (Gill, 1991, p.243). Additionally, according to Gill (1991), fatherless children create "a fantasized father, relate to this introject, and identify with both its positive and negative qualities." (p. 245) Thus, the "need to establish a cohesive and stable set of self-representations that lead to a sense of 'me'" (Levy-Warren 1996, p.25), when a boy reaches adolescence, evokes both an increased reliance on the father image, and a need to relinquish that image, by incorporating certain representations of the father and discarding others. We see in Joyce's Ulysses, through the character Stephen, the eternal search for a "sense of me" that results from the absence of his father.

Adolescents who have grown up without a father have only a mythical father to call upon as one of the primary love objects (role models) in order to help him define his identity, deal with intense emotions, relate to others, and make decisions. They do not experience the real father (or father figure) necessary to restructure the original, if not mythical, father representations. Furthermore, the father's continued absence limits the restructuring and de-idealizing process necessary for self-other differentiation and, thus, the development of mature forms of affect.

Telemachus' search for Odysseus, and Stephen and Bloom's parallel search in Ulysses, exhibits a son's natural turn to the father for assistance in finding and defining himself, and the ramifications that the father's absence has on this process—it leaves the paternally orphaned son no "implicit relational" model of how to proceed as a man in the world. As a result, when an event occurs that elicits specific self-other constellations in which a father image is called for (including how to be as a man in the world), or he is in a situation that elicits more primitive emotions (such as anger or sadness), the paternally orphaned son is likely to become consumed

by the affect, unable to experience himself or the other object/event outside of its current emotional state.

As a result, there is likely to be a continued reliance on the mythical father as a defense against the loss (separation) of his presence**.** Laufer (1966) has described the ramifications of object loss that are doomed to resurface in adolescence because, "interferences in normal mourning keep affects originally connected to the lost parental objects in an unchanged state, thus requiring layers of additional defenses to be erected (in order) to keep the affects repressed" (p.297). Furthermore, Laufer (1966) has noted that this results in "a continued reliance on the internalized representations of parental objects, that are often idealized (and in the events of earlier loss/trauma even more so), stay idealized, and thus hamper the 'adult identifications necessary for the maturation of the ego ideal'" (p.297). It seems, then, that this could result in a further entrenchment of non-differentiated states of self and other, and the inability to experience emotions as coming from one self or the (self-other) events in which they are embedded.

As Thompson (1986) suggests, affect maturity "determines how an individual will experience and cope with his or her feelings" (p. 212). This, in turn has consequences for the ability to tolerate negative affects, reflect on possible decisions instead of acting impulsively, and reality test one's emotions. These capacities are of great importance in adolescence, as the ability to successfully navigate its' tumultuous seas determines, to a great extent, the capacity for healthy adult functioning. Conversely, maladjustment in any of these areas, such as poor reality testing, an inability to regulate aggression and social maladjustment (Rodgers & Rose, 2002) renders adolescence treacherous.

Finally, it has been shown that the ability to reflect on experience in coherent and organized ways is correlated with the ability to regulate affect, and understand the emotion of

self and others (Slade, 2000). In this way, the capacity to reflect on one's experience of father absence in coherent and organized ways is likely to be correlated with more mature forms of affect maturity. That is, the ability to experience the self and others, and the affects associated with those self-other representations, in differentiated and hierarchically organized ways is fundamental to the capacity to present more reflective narratives associated with early experience of father absence, and vice versa.

In this same vein, the ability to acknowledge and make meaning of early experiences prevents the need to resort to defenses such as denial, distortion, or dissociation (Slade, 2000). In this way, the inability to integrate the affective experience of father absence into a coherent, balanced and reflective narrative, and instead rely on an idealized, or overly negative, mythical image of the father is likely to be correlated with low levels of affect maturity.

It seems likely that the negative effects of father absence on affect maturity would be most evident in the face of conflict, when the need for positive, regulating internalized representations of self and other are needed to weather affect storms. In highly affectively charged situations, when the heat is turned up, fatherless sons do not have wealth of good experiences between self and father to draw on in order to regulate their affect. As a consequence, when paternally orphaned sons are in situations that are affectively charged they may be more likely to experience emotion in a way that is reflective of primitive levels of affect maturity.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

Subjects

The participants of this study were 25 young men between the ages of 15 and 23 years old enrolled at the Fortune Society of New York, a rehabilitation center for young men and women with emotional and/or behavioral difficulties, which often contributed to the use of illicit narcotics and subsequent legal infractions. The participants were mostly from high-risk urban minority communities, and primarily of African-American, Puerto Rican, or Hispanic descent. Nearly all of the participants had been exposed to a variety of familial and/or social stressors including poverty, legal issues, substance abuse and/or violence. Participation in the study was voluntary and confidential, and a small monetary compensation was given for those that took part in the study.

Setting

The study was conducted at The Fortune Society presently located at 29-76 Northern Blvd. Long Island City, NY 11101. All research instruments were administered during the course of a one-hour interview.

Procedures

The data gathered in this study were collected from responses to: a demographic questionnaire, a short screening questionnaire regarding father contact, the Thematic Appreciation Test (TAT), and a "Brief Adult Attachment Interview" (a subset of six questions taken from the AAI).

Basic demographic information was collected first and included the participants' name, age, education level, place of birth, place(s) of residence, family structure, and primary and secondary caregivers. The participants were then given three screening questions to determine the level of father absence and/or presence in their childhoods. Participants were then administered a series of eight Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) cards in which they were asked to provide narratives of the situation(s) presented in those cards. Finally, participants were given the "Brief AAI," six questions, taken from the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), which tend to elicit information regarding the quality and nature of one's relationship with the caregivers, as well as the capacity to reflect on the way these relationships may have impacted one's development.

All participants received a debriefing on the testing. During the debriefing, subjects were informed of the possibility that the questions they were asked might provoke emotional reactions to loss and upset from early relationships. At the end of the interview, participants who requested it were offered support and psychotherapy treatment (provided by the clinical staff of the Fortune Society). None of the participants asked for this referral.

Instruments

Screening Measure

To determine the level (amount) of father presence and absence experienced, the participants were given an initial screening measure which consisted of the following questions:

1. Who do you call Dad? (Someone who has been like a father to you).
2. From the time you were born until the age of eighteen can you please select which choice most accurately reflects the amount of contact you had with your father (this person)?
    a. Never.
    b. At least once a year
    c. Once a month
    a. Once a week
    b. More than once a week

2. Please describe as best you can the relationship you had with your father (this person)?

3. At the very end of the interview, if, and only if, a subject responds that he was not able to call anyone dad, he will be asked the following question: “Is there anybody else in your life who you considered to have had a father-like presence in your childhood.” If the answer is yes, the subject will be asked, “who was this person, and can you give me a brief description of your relationship with him.”

Thematic Apperception Test

The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is a projective test that consists of a series of cards that portray characters in various situations. Participants are asked to provide a narrative for each card which includes a description of the event presented in the card, what has led up to the event, what each of the characters are thinking and feeling, and what they believe will happen next (a prediction of the future). The participant's responses to the cards are considered to reflect, and therefore assess, thought patterns, attitudes, behaviors, and the quality and nature of affect. McClelland, Koestner, and Weinberger (1989) suggest that the TAT measures implicit motives as opposed to more conscious self-attributions" (referenced in Groth-Marnat p. 484, 2003). As such, they tend to represent the unconscious, symbolized experience of one's inner life (Groth-Marnat 2003).

For the purposes of this study, the TAT will be used to assess affect maturity in relation to father absence. As such, eight TAT cards, which are believed to best assess affect maturity in relation to father absence, were presented to the participants. The eight cards include four cards that depict fathers, or father figures, and four cards that have no father, or father figure present. Additionally, within each of these two groups (with father and without), two cards were presented that tend to elicit affect-laden stories from subjects and two that do not tend to pull for such intense affect.

The variation in affect intensity among TAT cards was determined by the typical themes that they tend to elicit as referenced in Bellack, L. (1986), De Vos, G. A., & De Vos, E. S. (2004), and Groth-Marnat (2003), as well as through discussion with the lead advisor of this study. The eight TAT cards presented in this study are listed below.

Cards with no father present

Card 13B : A little boy is sitting down in the doorway of a log cabin.

Card 1: A boy is sitting a table staring at what appears to be a violin placed on a table in front of him

Cards with no father figure present that pull for affect-laden narratives[8]

Card 3GF: A woman in a long dress is standing in the opening of a doorway. Her head is facing down with her hand over her face (which is not visible).

Card 3BM: A boy is propped up against a sofa with his head resting on his right arm. An ambiguous object that could be a set of keys or a gun, is lying beside him on the floor

Cards with father figures present in them

Card 7BM: An older man and a younger man, both in a suit and tie, are relating to one another. The older gentleman is looking at the younger gentleman, who is looking off in the distance.

Card 6BM: an elderly woman is standing parallel to a window. Behind her is a younger man with his face down.

Cards with father figures present in them that pull for affect-laden narratives

Card 15: A dark figure that appears to be an old man or woman staring out into what looks like a graveyard.

Card 8BM: A young boy in the foreground is staring directly out of the picture. In the background is a hazy image of two men performing surgery on a patient who is lying down.

[8] (Murstein, 1972)—these cards tends to elicit affect-laden stories

Brief Adult Attachment Interview

To assess the nature and quality of the adolescent boys' representations of themselves and their fathers, the participants in this study were administered a "Brief AAI," which consisted of questions one through four, question ten, and question eleven of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) (George, C., Kaplan, N. & Main, M. 1996). The AAI is a semi-clinical interview used to assess early attachment relationship experiences and their effects. More specifically, the AAI provides a way of assessing state of mind in relation to attachment (Main, 2000), or the cognitive, mental representations of early attachment experiences (Slade, Belsky, Aber & Phelps, 1999; Slade et al., 1999).

The first four questions of the AAI are used to determine the nature and quality of the relationship with both the mother and the father. They include asking the participants to provide descriptions of each of their parents and their relationship to them. Question ten of the AAI asks participants to reflect on how they were affected by their early experiences with their parents and question eleven asks participants to reflect on their parent's psychology. These are listed below:

1. Could you start by helping me get oriented to your early family situation, and where you lived and so on? If you could tell me where you were born, whether you moved around much, what you family did at various time for a living?
2. I'd like you to try and describe your relationship with your parents as a young child…if you could start fro as far back as you can remember?
3. Now, I'd like to ask you to choose five adjectives or words that reflect your relationship with your mother starting from as far back as you can remember in early childhood—as early as you can go (but age 5 to 12 is fine)?

4. Now, I'd like to ask you to choose five adjectives or words that reflect your relationship with your father, again starting from as far back as you can remember in early childhood—as early as you can go (but, again, age 5 to 12 is fine)?

5. In general, how do you think your overall experiences with your parents have affected your adult personality?

6. Why do you think that your parents behaved as they did in your childhood?

The participants' responses to these six questions were used to determine the quality of attachment participants had with their primary caregivers (father). This "attachment style" was classified into one of three categories: Negative, Idealized, and Reflective.

Individuals who were classified as *Reflective* described a balanced and objective view of attachment figures and their relationship to them. In this way they were able to understand the importance of such relationships in their life and the ways in which it influenced their development. In this regard they tended to be highly reflective.

Individuals classified in the *Idealized* category tended to idealize attachment figures and their relationship to them, while at the same time discounting their connection to such figures/relationships. Their narratives, in this regard, were often unsupported or contradicted.

Those classified as *Negative* showed clear difficulty in their inability to reflect on their attachment relationships, and tended to be consumed by affect when attempting to do so. In this regard, their descriptions were often very negative, rather than balanced and objective.

While these categories resemble, to a great extent, corresponding categories in the actual AAI (secure-autonomous, dismissing, and preoccupied respectively), they were created by the principal investigator and chair of this study, and have not been shown to have internal or

external validity. Additionally, the scoring of data for this quantitative measure, as well as a subjective qualitative assessment of subject's narratives that was used to provide a more thorough understanding of the correlation between father absence and affect maturity, was completed by the principal investigator, not an independent scorer.

Affect Maturity Scale

The affect maturity scale is a five point scale that assesses the level of affect maturity from the most primitive to the most mature.

A score of *one* indicates that emotions are experienced as event-like and minimal differentiation within the affect-event exists. In this way, emotion is attributed by individuals to the situation as a whole rather than to any particular feature of the situation. As such, emotion often tends to define all reality for as long as the affect-event exists. And, when the affect-event passes, all of the emotions tied to that particular affect-event disappear with it.

A score of *two* signifies the ability, while nominal, to attribute emotion to self and others. However, the attribution of emotion is done of the basis of very rudimentary, surface features of self and other. And, while there is a greater ability than in level one to distinguish between self and other, emotion is still experienced in an event-like state and is not readily deciphered from its source. Individuals are thus seen as having an emotion rather then experiencing one (e.g. someone may look happy rather than being happy). This suggests that affect can be "warded off, expelled or eliminated in some way" (Thompson 1985, p. 214). Affects in this state are still "irreversible", such that the affect-event defines all reality and self-other representations. As such, mixed or contradictory affects are impossible. There is, however, an ability to have multiple affect states successively, but not simultaneously. And so, when a new affect-event occurs, the previous affect-event, as well as the self and other representations tied it, disappear.

A score of *three* indicates the ability to experience emotion as attributable to persons, but not in a fully independent manner. Representation of emotions in self and other are still not differentiated. The same emotion can exist in two different people, but not for different reasons. In this same vein, emotion in others is experienced (made sense of) through an egocentric lens that reflects the individual's own feeling rather than what may actually exist in/for the other. In this third level of affect maturity, emotions are still irreversible and they, as well as the self-other representations, are primarily defined by the affect-event in which they occur. Good feelings, for example, are cause by a good object and bad feelings by a bad object, without any "recognition of the object's independent existence, complex characteristics, and so forth" (Thompson 1985, p. 215). Affects are dealt with through "Pollyanish" solutions, and by replacing, one affect for another, without any integration of previously felt states.

A score of *four* reflects the ability to experience affect in self and others in more individuated ways. However, the attribution of individualized affect tends to be confined both to the immediate affect-event in which it is embedded, and/or in relatively superficial, external ways (such as by role, sex, occupation…). As such the ability to capture the full uniqueness of self and/or others is still relatively absent. Nonetheless, mixed or contradictory emotions can be attributed to the self, and they may be held in juxtaposition with each other with some attempt to resolve their contradiction. This level, thus, becomes a "way station" for the development of reversibility. Full reversibility "which requires the integration of mixed emotions into a hierarchical scheme so that they may be modified by each other," (Thompson 1985, p. 216) however, has not yet been achieved. This still leaves the possibility that when contradictory emotions exist, one of them will need to be minimized or eliminated in some way. Nonetheless, affect no longer exists solely within the affect-laden event in which it occurs.

A score of *five* reflects the full achievement of reversibility. Self and other representations, and the affects associated with them, are conceived of and attributed to in differentiated ways that reflect the uniqueness of both the self and the other. Additionally, mixed or contradictory emotions, rather then being confined to the specific affect-laden event in which they occur, are able to be modified and experienced in a broader perspective. As such, there is a greater tolerance for affect discrepancy, and the previously mentioned defenses of denial and minimization are no longer required in order to tolerate and organize conflicting emotions. Furthermore, the cause of affects can be evaluated independently of the affect and seen as partly emanating from the self, rather then solely the cause of the event. All of this lends to the individual being able to tolerate a range of affects and integrate those affects into the self's history.

The subject's responses to each of the eight TAT cards were scored using Thompson's Affect Maturity Scale. The scoring was done blind and completed by an independent rater who was trained in scoring the Affect Maturity Scale. While the Affect Maturity Scale is a scoring scale designed for the TAT, there is an absence of substantive research on its' reliability or validity. In the few studies that do exist, the Affect Maturity Scale has been shown to have discriminate validity in regards to age and IQ, but not education level (Thompson, 1981). The predictive validity of Thompson's (1981) Affect Maturity Scale is also unknown.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: **Influence of Father Absence on Affect Maturity**

There will exist a range of affect maturity scores as a function of the different categorizations of TAT cards (those seen as likely to pull for affect laden narratives and those seen as likely to elicit more neutral responses): Participants' scores on cards that pull for strong affect are hypothesized to yield lower affect maturity scores in comparison to those cards which were more neutrally charged.

Hypothesis Two: **BAAI and Affect Maturity**

There will be a positive correlation between the quality of the Brief AAI and the level of Affect Maturity: Subjects who present with overly negative or idealized images of their father, as derived from the Brief AAI, will show lower affect maturity scores than subjects who present with a more ambivalent image of their father.

CHAPTER FOUR: Results

Subjects

Thirty three young men participated in this study; the data of 25 participants was used in the final data analysis. Among the 8 participants who were excluded from the final analysis, 3 did not provide thorough enough scoreable responses on the Brief AAI or TAT, 2 participants' responses contained psychotic material, and 3 participants did not finish the interview.

Demographic data was collected for all subjects, including age, ethnicity, and the contact subjects had with their father and/or father figure growing up. Of the 25 participants that were included in the final analysis, 13 identified themselves as African-American (52%), 8 as Hispanic or Latino (32%), 1 as Asian, 2 as Caucasian, and 1 person identified himself as racially mixed.

The age of the subjects in this sample ranged from 19 to 24 years old. Their average age was 20.64 years old, and their median age was 20. Because of this study's concern with the adolescent period of development, subjects were grouped into one of three categories 19 to 20 years old, 21 to 22 years old, or 23 to 24 years old, and a repeated measures analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) for main effects was conducted to assess whether there was a significant difference between the age of participants and their affect maturity scores. No significant difference was found [$F(4, 12)=1.529$, $p=.257(ns)$] between a subject's age and affect maturity scores.

Each of the 25 participants in this sample were then coded for 1) the amount of contact with their biological father they experienced while growing up, and 2) the amount of father

figure contact (someone other than their biological father who served as a father figure) they experienced while growing up. The amount of contact subjects had within each category was determined and coded based on the following subcategories: no contact (never had contact), little contact (had contact at least once a year), some contact (had contact at least once a month), or regular contact (had contact at least once a week).

With respect to contact with their biological father, 8 of the participants had no contact with their biological father (32%), 10 had little biological father contact (40%), 1 person had some contact with his biological father (4%) and 6 had regular contact with their biological father (24%).

With respect to father figure contact, 14 of the participants had no contact with a father figure other than their father (56%), 1 person had little contact with a father figure (4%), 7 people had some contact with a father figure (28%) and 2 people had regular contact with a father figure (8%). The table below indicates the amount of father/father figure contact that subjects experienced:

Amount of Contact	**Biological Father**	**Father Figure**
None	8	14
Little	10	1
Some	1	7
Regular	6	2

Subjects were also coded for their responses to the Brief Adult Attachment Interview and assigned one of three styles: Reflective, Idealized, or Negative. Of the 25 total subjects, 3 were coded as having an reflective attachment style (12%), 3 were coded as having a negative attachment style (12%), and 19 were coded as having an idealized attachment style (76%).

As previously mentioned, the assessment of subject's responses according to the BAAI was based on similar categorical scoring in the Adult Attachment Interview, which has been shown to be both reliable and valid. However, neither validity nor reliability measures have been done on the BAAI.

Quantitative Analysis

Hypothesis One: **Influence of Father Absence on Affect Maturity**

The first hypothesis tested was that there would be a significant difference between subject's scores of affect maturity between TAT cards that pull for affect laden narratives. In order to test this hypothesis, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the scores. It was hypothesized that subjects' scores on cards that pull for strong affect would yield lower affect maturity scores in comparison to those cards which were more neutrally charged. However, no significant difference was found between the two **[$M_{AffectivelyCharged}$*=3.079;* $M_{Neutral}$*=3.165, F(1,15)=.343, p=.567 (ns)*]**.

It also seemed relevant to assess whether the presence or absence of a father figure in TAT representations had an effect on affect maturity scores. Thus, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test for differences in affect maturity scores between those cards in which a father was present, and ones in which no father figure was present. Again, no significant difference was found in affect maturity scores between cards with a father figure and those without a father figure [$M_{FatherIn\ TAT}$=3.116*;* $M_{NoFatherInTAT}$=3.128***, F(1,22)=.009, p=.926(ns)***]**.**

As previously discussed, the primary concern of this study was to understand the effect that father absence has on the emotional development of sons, including its impact on their affect maturity. Originally, it was believed that there would not be enough variation in the amount of

father contact experienced by subjects to run an analysis comparing the affect maturity scores for subjects with different levels of father contact. In fact, the variablity in the amount father contact experienced was great enough to be measured for significance in terms of affect maturity.

As a result, a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) for main effects was conducted to assess whether there was a significant difference between the amount of contact participants had with their father and their affect maturity scores. Given the possibility that *any* father or father figure contact might mitigate outcomes, the reponses to these items were reclassified, collapsing father and father figure contact into one category, yielding 4 levels of father contact. This new variable, FatherXTime, represented the most amount of contact that was experienced by subjects either with their biological father *or* a father figure substitute. Subjects were then re-coded as having no contact, little contact, some contact, or regular contact in relation to their biological father *and* in relation to a father figure. The greatest amount of contact that was experienced, either with a biological *or* father figure, was then chosen to represent FatherXTime for each subject. If, for example, a subject had "no contact" with their father, but had "some contact" with a father figure substitute, they would be coded as having "some" FatherXTime.

A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run once more, with these newly defined variables, to assess whether there was a significant difference between the amount of father contact (FatherXTime) and affect maturity scores. As suspected, a significant difference was found between the amount of father contact and affect maturity scores [$M_{\text{NO CONTACT}}$ = 3.597; $M_{\text{LITTLE CONTACT}}$= 3.047; $M_{\text{SOME CONTACT}}$= 3.088; $M_{\text{REGULAR CONTACT}}$=2.965**,** ***F(3,12)=10.69, p=.001(s)***].

It was predicted that participants with little or no father contact would show significantly lower affect maturity scores than those subjects who experienced regular father contact. As the results show, however, subjects who had ***no*** father contact growing up showed affect maturity scores that were more than half a point higher than those who experienced little, some, or regular, father contact.

Hypothesis Two: **Brief AAI and Affect Maturity**

The second hypothesis tested was that there would be a significant difference between the BAAI (Brief Adult Attachment Interview) styles of young men and their affect maturity scores. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare these scores. It was hypothesized that those with an reflective attachment style would show higher affect maturity scores than those with either an idealized style or a negative style. As predicted, subjects with reflective attachment styles scored higher on affect maturity than those with either idealized attachment styles or negative attachment styles [$M_{REFLECTIVE}$=3.6; $M_{IDEALIZED}$=3.2; $M_{NEGATIVE}$=3.3***, $F(2,12)=4.739$, $p=.031ns$***].

Factoring in Age and Race

In order to help eliminate other factors that may have influenced the above findings, age and race, which showed a good deal of variation, were added in as co-variants, and a repeated measures analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) was run to see if the inclusion of these two variables made a difference on the main effects of the study. No differences were found on any of the results of the prior analyses—everything that was insignificant remained insignificant, and everything that was found to be significant remained significant.

Qualitative Analysis

After investigating the aforementioned hypothesis, the subject's responses to the BAAI and TAT were reviewed to help provide a greater understanding of the ways in which father absence influences the affect maturity of these young men. Upon looking over the responses, several themes emerged:

More Is Less And Less Is More

The difference in affect maturity scores between those with no father contact and those with some or regular contact was found to be significant. Those with regular father time had the lowest average scores for affect maturity ($M_{REGULAR\ CONTACT}$=2.965); and subjects with no father or father figure contact showed the highest scores for affect maturity ($M_{NO\ CONTACT}$=3.597).

Upon reviewing the subjects' narratives within each of these categories, a pattern seemed to emerge in their responses to Card 8BM of the TAT. Card 8BM, as previously mentioned, portrays a young boy in the foreground, staring directly out of the picture. In the background is a hazy image of two men performing surgery on a patient who is lying down. Common responses to this card revolve around stories of either ambition or aggression. Frequently, the aggressive stories relate to fears of becoming harmed or mutilated while in a passive state. Another, somewhat less frequent theme, describes a scene in which someone was shot and is now being operated on.

The narratives of subjects with *no father contact* growing up often contained *themes of hope and resolution*, despite any aggressive content that may have co-existed. Additionally**,** compared to other subjects, their portrayal of the relational intention between characters was much more benevolent.

One subject with no father contact, for example, responded to Card 8BM this way, “I see like they cut him open, probably surgery, umm, I don’t know what’s wrong with him. Probably very hurt, or they just cut him up. I don’t know what to say. Probably accident, got hit by a car, or whatever they was doing, and she look like a police officer, and they probably seeing what caused this and go on with the investigation. Umm, she’s thinking if the doctors can save the man’s life, and thinking what caused everything to happen at the exact moment. And the doctor’s thinking if we can save another life before it’s too late.”

Another subject with no father contact, said this, **“**What I could see is like in the late World War II and the soldiers went into Vietnam, and the soldier got hit or shot and one of the other soldiers bring them into the nurse and the nurse like help him, and as I can see they cutting through the side of his stomach, so I guess to take out a bullet cause he got shot. For me is, the people next to him they trying to hold that person down on the table to make that person calm down, relax, so they can continue through the surgery so they can continue with the surgery so they can take out the bullet out of him so they could stitches and sew the spot back so he could live. Cause of they don’t do that right away, he be died over losing a lot of blood. After the war finished, if nothing happened to him she come back and make sure friend is ok.”

These narratives, which were common among subjects with no father, received comparatively high affect maturity scores to the subjects in the other father contact categories. Their narratives were a stark contrast to the narratives of young men with regular contact. Subjects with regular father contact, by contrast, had difficulty regulating their affective response to the card and often had narratives which contained pervasive, and sometimes disturbing, themes of violence and aggression that ended in tragedy (malevolent intention between

chracters). In this same vein, the affect maturity scores for this subgroup were the lowest among all the subjects.

One subject who experienced *regular father contact*, for example, responded this way to card 8BM, **"**Oh damn, oh my. Are they cutting him up? What the hell is she doing? Wow that's confusing. They getting harder and harder as you go on. Is it meant to be like that? Is there an order to that? Cause this is one of the hard ones. It looks like the light is shining down on him. If this is a surgery then it makes no sense why in the white coats and why she is just standing there. Just posing like Tommy Hilfiger or something like that. Looks like two guys are cutting this guy up over here. I don't know, cause looks like there is a bookcase in the background. This might be, could be a rifle, the gun barrel, how it shaped. Doesn't look like its part of the bed, because there is nothing on that side that it is holding it up. So this sick guy could have shot him, and she is a sick demented person, and who they probably, looks like old kinda picture, could be ambulance or something trying to get the gunshot wound out. Can't tell, because there is no blood or anything. She's thinking, they're thinking we gotta help this guy. She's thinking that she did whatever she had to do, cause she look like she got an angry look, not an angry look but that serial killer look on her face. Yeah, she is feeling like she conquered or completed her goal. I don't want to say shocked, but I say worrisome. Either she is gonna leave, cope, try and arrest her. That either she is gonna leave, cops gonna arrest her or something. They gonna try and save this guy, or whatever they doing, what are they doing? They are obviously gonna cut her or something. So whatever they are doing they are gonna finish it…That was a hard one.

Another subject, with *regular father contact*, responded this way: "Ok. This one right here look to me like Russians. Just saying Russians, this man getting cut right here and he is probably a hostage (person on table), and this lady right here (standing in suit) probably work for

the Russians, I'm just using Russians as an example, most likely cause she look Russian, or Korean, I don't know. Um look like a hostage, some type of war, cause I see a rifle right here. They cutting him open. Look like doctors doing an autopsy. Or they could be using this man to smuggle things, and she just like some type of person of power. Or is that a man, it look like a female. This person is in power. And that's the operation behind them, you know, some type of, um, war, or smuggling human bodies or something. (*What are each of the characters are thinking and feeling?)* Man, from his face look like he is dead or he is getting cut open. These guys look like they know what they are doing, so they know what they are trying to do. Whatever they trying to take out, they know exactly what they are doing, it doesn't look like a sloppy stabbing. And um, she look confident, like the takeover, like they are about to takeover something do some kind of bug business. *(What you believe will happen next?)* Next, hmm…what's gonna happen next is…he get paid, this is the boss (person in suit and tie). They look like they are doctors and they just go back to regular life, or there will be a war. These are some crazy pictures man. I think this is her vision, so she will probably reenact this."

And, another subject with *regular father contact* responded this way, **"**A son wearing his father's shirt. He is getting surgery…….....it look like they performing surgery on him. It also look like he is being tortured cause there is a rifle…..he could be a kingpin or something, probably owe money or drugs. He borrowing or saying something he not gonna do. They doing their job. People get paid to be criminals. Probably gonna finishing torturing him. Taking everything he got. Chop him up in garbage bag and throw him the river and go about their business."

As these vignettes show, there is a striking contrast in the way that emotion is experienced, and then responded to, between subjects who had no father contact while growing

up and for subjects who had regular father contact. Subjects who experienced regular father contact projected themes of violence, malevolence, destruction, and unresolved aggression. Correspodingly, these subjects were overtaken by their emotional response, and were unable to have mutliple experinces of self and other, or to regulate their emotion. Subjects with no father contact, however, were able to remain somewhat separate from their emotion despite having narratives that contained aggressive content. They were able hold onto hope and resolution amidst turmoil and aggression. In this way, they could have multiple experiences of themselves and the world amidst the emotion that was being triggered by their perception of Card 8BM.

Connecting To Anger

While subjects who had no father contact growing up seemed able to have multiple self-other experiences in the face of intense emotion, subjects with regular father contact were frequently unable to separate themselves from the anger evoked in some of TAT cards (and depicted their fathers as aggressive, violent men). The following are excerpts taken from the BAAI narratives of some of these young men:

"My Dad—that's where they say I got my aggressive side from, because my dad is aggressive by nature. When I was a kid, you know, everyone always ask my dad this or that. Everyone think just cause he is Italian, everyone think he is a mobster, just cause he is Italian. Not at all. But you know, I guess in my eyes, I always saw him as that cause of the way he acted sometimes, the way he talks, his friends look like that. That's how they are—they're old school Italians. But, like my dad has a short temper with people. That's why I say I get my violent side, my aggressive side from him. Like when I get in fights, you just like your dad, dad got in fights when younger. But my dad he doesn't pick fights. It's like if someone, one time, me, my dad, my little brother went to toys r' us, I forgot why, and my dad had a Cadillac, and someone rear ended

him, my little brother was sleeping in the back, and he snapped. He didn't snap, but he got out of the car, "you, you just hit my car, my son's in there!" The guy says go fuck yourself. That's a bad thing to say to my dad. My dad is a big man, and all the way coming home, we had to be 7 or 8, and got in the house and I was like mom, mom, mom dad beat this guy to a bloody pulp. And all I remember is that my mom and dad went down stairs and they were pouring bleach all over his hands, cause he, I guess you get blood on hands, and my dad was like go upstairs, go upstairs. That's where I get my violent side from, my dad. Although he is a loving guy, he is a teddy bear, you don't mess with his family, that's a fuse."

Another subject, who had regular contact with his father, talked about his relationship with his father this way, "Um, my father was pretty strict, we used to get beatings, of course. Um, I got this from him (points to scar), broomstick…I remember one Christmas he bought us a whole lot of toys, gun set, race car set, the works, hundreds of dollars worth of toys. I think he seen us with another toy, that wasn't ours, my friend's toy, it was an action figure, no bigger than like 5 inches, my father took everything and threw it in the garbage. That was two days after Christmas. Took everything and threw it in the garbage. I think sometimes he was too strict, you know.

When this subject was asked to provide five adjectives that he thought best reflected his relationship with his father growing up, two of the adjectives he used were:

1) **"***Fearful*. Yeah, I fear my father to death. When you hear those feet come up the stairs and that chain jingling, only two things are happening—ass whooping and screaming on, one or the other, I ain't gonna lie…Yeah, I use to fear my father a lot, anything he say gotta do right now. Ain't no waiting…It's crazy man."

2) "*Ruling*. My father was like, I felt like I was in a boot camp sometimes. It was crazy, like ten hut, stand up about face, my grandmother come home from work and she would be calm, but he wanted it the way he wanted it. He wanted us to call him sergeant—Yo, Sergeant is back—I think that is part of the reason why I am like this now. Terrible. It's just sad to know that, I mean, I figure, this is how things gonna be with my father...every year things start getting worse. When I was like 16, he stopped taking care of me. That's terrible. And that's when I was like I gotta go get it myself."

When asked the same question, another subject, who had regular father contact, was only able to provide two adjectives: "*Worried"* and "*Forceful*." Here is what he said about his father being forceful: "Like uh, forceful. Like, what's that word called, like on my back, always trying to make me do something. I guess that's forceful, I said it already…Forceful, he used to make me do things I didn't want to do! That's it basically."

A different subject, who had regular father contact as a child, when asked to describe his relationship with his father, responded by speaking of this sole memory, "I remember, when I was, I think four, I see my father fighting with someone…It was mind boggling. I never seen my father engage in violence like that."

Another subject, when asked to provide five adjectives or words that reflected his relationship with his step-father (who he considered to be his "father"), responded this way, "adjective? Scary sometimes." He then tried to continue…"Umm, humm, wow, umm, caring? Umm, umm, wow, umm, umm, I'll say non-emotional. Understanding…ummm, ummm, say umm, fun, he was fun sometimes, scary sometimes."

When subjects with no father contact or some father contact were asked the same questions as the subjects who had regular father contact, "What was your relationship with your father like" they responded much differently.

Subjects with some father experience described a conflicting and disappointing relationship with their father, in which there was a lack of a connection. In this way, they expressed resentment/anger at their father, but were less connected to him and to the anger than subjects with regular father contact (perhaps because of the time-limited, but still existent, relationship they had with him). One subject, for example, described his relationship with his father this way, "he was always on my ass, I never really liked being with him, know what I'm saying. Sometimes yeah he was cool, but it was like so so. Our relationship was never really that tight since I was young…it was just like, we never, eh-eh, I don't know, we never really like, the only time we really talked he was trying to discipline me. Other than that, there wasn't really much talking or chilling. We never went out. We never went out to the movies. As a matter of fact, I think we went out to the movies twice in my whole life. Other than that we never did anything fun together. Nothing at all, whatsoever."

And subjects with no father contact could not speak to what their relationship was like with their father because there was no father to have a relationship with. These were common responses: "I had no relationship," "I had no father…my mother was my father," "I was my father..I had to be my own father."

Hope and Dread in Father Absence

As was previously mentioned, the narratives from the BAAI and TAT of subjects who experienced no father contact growing up frequently contained themes of benevolence and hope when aggressive content, including emotionally charged relationships between men (a son and a

father), were evoked. This feeling of hope seemed to persevere among subjects with no father contact across different events and emotions. When presented with Card 1 of the TAT, for example, the narratives provided by these subjects contained hope for the future amidst strong themes of sadness, and a longing for a mentor (father) figure.

Card 1, which depicts a young boy sitting by himself staring at what appears to be a violin, typically pulls for themes of achievement (Bellak, 1986; De Vos and De Vos, 2004). It also tends to pull for narratives about one's relationship with their parents, issues of autonomy and compliance, and frustration (Bellak, 1986).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the subjects who had no father contact produced narratives in which there was a striking identification with the boy in the card. Additionally, what was unique to this subset of young men was the way in which their narratives contained themes of sadness, loss, and a longing for a role model/supportive figure to help them achieve their dreams, as if this would have a significant impact on the outcome of the situation.

As one of the subjects who had no father contact growing up expressed, "What I'm thinking right now, *as the boy*, is that he had the violin laying down in front of him with the note thinking, he trying to learn how to play and he ain't got nobody to be there for him, to help him, or to help him learn how to play. Cause the way he lookin' at it, at the violin, like that is his dream right there, and he want to learn it so bad, but he don't have nobody there to help him, and the note…He feels lonely, no love, no one to support him in his dream. He's just sitting there going to waste…What I think will happen next, is somebody, or nobody care about his dream, the dream gonna go to waste. And he probably gonna end up doing something bad, he wasn't suppose to be doing, but he just end up in that place."

This was a typical narrative for those with no father contact. Another subject, for example, told a similar story: “Um, it’s a violin right? Um, looks like you know what I’m saying, that this little boy is having some tough times learning how to use the violin and um he's struggling right now. *(What has led up to the event?)* Um, I guess it seems like he's having stress at his house where he's living at, and he wants to become somebody, but all this stress, he can't really focus, what he want to become, you know what I’m saying. (*Thinking and feeling?)* Um, looks like, he's thinking like, how am I gonna get better at this, if I got everything blocked, you know what I’m saying, like a lot of things going on in my life, and how am I supposed to keep one foot forward . He depressed, aggravated, looks like one day he's just gonna leave his house and run away, you know what I’m sayin, because he can't accomplish what he wants.”

These narratives were in contrast to those provided by subjects with regular or some father contact. The narratives of those with regular father contact also showed a wish for a mentor, idol, or teacher. Unlike those with no father contact, however, the longing for encouragement and support from someone elicited a blatant anger, as opposed to a sadness or depression. And, in their experience of anger, hope was absent. Remarkably, several responses of this subset of young men contained narratives of the boy breaking the violin out of frustration for not being able to experience success. It seemed that when their experience (projection) was that they could not receive support, these subjects became overwhelmed by anger.

One subject, who had *regular father contact* growing up, responded this way to Card 1: “I think he’s stressed because he *broke* his violin or something or he doesn’t know how to play the violin, he looks alone, so I guess he doesn’t have anyone to show him how to play the violin or to use it (*What has led up to the event?)* Led up to what, to him being like that? I guess he was just bored and he was trying to play the violin but it didn’t work out like he though it would.

(*What is he thinking and feeling?*) He's probably feeling disappointed that he wants to play it. He probably thinking that he *wishes someone could teach him how to play it*. (*What do you believe will happen next?)* What I think will happen next, umm. I would not know what to say. ***If it was me***, in a moment of frustration, I'd think id ***break*** that violin. ***I'll break it***. But I don't know (*laughs*)."

Similarly, another young man who experienced regular contact with a father figure responded this way, "There is a violin. I think like he is sad because he can't play it or something like he is bad at it. He's thinking how am I gonna become good at this. (*What has led up to the event*?). He probably got stressed out (*what you believe will happen next?)* Looks like he is about to grab it and ***just break it***."

What is striking about subjects who did not have a father figure in their lives, is that sadness and loss appears to be handled in a very different way than for those subjects who experienced some, or regular, father contact while growing up: for subjects with no father contact, there appears to exist an experiencing, rather than a denial of, the loss and sadness that accompanies the wishing for a father. In this same vein, these subjects' narratives were coherent and not dysregulated. The narratives of those with regular father contact, on the other hand, were very fragmented and dysregulated—they seem to be disrupted by aggression, with an experience of trauma imploding into the narrative.

This pattern of sadness and loss that is experienced by those with no father contact, as opposed to denied or avoided by those with regular (or some) contact, is poignantly exhibited in the subjects' responses to card 15 of the TAT. Card 15 commonly pulls for themes of death, depression, and repressed aggression (Bellak,1986).

One subject with *no father contact* responded this was to Card 15: "It looks like an old man who is in the cemetery standing by somebody's tombstone. I think that probably be his mom, or maybe his wife or might be his son. He feel so depressed he have to stand by the person's tombstone and cry or just sit there and talk to that person by the tombstone. At least for that person to feel better, feel like life is not over yet and still move on. *(What has led up to the event?)* Might be his son or daughter or somebody who died. Somebody he cares a lot about. *(What are each of the characters thinking and feeling?)* Feeling depressed and thinking if I was here could have been better. Could have been better instead of feeling depressed or lonely. *(What do you believe will happen next?)* **"**Gonna have to leave the cemetery and go back home at least for a couple month or week. Feeling relief depending on how he felt when he left."

Another subject with *no father contact* growing up said this*, "*Umm, this one look like they at a graveyard. Look like a mummy. Umm. Probably I see maybe a family member died or his girlfriend or somebody he want to go pray to them or drop off flowers or something or talk to them, make them feel better, cause he look like he stressed out, probably hurt or devastated what did to his life, but as the time goes on he just got a take it slow, step by step, and remember that they still be in his heart and he can move on with his life."

One subject with *regular father contact*, on the other hand, responded this way*, "*(Deep breath)…I can't tell if this is a man or a woman. It could be a person who is overwhelmed as far as death goes a lot of death in their family. Or they um…probably a bad person and figure this will be their grave, and all they see around them is death. Um, or could be a holy person, begging for forgiveness, from god, or whatever religion. (*What each of the characters are thinking and feeling*?) They just praying. They could be, this look like a happy person, or this person looks like nervous. (*And what you believe will happen next?)* I think the person gonna pray, there are

gonna be some real prayers going on. Um. Pray, and um, probably being inside here for a little while, with the holy ghost."

Another subject with *regular father contact*, said this, "Hah hah- bit my tongue that that was a hard one. Looks like a graveyard, that guy, creepy guy there. Hands folded, could be a girl too, because of how it blossoms outward. Looks like someone over a graveyard looking at it, dark kinda picture, too. Not a happy go lucky thing. Kinda abstract too, have little hills. (What has led up to the event?) Someone dies that she knows, and so she went to go visit. Or that could be the guy that killed her, I don't know. That's what I'm guessing. Obviously, he knows because there is somebody's graves, but he is only standing in front of this one, so he knows who that is though. (W*hat are each of the characters are thinking and feeling*?) Can't tell, because can't really see the eyes, the eyes are blacked out. Look like she has a push on his face, or her face. Maybe feeling remorse, maybe. Because in a graveyard I don't think can feel anything but remorse. (*Remorse, as if*?) Somebody that dies or that he knew died, or loss something. (*And what you believe will happen next*?) Probably leave. Leave. Looks like a creepy guy, could be a grave digger, deal with the body. Probably do that because it's a dark only picture of a freaky ass guy. Probably dig it up or something. Those were interesting."

This was another response from a subject with regular father contact, "Zombie rising from the dead. Unfinished business. He got something he gotta handle. Probably can't believe he is dead. He is gonna finish his unfinished business and then go back to the grave."

And, this is another subject's response, "This looks like a Martian. I see tombs, those look like tombstones, those look like crosses, she look like the ruler of this, like this is her kingdom and she is here to take charge of it, ya know. I'm thinking she is just here as a body guard or to protect her surroundings and she is in charge of everything here. That what it look

like to me." *And what you believe will happen next?* That someone's body might intrude and she'll take care of the person (laughs really loud)."

Identity

Regardless of their BAAI (attachment) style, or how much contact they had with a father figure while growing up, nearly all of the subjects showed a striking identification, in some way, with their *perception* of their *biological* father.

One subject described the sometimes overwhelming power that his identification with his father had over him, despite having a mother figure who deftly promoted the development of his reflective capacities and appeared to contribute to his *reflective* attachment style and high affect maturity scores: (AB) **"**I have dreams and certain goals I want to achieve, you know, my father is like the total opposite, he's a hood, never had a job, he is the definition of what a gangster would be. And I'm looking at life gotta live to the fullest, but the way my grandma taught me, I really can't be too much into that. Respect people, you know, like at the end of the day if I do something with someone, say someone and I got in a fight, god forbid, or like I shot someone, I'd do it but I'd really feel bad after—like damn, I know my grandmother not want me to do this, or this ain't me, I got heart man. I think I got too much love in my heart to be doing certain things. That's why I can't really go to full extent of being a hoodlum, really street dude...It's like I got two sides—I'm a really nice person at heart, but on the outside that's another thing. That's what the hood thing be. And my father could tell me, not to sell drugs, hold guns, but that's what I am seeing, that's what you doing (the father). You ain't practicing what you preach, and that's necessary. So I see you getting money, my father wasn't getting dollars, he taken care of me with clothes…from young to teenage years, and it just made me a mixed person. Not like I had two parents in house who were up to no good. My grandmother was really doing it, she was really

making a difference, trying to change peoples' life, helping family out, even though my life go in different direction. Always steering me in right direction, always on me about school at PTA meetings…me and my father though, he got attitude. It's like I got both sides, you know.

Another subject with regular father contact, high affect maturity scores and an *reflective* attachment style, reinforces this notion in his response to the BAAI question, *"In general, how do you think your overall experiences with your parents have affected your adult personality?"* "I think that the way my father used to act, it was just like bunch of wrong things. And when I was little, the wrong things I was doing, I probably thought it was right. Like in and out of jail, think I was a tough guy or something. Probably when I was little I used to think it was right. So I think that rubbed off on me. So now as I'm older, now, looking back on the things he used to do, I probably thought it was some, some of the things he used to do was right. So I think that's probably why I'm here. Like because he was in and out of jail. So I probably thought it was right for me to be in and out of jail. Sometimes, when I was little, I used to think about-oh what it be like if I was in jail, it's probably good to be in jail since he's coming in and out of it. (*Can you say what you mean by that?*) He used to be in and out of jail, I used to think, damn what's in jail that he likes going back over there and coming back out. I used to think sometimes maybe I should go to jail, maybe there is something good over there. So, you know I used to think about that sometimes. Or something was better out there than in here. So I wanted to see what that was like and I think that's why I am here now… So I guess they both rubbed off on me. He got me thinking about jail, and she got me thinking about succeeding. So I guess it was like stuck in between."

One subject with *some father contact*, an *idealized* attachment style, and high affect maturity, talked about his relationship with his father this way, **"**The relationship with my father

was just like stranger. That's how I feel. He is just like nobody to me, cause the things he says about us. And to this day he is in jail right now. And I just feel like, since I have, since I'm his son, I'm going through his path because I'm here. And just, I just wish I had someone else besides him. (*Can you say what you mean by that?*) Like a different father, like a different idol, because he used to be my idol growing up. But the things he used to do, used to get me confused. I used to go to school, they used to tell me "do good and what's right, what's wrong." And I used to come out of school and I used to see him and everything he was doing was wrong; drinking, screaming, arguing, cursing, fighting, going in and out of jail. So I guess me seeing that part of it rub off on me a little bit, and I think that's probably why I am going through this now. Cause I just won't care if I really don't see him. I got my step father, so that's just who helps me out. And him, he is just someone I don't want to be around."

Yet another subject, who had *little father contact*, low scores on affect maturity, and an *idealized* attachment, when speaking about where he felt like he made a wrong turn in life, said, "like father, like son…he kept warning me, telling me about jail, and I went to jail when I was like 14." (This young man's father was in prison almost his whole life).

Even subjects who had no contact with their father figure growing up re-enacted behavior which paralleled their perception of their father's behavior, when they reached adolescence.

One subject, for example, who had *no father contact*, average affect maturity scores (for this pool of subjects), and an *idealized* attachment style, described his relationship with his father while growing up as non-existent: "Basically (I saw him) never. He was locked up." When this subject turned eighteen, however, his father was released from prison and the subject said, "I wanted to move in with him." He described wanting a connection with his father, and finally having it. Their connection, at least in person, was only a momentary connection—during the

brief time they were living together, they planned and committed a robbery, and were once again separated as they went off to prison.

The Great Divide

As noted above, the findings of this study found the vast majority of subjects, 19 of 25 (76%), as having an idealized attachment style. These subjects' narratives were often blanketed in idealizations of their caregivers, and such idealized experience, as noted in the analysis above, negatively impacted affect maturity regardless of the amount of contact subjects had with their father.

One subject with some father contact, for example, responded to the BAAI question, "*I'd like you to try and describe your relationship with your parents as a young child…if you could start from as far back as you can remember*" this way: "My mom, she's always, even though my little brothers' father was there, she was always, well this is what she would always tell me, well, that she is my mom and my dad. She was always extra protective with me because I was the only boy until my little brother came into the picture. And to this day I have like, um, a really special connection with my mom, ya know. Um, yeah, my mom she's a great person. Um, and um, yeah, that's it. We always had a good relationship. I mean we had our fallouts when I got older and started thinking that I know a lot more than I thought I did, ya know but um, it was never like I wouldn't speak to her again and vice versa.

Another subject, who said he had no father contact growing up, responded to the same question this way, "Ah, I always had a good relationship with my parents, unless I was doing wrong or whatever, but other than that I never had no bad relationship with my parents. We all talk to this day. So it's nothing, we never argue or nothing like that. It's really not a bad relationship. (*Is there anything you remember from growing up, maybe that stands out that helps*

describe the relationship?) I think we always had a fun time, you remember Coney Island, we always use to go to Coney Island all the time, we used to go to movies or whatever, and that's when I feel like we had our most best times. Yeah, really nice. It used to be the four of us, me, my mother, my sister and my father at the time." As a result of his parents' separation when he was very young, this subject seemed to hold onto/recreate a magical past to deal with the ongoing pain of his experience. His belief that he had "no contact" with his father growing up, despite his memories, represented both the very nature of his idealized attachment, and his experience that in comparison to the relationship that he felt he once had with his father, after the separation it seemed as if there was "no contact." (he was coded as having "some" father contact).

Another subject, who had regular father contact, said this, "My mother, she is the best. I feel like I have a good relationship with her. I feel like I can tell her anything. My mother was, when I was younger I felt like she was really strict, but I appreciated that because if she wasn't strict I wouldn't be here. Although I got into trouble when I was 19, I was a bit older, but usually kids get into trouble when they are like 14 or 15, start going to juvee. I was never like that, not one day cut the whole day of school. I never tried marijuana in school, for the simple fact that my mother was so strict that I can't walk in like that she would notice. I would cut like the last class, but that was like the most. But I would make sure that my attendance was like, because my mother was real strict, and she would not so much to beat but to punish. Her punishments were like things like I hated. Stand against the wall, or hold the rice like this (holds hands straight out). But as I grew older I appreciate that, because although I have this case, I appreciate because I could have been someone else, I could have been even dead god forbid. My mother, I was with her yesterday, she came out here. Yeah, she real cool."

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The results of this study corroborate the idea that a son's relationship with his father has a profound impact on his intrapsychic world, including the capacity to experience emotion in mature form. They also suggest that it is not simply the presence or absence of a father that affects a son's psychological and emotional development, but the quality of the relationship between a son and father that impacts development. Furthermore, it seems that sons are impacted by their relationship with their father regardless of the quality of relationship they have with their mother, which—as previously discussed—has been considered paramount to a child's development in contemporary psychoanalytic theory and research. To repeat what one subject said when reflecting on his upbringing and how it influenced who he became as an adult:

> "I have dreams and certain goals I want to achieve, you know. My father is like the total opposite, he's a hood, never had a job, he is the definition of what a gangster would be…It's like I got two sides to me—I'm a really nice person at heart, but on the outside that's another thing. That's what the hood thing be. And, my father could tell me not to sell drugs, hold guns, but that's what I'm seeing, that's what you doing (his father)… (but it's) not like I had two parents in the house who were up to no good. My grandmother was really doing it…always steering me in the right direction... ***It's like I got both sides you know.*****"**

Indeed, the relationship this young man had with his grandmother (who was his primary caregiver) seems to have positively influenced his life and contributed in many ways to his ability to reflect on his emotion (reflective attachment style), and develop higher levels of affect maturity relative to other subjects. It seems, though, that when this young man was confronted with an experience that called upon his internal working model of how to be a man, he conjured up the "side" of him that identified with his gangster father, a man that was unable to regulate intense emotion, especially anger.

Despite this young man's reflective attachment style, which according to the results of this study was correlated with higher levels of affect maturity, the painful experiences that occurred in his relationship with his father still cast a shadow over his ability to navigate emotional events that elicited the self-other representations inherent to his internal working model of how to be a man in the world. That is, he internalized both the "good enough" mother and the "bad enough" father, and identified with aspects of both of them as templates for how to experience and be in the world.

As previously discussed, identification with one's father occurred regardless of how much contact a son and father had with one another, and regardless of the son's attachment style. Moreover, it seems that this identification occurred despite any conscious desire to de-identify with their father. This is in line with Gill's (1991)[9] contention that identification with one's father is both inexorable and unconscious. Identification, according to Gill (1991), is a "process of internal organization and synthesis, involving unconscious fantasy of being or becoming like another person…and (which) leads to modification of self-representation in line with the perception of the object" (p.243).

In this same vein, Erikson (1968)[9] has noted that identity formation (through a process of incorporation, introjection, and identification) leads the child to develop a sense of "I" ***if*** the experiences one has with identity figures occur under "the umbrella of trust." In other words, an environment of love and support fosters a child's development, including the attainment of a coherent sense of self. In accordance with these ideas, it may be that fathers who provide their sons with repeated positive relational experiences, and are consistently and reliably available for their sons, promote healthier psychological and emotional development (including identity

[9] See Chapter Two for a more detailed description

formation and affect maturity). If true, these ideas also would help clarify what seems to occur in the absence of a positive fathering experience (by way of either recurring negative/bad experiences with their father or no father experience at all). As one subject noted, when speaking about how his relationship with his parents (or lack there of) affected who he became as an adult:

> "My mom has been taking more time to explain stuff with me, (so) I am generally a more of like a patient person. But with that being patient, since there is no male figure around, once I lose my patience, there is nothing to curb my anger—I just lash out. So, it's like a two way street. I mean, I understand the patience, but once it passes that line, you know I don't know how to handle it…Say someone was like throwing a rock up against the window, or something like that. I would tell them to stop doing it, (and) I would lash out of them if they wouldn't—I would physically shake them, and say what is wrong with you I told you like a million times to cut it out! …at that time, you can't convince me of nothing…I believe that a lot of the anger management problems, this is my honest opinion—with out no father there is no one to control that anger. There is no one to sit you down and say look son, I know that gets on your nerves, chill out and look at it from a different perspective. If you just sit there and there is no one to stop you from doing that, your like Tasmanian devil like—you just go ape shit."

In this way, the narratives of this particular subgroup of young men appear to support, and be supported by, Herzog's (2001)[9] idea that the father is essential for "the consolidation of a boy's masculine sense of self" (p.22), and for the management of "intense affect paradigms." Without the experience of a good-enough father, however, the young men in this study seemed to be in a perpetual search, not unlike that of Stephen and Bloom in Ulysses[11], for the good-enough father *and* for their own identity. And, when the ongoing desire to have a positive, loving relationship with a father did not take

place in reality, there seemed to be a near universal imperative in these subjects to conjure one up in fantasy: to attempt to fulfill this need through an idealized, mythical father.

Of course, this is not an all or nothing phenomenon—every father-son relationship has many aspects to it, some of which may be experienced as loving or sufficient and other aspects as insufficient or even malevolent. Indeed all relationships are some combination of positive and negative fantasy and reality. Nonetheless, this finding appears to be in line with Herzog's (2001) notion of "Father Hunger" in that sons in this study seem to have a developmental and psychological need for an omnipotent father figure who serves as a protector who organizes and modulates "intense affect paradigms." The results of this study also seem to indicate that "father hunger" stems from the son's need for a father to help him find his way in the world.

It's possible, therefore, that it is when these needs are not met, regardless of whether the father is present or not, that "father hunger" occurs. And, it may be that these needs can only be fulfilled by a benevolent mentor figure who is able to lead sons toward the attainment of increasingly nuanced object relations, affect maturity, and the feeling of accomplishment. In fact, Herzog (2001) suggests that underneath all the longing that exists in the experience of father hunger, a child desperately seeks help from his father.

These ideas are consistent with the overwhelming wish for support from a father figure that was evidenced in subjects' responses to Card 1 of the TAT[10]. As noted in the previous chapter, subjects who had *no father contact* growing up showed a striking identification with the

[10] (which depicts a young boy sitting by himself staring at what appears to be a violin, and typically pulls for themes of achievement (Bellak, 1986; De Vos and De Vos, 2004; Mclellan et al., 1953), narratives about one's relationship with their parents, issues of autonomy and compliance, and frustration (Bellak, 1986; Соколова, 1980).

young man portrayed in Card 1, and responded with an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and helplessness (depression) when their projected yearnings were thwarted:

> "Cause the way he lookin' at the violin , like that is his dream right there, and he want to learn it so bad, but he don't have nobody there to help him…he feels lonely, no love, ***no one to support him in his dream. He's just sitting there going to waste***. What I think will happen next, is somebody, or ***nobody care about his dream, the dream gonna go to waste***. And he probably gonna end up doing something bad, he wasn't suppose to be doing, but he just end up in that place."

This parallels Herzog's (2001) clinical observation that the *absence* of a father in a boy's life often led to difficulty with emotional development, particularly the ability to manage aggression. When this failed, according to Herzog (2001) an inner emptiness or deadness was often the result. On the other hand, those who had regular father contact growing up, but the absence of a good-enough father, however, were overcome with anger (as opposed to hopelessness and helplessness) in response to the depressive feelings elicited in their projections of self-worth and the absence of support. In this way, these subjects' anger overshadowed their hope. Referring back to one subject's experience:

> "He looks alone, so he probably didn't have anyone to show him how to play the violin or use it….***He probably thinking he wishes someone could teach him how to play it.. If it was me, in a moment of frustration, I think I'd break the violin. I'll break it. But I don't know.***"

It appears that these subjects were unable to hold onto an internalized experience/idealization of a father that could help them overcome challenge and experience achievement (and subsequently feel a sense of self-worth). Rather, they became frustrated and angry, and ultimately consumed by their feelings. It also seemed as if the only way they could rid

themselves of such negative and intense emotion was to identify with their father and act it out (break the violin).

In the language of affect maturity, the breaking of the violin by subjects with regular father contact (subjects who had the lowest scores for affect maturity) represents a primitive affective experience in which the self-other representations elicited are wholly dependent upon the event in which they are embedded. In other words, these kids got so immersed in their anger that they could not experience others or themselves in any other way than the way they were feeling at that moment (i.e. incapable, hopeless, and/or enraged)—If they felt anger, for example, then anger was the sole determinant of their self-other experience, and no other aspect of the self and/or other existed. In this way, their experience bears a striking resemblance to Hamlet's impulsive stabbing of Polonius[11], in that Hamlet became so consumed by anger (at the loss of his father) that he was unable to act in a restrained, resolute, and reflective way. This, incidentally, is the very phenomenon that resulted in subjects' acting in ways that got them in trouble with the law.

Subjects with no father contact, however, were able to remain somewhat separate from any particular emotion that was being elicited within them despite having narratives that contained aggressive content. These subjects were able to hold onto some hope and resolution amidst turmoil and aggression. In this way, these subjects could have multiple experiences of themselves and others amidst the emotion that was being triggered by their perception of TAT cards. Additionally, in contrast to subjects who experienced regular father contact, the subjects with no father contact produced narratives that were coherent and not dysregulated.

[11] See Chapter One for a more detailed account.

In this regard, the narratives of these young men may indicate that having "enough" positive internalized experience, and a minimization of insufficient or bad experience, to call upon as one's internal working model, or implicit way of being/relating in the world, is imperative for the development of one's object relations, including affect maturity—hence the term "good-enough." While this has been well addressed in terms of the mother-child relationship, it appears that this may be true for a boy's *paternal* as well as maternal experience (at least for this sample of young men). If there is only the experience of inadequate fathering, by way of bad fathering or no experience with a father, however, then it seems a son will continue to look for a good one. And, one way in which many of the subjects in this study seemed to find this "good-enough" father, if he was unable to be found out in the real world, was by creating an omnipotent fantasy (mythical) father. In this way, it appears that the idealization is an attempt to keep hope alive and to comfort oneself. This finding seems to corroborate, and extend upon, Freud & Burlingham's (Neubauer, 1960) findings of fatherless children in the Hempstead nurseries (that was mentioned in Chapter Two[9]) in which fatherless children were "compelled to create in fantasy what did not exist in fact" (p.288).

Such reparative fantasy is also addressed by Kohut, who believed that idealizing was a crucial component of early development—"The selfobject is one's subjective experience of another person who provides a sustaining function to the self within a relationship, evoking and maintaining the self and the experience of selfhood by ***his or her*** presence or activity" (Moore and Fine 1990, p.178). As such, the self-other connections with an idealized figure "'provide the experience of merger with the calm, power, wisdom, and goodness of idealized persons" (Moore and Fine 1990, p.178). In other words, these idealized figures help provide the positive self-other experiences necessary for the internalization of these qualities, which paradoxically promote

separation from the idealized object, and a differentiation of experience which allows for emotion to be felt as separate from, but interrelated with, the self-other experience (event) in which it occurs. In this same vein, Kohut (1979), in his writing of the analysis of Mr.Z (which has been thought to have been Kohut's own analysis) declared that the analysis could not be completed until post-oedipal longings and conflicts were addressed with a male analyst (father figure).

Embedded in these ideas is the notion that the object of idealization facilitates the incorporation of aspects of the idealized object as one's own. And, if successful, it seems that the ideal no longer has to be experienced as an ideal, and as a result can be given up. In this way, it seems that there is a developmental necessity to give up the omnipotent father in order for a son to separate from his father (whether real or mythical) and become a man in his own right. As was discussed in Chapter Two, this is a crucial aspect of the second separation-individuation phase inherent in the journey from adolescence into adulthood, or rather the successful journey into self-other differentiation which parallels, and is a pre-condition for, the attainment of higher levels of affect maturity. The giving up of one's idealized father, however, necessitates the experience of loss in that one has to be able to relinquish the idealized, all-knowing father who protects them and guides them through the world, and come to terms with who the father really is.

The results of this study seem to suggest that it is difficult to let go of an idealized father figure until positive consistent experiences with such a figure are satisfied in reality. That is, it seems that a son can't let go of the idealized object (father) until he is met in reality by a good-enough father. Prior literature (Pruett ,1987, 2000; Parke 1996; Lamb, 2009,2010; Lamb et al. 2006) suggests that a benevolent, good-enough father promotes the capacity to elicit the self-

other (father-son) constellations without the father actually present. If achieved, this allows the son to comfort himself in the father's absence, which promotes separation-individuation and the development of increasingly higher levels of affect maturity. If, as in the case of this sample, there is repeatedly negative, or no contact, with one's father, however, it seems that the result is a sense of hopelessness.

Referring back to Card 1 of the TAT, the responses of subjects with no father contact suggest that their depression is about a hopelessness and helplessness at the absence of a positive object (father). These feelings appeared to set in when these young men were no longer able to use an idealized father to comfort them. This was in contrast to the narratives of those subjects with some or regular father contact, who felt anger as a function of, and defense against, the loss of a good-enough father. It seems that these subjects were less successful than subjects with no father contact in using an idealized father to comfort them because the repeatedly negative experience with their real father overshadowed any hope and son-father idealization that existed. Subjects in this sample who experienced regular father contact growing up appeared to have such negative experiences of their father that the ability to hold onto hope, or the possibility for change, through an idealization was rendered nearly impossible. That is, subjects with regular father contact were not able to override, through idealization, their internal working model of how to be a man, which was created from inadequate, if not malevolent father-son interaction.

Put another way, those with no father contact seemed to be *running to* a positive, but mythical, father-son experience but get tripped up by the **absence** of actual positive father-son interaction necessary to persevere. Those with regular father, but problematic, experience, on the other hand, seem to always be *running from* the negative/malevolent father-son internalized experience. And, when they can't succeed they are filled with depression and subsequent rage,

which is an elicitation of the **actual** (rather than idealized) internalized father-son constellations, which correspondingly connects them to their father through anger (identification with the aggressor).

This may help to explain why these subjects' affect maturity scores were significantly lower than those with no father contact. Nonetheless, running away from, or to, an experience/affect is a way of defending against emotion that is too powerful, and thus can not be experienced in a mature form. This may help to explain why all of the subjects' affect maturity scores were fairly low. If correct, it seems that, at some point, a son's *experience with his real father* becomes one of the many factors that determine a boy's capacity to experience emotion in mature form. Again, this seems to highlight the importance of a good-enough father in a son's development (specifically, in being able to elicit internalized self-other experiences to call upon in order to experience affect in mature form).

These findings appear to suggest that it is not just the presence or absence of a father that matters, but the quality of the relationship one has with their father that is important. If the father is absent then the idealized father is relied upon beyond what the usefulness of idealization can provide, and if he's malevolent the idealized father can't supplant what has already occurred. In this way, it may be that the idealized father serves as an attempt to meet developmental needs that can only be met by a "good-enough" father, and as a way to prevent the loss embedded in not having experienced a good-enough father. This, paradoxically, inhibits the separation-individuation process necessary to develop more sophisticated levels of affect maturity. As Steiner (2005) has suggested, if the loss of this idealized other cannot be faced there is an activation of defensive processes, which deny the loss and can lead to depression.

As previously noted, attempts to hold onto an idealized father in order to garner support and affect regulation eventually gave way to the actual experience, or lack thereof, that subjects had with their real father. The absence of such nurturing experience resulted in depressive thoughts and feelings, including feelings about one's capacity and self-worth, and the perception of others and the world as benevolent or malevolent. Subjects who experienced regular father contact appeared to respond to these emotions with anger, which correspondingly connected them to their father (and thus prevented the experience of loss and the attendant feelings). In contrast, those who had no father contact appeared to lean more on the side of experiencing mourning, as a function of losing hope in their ability to elicit help from a real and present father. In this way, those with no father contact seem to have used idealization as a defense, which paradoxically perpetuated their difficulty with affect maturity (because it prevented mourning the loss of their father).

While none of the young men in this study had a positive fathering experience, which makes it difficult to say with certainty what the impact of positive fathering has on a son, these findings may suggest (at least for the subjects in this study) that having repeated positive experiences with one's father is fundamental to a son's belief in himself as being able to overcome the difficult challenges and experiences that are an inescapable part of life. That is, without positive father–son interactions occurring under an "umbrella of trust", it may have been difficult for these subjects to develop the sense of "I" that is fundamental to coming into one's own. And, paradoxically, it may be that if there was a good-enough father figure in their lives, the idealized, omnipotent father could have be given up (in favor of reality).

In this way, the absence of positive experiences with a good-enough father may have created a considerable dilemma for these young men—they struggle with the emotional

consequences of loss (of a good-enough father) exactly because they did not have the positive father-son interactions that would have helped them survive such painful experience. And, it may be that in order for these subjects to have persevered, they not only would have needed the positive self-father experiences to believe in themselves, but they would also have had to separate from the self-father experience of being incapable and unlovable, and thus separate from their father.

This is akin to Winnicot's (1958) notion of *the capacity to be alone*, in which a child is able to elicit the comfort of a good-enough parent even in the parent's absence. It seems that having repeated negative father-son interaction, or no father-son interaction, prohibited the development in these subjects of the comforting self-other internalizations which are necessary to elicit the good-enough father even in his absence. And, it may be that without this experience a son will have a diminished *capacity to be alone as a man*. That is, without this experience, a son does not seem to be able to comfort himself (regulate his emotion) which may keep him from separating from the internalized experience he does have of his father, even if negative or idealized.

Furthermore, as the narratives of these young men show, when the love of a good-enough father is not experienced, it initiates a never ending quest for it. In their quest for love, the young men in this study who experienced regular father contact were faced with the reality that their "bad-enough" father is still alive and very much present in their lives. They are, as a consequence, repeatedly confronted with the disappointment and deprivation that created the desire for love in the first place.

It seems, then, that the loss of love from their father, and the attendant feelings of sadness and anger, end up locking these young men in a vicious cycle of seeking love and hating their

father—that is, they get stuck in a splitting of good and bad, or an alternating of experience. As a result, these subjects seemed to end up ineluctably joined to the malevolent and/or idealized father (in part by identifying with him) and not undergo the process of separation-individuation necessary to acquire differentiation and experience higher levels of affect maturity.

It is also seems that despite these young men's wish to de-identify with their father, letting go of their anger means letting go of the connection they have to their fathers. It may be that the (separation) anxiety embedded in the de-identification that would have to occur with such a loss is too overwhelming. To reiterate Levy-Warren (1996), when speaking about negotiating adolescent development, "interferences in mourning keep affects originally connected to the lost parental objects in a unchanged state, thus requiring layers of additional defenses to be erected to keep the affects repressed" (p.297).

Again, this seems to indicate that developmental progression is contingent upon a good-enough object, not just a present one. As Lerner and Lerner (1987) have noted, the attainment of object constancy (and other developmental milestones) "requires the presence of the absent object (and) it is partly this developmental need that opposes the normal process of mourning. Thus, relevant objects are brought to life again and again (as through idealization, and the inability to relinquish the idealization) in order to satisfy the requirements of psychological development" (p.382).

It seems, then, that the loss of repeated positive relational experiences that a good-enough father provides is still "object loss (which)…leads to a heightened adaptive and defensive identification with the lost parent" (Lerner, P.380). This may help explain the lack of differentiation inherent to more mature forms of emotion, as well as the prevalence of idealized attachment style, that characterized so many of the subjects in this study. In this way, it does

appear that the absence of a good-enough father, and the love and nurturance he provides, predisposes a son to the trauma of a lost parent and the defenses that are adopted in order to cope (which inhibit the healthy progression of emotional development).

This is in keeping with some of the major tenets of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1980; Carlson and Sroufe, 1995)[9] that suggests which suggest that the internal images one has about one's caregiver (including feelings associated with those images) serve as a map of how to experience and interact with the external world. In this way, it seems that sons who experienced the *absence* of a *good-enough father* growing up, either through never having experienced a father-son relationship, or having experienced a malevolent one, are at an extreme disadvantage of how to experience and interact with the world as a man in a way that is benevolent and in turn reciprocally beneficial.

Additionally, subjects who experienced malevolent fathering growing up (subjects with regular father contact) are placed in an irresolvable dilemma—the very person they would turn to for comfort and security in distress is the source of the distress (Main, 2000). The outcome of this is often "disorganized behavior…because there is a breakdown of an organized attachment strategy when the (child), feeling endangered, face(s) the irresolvable paradox that his biologically channeled haven of safety (is) simultaneously the source of his alarm" (Wallin, 2007, p. 93).

Referring back to the way one young man, who experienced regular (but malevolent) fathering responded to Card 15 of the TAT:

"This looks like a Martian. I see tombs, those look like tombstones, those look like crosses, she look like the ruler of this, like this is her kingdom and she is here to take charge of it, ya know. I'm thinking she is just here as a body guard or to protect her surroundings and she is in charge of everything

here. That what it look like to me." *And what you believe will happen next?* That someone's body might intrude and she'll take care of the person (laughs really loud

This young man's narrative, like so many of the young men in this study who experienced regular (but negative) father contact, is representative of what Main and Hesse (2000) have called unresolved or disorganized (discourse). Such discourse is characterized by incoherence, irrelevance, and/or lapses in reasoning, and is often reflective of having experienced either outright maltreatment or more subtle forms of frightening behavior from one's caregivers (Main & Hesse, 2000). When such trauma occurs it is too overwhelming to be integrated, and as a result, is dissociated in a defensive attempt to keep the painful (if not annihilating) experience from emerging. This, however, perpetuates the discontinuous states of mind that are synonymous with an unresolved/disorganized state of mind. As a consequence, "overwhelming experiences (stay) preserved in a dissociated state, lying dormant, yet available to be activated by particular emotionally arousing contexts" (Wallin, 2007, p. 38).

In this vein, Wallin (2007) has suggested that "when emotionally evocative AAI queries or childrearing contexts resembling those of the traumatic past disrupt this denial, unresolved adults can find themselves suddenly falling into states of mind that are overwhelming, chaotic, or trance-like" (Wallin, p.95). It seems, then, that when the young men in this study who experienced regular father contact growing up were presented with the task of recalling their early experience with their father in the BAAI, or with TAT cards that activated particular self-other experience that was too emotionally arousing for them, their narratives became incoherent and disorganized. In other words, the prevalence of disorganized narrative among subjects with regular father contact suggests a history of traumatic, unformulated, and unintegrated experience (in the father-son relationship). In turn, the "dissociated, traumatic experience remains intact in

its original unprocessed state waiting to "erupt" (Wallin, 2007, p.95). It is not surprising, then, that the young men who displayed unresolved narratives (those with regular father contact) showed the lowest levels of affect maturity.

Furthermore, Main (1995, 2000) has shown that people with disorganized/unresolved attachment show a tendency to role-reversal, and become the controlling/traumatizing figure in relation to their attachment figure. This helps to explain the tendency these subjects had to be connected to their father through a sadomasochistic (and undifferentiated) bond. That is, by becoming (identifying with) the traumatic, malevolent "father", not only are they able to remain connected to a father that would otherwise be "lost" (and thus have to endure loss), they seem as if they are attempting to create a sense of organization and mastery in response to trauma that was so disorganizing.

In this way, it seems that a son will connect to a father in whatever way he can, even if mythical, even if malevolent, in order to: define who they are, avoid the anxiety inherent to being alone as a man in the world, and /or master the fear and disorganization that exists from that the trauma experienced with their father.

It may also be that in the adolescent stage of development, when boys are becoming men, there exists a second developmental process of the *capacity to be alone*, which if successfully achieved, leads to a visceral sense of "I," as a man. And, unlike the earlier acquisition of this capacity, a boy's relationship with a good-enough father is the primary relationship for which this takes place. The need for this father-son connection may help to explain one young man's willingness to commit a crime with his father, after never having prior contact with him.

In a similar vein, Winnicott has suggested that the transition from *object relating* to *object usage* occurs if the mother can contain and modulate the child's aggression and is not

destroyed in the process. The aggression can then become part of ego relatedness and not an id impulse (Tuber, 2008). In the context of affect maturity, the capacity to experience one's emotions, and the events in which they are embedded, as related but separate appears to be tantamount to the developmental process in which the child transitions from object relating to object usage. (I hate you, you survived my hate, and now I can see you (and emotion) as separate (and differentiated).

If the father can survive and manage the son's aggression then both the son and the father can become separate people, who are related but distinct. In this way, as described by Levy-Warren (1996) and Blos (1965, 1967,1972), the son can take some aspects of his father and leave other aspects, in the development of his self. And, as a result, "the parents of childhood are left in the past, and more differentiated, realistic, and less-idealized representations of self and other come to exist" (Levy-Warren, 1996) [9].

If this goes awry, however, then it seems the son may learn that anger is dangerous because it threatens the security of relationships. The results of this study seem to suggest that boys who are unable to move from relating to usage become frozen in anger as a way of connecting (which does not allow for the experience of separateness or individuation). In such cases, it seems that a son (with regular father contact) is likely to become a carbon copy of his father, most likely by unconsciously identifying with him and connecting to him (and others) through anger (those with regular father contact).

Furthermore, the projective mechanisms that are at work (in this stage) are essential in helping the subject (son) find something of the object (father) in him and thus be seen by the object (as separate (Winnicott, 1958). It seems that if the father has been able to move from relating to usage in his own development, then it is likely that he will be able to help his son do

the same so that he can find himself. In this way, I would agree with Herzog's view that the father plays a unique and essential role in helping his son modulate and organize his anger, but I would add that it must occur in a relationship with a "good-enough" father, not just a father.

And, while Winnicot talks about the transition from object relating to object usage in the context of early mother-child interaction, it may be that there is a second phase of a similar phenomenon (as Blos has suggested there is a second separation-individuation phase), during adolescence, in which the subject is coming to know himself and the object as separate in a new, more sophisticated way. And, because so much of it, unlike the early phase of separation-individuation, is related to the establishment of identity, the father becomes a crucial figure in this process for his son.

Although speaking about the task of the analyst, it can be inferred that Winnicott's assertion that "reliability is all that matters, as well as survival in terms of keeping alive and the absence of retaliation," (P.92) may be true of the mother ***and*** the father. The father who is present but malevolent, and the father who is never present, can not provide this for his son, which may prohibit the ability to experience people and emotions in differentiated ways.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

The changing composition of the American family over the last three decades has seen a dramatic rise in children being raised without fathers (21.2%[12]). And, for children whose fathers are (or have been) present, there appears to have been a shift in paternal responsibility (Romano & Dokoupil, 2010). Understanding the father's impact on a child's development, as a result, has become increasingly important.

[12] From the Progress of Nations, 1996

The results of this study are highly suggestive of the notion that the absence of a loving and supportive father causes sons to create an idealized, mythical father in an attempt to provide them with the comfort and support they need for developmental progression. If true, it seems that boys have a universal need for a good-enough father. As Kohut suggested, '*idealized* selfobjects "provide the experience of merger with the calm, power, wisdom, and goodness of idealized persons"(Moore and Fine 1990, p.178). More specifically, the need to experience a relationship with an idealized selfobject seems fundamental to the promotion of self-other differentiation necessary for more sophisticated levels of relating to others and the world, for regulating affect (the development of affect maturity), and for the establishment of identity. As Moore and Fine (1990) point out, "the selfobject is one's subjective experience of another person who provides a sustaining function to the self within a relationship, evoking and maintaining the self and the experience of selfhood by ***his or her*** presence or activity" (p.178). In this way, the results of this study are consistent with previous theory, which suggests that the father is essential in helping sons meet developmental needs, including the management of "intense affect paradigms" and the development of one's identity.

It is important to note, however, that the results of this study are limited by the absence of a group of young men who had positive father-son interactions while growing up. Therefore, it can not be said with certainty that the results of study are due solely to absence of a good-enough father. Similarly, there may have been several variables (such as social class, poverty, and peer groups) that contributed to the low affect maturity scores found in the young men who participated in this study. In this same regard, this study did not undertake whether the developmental needs discussed in this study are able to be obtained solely through the relationship with a good-enough father.

If the findings of this study are reflective of the importance of a good-enough father for the development of affect maturity, however, they would be aligned with previous research which suggest that a good-enough father plays a fundamental role in the healthy development of his children (Herzog, 2001; Pruett ,1987, 2000; Parke 1996; Lamb, 2009,2010; Lamb et al. 2006). As such, interventions that promote education about the role a benevolent and nurturing father can play in his son's life may help to increase both the quantity and quality of father involvement in childrearing. Additionally, because the "calm, power, wisdom, and goodness" of a nurturing and supportive father are the very experiences/qualities needed to repair the early loss of the good-enough father, interventions that help provide a good-enough fathering experience more directly (through a therapist, mentoring program…) may prove remedial for boys who do not have the experience of growing up with a good-enough father. That is, having the experience of a good-enough father's comfort, and all that it encompasses, seems to be essential to helping mourn the loss of not having such experiences, which promote the separation-individuation (mourning) process necessary for more nuanced object relations, the capacity to experience emotion in mature form, and the establishment of a coherent sense of self.

As previously mentioned, it may be that the transition inherent to the process of mourning an idealized father parallels, and may even include, the transition from object relating to object usage. As such, it seems that a crucial task of clinical work with boys and men who have experienced the loss of a good-enough father is to provide them with a good-enough father-son (therapist-patient) relationship which can organize and modulate their anger and comfort them.

However, as evidenced in this study, much of the anger that lived inside these young men, and was acted out in the world, was a function of the frustration and disappointment in the

need for a good-enough father not being met, as well as the internalized experience of an insufficient, or even malevolent, father-son relationship. Thus, it seems there is a danger in becoming a participant in the trauma by reinforcing (playing into) unconscious attempts to connect to the familiar (malevolent father-neglected and angry son dynamic) through implicit and explicit aggression. If the therapist fails to modulate and organize the patient's (sons) anger, it could lead to a vicious cycle of disavowed anger and confirmation of neglect, which in turn could create a sadomasochistic, undifferentiated bond where neither the patient nor therapist can see each other as separate, individuated people.

In regard to treatment, the ability to survive the hatred that is likely to be projected onto the therapist (as part of the transference) without reparation seems crucial. Allowing for such anger, without becoming the malevolent father/therapist may help, over the course of time, form a bond founded upon benevolence and mutual recognition. Of course, at first, being "good-enough" is likely to escalate patients' anger as they would have to come to terms with the reality of who their father actually is/was, as well as the emotions connected to such deprivation. Nonetheless, repeated benevolent interactions, in accordance with the ideas inherent to affect maturity, help to build the positive self-other internalizations (cognitive schemas) necessary for differentiation and thus more mature forms of emotion. Kohut's proclamation that the analysis of Mr.Z could not be completed until post-oedipal issues with a male therapist were resolved may have involved a similar process which included the idealization of a father-figure/therapist in order to meet developmental needs, followed by the destruction of this idealized person to continue development and become a man in his own right.

Understanding these dynamics has another important implication for clinical process—how the therapist understands the patient's struggle will shape how the therapist sees the patient.

As Benjamin (1990, 1995) has noted, what is seen in the patient shapes the patient's experience of himself (and thus his development). In this study, the young men portray images of fathers who were unable to regulate their emotion or experience themselves and others as separate and individuated. It is likely, therefore, that many of the intolerable feelings that existed in these malevolent fathers were projected onto their sons. In other words, it seems likely that the father's issues with self-worth and affect regulation were disavowed and passed to the son to hold. In this way, the father sees the son as a reflection of him, rather than as a separate person. The way the son experiences himself through his father's eyes, then, is likely to be that of a false self which unconsciously clings to identification with the malevolent father as a way to deal with not knowing their true self. And, for sons with no father contact it seems likely that without having any father to see something in them, it's hard for them to see something in themselves.

Providing such clients with a mirroring experience that fosters their capacities—their "true self"—so that they can see these qualities in themselves, seems crucial for the development of their self worth (sense of self) and for the sense of hope that is necessary to persevere through the struggle and loss they have and will experience. In this way, how a clinician sees (understands) the patient who has experienced some form of father loss is likely to influence the way they see the patient, which in turn, is likely to affect how the patient comes to see themselves.

One way in which a clinician may be able to determine a patient's experience of father loss is through the patient's narrative. In line with Main's (1995, 2000) contention that the quality of one's narrative is indicative of one's "state of mind with respect to attachment" (and is a function of one's internal working model), the narratives of patients who display incoherence or disorganization in the clinical setting can provide invaluable information regarding the

patient's past and current way of relating to others. When such disorganization occurs, it may be a function of past experiences of loss and trauma (passed down from previous generations) that get reenacted, and thus reinforced, in the present. In this regard, a thorough understanding of the dynamics involved in the experience of father loss seems particularly important in order to handle the interpersonal exchanges with a patient who has not experienced some form of "good-enough" fathering. It is likely, for example, that patients who experienced some form of trauma and/or loss in their relationship with their father could draw the therapist into the transgenerational projection of intolerable parts of himself (including the narcissistic injuries and uncontainable anger). If this occurs and goes unnoticed, or unattended to, by the therapist, it seems likely that it would perpetuate the patient's identification with the idealized or malevolent father as an attempt to hold onto a father that was never really there, and to defend against the loss of that experience.

In this same vein, the de-idealization of the father can be a massive blow to a son's self-worth/esteem (sense of self). The experience of loss that is embedded in giving up the idealized father in favor of who the father really is, can be a painful process and part of why the comfort of a father figure is so important. It seems that helping young men come to terms with the loss is helping them come to terms with reality so that they can separate from their pain and anger and thus their identification with their father (as a narcissistic defense) and their self-father experience.

Additionally, helping clients work through this loss, especially as it occurs in the transference, is likely to promote a more realistic, mature and reflective view of their father (and others) so that sons don't have to rely on an overly idealized one (to defend against the pain of

not having one), which in turn may lead to more differentiated experience and higher forms of affect maturity.

It seems that an understanding of such father-son dynamics is an essential part of facilitating this process. Reis (2009) has defined this as being an "enactive witness" to trauma—helping the patient come to terms with the loss by living it out in the therapeutic relationship without repeating the relational patterns of trauma that were and are part of the patient's ongoing experience. In this same vein, so many of the subjects said that despite any preaching by their father for better behavior, it was how their father actually behaved, rather then how they said to behave, that determined a good deal of the subjects' own behavior. How the therapist "behaves" is, therefore, of the utmost importance.

It seems important for the therapist to be able to keep these dynamics in mind and help to be the change they wish to see in their patients, which in part comes from the capacity to tolerate anger without retaliation and to be a good-enough therapist (father-figure) who provides comfort, love and nurturance.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Several limitations inherent to this study may have impacted its findings. Among them, the small sample size was a fundamental limitation which might have precluded the ability to find significance in the second hypothesis—that there would be a significant difference between affect maturity scores on TAT cards that contained an image of a father figure and TAT cards that had no father figure in them.

However, as this hypothesis was meant to measure any difference in affect maturity due to father absence or presence, the unexpected variation in the amount of father contact experienced by subjects made it possible to measure for this by making the amount of father

contact the independent variable rather than differences in TAT cards. As a result, the intent of the second hypothesis was supported using a different means of analysis.

While the amount of father contact was significantly related to affect maturity, the way in which father contact was conceptualized—no contact (never had contact), little contact (had contact at least once a year), some contact (had contact at least once a month), or regular contact (had contact at least once a week)—may or may not have been representative of any actual "contact" distinctions. For example, it's possible that having three or more days a week of father contact has a much different impact on the development of affect maturity than once a week does, or that having twice a month contact is significantly different than once a month, but is similar to once a week. These distinctions were not accounted for by the established "amount of contact" categories, which may have affected the outcomes of this study.

Similarly, the exact period in which the father was present or absent was not assessed. Rather, subjects were asked about their overall experience with their father from the time they were born up until the age of eighteen. Thus, it is unknown whether the timing of the father's presence/absence, if it varied, had an impact on the son's affect maturity. The impact of the father's absence or their malevolent presence during the pre-oedipal stage of development, for example, may be significantly different than during the post-oedipal stage.

Another significant limitation of this study was that there were several unknown (other) variables that may have influenced the results of this study. These include intelligence quotient (IQ), socioeconomic and cultural factors, and relationships with other significant figures besides the father. For example, the mother-child relationship, which has long been regarded as the essential catalyst of child development, was not examined in this study. Consequently, any impact that the mother-son relationship has on the development of affect maturity or the degree

to which the mother influenced the outcome of these findings is unknown. Additionally, because the mother's relationship with her son was not examined, the extent to which the findings of this study were due solely to the father-son relationship can not be determined.

As a result, the influence of any interaction between variables related to the mother, father, and son dynamic on the son's development are difficult to determine. It may be, for instance, that a mother who would keep an ongoing relationship with someone who was a malevolent father (whose regular contact with sons was shown to correlate with the lowest affect maturity scores) are themselves malevolent figures, and greatly impact their son's development of affect maturity. In a similar fashion, it may be that sons who had no father contact (and who showed the highest affect maturity scores) had mother figures whose object relations were healthy enough to exclude such malevolence from their life as well as that of their sons, which may have positively influenced the development of affect maturity.

A better understanding of the interaction among these variables might be important in clarifying the role the father plays in their child's development, as well as the impact of these other factors on affect maturity (such as whether a good-enough mother can ameliorate or lessen the impact that the absence of a good-enough father has on sons). Furthermore, the likelihood that affect maturity is multiply determined may make it difficult to measure distinctions between maternal object relations and paternal ones.

In regards to the scales used in this study—the Affect Maturity Scale and the "attachment style" categorization obtained from the BAAI—the absence of robust research on the reliability and validity of these scales, as well as the way in which these scales were scored, may have impacted this study's findings[13].

[13] See Chapter Three for a more detailed description.

Another limitation of this study, as mentioned previously in this chapter and in Chapter One, is that all the subjects in this study came from environments in which they were faced with multiple challenges and circumstances that are likely to have impacted their development. This primarily includes socioeconomic and cultural factors that may have impacted the exposure subjects had, or missed out on having, with parents, peers, and mentors such as coaches and teachers. One subject, for example, said, "The only people I really looked up to like that (like a father figure) was my peoples. Niggers in the projects. It was just really me. A lot of shit I learned I learned how to do on my own watching people. Understanding what I'm saying. Other than that it wasn't nobody, besides older niggers in the hood that used to tell me listen I been through this, I did shit this way, that way, so you don't fuck up."

Thus, without a control group that consists of young men from a similar demographic who were exposed to regular, but *positive* father contact growing up, it is impossible to say with certainty whether the results of this study are due solely to the absence of a good enough father. Similarly, the results of this study may not be able to be generalizable to the male population as a whole. In some ways, however, the universal longing for a good-enough father among all of the young men in this study may be suggestive of the important role that the father plays in healthy development, and that a good-enough father may have a positive influence on a sons' development regardless of these other factors.

Furthermore, despite the above limitations, this study was a within group analysis (of subjects with similar "other variables"). Therefore, the findings suggest that the father does play a distinct and important role in the development of affect maturity, at least for this subset/population of young men. Incorporating more known variables into future studies,

however, may help isolate how the father influences the affect maturity and object relations of their sons.

CONCLUSION

The primary hypotheses of this study were based on the presumption that the father plays a significant role in promoting psychological development in their sons, including the development of affect maturity. It was predicted that a father's absence from his son's life would have deleterious affects on the attainment of developmental milestones, especially in adolescence when boys are negotiating what has been called the second separation-individuation phase of development.

Father absence, however, came to mean something different over the course of the study. What these subjects shared, contrary to what was originally predicted, was the absence of a "good-enough" father, not necessarily a father. And, in the absence of this good-enough father, a son's affect maturity was significantly impaired.

The absence of a "good-enough" father seemed to prevent these sons from acquiring the positive self-other experiences needed for differentiation and the increasing development of affect maturity. As a result, these young men stayed ineluctably joined to the malevolent and/or idealized father and had difficulty undergoing the process of separation-individuation necessary to acquire differentiation and experience higher levels of affect maturity.

The results of this study seem to suggest that having a good-enough fathering experience is essential for sons to separate from their father and become a man in their own right. In this way, the good-enough father facilitates their son's sense of "I," through the process of incorporation, internalization and identification. If successful, the son can take some aspects of father and leave others behind in order to become his own man. If not, the son seems to

perpetually search for a sense of "I," and will unconsciously identify with his perception of his father in ways that are fused (a carbon-copy) rather than individuated. And, it seems that when this occurs, and the second separation-individuation process gets derailed, the development of affect maturity is impaired.

The absence of a good-enough father-son experience places these sons on the wrong side of a paradox—the lack of good-enough experience impairs their capacity to go through (and feel they can go through) the developmental mourning process inherent to adolescent separation-individuation, and thus no longer have to be dependent upon the good-enough father. In order to cope it seems that these subjects mobilized defensive processes, including idealization and denial, which perpetuated a vicious cycle of depression and defenses against this depression.

For subjects who truly experienced father absence, and thus the absence of a "good-enough" father, their depression materializes in a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. It seems, though, that because these subjects had no experience with a father, they also had an absence of malevolent fathering experience, which led to higher affect maturity scores in relation to those that had regular, but negative, father contact. For subjects who experienced regular, but pervasively bad fathering, depression is experienced with rage, which connects them to their dad by becoming just like him.

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