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Present at the creation : the experience of men becoming first-time fathers.

Neal Aponte
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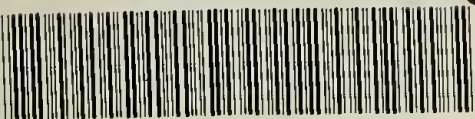
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PRESENT AT THE CREATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF
MEN BECOMING FIRST-TIME FATHERS

A Dissertation Presented

By

NEAL APONTE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 1991

Psychology

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FIRST-TIME FATHERS

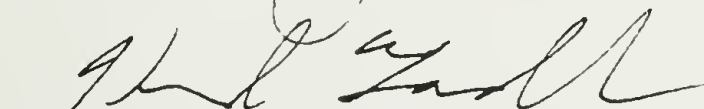
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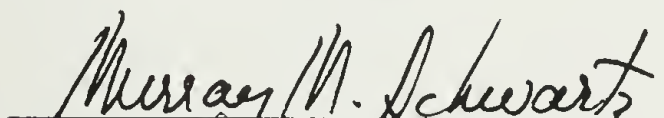
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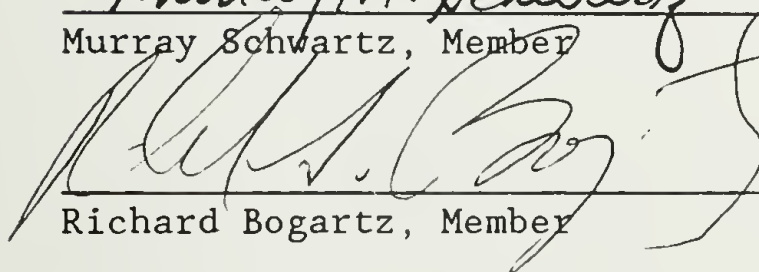
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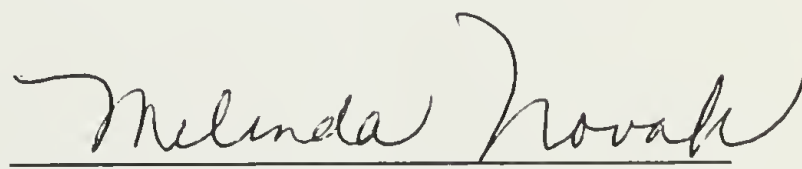

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In Memory of my father and brother
and to my mother and sister

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ABSTRACT

PRESENT AT THE CREATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF
MEN BECOMING FIRST-TIME FATHERS

SEPTEMBER 1991

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This dissertation utilizes an object relational framework to explore how prospective fatherhood represents an important transitional moment in a man's normative psychological and emotional development. The interpersonal and intrapsychic changes wrought by this transitional moment are first conceptualized around several related themes: 1) how becoming a father engenders a concurrent identification with and separation from one's father and family of origin; 2) how the process of becoming adult symbolically destroys and transforms the relationship with a parent and how becoming a parent generates an opportunity to make reparation; 3) how the child's birth reverberates against oedipal wishes for omnipotence and immortality yet also presages the limits of generational authority and one's physical mortality; 4) how becoming a father conjures up feelings of envy about a woman's procreative capacity and her relationship with the fetus and resurrects aspects of a man's childhood relationship with his own mother.

Twenty men whose partners were in the last trimester of their first pregnancy were interviewed. A qualitative analysis of the interview data was used to illuminate how prospective fatherhood: 1) engendered an internal dialogue between an established and inchoate sense of self; between the self as adolescent and the self as adult; 2) intensified an emotional dependence on their partners, generated a sense of awe and reverence towards their partner's bodies, and produced feelings of helplessness about being responsible for their infants, all of which resurrected aspects of a man's early childhood relationship with his mother.

Ten case studies are presented focusing on subjects' relationships with their fathers to demonstrate how prospective fatherhood enables men to engage in three inter-related dimensions of reparative work. Prospective fathers can repair: 1) their own fathers by offering the grandchild as a quid pro quo for the child they have lost and by enabling the father to be idealized anew by the grandchild precisely when the sons become increasingly aware of their fathers' mortality; 2) the father/son relationship as men identify more with their fathers; the experience of prospective fatherhood represents a potential emotional bridge back to their fathers; and 3) themselves as the desire to create a different relationship with their own children and the related identification with the unborn child reflects a need to alleviate the emotional wounds they endured as children.

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CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

Much of the existing clinical literature on prospective fatherhood describes men's pathological responses to pregnancy and childbirth. These responses range from neurotic oedipal-derived guilt and anxiety, to depression to acute psychosis. (see, for instance, Zilboorg, 1931; Wainwright, 1966; Lacoursiere, 1972; Gerzi and Berman, 1981)

By contrast, I want to illuminate how prospective fatherhood represents an important moment in a man's normative psychological and emotional development. I will examine important aspects of what I understand to be the transformational and reparative dimensions of becoming a first-time father.

The interpersonal and intrapsychic transformations wrought by the transitional moment of prospective fatherhood can be organized around several sets of related themes: 1) how becoming a father engenders a concurrent identification with and separation from one's father and family of origin; 2) how the process of becoming adult symbolically destroys and transforms the relationship with a parent and how becoming a parent generates an opportunity to make reparation; 3) how the child's birth reverberates against oedipal wishes for omnipotence and immortality yet also presages the limits of generational authority and one's physical mortality; 4) how becoming a father conjures up feelings of envy about a woman's procreative capacity and her relationship with the fetus and

resurrects aspects of a man's childhood relationship with his own mother.

Identification/Separation

In becoming a parent, men generate important new identities and assume responsibilities previously undertaken by their own fathers. They are becoming, in some respect, more like their fathers. As men begin to ask themselves questions like: will I, or more accurately my partner and I, earn enough to support a child?; is the child going to be healthy?; will I make the same mistakes as my father made in raising me?; they begin to wrestle with the anxiety experienced by their own fathers. These gnawing questions provide men an important opportunity to deepen an understanding of their fathers from the inside. The potential for an empathic identification emerges out of a recognition of shared experience.

This nascent identification with one's father can occur at a significant psychological cost: the loss of an idealized father. New parental imagoes, reflecting the son's emerging sensitivity to the depth of his father's vulnerability must be integrated with existing representations.

Sons and/or fathers may be ambivalent about giving up this idealized paternal imago. For instance, the need for an idealized father surfaces regularly in political life. The appeal of Ronald Reagan in 1980 as someone who could magically solve all our economic woes, extricate the hostages from Iran and restore American pride in the world community, reverberates against the deeper wish to believe

in a powerful, beneficent father. And many writers have discussed the allure of extremist political leaders as magical idealized fathers whose appeal reflects a retreat from the complexities of modern social life. (see, for example, Fromm, 1941; Mitscherlich, 1970)

To fully embrace the inherent ambiguity and difficulty of adulthood requires giving up these idealized fathers and renouncing the possibility of effecting magical reparative solutions to current vexing collective problems and individual crises of meaning and existence. Giving up and transforming the idealized father can be terrifying, exposing individuals and/or whole societies to the fear of utter chaos and complete annihilation.

Yet as sons become fathers, many need to rekindle an idealized depiction of their fathers to bolster their own fledgling paternal identities. And this need may develop precisely when sons become more aware of their father's vulnerabilities. In fact, too close an identification with the "insecure" father may exacerbate a son's concern about his own ability to father.

Fathers may also inhibit sons from shedding their idealization to observe the emperor without clothes. A vivid example comes from the film The Great Santini.

In a powerful scene, a teenage son has finally beaten his father in a game of one-on-one basketball. The father refuses to accept defeat and tries to bully the son into playing an immediate rematch by repeatedly bouncing the basketball off of his head. In these situations, the son's healthy competitive strivings are interpreted

as threatening and destructive to the father's self-esteem. Here an oedipal father remains unable to recognize and accept the process of becoming eclipsed by his son. He refuses to acknowledge the limits of generational authority and his own mortality.

As a son undertakes the task of individuation beginning in infancy and childhood and extending through adolescence and early adulthood, a father must reconcile himself to be "used" as an object. Fathers represent the established order of things and become containers for the son's projected hate and aggression so the task of separation can proceed. When this occurs without undue counter-aggression, fathers communicate they can survive their son's hate. And if a father can tolerate a son's hatred and remain emotionally available to him, the father allows himself to be rediscovered by the son. This rediscovery of the father affords the son an opportunity to repair the emotional and psychological wounds wrought by his effort to become a more fully individuated adult.

This symbolic destruction/transformation/rediscovery process continues throughout the son's entire lifespan and represents the wisdom of Mark Twain's story about his own father:

"When I was 10 years old, I thought my father knew everything. When I was 15, I thought he didn't know anything. And when I turned 20, I was surprised to discover how much he had learned in 5 years."

However, the unspoken psychological pivot here involves the father's continued availability. A father's sustained emotional presence engenders the possibility of reconciliation through the son's act of reparation.

The experience of one's father as a mortal being with strengths and vulnerabilities engendered by the experience of prospective fatherhood consolidates an integration of existing good and bad paternal imagoes. An integration of the father who afforded safety and protection with the father who remained emotionally unavailable; or the integration of idealized childhood imagoes with the more aggressive and hateful representations usually constructed in adolescence.

The prospective father's identification extends not only to his own father but to his unborn or newborn child. Frequently, men are concerned they will replicate their father's childrearing mistakes. For many men, fathers have been known primarily through their physical and/or emotional absence. These fathers were either busy at work outside the home or, when they were present, did not interact with their sons. Many of these fathers, of course, never experienced intimacy with their own fathers and consequently did not understand how to be a father with their sons.

By imagining and providing a qualitatively different father/child relationship from what they experienced themselves, men enable their sons and daughters to be the kind of children they could never be. A man's emotional investment in this process reflects loving feelings for his children and a deep longing to heal childhood wounds. As men identify with their children as children, the process of fathering becomes a self-reparative gesture. This self-reparative effort may resurrect or produce a new awareness of painful feelings and memories, e.g., the resentment and anger towards an absent or

distant father, and generate hateful feelings. Alternatively, a poignant awareness of a father's emotional absence may produce a wish for a different father or intensify the longing many men unconsciously feel towards their fathers, what Herzog described as "father hunger". (Herzog, 1982)

Finally, a son's self-reparation may engender a deeper sense of forgiveness. Prospective fatherhood provides men an opportunity to reflect on how difficult it must have been for a father to raise a family when, for instance, he had not been properly fathered himself or because he had to work two jobs. But time alone does not heal all wounds. If fathers remain unavailable for emotional contact, then sons must do all the healing work themselves. Moreover, given the nature and extent of some childhood scars, forgiveness or even acceptance can be very difficult to embrace. Nevertheless, prospective fatherhood establishes the potential emotional space to empathically identify with and to perhaps forgive one's own father as men integrate new and existing self and paternal representations in the context of ongoing father/son relationships.

Parricide and Reparation

Hans Loewald argued that becoming an adult represents a symbolic process of parricide. (Loewald, 1979) The experience of becoming an adult represents an eclipse of the father's individual and generational status. Unconsciously, a son desires to usurp his father's parental authority and to transform the nature of their

relationship in the service of enjoying the privileges and assuming the responsibilities of adulthood. Quite simply, there is sublimated murderous desire embedded in the effort to become an independent adult. And it remains an important developmental achievement to own up to the reality of generational conflict first awakened in childhood and then rekindled in late adolescence and early adulthood.

When fathers accept the reality of a son's parricidal wishes and do not cling to their own idealized status, this can renew a profound respect for the father. But as suggested earlier, there is also considerable reassurance involved in rediscovering the father. And this important process of rediscovering the parental object provides an important foundation for reparation: the object has survived. There can be no reparation if the father has not symbolically survived and becomes or remains unavailable to the son as an object of identification.

Melanie Klein's concept of reparation refers to the infant's need to mend the phantasized damage effected by its instinctual hate. (Klein, 1937) The dialectic between hate and reparation in the Kleinian framework represents an imaginative recasting of the relationship between the Freudian life and death instincts. Whereas other object relations theorists, for example Balint, Fairbairn, Winnicott and Guntrip, rejected the Freudian death instinct and expressed reservations about the existence of drives, Klein embraced Freud's view that instinctual phenomena defined the bedrock of human nature and development.

For Klein, the infant's phantasized annihilation of the mother's breast derived from the combined force of its instinctual hate and aggression and its experience of frustration caused by unfulfilled needs. But an important achievement in Klein's developmental narrative involved the expression of instinctual guilt and remorse over the destruction wrought by the infant's phantasized aggression. The emergence of instinctual guilt to counteract both hate and aggression and to maintain an important object tie propelled the infant's desire to repair the imagined damage it inflicted on its caregivers. (Klein, 1935)

With the emergence of guilt and remorse, Klein reasoned that the infant could no longer experience the object of its hate and love as separate or different. In Kleinian language, the infant's "depressive position" represented the realization that the hated object, or the parent who frustrates, and the loved object, the parent who gratifies and the parent to whom reparation must be made, were one and the same rather than different parental objects.

While Klein understood that the infant's reparative efforts get expressed in an object relational context, the motor energy for reparation derived solely from its instinctual love for its objects.

Klein's concept of reparation clearly emanated from a consideration of the infant's biological instinctual energies. In this study, I will propose a very different meaning to this important term.

In the transitional moments of our lives, there exists a dialectic between transformational and reparative processes. The

transformational dimension involves a recasting of internal representations of self and object and a reworking of the meaning and basis of actual interpersonal relationships. As internal representations and interpersonal meanings are symbolically reworked or "destroyed", the transformational process illuminates the importance of hate to the experience of psychological growth and development.

The reparative dimension involves the transforming subject's attempts to repair the psychological and emotional distress and anxiety caused by the intrapsychic and interpersonal changes wrought by the self and illuminates the continued importance of the self's love for its important objects.

Understood this way, reparation defines an intersubjective process, involving both an interpersonal dimension, with reference to actual relationships or exchanges between individuals, and an intrapsychic dimension, with reference to the self's internal world, rather than an instinctual phenomenon.

Loewald discusses how the parricidal phantasies embedded in oedipal desires get expressed in a palpable manner during the protracted developmental transition to adulthood. (Loewald, 1979) What I want to demonstrate here is the countervailing reparative movement embedded in the process of becoming a parent. The reparative dimension of parenthood provides the reciprocal of the parricidal thrust of adulthood: becoming a parent affords men an opportunity to repair the parricidal aspect of becoming an adult. In particular, the process of becoming a parent effects a reparation of:

1) the parent; 2) the parent/son relationship; 3) the son, or what I describe as a self-reparation.

The transformational/parricidal and reparative motifs appear to be integral features to becoming an adult and then a parent. However, these developmental motifs do not require an appeal to instinctual endowments. Rather, the processes referred to here derive from the reality of change and transition in our lives. The transitory and finite qualities of our lives connect the symbolic process of destroying internal self and object representations and actual interpersonal relationships with rediscovering and recreating them during life's transitional moments.

A central aspect of the reparative wish in parenthood involves offering a child to one's parents, the child's grandparents, as a quid pro quo for the loss of their child. By enabling one's parents to become grandparents, one mitigates the parent's declining role in one's own life with the new and potentially meaningful role in the grandchild's life. The grandparent/child relationship enables the grandparent to be idealized anew precisely when their own child becomes more profoundly aware of their frailty and mortality. Moreover, the son offers the parent another opportunity to parent, perhaps in certain instances to rectify or master unresolved problems or even to undo what transpired when the son was a child. The son offers his own parent an ideal arrangement: a presence in the child's life without the exhausting day-to-day responsibility of raising a child. In effect, the "doting" grandparent benefits child and grandparent alike.

The grandchild can be understood as an offering to compensate and atone for the symbolic parricide effected by becoming an adult. This kind of atonement echoes the child's omnipotent fantasy to rewrite the past. While a hallmark of Klein's depressive position involves nonmagical means of reparation, the experience of prospective and actual fatherhood reverberates against more primitive and magical reparative wishes.

Another potential expression of primitive reparative wishes involves the act of procreation itself. One can understand the desire to make a woman a mother, to implant one's male seed into the female body, as providing reparation for the infant's phantasized devastation of the mother's body. By enabling one's partner (the mother) to conceive, one generates palpable evidence of the mother's continued fertility. Accordingly, insofar as the individuation process and perhaps all acts of creation involve a dimension of hate and destruction, all acts of procreation involve reparation.

The precise extent of the need for magical reparation depends on the quality of one's self and object relationships and/or representations. A more intense parental demand, e.g., appeasing an oedipal father or satisfying a severely narcissistic parent, or unresolved developmental conflicts, e.g., experiencing guilt over eclipsing one's father or, more tragically, associating one's individuation with destroying a parent, will create a greater need to effect a magical reparation subverting the reality of the son's separate adult existence.

However, the experience of becoming a parent and making one's parents grandparents necessarily involves some degree of magical reparation. These reparations characteristic of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position, whereby the hated and loved object are segregated and the impact of the infant's hate can be magically undone, remain visible like the archaic images on an intrapsychic palimpsest underneath our experience of "whole" objects and a differentiated object world generated by the depressive position.

Oedipal Wishes for Immortality/Realization of
Generational Limits

Another unconscious motivation propelling men to become fathers may be more prevalent in older men, men in their mid 30's or older. For these men parenthood may express what could be termed a manic defense against an incipient awareness of death. The urge to procreate for these older men may develop when they consciously or unconsciously experience a diminution of the sense of seemingly infinite movement (whether it's psychic, emotional, occupational and even physical/geographical) and future possibility characteristic of adolescence. Of course, this manic defense could represent a motive of younger men too. For instance, the death of a parent or parental divorce could signal the need for children; the need to create new life to counteract the experience of separation and loss.

This issue highlights what I consider an essential psychological tension of prospective fatherhood. On the one hand, creating a child

fulfills the oedipal wish to become a father to oneself. A parent creates a child that becomes his "flesh and blood", a living and breathing testament to his existence and a palpable embodiment of the effort to extend oneself beyond the boundary of one's generation.

Concurrently, a parent creates a child who will ultimately supercede his own generation.¹ Through the creation of progeny, the adult creates the seeds of his own generational demise:

"Sweet death, small son, our instrument
Of immortality,
Your cries and hungers document
Our bodily decay."

(Donald Hall, My Son, My Executioner,
in Shinder, ed., 1983)

The history of psychological transitions from infancy to adulthood embodies a history of usurpation. As the child develops, he appropriates authority hitherto exercised over him by the parent. One can therefore readily discern a paradox at the very heart of parenthood: the child provides the parent with a symbolic immortality at the expense of the parent's own generational and mortal power; the new generation both extends and eclipses its predecessors. The moment of conception, the process of gestation and the experience of childbirth remain inextricably bound up with the reality of death.

Mind/Body & Male/Female

As prospective fathers observe the changes occurring in their partner's bodies and experience them become mothers, they confront

the reality of biological differences between the sexes. However, a man's experience and interpretation of these differences reflect internalized cultural templates about the body and about the meaning of maleness and femaleness. In turn, these templates resonate with and confirm the unconscious residues of their childhood relationships with their own mothers.

In many of life's transitional moments our psychological and emotional development stems from the wisdom embedded in our bodies. As we learn to walk, become aware of gender differences, enjoy ecstatic sexual union and accept increased frailty in old age, we experience the intimate connection between our evolving self-consciousness and our bodies.

Yet much of our social and cultural life repudiates the language of the body. Our cultural obsession with finely chiseled physical perfection illustrates this denial as it generates and reflects our shame about bodily imperfections. We feel embarrassed and unnerved by our bodies that well up with mucous, phlegm, feces, urine, spittle and vomit; bodies that sweat, smell, hurt and hunger and thirst for physical and sensual gratification.

Our anxiety about the body provides the ultimate source for an equally profound distrust of our desires. The distrust of human passions and desires, expressed in Platonic philosophy and continued with the history of Christian belief and the emergence of modern liberal political and social theory, represents an epistemological bedrock of Western thought and civilization. As we remain bound to a cultural apotheosis of reason, science and technology, our bodies and

desires assault us. Our frail and mysterious carnal existence contradicts and wounds our grandiose wish for immortality.

This wish represents a form of narcissistic madness all "civilized" beings in our culture share. This wish for immortality is mad because it effects a profound schism between mind and body. In order to pursue this wish, we must continually denigrate the body, feeling and desire as important elements of being human.

Our wish for immortality reverberates against our earliest object relations conjuring both oedipal and preoedipal desires. The oedipal wish expressed here is the wish to become fathers to ourselves, to render our fathers irrelevant and to replace them. The preoedipal wish reflects a desire for increasing separateness from and residual anxiety about reengulfment by the omnipotent preoedipal mother.

Our primitive anxiety about the preoedipal mother illuminates the antagonism between male and female; consciousness and unconsciousness; mind and body.² The antagonism represented here manifests itself in associating consciousness, the mind and maleness with the agent of human action, the rational "I" or "Self" governing our thoughts and behaviors. The unconscious, the body and femaleness are reduced to the status of the Other. These remain alien and menacing to the self's integrity and instrumental control of the physical and social environment.

In the deepest terms of our individual self-awareness, we replicate social/cultural forms of repression as Foucault repeatedly observed. It is only the less stable and illegitimate forms of

domination like physical violence that are overtly interpersonal. The more profound and insidious forms are effected by the conscious and unconscious terms we understand ourselves and how we perceive and make sense of our participation in the natural and social worlds around us.

An important aspect of this repressive self-consciousness involves the endemic splitting characteristic of Western thought. The following list suggests how this splitting resonates with gender differences:

<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
mind	body
reason/thought	emotion/feeling
culture	nature
public	private
knowledge	desire
oedipal	preoedipal
outside/role of the father	inside/role of the mother
instrumental	affiliative
head	heart
autonomy	dependence
active/sadistic	passive/masochistic

This dichotomous worldview emanates, I would argue, from our anxiety about the differences between male and female bodies. This suggestive list illustrates how our self-consciousness reflects and maintains a repressive bifurcation. And as our culture splits off dreaded feminine qualities, they are more readily denigrated and repressed.

However, we dance among the Jungian shadows whether consciously or not. For the ever resilient repressed returns in ways we cannot control or even be aware of. Accordingly, the split off and devalued

feminine qualities haunt our individual psyches, souls and cultural forms alike: the greater our repression of bodily awareness and feminine identifications, the more we are overwhelmed and horrified by our own bodily functions and anima.

This cultural dilemma concerning the reintegration of the anima helps illuminate why our continued domination and exploitation of nature bedevils us with horrifying consequences. We seek to reduce the physical planet to an instrument of production through the application of science and technology. Through these efforts we not only denigrate the environment, the natural body that surrounds and nourishes us, we also seek to repress our own identities as natural creatures. Through technological advance, we hope to define ourselves as standing apart from nature rather than as uniquely self-conscious creatures of nature.

The dualistic quality of our self-consciousness also reflects the insinuation of patriarchal domination into the very fabric of both public and private life. It is how patriarchy remains inside all of us, rather than as merely a function of institutional economic and political arrangements. In psychoanalytic terms, the masculine becomes associated with the end-goals of psychological growth and maturity: greater individual autonomy and independence. The feminine remains associated with the archaic regressive pull for merger involving an attendant loss of a separate sense of self characteristic of pathological and primitive states: psychosis and love. In this sense, psychoanalytic theory embodies the larger cultural denigration of the feminine. Yet, rife with contradiction,

psychoanalysis concurrently points the way back to the body as an important bedrock of understanding ourselves and our relations with others. As Norman Brown observed:

"The aim of psychoanalysis-still unfulfilled, and still only half-conscious- is to return our souls to our bodies, to return ourselves to ourselves, and thus to overcome the human state of self-alienation."

(Brown, 1959, p.,158)

The nascent recognition of our own separateness occurs at a bodily level. This is the essence of Freud's contention that the ego is initially a body-ego. However, the incipient awareness of our physical boundedness occurs in relationship with the bodies of our caretakers, most particularly, with our mother's adult female body. Bodily experience establishes an important umbilical cord connecting the intrapsychic and interpersonal worlds. This other body regulates our internal states, our hunger, pain, pleasure and longing, and manages the substances oozing out of our bodily orifices. Consequently, a mother's body is initially experienced as the source of all life. Her body is the center of the child's universe, the child's Garden of Eden. And the child's emerging awareness of difference represents the child's fall from innocence. Mother's body has the power both to sustain and to take life away. The initial sense of our physical boundedness involves experiencing the seeming omnipotence of our mother's body and the relative helplessness of our own.

As writers such as Horney, Zilboorg, Dinnerstein and Benjamin have noted, this experience of maternal omnipotence generates a primitive sense of awe and envy; a sense of both longing and dread.

(Zilboorg, 1931; Horney, 1932; Dinnerstein, 1976; Benjamin, 1988)

The mother's body is both a source of life-affirming love and a powerful force to be reckoned with. In this context, the wish for immortality symbolically expresses a wish to control and dominate the preoedipal mother: to strip away the magical power of her body, the power to give and take life away, and to repudiate any identification with her.

Thus, as male and female intrapsychic representations and cultural stereotypes remain segregated, an important source of life energy remains inaccessible to men. (Benjamin, 1988) In fact, the search to be reunited with the life-affirming power of the mother's body represents a deep longing for many men in adult relationships. This was beautifully expressed by Wallace Stevens:

"It was in the earth only
that he was at the bottom of things
And of himself..."

Everything comes to him
From the middle of his field. The odor
Of earth penetrates more deeply than any word.
There he touches his being. There as he is
He is. The thought that he had found all this
Among men, in a woman...."

(Wallace Stevens, Yellow Afternoon,
in Stevens, 1974)

But as men experience the mother's female body ambivalently, the act of sexual union becomes fraught with ambivalence too. To be reunited again exposes the man to the feminine body's power to take life away. The moment of conception, the subsequent gestation process and the actual childbirth occur deep within the female body providing palpable evidence linking the physical body and the forces

of nature with femaleness. The seemingly miraculous lifebearing capacity also resurrects a primitive anxiety about the omnipotent mother.

The Development of Gender Representations

In the psychoanalytic model of male gender development, the boy consolidates masculine self-representations as he disidentifies with his mother. However, as the boy turns away from her, he disidentifies with salient characteristics of mothering such as the focus on acknowledging and responding to the needs and feelings of others. These qualities, tarnished with the association of being maternal, become subordinated to a more instrumental assertive phallic thrust into the world. As Benjamin reasoned:

"The boy thinks: "Mother has the good things inside, and now that she is forever separate from me and I may not incorporate her, I can only engage in heroic acts to regain and conquer her in her incarnations in the outside world."
(Benjamin, 1988, p.163)

This turning away from the mother signifies a fundamental shift in the boy's self-representation. The previously introjected nurturant and empathic mother becomes split-off and externalized in the boy's nascent masculine sense of self.

Now this capacity for empathic attunement with others represents an important quality in being a good enough parent. In Winnicottian terms, the child needs to look in his mother's eyes (and father's eyes too, although Winnicott does not discuss fathers) and see himself rather than the parent's image of the child reflected there.

This promotes an uninhibited development of the child's spontaneous and authentic sense of self. The child's True Self, originally depicted as a bubbling up of sensorimotor impulses embedded in what Winnicott termed a "spontaneous gesture", can only emerge and develop when the parent empathically meets the child. (Winnicott, 1960)

However, if men repudiate their empathic abilities as boys, how can they learn to attune to their infant's needs and become good enough nurturing fathers?

The giving up of maternal or feminine identifications points to the emotional/psychological loss boys experience as they consolidate their gender identities. So as men experience their partners communing with the unborn fetus and/or the neonate, fathers, like the boys they once were, observe a mother's life-affirming nurturance and empathy from the outside, conjuring up old and deep narcissistic wounds; the wound of giving up an identification with their mothers.

Until recently, these issues were lost on the body of psychoanalytic developmental theory focused on the girl's traumatic discovery that she does not have a penis. As Benjamin noted, the earliest phase of gender identity, beginning with the rapprochement subphase and culminating in the third year, remained defined in terms of the presence or absence of the penis. (Benjamin, 1988) Understood this way, the consolidation of gender identity in girls involved a painful narcissistic injury: the lack of a penis. Whereas the boy merely had to hold on to what he already had. As Benjamin observed, masculine gender remained an unattainable ideal for girls, whereas

the feminine remained an ever-present threat to identity for boys (Benjamin, 1988).

In traditional psychoanalytic terms, establishing female gender identity meant confronting the harsh reality of limits imposed by human biology. The establishment of male gender identity pivoted around giving up dangerous wishes: namely the wish to bear children like mother, and subsequently, the wish to possess mother as an incestuous love object. Here we see the essential truth of Fast's recent insight that the boy experiences two distinct powerful sources of castration anxiety: the regressive feminine identification that jeopardizes masculine gender identity, and the menacing rivalry between father and son. (Fast, 1984)

In the framework of Freudian ego psychology the boy does not have to confront the reality of limits; he does not give anything up in the way girls do. A feminine identification threatens the integrity of the penis and does not represent an unattainable ideal. However, in the developmental model recently articulated by Fast and Benjamin, the consolidation of gender identity represents a loss, a significant narcissistic injury to both boys and girls. (Fast, 1984; Benjamin, 1988)

The development of male gender in this newer model entails a transformation of the boy's self representations. Fast contends the infant's emergent self representation includes both masculine and feminine elements reflecting an identification with both mother and father. (Fast, 1984) However, the recognition of sex differences, occurring in the third year, delimits the identifications boys and

girls make: girls do not have penises and boys cannot have babies. In either case, awareness of sex and gender differences involves a recognition of limits. The physical body shapes a sense of what one is and is not and effects a narrower self representation. Accordingly, gender becomes a critical organizing principle determining which attributes and feeling-states experienced by the self are consistent with or inappropriate to one's gender. (Fast, 1984)

The ego psychology paradigm illuminated important ramifications of the girl's discovery of not having a penis: her profound feelings of loss, her demand for restitution, her belief that mother can somehow undo the loss, her fear that the lack represents some sort of punishment and her resentment that boys do not endure a similar experience of loss. As Fast observes, the parallel experience for boys has not been examined. (Fast, 1984) One could, for example, interpret the boy's acknowledgment of being unable to bear or to nurture a child like his mother as an important loss. Accordingly, one might understand a boy's phallic exhibitionism as an expression of the real threat to his identity posed by this loss and a related demand for restitution. Or this phallic display might express an anxiety wrought by comparing his penis with his father's.

The repudiation of feminine self representations, representing a narcissistic injury for boys, illuminates important issues confronting a prospective father: how does one reconcile masculine representations with the nurturant aspects of being a father? Indeed, how can men even wrestle with this issue if their own gender

development involved a repudiation of the very qualities they need to become empathic fathers? A critical factor involves the extent to which one's own father reconciled being masculine and nurturant. Certainly, the experience of a nurturant father attenuates the need, during one's childhood and adolescent development, to assert one's masculinity by repudiating affiliative tendencies and attributes. To the extent that fathers provide conciliatory role models, boys will not have to repudiate their own nurturant capacities.

It is important to point out an important distinction here between turning away from the mother as a primary object of identification and a repudiation of the qualities she embodies. The former is clearly important to the establishment of any semblance of masculine gender identity. However, I believe a critical feature of good enough fathering allows for the expression of nurturant qualities which are wholly consonant with the elaboration of masculine gender identity.

In the psychoanalytic narrative about male oedipal development, the boy gives up the mother both as an incestuous love object and as a primary object of identification; there is both a decaathesis of and disidentification with mother. However, it is clear that the two are not and should not be organically related. The primacy of a boy's identification with his father should not interfere with a boy's continued identification with the nurturant/affiliative qualities associated with the mother. But the possibility of reconciling a primary identification with the father with an ongoing identification with the mother probably derives from the father's ability to

reconcile these masculine and feminine identifications for himself and in the relationship with his partner. This underscores my belief that the child internalizes each parent as an individual and the parents in relationship to one another as he/she consolidates his/her gender identity.

While the parental relationship represents an important source of information about gender, it remains clear that fathers play a critical role in reconciling masculine and feminine representations for the boy. In fact, evidence suggests that father absence and resulting "father hunger" are directly related to a phallic machismo-like behavioral display in prospective fathers and their inability to assume greater responsibility during their wives' pregnancies. (Herzog, 1982) Other evidence suggests that grandfathers may provide an important role model to the young boy demonstrating the compatibility between being masculine and nurturant. (Cath, 1982)

Thus, the emotional capacity of men to view themselves and to assume responsibility as nurturant fathers reflects the availability of their own fathers as identificatory objects and their father's and/or grandfather's capacity to provide a nurturant role model. Moreover, the experience of a boy growing up in a family with younger siblings may provide opportunity for the boy to replicate his father's nurturant stance.

Accordingly, an available and nurturant father enables the boy to reconcile his masculine gender identity with qualities originally associated with his mother, allowing for a greater integration of masculine and feminine self representations.

Understanding the Father's Desire

Traditionally, psychoanalytic theory focused on the child's primitive dark fantasies vis-a-vis the parent and neglected the parent's desires. Yet as the psychoanalyst Aaron Esman bluntly observed: the child is as much an object for the parent as the parent is for the child. (Esman, 1985-86) To acknowledge the parent's fantasies about the child does not challenge the theoretical cornerstone of psychoanalysis: Freud's abandonment of his so-called "seduction theory". In fact, Masson's position regarding Freud's disavowal of the seduction theory highlights the very real problem of sexual abuse yet ignores the more subtle and pervasive issue of a parent's unconscious aggressive and/or sexual phantasies about the child. (Masson, 1984)

These unacknowledged parental desires get silently communicated to the child. As Stern argued, during the first few years of life the child remains an exquisite reality-tester uncannily perceiving the feelings of those around them. (Stern, 1985) A few psychoanalytic thinkers like Ross, Kwawer, Esman and Devereux have recognized the content of these parental phantasies. (Ross, 1985-86; Kwawer, 1985-86; Esman, 1985-86; Devereux, 1966) But to my knowledge no one has examined how these parental desires influence the production and expression of the child's phantasies about the parent. For example, the extent to which the child's phantasy results from the parent projectively identifying his/her unwanted

sexual/aggressive phantasies into the child to hold. Or the extent to which the child mirrors these parental phantasies in the service of maintaining an emotional/psychological connection to the parents through their unspoken desires and phantasies. As Mitchell cogently summarized Fairbairn's views:

"...it is precisely the parents' character pathology to which the child becomes most compulsively connected and which he internalizes, because it is there that he feels the parents reside emotionally... at the core of the repressed is not a trauma, a memory, or an impulse, but a relationship-a part of the self in close identification with a representation of the actual caretakers-which could not be contained in awareness...."

(Mitchell, 1988, p. 27)

Many commentators have interpreted Freud's misreading or selective reading of the Oedipal myth. Freud neglected to examine and interpret the sins of Oedipus' father Laius, whose pederastic and violent acts set the whole tragedy into inexorable motion (for example, Balmary, 1982; Krull, 1986; Ross, 1985-86). Some of these writers also noted how Freud abandoned the seduction theory shortly after his father's death (see Balmary, 1982; Krull, 1986). This coincidence of theoretical repudiation and painful life event may have represented Freud's exoneration of his father in the service of warding-off hateful and murderous feelings about him. Seen in this context, Freud's ever-increasing body of psychoanalytic writing functioned as a personal totem resurrecting and idealizing the father and memorializing the heinous crimes "committed" by the son.³

However, Freud's knowledge, disavowed for the moment, could not be shut away forever. One can understand his phylogenetic fantasy, elaborating an anthropological/climatic foundation for man's

contemporary neurotic dilemma, as a return of the repressed. Freud's anthropological reconstruction articulated the tyranny of the primal father, his subsequent murder and symbolic resurrection, and atonement of the murderous sons as actual historical events. Freud's fantasy recapitulated both his original seduction theory, involving the father's crimes, and his eventual repudiation of the theory, resulting in the father's exoneration. One could state without undue hyperbole that Freud's phylogenetic fantasy recapitulated his personal intellectual odyssey and the political history of the psychoanalytic movement in its distinctly oedipal hue.

Freud's own apparent ambivalence and psychoanalytic theory's subsequent blind eye to parental desires and phantasies, confirm the important and essential truth of Fairbairn's pithy statement concerning the child's dilemma in relation to its parents: "it is better to be a sinner in a world ruled by God than to live in a world ruled by the Devil". (Fairbairn, 1986, p.66-7) It remains exceedingly difficult to focus on the darker fantasies of those entrusted with our well-being and development; indeed our very lives. To do so renders the world a dangerous and chaotic place. Yet we must begin to do so if we are to illuminate the deepest and darkest feelings of fathers. We are only beginning to acknowledge the widespread problem of sexual and physical abuse but just as important, we need to recognize the pervasive cannibalistic and filicidal wishes of fathers. (see Devereux, 1966; Kwawer, 1985-86)

I do not believe these primitive wishes and desires should or even could be neutralized. As Kwawer reminds us, children are good

enough to gobble up and eat. (Kwawer, 1985-86) The child's innocence conjures up myriad sexual and aggressive feelings. And as Ross notes, parents should not be discouraged from having these feelings. (Ross, 1985-86) In fact, a child's innocence and beauty should be appreciated even if it evokes uncomfortable sexual feelings. Unfortunately, some parents remain aloof from their children as a reaction formation defense against these feelings. When this occurs, the child's own sexual and aggressive strivings cannot be safely contained and/or mirrored by the parent. As a result, the child cannot experience his/her feelings as being safe to have. Rather, they become construed as dangerous or destructive and generate an important basis for future psychopathology.

Therefore, we need to understand that children necessarily evoke sexual and aggressive desires in parents. And that these parental desires, whether acknowledged or not, are experienced by the child. Parents need to become aware of and to contain, rather than be ashamed of and repudiate, their primitive fantasies involving their children. As parents contain their own desires and fantasies, they enable their children to cultivate the important sexual and aggressive dimensions of their own authentic selves.

Conclusion

If we are to uncover some of the deeper meanings of becoming a parent, we need to recognize the reality of and intimate relationship

between transformation, repetition and reparation, and between hate and love.

My central theoretical assumptions are that: 1) becoming an adult represents a symbolic process of killing off one's father by usurping increasing amounts of parental responsibility from him and expresses the reality and importance of hate to an individual's psychological development; 2) becoming a parent provides the possibility for reparation and expresses the reality and importance of love to psychological growth; 3) that the phenomena of hate and reparation emanate from the matrix of an individual's past and current relationships with others rather than from biological/instinctual endowments. These assumptions provided a theoretical and organizational framework for collecting and for the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the interview data.

By enabling one's parents to become grandparents, one offsets the parent's declining role in one's own life with a new and potentially meaningful role in the grandchild's life. The grandparent/child relationship enables the grandparent to be idealized anew precisely when their own child becomes more profoundly aware of their frailty and mortality. In effect, the grandchild is like an offering to compensate for, to atone for the symbolic parricide effected by becoming an adult. The sense of having to atone is expressed by the need for reparation and forgiveness: we are able to atone as we more profoundly understand the meaning of parenthood; and we can forgive our parents as we empathize and identify with their humanness.

The reparation embedded in parenthood provides men with an opportunity to redress the anxiety their fathers experience confronting old age and death. Parenthood also allows for a reparation of the father/son relationship. As a son identifies with his father as father, he can begin to construct a bridge over the emotional chasm separating them. But parenthood also represents a self-reparative gesture: a reparation of oneself as a child effected by identifying with one's own child.

Parenthood provides an opportunity to further integrate existing and new parental and self representations: the good and bad parent of childhood; the omnipotent idealized parent of childhood and the reviled parent of adolescence; and the self as child/adolescent with the self as adult/parent.

The welling up of love and hate and the opportunity to integrate these conflicting feelings represents a deeper working through of the infant's depressive position. (Klein, 1937) In childhood, this intrapsychic position related to an emerging awareness and acceptance of immutable gender and generational differences. Yet in adulthood, the working through reflects an awareness of both difference (the child's generation will eclipse the parent's) and similarity (one becomes like one's parents). However, both the child and adult must negotiate the reality of limits, whether it means giving up male or female self representations and the opposite sex parent as an incestuous love object in childhood, or recognizing the finiteness of one's existence in adulthood.

Notes

1- This double-edged inter-generational dynamic provides a psychological basis for both the conservative and liberal political impulse in society: the need to preserve and the need to renew existing institutional arrangements and generational authority. Freud's story about the primal horde and the ultimate murder of the father can be read as a parable about democracy: the historical transition from monarchical to liberal forms of government, or what Max Weber termed the shift from a patrimonial form of authority to a legal/constitutional basis of government. In fact, one can understand Freud as an important liberal thinker, whose theoretical concerns, e.g., the tension between man's capacity for reason and his primal passions or that between individual interests and group life stem from Hobbes and Locke.

2- Ogden recognizes an important and neglected aspect of the boy's Oedipus complex; namely, the mother who becomes his incestuous oedipal object bears a striking resemblance to his omnipotent preoedipal mother. (Ogden, 1989)

3- The movement away from an interpersonal to an intrapsychic account of neurosis was consolidated by Freud's metaphorical architecture of the mind: the development of his tripartite structural model consisting of Id, Ego and Superego. (Freud, 1923) Freud's structural paradigm identified the source of neurotic pathology as the result of competing and conflicting impersonal mental agencies and fueled by the cauldron of instinctual energies lodged in the Id.

Moreover, Freud's turn away from parental seduction also had a tremendous impact on conceptualizing the therapeutic relationship and on clinical technique. A generation of analysts believed their own feelings experienced during the analytic hour were obstacles rather than critical avenues to understanding their patients. This view of the analyst's countertransference represented an important clinical corollary of the movement away from an interpersonal account of neurosis.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

In June, 1989, I contacted the Pioneer Valley Childbirth Association, an organization devoted to preparing couples for childbirth, to ask whether I could attend their classes and recruit interview subjects. Fortunately, several instructors expressed interest in my study and agreed to let me present my research interests at the close of their classes. I prepared a brief and succinct statement of what I proposed to study and the issues the research interview would address. After attending five childbirth classes, I recruited the desired number of twenty subjects. Several men expressed reservations about participating and the enthusiastic introduction of my research by class instructors coupled with their partner's encouragement greatly facilitated the recruitment process.

The criteria I used in selecting interview subjects was twofold. Subjects were to be first-time fathers. However, two men were married to women with children from previous marriages. Secondly, a man's partner had to be in the last trimester of the pregnancy. All of the men I interviewed had partners who were at least seven months pregnant.

Virtually all of the interviews occurred in men's homes. Two interviews occurred at the Psychological Services Center at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. At the beginning of each interview, subjects read and signed an informed consent form (attached as Appendix A). Thereupon, I administered a

semi-structured interview protocol (attached as Appendix B).

Interviews lasted from 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours. The semi-structured format generated similar data across subjects yet afforded me the flexibility to probe in order to highlight the unique experiences of my interview subjects.

At the end of each interview, my subjects and I discussed how they experienced the interview, e.g., what parts were most and least interesting, enjoyable and/or surprising and finally whether they wanted to discuss anything I neglected to ask. A few men asked questions about my personal background and/or how their interview responses compared with those of other subjects.

Finally, while I interviewed twenty men, I decided to present ten case studies to illuminate the three aspects of reparation I identified as being embedded in the experience of becoming a father. The ten subjects were selected as they best represented the entire range of reparative themes in all twenty interviews. That is, the issues presented in these case studies accurately reflected the themes highlighted in the other ten interviews. However, in my opinion, the ten subjects I selected were better able to clearly articulate, (with reference to thoughts and feelings, present day and/or past memories and reflections, especially relating to their father/son relationship), the salient reparative themes discovered in all of the interviews.

A Plea for Uncertainty

During the course of this research project, I have repeatedly wrestled with the question concerning the goals of qualitative research. In the process of conducting interviews and interpreting and writing-up my data, I grew increasingly certain of the need to wallow in quite a bit of uncertainty. I discovered that I wanted to create a living and breathing text whose content illuminated important aspects of the personal identities and struggles of my interview subjects, like a portrait or a work of good fiction. It quickly became apparent that there could be no "true" or "real" story, but only many important, interesting and partially true stories reflecting selected features of my subjects' experiences and, of course, my own personal preoccupations.

Yet if I abandoned the task of writing a true story, what was I leaving myself with? How could one distinguish a meaningful from an irrelevant or meaningless narrative? This is, of course, a very important question for both research and clinical settings. Naturally, I do not have a definitive answer and I am beginning to doubt whether this question has one.

What I have tentatively concluded is that the proof is, to some extent, in the eating. That is, the evidence for the compelling nature of my narrative rests with you the reader. If in the course of reading, of engaging in a dialogue with my narrative, the text moves you to recall, entertain new questions about and/or clarify aspects of your affective experience and facilitates some process of self-discovery or rediscovery, this will provide sufficient evidence

that there is some truth in these pages. My hope is to create an emotional space between text and reader and engender a thought and feeling provoking dialogue rather than to elaborate some definitive truth about prospective fatherhood. Again, this does not represent a definitive answer to the question of the goal of qualitative research but it does, I feel, define what I have hoped for in writing-up my interview data.

Uses of the Countertransference in the Research Interview

When I began interviewing prospective fathers, I did not set out to write about parenthood as a reparative gesture. I was interested in how becoming a father generally impacted a man's father/son relationship; in particular, whether and/or how this experience furthered a man's identification with his father. The evolution in my theoretical framework revealed an important aspect of doing qualitative research. On the one hand, my theoretical perspective influenced the way I formulated my general research interests and elaborated the format of my interview schedule. Yet as I heard about my subjects' desire for more intimacy with their fathers and how they finally understood who their fathers were, the reparative aspect of prospective fatherhood became a more salient theme. In short, the data collection process had a considerable impact on the evolution of my theoretical framework. Whereas my original theory helped create the kind of data I would collect and analyze, the data I collected transformed the theoretical lens I utilized to understand what my subjects were telling me.

The data that compelled me to think and write about reparation did not only emerge from my subjects' articulated thoughts and feelings. One of the important parallels between the clinical and interview setting involves usage of the so-called countertransference. I am using this term quite broadly to refer to the therapist's/interviewer's own thoughts and feelings during or after an interview. For instance, during an interview, I used my personal reactions as a guide to ask more probing questions to obtain important information or refrain, in the service of maintaining good rapport, from pushing any further.

However, one of the most striking uses of my countertransference occurred usually after I completed an interview. Invariably, when I returned home, I would suddenly feel quite tired and hungry. As this happened repeatedly, and after I ruled out that doing the interview alone produced these states, I set about to understand the origins of my intense bodily experiences.

Over time, I realized that, my desire to eat and sleep represented unconscious ways to ward-off my own anxiety about becoming a father. I also discovered that I envied these men for undertaking the responsibility for raising a family. They were doing what I felt unable to do at that point in my life.

But even after I understood and worked through these feelings, my tiredness and hunger persisted after most of the interviews. Something else was clearly happening. Gradually, I became aware of how my body was registering something beyond or beneath my conscious awareness. As I began to understand this, I became aware of holding

both my own anxiety and the intense anxiety of my interview subjects. I realized that the men I interviewed were, by and large, trying to communicate how smoothly the pregnancy had progressed or how they remained in control, leaving me holding their anxiety about the transformations occurring in their lives as they hurtled towards unknown territory. I was feeling the anxiety these men never managed to put into words.

Eventually, however, I stumbled onto something entirely different. After a post-interview snack of cookies and milk one evening, my urge to eat and sleep assumed new meaning. In a satiated and drowsy state, I began to feel what I imagined an infant might feel like. But where did these feelings come from?; and what did they represent?

As I reflected on these questions, I perceived my behavior as living out my interview subjects' unacknowledged experiences. On the one hand, my tired and hungry state appeared to replicate a need to be taken care of and parented. In this sense, my bodily experiences conjured up an infantile dependent state. And I sensed this reflected my subjects' unvoiced emotional dependency on their partners.

On the other hand, I sensed my bodily experience expressed my subjects' identification with their unborn infants and reflected, in turn, a desire to create a different relationship with their own children. I interpreted my subjects' identification with their unborn children as a reparative motif reflecting a desire to mend their own emotional wounds sustained when they were children. This

important insight influenced my ideas about what I wanted to investigate and was already discovering. As a result, my understanding and working through of my countertransference reactions provided a critical source of data allowing me to recast my theoretical framework and highlight the issue of parenthood as a reparative gesture.

In summary, qualitative research findings emerge out of an ongoing dialogue between the researcher's theoretical framework and the data obtained from subjects. And an important source of information about subjects comes from the words individuals use to describe their experience and the thoughts, feelings, bodily states, etc., evoked in the interviewer reflective of those critical aspects of experience that subjects cannot yet put into words.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION TO THE DATA ANALYSIS

My analysis of the interview data will be organized around the transformational and reparative processes I described in my theoretical introduction. Accordingly, the first data analysis chapter will explore various emotional and psychological sources of change and transformation embedded in prospective fatherhood. This includes a discussion of how men understand their lives and evolving identities as men, how men experience their partner's bodies during pregnancy, how the pregnancy affects their sexual relations and what men imagine being a father will be like. I will also address what I consider to be the "regressive" aspect of pregnancy and explore ways that a man's experience resurrects important aspects of his early childhood development.

The second data analysis chapter will discuss the reparative aspect of parenthood. I will present ten case studies to illustrate the recurring theme of reparation. In analyzing the relationship between parenthood and reparation, I will focus on how parenthood helps repair a man's: 1) father; 2) father/son relationship; 3) sense of self.

I will begin with a brief introduction to my interview subjects.

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

Allen: Allen, age 39, is a performing artist and academic; his wife, age 33, also works in the arts. They have been married for four years. His father died in 1985 and was an academic; his mother died when he was 7. His father remarried when he was 15. His brother, age 38, is involved in a religious movement.

Brad: Brad, age 22, is a mechanic; his wife, age 20, works for a bank. They are unmarried and have been involved for six years. His father, age 44, works as an electrician; his mother, age 42, delivers newspapers. He has two brothers, one, age 23, works with his father and the other, age 13, is a student.

Brian: Brian, age 32, shares a "professional practice" with his mother; his wife, age 33, works for an insurance company. They have been married for six years. His father, age 65, is a doctor. His mother, age 58, shares a professional practice with Brian. One brother, age 35, works as a mental health professional and another, age 24, works as a peace corps volunteer; his sister, age 33, works as an insurance broker.

Chet: Chet, age 27, works as a laborer; his wife, age 24, is a housewife. They have been married for two years. His father, age 63, works as a salesman; his mother, age 62, is a housewife. He has three brothers. One, age 39, works in computers, another, age 37, works as a health center counselor and the other, age 33, works in the forest service.

Clark: Clark, age 33, is a business consultant; his wife, age 36, shares the consultant business with him. They have been married for six years. His stepfather, age 59, is a retired military officer; his mother, age 56, is a housewife; his mother remarried when Clark

was 9. Clark's does not know very much about his biological father. He has two brothers. One, age 27, works as a automobile dealership manager; the other, age 22, is a student.

Gary: Gary, age 24, is an engineer; his wife, age 23, is a student. They are married and have been involved for 4 1/2 years. His father, age 59, is a businessman; his mother, age 48, is an academic. His parents divorced when Gary was 3. He has no siblings.

Gordon: Gordon, age 31, is an academic; his wife, also 31, works as a physician. They have been married for three years. His father, age 55, is a laborer; his mother, age 52, is a cook. He has two sisters. One, age 25, works as a teacher and the other, age 16, is a student.

Hank: Hank, age 34, works as a business broker; his wife, age 33, has her own secretarial business. They have been married for ten years. His father, age 70, works in the insurance business; his mother, age 65, is a housewife. His brother, age 37, works as a lawyer.

Ira: Ira, age 34, owns a business; his wife, age 31, is a health professional. They have been married for ten months. His father, age 63, is a businessman; his mother, age 59, is a housewife. His brother, age 30, works as a teacher.

Jason: Jason, age 32, works as a designer; his partner, age 30, is also a designer. They are unmarried and have been living together for eight months. His father, age 61, is a skilled laborer; his mother, age 60, is a factory supervisor. His brother, age 36, works as a laborer and his sister, age 33, works as a waitress.

Joel: Joel, age 27, is a carpenter; his wife, age 30, works as a teacher. They have been married for three years. His father died in 1986 and was an editor; his mother died in 1988 and was a housewife.

He has three brothers. Two, ages 29 and 32, are engineers, and one, from his father's previous marriage, age 45, is a laborer.

Kevin: Kevin, age 20, works as a manager at a department store; his wife, age 22, is a department store employee. They are unmarried and have been involved for 1 1/2 years. His father died in 1988 and worked as a manager in a local hospital. His mother, age 59, is a housewife. He has a brother, age 25, who works with disabled children. He also has three sisters. One, age 40, manages a gas station; another, age 34, works at a local hospital; and the third, age 32, is a housewife.

Matt: Matt, age 32, is a mechanic; his wife, age 34, is a sales representative. They have been married for 2 years. She has a daughter, age 5, from a previous marriage. His parents divorced when Matt was 10 and his father died in an accident when he was 11. His mother remarried when Matt was 23. He has a brother, age 36 and two sisters, ages 30 and 28.

Randy: Randy, age 34, works as a carpenter; his wife, age 33, works as a nurse. They have been married for 1 1/2 years. His father died in 1986 and was a career military man. His mother, age 62, is a housewife. He has a brother, age 32, who works as a buyer. He has two sisters. One, age 37, works as a secretary; the other, age 35, works as a dispatcher.

Ron: Ron, age 35, works as a highly skilled laborer; his wife, age 34, is a housewife. They have been married for nine months but they have been together for four years. She has two children from a previous marriage who are ages 6 and 8. His father, age 65, works as a laborer; his mother, age 60, is a baker. He has two sisters. One, age 38, works in a rest home and the other, age 37, works as a teacher. His brother age 26 works as a skilled laborer.

Sean: Sean, age 22, works as a cook; his wife, age 26, is a housewife. They have been married for two years. His father, age 50, works as an accountant; his mother, age 54, works as a secretary. His brother, age 28, works in the army.

Tony: Tony, age 28, works as a draughtsman; his wife, age 28, and is a bookkeeper. They have been married for eleven months. His father, age 48, works as an engineer; his mother, age 47, works as a secretary. He has two brothers. One, age 29, works as a cook and the other, age 26, is a psychologist.

Walter: Walter, age 33, works in the mental health profession; his wife, age 30, works for a bank. They have been married for five years. His father died in an accident in 1963, when Walter was 8; he was a doctor. His mother, age 60, is a schoolteacher. He has a brother, age 32, who is a scientist.

Wesley: Wesley, age 22, works as a laborer; his wife, age 19, works as a clerk. They are unmarried and have been together for four years. His father, age 51, owns a restaurant; his mother, age 49, works with her husband. His sister, age 26, is a housewife; his brother, age 28, has just been discharged from military service.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHANGE, LOSS AND REPETITION DURING PREGNANCY

Pregnancy as a Transitional Moment

Pregnancy represents a time of emotional extremes. A time when men experience thrilling exhilaration and gnawing anticipation; radiant happiness and profound anxiety. The months preceding parenthood also function as a poignant transitional moment. New and uncertain identities and relationships remain inchoate while established ways of being lose some or much of their meaning. Becoming a father represents an important benchmark in a man's life on a par with getting married, committing oneself to a career and the death of a parent, and affords men an opportunity to experience the evolving trajectory of their lives:

Interviewer: Has your partner's pregnancy affected the way you view your life?

Walter: "I definitely think that it's a real turning point, a major transition in status. And sometimes I've thought about how this is going to make me finally face the fact that I have to grow up. That I can prolong adolescence and young adulthood until this happens and now there's so many responsibilities and commitments that are involved in this that it will make me grow up."

Interviewer: What do you mean when you say that it makes you grow up?

Walter: "Giving up the freedom to be irresponsible. Maybe the freedom to fail. I think in adolescence and young adulthood you can make more trial and errors or experimental attempts to begin a path. And then if you blow it and fall flat on your face, that's ok. Nothing's lost and you can pick yourself up and try something else. But it seems like now there's much more of a responsibility to maintain more permanency in whatever path is chosen."

Interviewer: Has your partner's pregnancy affected the way you view your life?

Kevin: "It's not like your single days and you're raising hell and going out and racing your cars. Now you're a family man and you have responsibilities. This is good. It makes you feel more important about yourself."

Tony: "Your personal freedom has to change. Obviously you don't bring somebody into this world and neglect them. Like going out and partying all night long- that's nice if you're into it and we were. That stops now and you have to provide for somebody who can't provide- that person depends on you and you have to be there."

Jason: "I think I got more serious about working and about what I'm doing with my life. I kind of look at my life and ask what's going on?, what are you doing?, you have a child coming, you have a relationship and you're 32 years old, what are you going to do? So I'm trying to act like a guy who has a kid coming, who has a woman in a relationship and who's 32 years old. Like making mature decisions in my career. I think about the sacrifices- we can't jump on a plane and go to Florida this year like we wanted to. Or to just take off whenever we felt like it. So there are sacrifices in there."

Clark: "What I fear is a chapter closing and not being able to retrieve it because you obviously can't give it back. It's an acceptance process. I realize that life goes on and you do get older. I realize that I'm in the second stage of life now. I look now at other people with children, whereas before I wasn't that interested."

Sean: "Since I found out that I was going to become a father, I felt like mentally I just started going through these changes that were- just the devastation of finding out you were going to be a father was staggering."

Joel: "I feel like the freest part of my youth is coming to a quick end."

As one listens to these men discuss the changes in their lives, one overhears an internal dialogue between a self as adolescent and a self as parent. The self as adolescent wistfully recalls the freedom to do whatever one wants, whenever one wants to do it and flinches as the universe of seemingly unlimited choices dramatically shrinks and

becomes more settled and fixed. These men recognize they are letting go of the freedom associated with youth and adolescence. The self as parent highlights the responsibilities, obligations and commitments of fatherhood. It is a voice that says: now you are supposed to behave like an adult man, like a father.

This internal dialogue between parent and son helps men adjust to their impending parental roles. Yet there remains an essential tension between these contending voices. The parental voice beckons from an uncertain future and undoubtedly resurrects an internalized voice of the past, the voice of one's own parents. The youthful adolescent voice seemingly anchored in the present begins to fall away and its relevance or meaning for one's future role as parent remains unclear.

The tension presented here emanates from an apparent antinomy between freedom and commitment. The commitments involved in raising a child impinge upon previously enjoyed personal freedom. This tension accurately presages the realities of parenthood. However, a considerable part of the anxiety stems from an inability to experience how becoming a parent enhances another dimension of personal freedom: the freedom to express and realize aspects of the self through commitments and relationships with others. Virtually all of my interview subjects failed to acknowledge how giving up the freedom to stay up all night or to travel at a moment's notice is, in effect, exchanged for a freedom to cultivate, for instance, nurturant aspects of oneself that are possible only in relationship to others. During the transition to parenthood, the horizontal axis of a man's life diminishes, as the universe of adolescent potential shrinks, and

the vertical axis deepens, as parenthood presents an opportunity to enrich one's internal emotional world and commitments to those one loves.

However, my interview subjects were not merely preoccupied with giving up personal freedom. Several men, for instance, sensed or hoped the birth of their children would produce more intimacy between themselves and their partners:

Hank: "We used to go for walks and picture what it would be like if we were doing that and pregnant at the same time. And now we are and we're both so happy that things seem to be going so well for us and that our relationship is stronger than ever. I think we've been happy with the whole process and the fact that we're going to be getting a baby and the fact that our relationship is continuing to develop in ways that we like."

Ira: "I think it will bring us closer together. We decided to do it [have a baby] together- we said we were going to do it together and we're going to follow through on that."

Joel: "I think it's going to bring us closer because we're certainly going to have that responsibility together and share each experience together. And deal with every problem together."

Chet: "It almost makes you feel closer and we were very close before. It puts a greater feeling of it's just you. Even when you're married, you're with your relatives sometimes and you can still feel like circles are overlapping. But now with the baby, it's like everybody died or moved to Argentina. It gives you a closer knit feeling. It's something that's just between her and I."

Clark: "I hope that it will make us that much closer, although I don't see how you can get that much closer than we are. I think it will force or require even more interaction and discussion about the various problems that come up."

Brad: "We realize we have something growing inside of her that's from both of us. And I think that's matured us a lot. Coming up after nine months we're going to have a little baby. You have to get everything set and get your life together. Not that it was screwed up before, but I think it's going better."

Jason: "It really solidified our commitment to each other. The relationship was so new in length of time. It was a reality that set in, that we live together and we're in a relationship and now we have a child coming. I think it made our bonds together a lot stronger."

These men imagine their impending parenthood will demand and therefore establish greater intimacy in their relationships. As Joel noted, trying to deal with an infant will require a collaboration. But these comments may express the fact that having a child often represents an unconscious strategy to bring couples together. In this regard, I was surprised to discover the extent to which pregnancies were unplanned or loosely planned. Nine of the twenty men I interviewed acknowledged their babies were either total accidents (3) or resulted from oversight in the use of birth control (6).

Moreover, more than half of the subjects (11) observed their partners were more ready to have children than they were. The most frequently cited reason involved their partner's awareness of their "biological clocks". Understood in this context, some of the comments associating becoming a parent with greater intimacy may reflect some wishful thinking about the baby's birth. Nevertheless, men appeared to appreciate how mundane experiences like going for a walk or cuddling in bed assumed new and intensified meaning. This, in turn, suggested some awareness of how creating a family enriched their identities and lives as men.

What remained absent involved the sense of trading-off the adolescent experience of seemingly infinite possibility or spontaneity for a deeper sense of self-expression and self-knowledge effected through an expanding web of commitments made to others.

Instead, men's insights about the poignant loss of freedom and the possibility of enhanced intimacy remained segregated. Their adolescent and parental internal selves spoke with dissonant voices: each impinged or even threatened the other. The reconciliation or integration of these voices clearly transcended the experience of these men in transition.

Observing Changes in a Woman's Body

The most visible transformation wrought by pregnancy involves changes occurring within the woman's body. Consequently, how men understand the impact of pregnancy on their own lives and relationships reverberates against their experience of these bodily changes.

Interviewer: What's it been like for you to observe the changes occurring within your partner's body?

Jason: "I look at her differently sometimes. That she has a human being inside of her. And it's mine and it's hers. The whole miracle of birth to me sometimes really hits me at night sometimes when we lay in bed. I rub her stomach and we sit and talk and I feel the baby move. And I push on it and it kicks back. So it's almost like a communication between us. It's amazing to me how the women get pregnant and have this human being growing inside of them."

Brian: "It's absolutely fascinating to watch her expand. It's a very intense experience. She describes herself as being a science museum and that's exactly right. And I love to watch her belly grow. I didn't think I would. I thought I would find it akin to her growing fat but it's not the same at all."

Gary: "Actually, it's been rewarding. Because I always feel the need to want to help her. I can almost sense some of her discomforts. It makes me appreciate the human anatomy more and more. It's very amazing. I have this exuberant thrill- wow, look at that, it's great."

Walter: "It's amazing just to try to appreciate what's going on in there. You read all these things about fetal development, but it's still hard to appreciate the miracle of it. Amazing things are happening in there. I'm just in awe of it."

Tony: "It's bizarre. The whole thing is bizarre. Something- a human being develops out of nothing. You learn something about women's bodies versus men's bodies and how they function that you never cared or bothered to know before. It's bizarre- the way it comes from nothing and evolves to a human being that's going to be here in nine months."

These men acknowledge a sense of awe and mystery as they witness the miraculous development of the fetus inside their partner's bodies. These bodies become endowed with a numinous quality defying rational understanding. It is as if the womb represents the transcendent life affirming power of nature itself/herself.

The miraculous aspect of bearing life may also generate considerable conscious and/or unconscious anxiety and perhaps dread of the female body. Ira's feelings provided the clearest example of this:

Ira: "It's been kind of frightening. Don't show me. Don't show me. She wants to show me every day and I- my feeling is that I saw it yesterday and look how big it's gotten today [in reference to her stomach]- I saw it yesterday. It's ok- what can you do? You knew what was going to happen. Now she quit showing me twice a day and I have a more compassionate reaction."

Another source of anxiety men experience emanates from an emerging awareness of their marginal importance or complete irrelevance to the gestation process. As men observe their partner's rapture with the fetus, they become aware of their role as relative bystander or witness regardless of their emotional participation in the pregnancy:

Gordon: "It's been very exciting in one respect to see this baby developing and it was very exciting to hear the heartbeat and feel the body moving. Especially doing those things for the first time. Now being able to feel body parts and knowing that they're hands and feet, that was very exciting. But in some way it's been a little intimidating. I sense that as the father, I'm never going to be as close. Just because of the physical bond. You can see this child developing inside of her and there I am on the outside. That makes it somewhat intimidating. Not to the point where I lay awake worrying about it (laughs), but just the sense that I'm now a little external to the whole process after I've done my initial part."

Allen: "I feel thankful that pregnancy is so long because it's allowed me to go through different phases of accepting that there's something in there and that it's actually moving. It's alive in there and it's coming between us in a number of ways. And also it's something that only she can really feel. And so it's something that she can share with the fetus that I can't directly. I can only hear it or touch it from the outside."

Joel: "I think it's fascinating. I think it's magical that a woman can carry life inside them. I guess I feel very envious that I can't do it. I can only imagine through what I feel on the outside of her body when it kicks. I can only imagine that. My stomach growls and I wonder if it's anything like what it feels like."

Clark: "I think it would be a very strange sensation to have something alive inside you. As you get to the stage where it's kicking and you can feel movement it would have to make you that much closer to the child eventually when it's born. This feeling that women talk about- well, I carried you. I think men are robbed of that closeness and that feeling. We're not able to do that."

Sean: "She's in her own world as a person. And she's going through the experience. I feel like she's- she hasn't pulled back inside herself but the experience for her is- I think it's made her more deep as a person. And I don't know if all fathers feel the same way about it as I do but they're very much on the sidelines in participating with the growth of the baby internally and giving birth to it. I wish that physically that there would be some way that I could be more close to her. I feel that for her to be pregnant and give birth-it's a division, a natural physical barrier that I wish could be broken."

As these men witness the miraculous transformation occurring in their partner's wombs, they observe them falling in love with someone

else. It does not matter that this "someone else" involves the unborn fetus they helped create. The curiosity and jealousy expressed here underscore how as fathers their relationship with the baby will remain qualitatively different than their wives'.

In the experience of these men, the inviolable bond between mother and fetus emerges before birth. Accordingly, they necessarily remain one step removed from center stage prevented by human biology from being full participants in the pregnancy. As Clark bluntly observed:

"Biologically men play such a small role in the whole pregnancy it's amazing. It's only in recent years that our acceptance of fathers being in on the birth and going to these classes that you're given even 10% of the experience that the woman goes through."

The miraculous changes occurring inside the woman's body generates feelings of awe and reverence for men. And these feelings are like double-edged swords. They capture both the powerful emotional experience men share with their partners and engender feelings of envy. Men envy both their partner's procreative ability and emerging relationship with the unborn fetus. But I would argue that the mother/fetus relationship also conjures feelings of loss as their partners become increasingly preoccupied with their own bodies and the life developing inside them. Men remain peripheral to this unfolding drama and they become, although no one overtly acknowledged this, rival suitors competing for their partner's love and attention.

A Man's Experience of His Partner

The reverence men feel towards their partners surfaced in the vivid descriptions of their partners' ability to negotiate the psychological and emotional changes of the pregnancy:

Interviewer: Has your partner's personality changed in your opinion since the pregnancy began?

Gordon: "Not in any dramatic way. She's always been very organized and prepared for things. And this has been no exception. She's gotten- we've gotten our house ready and made all the necessary preparations. And she's more on top of those kinds of things than I am. But she's always been more on top. She's always said, ok, we've gotta get this done now."

Joel: "Just physically watching her go through this has really taught me a lot about her. She's got this stamina that I've never seen in her. She stopped working last week at the end of the school year. I was impressed that she worked through seven months of pregnancy and did just fine at it. She's really healthy and she's very beautiful and seeing that she's gone through a pregnancy, which for a lot of women is a very difficult thing, with a great deal of ease- that's just been a delight for me to see."

Randy: "It's an emotional type of thing where I don't know if I would handle what she's going through anywhere near as well as she is. I suppose that I really do look up to her a lot. And I'm jealous in certain ways that I can't be the way she is. I guess it's always been that way, but even a little more since she's been pregnant and handling everything so well. Just taking it on like a trooper. Not a complaint."

Wesley: "I was told once that a woman is the most beautiful during the last three months of pregnancy and I'm believing it. She's happy and she has a nice round face and it's one big round happy ball."

Brian: "I think she's doing a great job. it really engenders respect. There's a lot of horror stories you hear. And she's avoided them through her willpower. Through her own volition."

While a few men described their partners as having increased mood swings or depressed feelings, most depicted partners as taking

everything in stride. Men's observations about their partner's remarkable ability to handle the pregnancy dovetailed with their uniformly glowing comments about them as mothers. And as I listened to these reflections, their partners assumed idealized dimensions.

Here are some typical statements:

Interviewer: What do you think your partner will be like as a mother?

Randy: "I think she was cut out to be a mother. She'll make the perfect mother. I'm not saying that God put all women on this earth to have babies, but he sure did put her- that's one of the reasons she's here. To have more babies."

Hank: "I feel very confident that she'll be a good mother. She's a very loving, extremely loving and willing to show it. She's very patient and she has just about any good quality that you could think of."

Allen: "I think she's going to be a great mother. I think she's very loving and very down to earth and direct with that love. The baby will get plenty of love from her. Plenty of care."

Chet: "I've seen her in action with children. She knows all about them. She loves children. So I feel totally confident about her as a mother."

The idealization of partner as mother undoubtedly reflects a man's profound feelings of awe and reverence towards the pregnancy and an emotional dependence on his partner. But the context for these interviews, the last trimester of the first pregnancy, probably accentuated men's dependence on their partners. The uncertainty and anxiety involved in becoming a first-time father joined with the unfolding pregnancy itself, culminating in the remarkable growth of the fetus during the last trimester and the childbirth, contributed to an understanding that men remain dependent on their partner's bodies to nurture the fetus and deliver the baby.

Nevertheless, my subject's comments appear to confirm a pervasive cultural stereotype: men cede primary caretaking to the mother based on their belief in her knowledge, expertise and/or caretaking experience. The stereotype holds up even in a group of men committed to being emotionally and physically involved in their partner's pregnancy.

What About Primary Paternal Preoccupation?

In the psychoanalytic literature, the unique bond between mother and infant reflects what Winnicott referred to as "primary maternal preoccupation". (Winnicott, 1956) This involves the mother's emotional investment in her infant and the special bond forged between them. In my interviews with men, I wanted to explore whether there existed a parallel process of primary paternal preoccupation. When I inquired about men's expectations about being a father, a few men discussed their anticipated involvement with their children as infants:

Interviewer: What do you most look forward to in being a father?

Sean: "Seeing it and taking care of it. Playing with it and watching it be happy learning and developing and growing as a person."

Gordon: "I think immediately- spending time with the child. I'm glad I have a job that I do which will enable me to spend some more time at home. Especially at the beginning and actually be there for all these milestones."

Wesley: "The firsts. The first changing of diapers, the first walk, the first word. I like firsts."

Others expressed trepidation about their infants turning their world upside down:

Interviewer: What do you least look forward to in being a father?

Brad: "For the first couple of months I won't look forward to getting up at 2 in the morning. There are a couple of things you have to put up with."

Brian: "I expect to have my lifestyle interrupted. I'm not as negative about- that implies more than my specific concern which is the screaming and uncontrollable crying all night long. I think there's going to be a lot more stress. Not just because we're tired but because we have a lot more decisions to make. But tiredness relates to stress really close. As I understand it, sex is going to be impossible because we're going to be tired all the time."

Joel: "I'm not looking forward to losing sleep, changing diapers, getting food thrown at me. The added stress and the time that I'm going to miss- coming home and having to be responsible for another being. I certainly don't look forward to that."

Kevin: "I least look forward to the first six months. The crying and changing the diapers. The baby crying and getting up at 2 o'clock. And her feeling her discomfort."

Clark: "I'm apprehensive about the lifestyle change. I realize that the same things that were important to me in the past may not be in the future but still, in the back of my mind, I'm wondering if this will be too great a change."

However, men rarely offered concrete images of their children as infants. Most seemed only to imagine their children as being older:

Interviewer: What do you most look forward to in being a father?

Walter: "I think spending the leisure time with a child doing recreational and fun things. Just sports or games or any type of playing. I never had any doubt that I wanted to have children. So I'm looking forward to finding out what it's like playing with my own child."

Ira: "Playing with the boy. I like playing with boys. I imagine teaching a boy how to play baseball."

Tony: "Sharing some of the things that I never did with my father but that my mother was always there for like baseball and hockey. Sharing times like that."

Sean: "My ability to build an emotional tie to my children. I would just try to be as honest about myself with them and let them learn from personal experiences that I had. I would like to let them get to know me as a person."

Kevin: "My parents were great about talking about everything. So openness with the baby. My parents shared a lot with us. I want to be really close to it especially since it's the first one. I really want to show the first one a lot of closeness."

Joel: "I would say just being active with my child. Doing all the active things that I like to do. Going hiking and being outdoors. Listening to music."

The imagined children presented here appear as children capable of verbal exchange and physical activity with fathers; children who can take in and respond to what fathers say and do. One explanation for this is the possibility men implicitly cede the primary caretaking role to women. Men appeared to have an abiding belief that women remain better emotionally equipped to anticipate and respond to an infant's needs. For example:

Joel: "A child is probably going to want more things from her than it's going to want from me. But I think she's going to be very good about dealing with that. I think she's very focused and straightforward. She's gonna know that she's going to need to spend time doing this for the baby and then she's going to need to come to me and give me attention when I need it."

Chet: "Before I said I know a lot about the stages- the terrible twos and the stages children go through. But I've never changed a diaper. I've never been left alone with a baby before. It's not like I'm terrified of it, it's just that I'm least secure about that."

Kevin: "I want the mother to stay at home and take care of that kid until it's a year or maybe even two years old. Until the kid knows and is walking- getting his feet in the world."

There appears to be a consensual recognition that mothers know best and that men remain outsiders regardless of the level of their emotional participation. The absence of a clear or consistent sense

of primary paternal preoccupation may reflect the internalization of social norms. However, given the cultural revolution effected by feminist ideas, I expected men to assume or at least talk about assuming greater responsibility for their infants.

The sustained power of the old stereotype involving a mother's role in caring for the infant and a father's desire to throw the football around has, I would argue, important psychological roots. One prominent issue involves the infant's profound helplessness and dependence. By imagining their children as older, fathers bypass or ward-off the anxiety and emotional vulnerability a dependent infant evokes. Imagining a child as older enables men to establish more certain ground for their role and identity as father. But just as important, my subjects' acknowledged relative helplessness in knowing how to interact with a completely dependent newborn coupled with the deference accorded to their partner's maternal abilities, resurrects their own early experience of helplessness in relation to a seemingly omnipotent mother. One could argue that the idealization of their partners as mothers and their sense of their own marginality and helplessness represents an unconscious reenactment of a man's earliest relationship with his mother. This repetition reflects the regressive pull of the process of becoming a father for men.

A related theme involves the prominent use of shared experiences and activities as the focus of a man's anticipated relationship with his children. Again, this represents a contrast to the intense emotional affiliation between mother and infant. It represents a more instrumental mode of relating that may enable men to carve out their distinctive ways of relating to their children. That is, a way

of relating that remains different than and therefore safe from competition with the mother/infant way of relating. Thus, when I asked men to describe their partner's weaknesses, their answers clustered around a few striking themes. For instance:

Brian: "I may toss the baby around like a football and she will carry it like nitroglycerin."

Gary: "I think she's going to try to keep bad elements away from the child. Not opening the child up to- I think she's always fearful, too protective of things that she is not aware of. Like street life."

Walter: "She will take the job very seriously. And maybe too seriously. She will sweat out the details a little too much and tend to worry about things ultimately not worth worrying about."

Wesley: "I'm afraid she's going to wear herself out. She's very delicate and frail and she's going to bust her ass to make sure- if that baby whimpers once, she's going to be in there. And I don't want her to wear herself down to nothing."

The contrast presented here contains clear expressions of resentment, jealousy and perhaps even hostility towards their partners' caretaking styles and incomparable relationships with their infants. Perhaps Matt clearly articulated what other men could only indirectly express when he discussed the relationship between his wife and her child, named Brenda, from a previous marriage:

Matt: "I've learned that there is a certain amount of attachment between the mother and the child that is unparalleled no matter how much the dad can try. I don't think that I envy it. But we get to a point where my wife's mothering and their attachment is, I feel, counterproductive to some other goal that we're trying to accomplish. Like with the violin lesson. Brenda has to work very hard to get through a violin lesson and she falls back on the available love and comfort that my wife will give her without- if Brenda chooses that as an alternative to working hard for something, then it could be counterproductive to her learning how to excel. Or learning how to work hard."

The underlying issue here and in the previously cited reflections appears to be how men experience themselves as being in conflict or competition with the mother/infant relationship. Men imagine they would encourage a more active exploration and discovery of the world outside the mother/infant dyad. Seen one way, the reflections remain consistent with important aspects of the father's role elaborated by psychoanalytic research. The father facilitates the infant's motor development through engaging in rough play, enhances the infant's confidence and ability to experience mastery and control over its social and physical environments and engenders a movement away from the primordial mother/infant symbiotic relationship.

However, an alternative, although not incompatible interpretation of the father's more physically engaging interactional style, may reflect the father's deep-seeded envy of the intense mother/infant bond and his conscious or unconscious sense of being in competition with the mother. The deprecatory tone of these reflections at once expresses male envy and the need to mitigate the idealized images of their partners as mothers in the service of establishing meaningful roles for themselves as fathers. In particular, paternal roles that will influence a child's development. Given the apparent consensus among the men I interviewed about ceding the primary caretaking role to the mother, these contrasting interactions may also represent attempts to elaborate distinctive father/infant relationships secure from the mother's intrusion.

The Concern About Adolescence

The absence of clear images of their children as infants contrasted with the recurring image of them as adolescents. A few men appeared concerned about the anticipated conflicts with their adolescent children:

Joel: "I fear the teenage years because I see a lot of kids. I fear a lot of what I went through. Partying and not being a good student for a good while. And I know every kid no matter how good they turn out to be, they generally go through that kind of phase."

Gordon: "My nightmare is of having a son who's a conservative republican. But when adolescence comes on, the boy no longer looks up to his father and now starts to distance himself. I think that would be more of a challenge."

Walter: "I don't look forward to adolescence and having to be the one who sets very firm limits. To be the authority person. I expect there will be a lot of power struggles in there that I'm not looking forward to but I think are inevitable."

For other men, anticipated conflict or tension with adolescents focused on their children's sexual awareness and/or desire:

Tony: "I think the biggest challenge is to discipline- if it's a girl, you obviously have to teach her birth control and sex early. You wouldn't want a girl growing up and not knowing what her options are. If she's going to choose to have sex when she's 15 that's fine, as long as she knows what the consequences are and the options of birth control. That's the challenge if it's a girl."

Brian: "I like to think about a girl who's pre-adolescent and a boy who's adolescent. Because girls develop faster, are more precocious and more in charge. You look at a cute adolescent girl and you think to yourself, god, is she cute. Pre-adolescent. And you think of a cute adolescent girl and you say, boy, she shouldn't walk the street. She's going to be in trouble. She's going to be raped by some guy or something horrendous. Adolescent boys? Even if they're sexually active, they're ok. Ok in that they won't get pregnant. They won't get hurt. That may or may not be true."

Kent: "I think a boy will be easier. Because with a girl you have to, at a certain age, keep them away from boys. It's different with guys."

Wesley: "I think having a girl is more challenging because when the boy becomes older, 15 or 16, and he's going to want to lose his virginity and I'm going to be tapping him on the shoulder and saying, go for it- anything with a skirt, nail it. But with a girl, I want to meet the guy, I want to go out on the date with you. I'll walk both of you up the front steps and I'll watch him kiss you goodbye."

Kevin: "A girl is-you're there to protect them, where a boy can probably protect himself as he gets older. But your little girl is always going to stay your little girl. If somebody bothers with her, you feel more protective of a girl than with a boy."

Brad: "I think a girl goes through a lot more frustration than boys do. I'm thinking about when they get older. They get older and they start dating and start wearing all the clothes and start doing the make-up. Your father's little girl starts to move away. You must get a little nervous. I'd be less concerned with a boy."

Gordon: "An adolescent girl usually maintains an attraction although there you start to get jealous because the girl is starting to get interested in boys (laughs)."

The powerful central theme here involves parental control. The more general observations about adolescent children focuses on the threat to parental authority posed by adolescence and the need to clearly define limits.

The other recurring and related theme presented here involves female sexuality. Several men discussed the need to protect their imagined daughters. But protect them from what? Perhaps from the seductions or the "predatory" behavior of men. Yet what appears to be of greater concern is the emergence of their daughter's own sexual desire.

In the context of observing changes in their partner's bodies and experiencing the powerful procreative repercussions of sexual

activity, female sexuality represents a force that must be controlled. Consequently, several men express their own desire to maintain their imagined daughters as pristine and virginal. These men appear to believe that if the emergence of female sexual desire cannot be prevented or delayed, it can be controlled and/or dominated. In extreme cases, this domination gets expressed through sexual violence as suggested by Brian's observation. The need to control female sexual desire refers back, I would argue, to their experience as boys interacting with their seemingly omnipotent mothers. The underlying male fear and anxiety about female desire/power emanates from childhood and is resurrected during pregnancy as men witness their partner's capacity to bear life.

A few men associate the emergence of female sexual desire with separation and loss. The expression of sexual desire in their imagined daughters initiates a process that will eventually carry them away from their own families. And as Gordon suggests, boyfriends and of course husbands, can be experienced at some level as rival suitors. But I sense too that the sexual maturation of daughters conjures up the experience of anatomical/emotional differences for men. As girls' bodies mature, it becomes increasingly evident they are not like their fathers. And perhaps this recognition conjures up their own emotional wounds as children sustained upon discovering they would not be like their mothers.

Finally, an important unstated issue involves a man's own sexual desire vis-a-vis his children, in particular desire aroused by a daughter. The thought of a dependent and seductive child necessarily arouses a wide range of sexual feeling in fathers and this may

account for the recurring theme of sexuality in men's observations about their daughters. Perhaps the sentiment to protect their imagined daughters from male sexuality and aggression represents, at some unconscious level, an acknowledgment of their imagined daughter's seductiveness and the need to protect them from their own sexual desire.

Another clear and important factor influencing men's expectations about raising children involved their own father/son relationship. Several men expressed the belief they could better identify with and understand a son and therefore be more effective as fathers:

Kevin: "Having a boy might be easier for me because I could talk more plainly to it, like my father did with me. Sports and stuff like that. So in a way it would be great for me to have a boy."

Clark: "I'm replete with anxieties here. I have anxieties that I will not be able to relate to a daughter as well as I might to a son. I don't really know what basis I have for that. Certainly things that males have in common that you might not with the opposite gender. I hope I don't have difficulty being able to understand how my daughter feels about some problem in her life and just brush it off as minor when to a woman it would be major."

Joel: "Having a boy would be easier for me, being a boy and having grown up in a family of three boys. I think I have more experience with the male psyche being one. A girl will certainly be more of a challenge for me."

Ira: "I've been around boys growing up, but I've never been around girls. Having a girl would be less challenging because there the mother role model would dominate. So I wouldn't have to provide a dominant role model. It would be less responsibility."

But other men believed it easier to have a girl as they would avoid any repetition of their own father/son relationship:

Randy: "I imagine a boy and a girl will present their own set of problems. Maybe the boy a little more than the girl

because of the problems I had with my dad and not wanting to repeat them with my own son."

Allen: "I think it will be harder to have a son. Maybe from my own- my images are of the conflicts later on between father and son."

Walter: "Having a son will probably reactivate a lot of my childhood concerns about what kind of a father I will be and what it will be like to have a son who approaches the age that I was when my father died. So I think it would more readily tap into that if we have a boy."

Whether a man imagines or desires a boy because he understands how boys are or a girl because he remembers the conflict, tension or emotional pain in his own father/son relationship, the past weighs heavily on the present. In the former group, there is no simple correlation between the quality of the father/son relationship and the desire for a son. While Clark, Joel and Ira experienced their fathers as distant, Kevin appeared to idealize his father. Conceivably, the desire for a boy has a self-reparative dimension. A few men expressed concern that raising a son would resurrect unresolved and painful issues from their own childhood. Difficult as it might appear, raising a son could represent an opportunity to work through some of these issues.

However, those men who expressed a desire for a girl experienced a profound sense of loss in their father/son relationship. Randy, Allen and Walter endured the death of their fathers: Walter as a child and Randy and Allen as adults. Sean experienced bitter and hateful feelings as the result of a very destructive divorce, leaving him and his mother with deep emotional wounds. Understood in this context, having a girl represented a desire to create an emotional distance from the grief associated with the loss of their fathers.

Undertaking Parental Responsibilities and the Need to Maintain
Personal Boundaries

Another recurring anxiety men discussed involved the emotional and physical responsibilities of raising a child. In our culture there has been a considerable discussion of how women juggle their "domestic" responsibilities with their professional aspirations. However, scant attention has been devoted to the conflicts men experience, especially as active participation in raising a family becomes integral to definitions of personal success. A man's anxiety about assuming increased caretaking responsibility remains firmly in the proverbial closet. Yet several of the men I interviewed expressed concern about being responsible for bringing a new person into the world:

Allen: "Maybe another resentment is having to be more responsible over a period of time and not being able to discreetly separate this time for me and this time for the baby. This is a worry of mine about becoming a father- there's a feeling that can I really have my own time?, have my interests? I like to read and focus on my art and those are private times and the whole idea of a child impinges on those."

Brian: "The fear is being a poor father. And a drastic change for the negative in lifestyle meaning that we are slaves to the house. I don't think that will happen but it can happen. I've seen other couples where that happened. There's a risk that my wife and I will not get along after the baby- we have a good relationship now, but it may not be after the baby."

Gordon: "The thing that scares me most is the responsibility. It means a dramatic change in lifestyle and decisions that used to just affect me and more recently have affected two of us, will now be affecting another generation. And that's a little intimidating to think of."

Clark: "I like kids and get along with children, but the children go home at the end of the day or weekend with their parents. The intense non-stop commitment for a long

period of time is probably what I'm most fearful or apprehensive about."

Joel: "A lot of the fear is just trying to still the doubt about how it's going to change my life. Knowing that it's going to change my life but my doubt about wanting to accept that change. And how to deal with the things that I might miss. The things that I'm not going to achieve that I want to achieve."

One recurring theme here involves the loss of freedom I noted earlier. Men recognize the commitment and energy needed to raise a child will be considerable. They worry about losing the freedom to pursue their own independent interests and activities, whether pursued alone or with their partners.

However, this concern suggests a far deeper and troubling issue that Allen raised: the potential loss of personal boundaries. Imagining a child as an impingement on one's "private times" reflects a need to maintain secure boundaries to protect a sense of self. The threat to personal boundaries involve not only considerations of time and energy, but resonate with a man's issues regarding emotional dependence. As a few men elaborated:

Walter: "I have a fear of being the one who has to be in charge and to take care of someone who's absolutely dependent rather than being the dependent one. Rather than being able to fall back on someone else, I'm the one who's going to be fallen back upon."

Hank: "Every once in a while, I think more often now than early in the pregnancy, we're getting a few feelings of are we going to be able to handle it?, will we know what to do when the baby cries or when it gets sick?"

The fear of not knowing how to care for an infant or to be a responsible father parallels the infant's imagined and real helplessness. For Allen, and perhaps these other men too, there is

an inchoate awareness of identifying with the helpless infant. As Allen clearly articulated it:

Allen: "Becoming a father is reawakening a kind of immediacy and playfulness that is unintellectually complicated-the relationship with this new being whose needs will be very direct and pure and wild. It's also reawakening memories-as we get closer to it and I try to imagine what it's like to be in the womb now for this being that was also me at one point. It's reawakening whole dimensions of my own life that have disappeared maybe."

The identification with the infant conjures up vague feelings of experiencing the world in a state of relative merger with one's own mother or partner. A man's identification with his unborn infant coupled with the idealization of his partner as mother, his own heightened emotional dependence and related need for attention and love during the pregnancy all replicate important aspects of a man's earliest relationship with his mother. This replication evokes powerful reunion fantasies to bask in the warmth and presence of that first maternal object. Yet it also generates considerable anxiety defined by a loss of male gender identity and more fundamentally, a loss of physical boundaries, a loss of boundaries between self and other. Accordingly, the desire to be totally dependent on an omnipotent caregiver and the clear anxiety expressed here by these interview subjects, emanate from a powerful ambivalence evoked by the regressive pull of the pregnancy.

One potential response to this deep-seeded anxiety involves, as Allen suggests, carving out and maintaining an autonomous sphere of interest. This sphere of interest reestablishes a man's sense of being firmly in control and serves to counterbalance the tremendous authority and power wielded by their seemingly omnipotent partners.

Thus, Allen's desire to preserve his "private times", his own productive, creative and symbolically procreative artistic work represents a response to his partner's life-bearing capacity. Only a few other men openly discussed similar issues. But perhaps Randy voiced feelings that other men could relate to:

Randy: "Last night we wanted to put up a door to keep the cats out of the nursery. And she wanted to help. And it really bothered me because I'm the carpenter. I'll put the door up. It shouldn't have really bothered me at all. She was just trying to help me. And I should have been grateful but instead I got angry. I told her to leave me alone and let me do it myself. I do find myself getting angry at stupid stuff where I can't really explain what I was mad about. I shouldn't have been mad about her trying to help me. But I was."

"And I think it's an emotional type of thing where I don't know if I would handle what she's going through anywhere near as well as she is. I suppose that I really do look up to her a lot. And I'm jealous in certain ways that I can't be the way that she is. I guess it's always been that way, but even a little more since she's been pregnant and handling everything so well. Just taking it on like a trooper. Not a complaint."

The issue here extends far beyond professional competency or self esteem. Randy recognizes he acted like a child in relation to his partner, who he portrays as a powerful maternal figure. The fact she handles her pregnancy so well and then wants to assist with his work (in his area of expertise!) provides palpable evidence of her emotional strength. When confronted with evidence of this power, Randy responds by clearly delineating his turf, his identity as a craftsman and as a man, and protecting it from intrusion by his partner.

Ira discussed similar themes:

Ira: "What do you do with children? What do you do with them? (laughs) Her knowledge is encyclopedic. It's

ironic. Here I went to ivy league colleges and I can't do that. And she went to U. Mass. and she can do that. And here I got all these shelves of useless philosophy and psychology and she knows how to do it. See, the problem is that like my father, we establish hegemony over a very small universe that can be controlled. My business is an extremely narrow area but over this area, I establish absolute hegemony. There's not room for discussion. My father did the same thing in his business. Absolute pigeon-hole efficiency."

Ira expressed the profound dilemma quite succinctly. In the face of his partner's expertise and his dependence on her, Ira identifies and protects clearly defined areas of control. He creates an empire of his own where he unequivocally reigns supreme. Here we see that the idealization of the woman represents a very real threat to the male ego. As he defines his partner's knowledge as encyclopedic, he experiences his own knowledge and expertise as effectively useless. This requires the development of a countervailing arena that he can dominate. Note the language Ira uses: hegemony, controlled, absolute domination, not room for discussion, pigeon-hole efficiency. This is the traditional patriarchal world characterized by instrumental relationships of domination and submission. Just as importantly, it remains a world that implicitly devalues and/or denigrates women and the "domestic" or private world she controls. In effect, the idealization and denigration of the female share a common psychological root. The female's seemingly miraculous life bearing power enables men both to venerate and to recoil from her in dread.

For several men, undertaking parental responsibility for a completely dependent infant generated clear anxiety or concern. On one level, the time and effort devoted to a neonate or to a child

detracts from the energy focused on individual pursuits. For some, the infant represented an impingement on personal freedom. But at a deeper level, an infant's helplessness paralleled their emotional dependence on their partners. This ongoing dependency, when coupled with an identification with the unborn infant, necessarily resurrected their dependency on their mothers when they were infants. In turn, a few voiced the need to establish autonomous spheres of activity and control to counterbalance the seemingly omnipotent life-bearing power wielded by their partners and mothers. Understood in this context, the need to reestablish autonomy and control during pregnancy reenacted the turning away from their mothers they experienced during their early childhood.

Sexual Relations During Pregnancy

Interview subjects expressed a considerable range of opinion about the impact of pregnancy on their own and their partner's sexual desire. Several men acknowledged experiencing diminished interest and/or heightened anxiety about sexual relations during their partner's pregnancy. Yet others observed that the pregnancy heightened sexual intimacy between them:

Interviewer: Has your sex life been affected by your partner's pregnancy?

Gary: "It's actually been a lot more positive. It's bloomed even more. We both feel more turned on. Because now it's like a thing with me being involved with the pregnancy and rubbing her stomach and getting on her side. We're physically getting more closer."

Jason: "Other than positions, no. We have to get creative. Our favorite positions we can't get into anymore. We

create different ways to make love. As far as frequency and intensity and closeness, no."

Kent: "I'm more turned on. The way she looks. Everyone else looks at her as fat. I don't. I think she looks beautiful."

Kevin: "Sexually, I'm as turned on. Lovingly, I'd say more turned on. I rub her stomach. We were close, but the baby has brought us so much closer."

Wesley: "Yes, in a positive way. The only problem though is- working 11 to 7, you don't sleep normal hours. She does but I don't. But other than that, I don't think it's been affected in a bad way."

It should be noted that all of these men, except Kent, are unmarried. In fact, all of the unmarried men I interviewed are quoted here. Does their unmarried status protect them from the anxiety and/or lack of interest other men experienced? One possible explanation may be that unmarried status during pregnancy diminishes anxiety and guilt about having sexual relations with a woman who is both partner and mother, which may resurrect a man's oedipal desires and prohibitions against them. Also, the absence of a marriage relationship may foster an "illusion" of freedom from commitment. That is, the fact these men remain unmarried enables them to unconsciously believe their relationships and perhaps their lives have not really changed because of the pregnancy.

On the other hand, several men discussed their diminished interest in and/or increased anxiety about sexual contact:

Ira: "We have sex much less often. My feeling is, and she hates me to say this, what's the point?, she's already pregnant. I just don't have the desire to have sex with her because she's already pregnant. What's the point? I'm just thinking, after sex, oh well, another baby seven months from now."

Gordon: "It's harder for me, I can't really explain it. It's not hard to get aroused but it's hard to complete. Maybe it has to do with the changing body. Maybe it has to do with an irrational fear of pushing too hard and hurting the baby even though I know that's not true physically. It might be psychologically. But even if I can't come to a climax, I've found that it's satisfying just to be close."

Hank: "We haven't had sex much at all during the pregnancy. Although that's not to say that we're not physically close. We do a lot of hugging and kissing and touching. We just don't have sex a lot. And then we've had even less during the pregnancy."

Joel: "We basically have been abstaining from it. Not continually, but we've gone for a month at a time without having sex. It was actually incredibly easy for me. I was surprised I didn't have the urges that I usually have and I think that certainly is related to the fact that her body was changing and she wasn't as appealing to me."

One of the striking themes here involves the connection between acknowledged anxiety and their partner's body. Gordon and Joel explicitly make this association. And Hank reports he enjoys physical contact but does not have much desire for entering his partner's body. As noted earlier, the idea or experience of having sexual relations with one's partner who is also becoming a mother may symbolically represent a fulfillment of a man's oedipal desire, a phantasized oedipal victory over one's father that generates anxiety. This anxiety may help explain Ira's diminished sexual desire.

However, a man's anxiety to enter the woman's body may reflect, on another level, a primitive castration anxiety. Sexual intercourse with a female who evokes images and phantasies of the omnipotent mother of early childhood may generate a fear of losing the source of male authority and power, the penis, or even more threatening, a loss of a separate sense of self. This may account for Gordon's association between his inability to experience orgasm and the

changes in his partner's body and Joel's tracing his diminished sexual "urges" to finding his partner's body less "appealing". Unfortunately, a direct exploration of these important themes necessarily transcended the scope of my research interview.

A few men also reported experiencing the presence of the unborn fetus while having sexual relations with their partners, especially during the third trimester of pregnancy:

Allen: "It was a little weird maybe at the beginning once the baby started moving. To have sex and to be able to feel that there's a baby moving in there too. It's like an invasion of your privacy. I think it felt a little odd like here's this third person and they're right between us."

Tony: "I don't know if it's a psychological or a physical thing, but I think it's a combination of both of them. With the baby there it's kind of a weird thing."

Gordon: "I think that there's a greater feeling of the baby being right there in the middle as the baby becomes more and more prominent. Because at first you just don't realize that there's- you know intellectually that the baby's there, but you don't realize it. But as time goes on, it becomes increasingly more evident."

These observations are clearly grounded in reality, especially as the pregnancy heads into the last trimester and the woman's stomach swells with the living but still unborn fetus. Yet alongside a man's realistic appraisal, these observations contain nascent feelings about the existing dyad evolving into a triadic relationship. The unborn baby insinuates itself into the couple's most private, intimate experiences and remains planted right between the sexual partners. So the anxiety presented here may reflect an experience of the baby as a rival competing for the mother's nurturance and love.

Another significant theme involved the anxiety of several men who feared hurting the fetus during intercourse as Gordon noted earlier. Interestingly, most of these men understood they could not harm their babies. Nevertheless, their fears persisted:

Brad: "We've been a little weird about sex now. You have to be careful. That's why we're going to these classes. When the cervix starts opening up- first-time fathers just get a little wary about having sex. There's always some theory about hurting the baby. But I'm sure you can't. But I'm wary about that."

Tony: "I guess I've lost more interest in sex during the last couple of months. It's been really through most of it but more now. I guess a lot of it was the fact that I didn't know how it would affect the baby. But after finding out that it doesn't, even then it was affected. I don't know if it's a psychological or a physical thing. I think it's a combination of both of them."

Allen: "I'm afraid of not knowing exactly whether- I guess if it's gentle, there's not a chance of stimulating labor. But I think there's a little bit of fear in me that way. It can't be abandoned. It has to be focused and done in a certain way and I'm worried about the contractions of an orgasm being sort of like the contractions of a birth and so accidentally stimulating that."

Chet: "At first there was not much change at all. Then it gets uncomfortable. Probably when she starts getting bigger- we haven't had sex in a month. I can't remember. Half out of discomfort and half out of it becomes so much work and it's a fear of not wanting to hurt the child. And I don't want to hurt her."

This anxiety about hurting the fetus may stem from unacknowledged and unwanted aggressive feelings both toward the fetus and their partners. The source of aggression expressed towards the fetus may relate to its status as rival for the mother's love as suggested above. Accordingly, a man's aggression may be oedipally tinged as a phantasy about killing off or hurting a rival through the act of intercourse with the mother.

Another possibility involves the fetus as symbol for a man's own dependency needs and helplessness intensified by his partner's pregnancy. Aggression towards the fetus may reflect the desire to kill off these potentially disturbing feelings within himself. Relatedly, aggressive feelings towards one's partner may involve a wish to assume mastery or control over the seemingly omnipotent female body. By implication, a man's aggression may counteract the experience of relative impotence or marginal importance as the pregnancy unfolds.

Clearly, for a significant number of men in my interview sample, sexual relations during pregnancy became more difficult and fraught with anxiety. My exploration of these anxieties necessarily remains more speculative, involving a dimension of experience buried in the realm of unconscious phantasy. Yet my sense while interviewing subjects and interpreting the data remained consistent. Sexual relations during the third trimester of pregnancy evoked powerful aggressive and rivalrous feelings associated with oedipal wishes. Concurrently, other primitive feelings surfaced involving a feared loss of one's physically bounded separate sense of self.

Prospective Fatherhood and Empathy

A parent's ability to put him or herself in the infant's place and respond to where the infant is, provides the infant with a good-enough environment and enables it to persist in its being without undue impingement from its social and physical surround. (Winnicott, 1960)

However, as I discussed in the introductory chapter, empathic ability becomes associated with the mother and remains construed as a feminine trait to be partly or even wholly disidentified with as the young boy solidifies his own male gender identity. Again, we need to clearly distinguish the boy's disidentification with his mother, she is female and he is male, and a repudiation of her as an object of sexual desire from a process of disavowing the qualities she embodies.

As I noted earlier, I believe the father assumes a vital role in enabling the boy to integrate feminine-like nurturant capacities with his developing sense of what it means to be a boy and later a man. The father's task involves helping his son to integrate male and female self representations. Accordingly, this defines a critical issue for prospective fathers: to what extent can they join masculine and feminine representations and provide a nurturant empathic paternal role model for their sons?

Two of the questions I asked during the interview were: 1) "what would it be like for you to have a baby growing inside of you?"; 2) "what would it be like for you to give birth to a baby?" With these questions, I wanted to determine the extent to which men could put themselves in their partner's place and imagine experiencing pregnancy and childbirth. In other words, I believed these questions would help measure their empathic ability and the extent to which they could integrate masculine and feminine self representations.

Admittedly, the questions I asked are difficult and challenging. Yet I remained unprepared for just how difficult they proved to be.

Frequently, men looked bewildered then paused to think of an answer. Many commented on the question's difficulty and struggled with a response. For a few men even seriously considering the question appeared beyond the realm of possibility:

Interviewer: What would it be like to have a baby growing inside of you?

Ira: "I can't- what do you mean, what does she feel like? I don't- it doesn't happen to men.

Interviewer: I understand, but if you could just fantasize for a moment, what would it be like?

Ira: "A circus. A freak side show- man has baby- a pregnant man with a beard in a side show. I'm sorry I can't get past the absurdity of the premise."

Interviewer: What would it be like to give birth to a baby?

Ira: National enquirer- man gives birth to triplets on mars. Elvis was there. Strange- forced gender change. All this is predicated on the nazis forcibly changing my sex in a horrible medical experiment. (laughs nervously)."

The horrific nightmarish imagery here attests to the extreme anxiety Ira experienced as he struggled to imagine himself as female. The violent and masochistic aspects of Ira's response suggestive of castration, reflect the relationship between Ira and, as he revealed in his interview, an emotionally abusive mother. Just even considering identifying with a feminine figure invites being subjected to the murderous rage Ira experienced as a child. Moreover, his father's inability to protect him exacerbates his anxiety. Ira's identification or empathy with a female figure threatened castration and annihilation without any protection. Viewed in this context one can readily grasp the source of Ira's horrifying images.

The fantasies of several other men also contained disturbing imagery:

Interviewer: What would it be like to have a baby growing inside of you?

Jason: "Did you ever see the movie Alien? It would be weird. Every time the baby moves in her, she can feel it moving inside. To me that would be a strange feeling. The best I can describe it is weird."

Randy: "I imagine it's very strange. I've had a couple of cysts. This is a terrible comparison, absolutely gross, but it's something that starts as nothing and grows. And they get huge and it's like out of your control. And I've always hated that feeling. It's the worst feeling in the world that you can't control a growth on you or something that's happening to you. It's totally beyond your control."

Gordon: "I think it would be probably exciting, frightening in some respect, intimidating. Frightening not just in the sense that something could happen but also in the sense that this is yours and there's even more of a sense that this is yours when it's right there."

Wesley: "I'd feel like you're getting bigger and weird shaped and stretched out and used and abused. I don't know if I could handle the doctor's exams of my internals."

Allen: "Two things- one is this very tangible long slow process of nurturing. Another is a fear of being invaded- something in me that's not me."

The unsettling visual imagery here reflects the threatening aspect of considering oneself as female: being feminine means losing rather than enriching one's maleness. Also, Randy, Wesley and Allen, and indirectly Jason, imagine having a baby as an invasion of, or resulting in a loss of control over one's body. The concern articulated here penetrates far deeper than one's male gender identity and involves a threat to one's physically bounded sense of being a separate person.

Alongside these more disturbing images, several men focused on the considerable pain carrying and delivering a baby entails:

Ron: "The scary part is going through labor itself. Especially for the first time. When I first started reading about contractions and the baby coming out and down the canal, I tried to imagine what I've done in my life that was physically painful. I haven't broken any bones- so nothing like what my wife's going to go through."

Randy: "I've thought about giving birth to a baby. Especially since we've been going to classes. They show pictures. Oh, my god! It would be like somebody sticking their hand up my asshole. Not pleasant at all. Just horrible pain."

Jason: "Painful I would think. And a serious commitment. You talk to women who've had babies and one of the things that always comes up is how much pain is involved in early labor. The conversation never goes by without someone describing the amount of pain involved."

Chet: "It's painful. My wife says it's like having a big bowel movement. That's the closest thing I can relate to. I wouldn't want to go through it. I admire my wife for doing it for nine months."

Wesley: "To me it would be like splitting a chunk of wood in half. To watch this thing come out of something that was this big I would think would hurt like hell. I can't describe the pain other than taking an axe and splitting your forehead open."

This focus on the physically painful aspect of carrying and delivering a baby reveals the one consistent area where men empathically identify with their partners. However, this empathic understanding obscures, I feel, deeper feelings of venerating their partner's ability to endure the physical stress of pregnancy. And when considered with the horrifying imagery presented above, men's empathy for the pain women experience glosses over deeper feelings of awe and dread towards the childbearing and childbirth experience.

The responses to my interview questions revealed the difficulty men have integrating masculine and feminine self representations.

And this raises concern about their ability to enable their sons to integrate nurturant capacities with their developing masculine gender identities. However, I would add that the regressive aspect of interacting with a pregnant partner, as she conjures up images of a seemingly omnipotent female figure and generates several powerful sources of anxiety for men, may significantly but temporarily reduce a man's capacity to integrate male and female self representations. But one might ask: does the mother who breastfeeds or enjoys a special relationship with the neonate and young infant exert any less of a regressive and threatening response from the father? This remains a question to be explored by future research.

The Dreams of Prospective Fathers

About three-quarters of my interview subjects remembered dreams they had during their partner's pregnancy. Some of them remained quite vivid:

Matt: "I'm into white water canoeing and I've had dreams about that. Going down the river. Going through big water with the boat. Being out of control."

Ron: "I've had dreams about- I don't quite remember the dream itself but I do remember that the dream was about anticipation. Feeling of not knowing and waiting. Getting upset or angry at somebody else controlling the situation. Whereas now the baby's controlling it. It's going to come out when it wants to."

Clark: "It's the first day of classes and I can't find the room that the class is in or the test is in. Another is walking into class and we're going to have a test and I knew about it but I didn't study."

For these men, the theme of being out of control, of not being able to influence the events of the pregnancy appeared to generate

anxiety. A few other men had dreams that more clearly involved their unborn children:

Randy: "I've dreamt of jumping. I've woken up a few times in the middle of a jump. It was like I was on the moon. I could take these gigantic steps and leaps. And I've actually woken up in the middle of one. I actually felt myself moving and then realized I was in bed. I felt weightless like nothing could bother me."

Jason: "I've had dreams where I'm underwater and the water is crystal clear and you can see vegetation under there and you can breathe in the water and it's warm. And Sheila [his partner] and I were snorkeling on top of the water and looking down at all the vegetation."

Randy and Jason express a clear identification with the unborn fetus still living in their partner's wombs. Perhaps these dreams reflect a desire to join with the fetus in the womb and to be enveloped by the totally secure and nurturing environment of their partner's bodies. Or these dreams may express a wish to return to some idyllic infantile state without responsibility and anxiety.

Other men experienced dreams with more concrete images of their newborn infants:

Walter: "I think it was changing diapers. I had to do something to take care of the baby. Change a diaper. But the baby was more adult-like. So on the one hand it was an infant and on the other hand it could talk."

Gordon: "I had one where we had the baby twice (laughs). It was a girl the first time and then it was a girl again. I don't really remember but I do remember that immediately after the first, she had the child again and it was a girl again. And that time it was for real. The second time I knew that this was it. This was the real thing. (laughs)."

Allen: "I had one about the baby. My wife has had some dreams and she told me her dreams and sometimes I can't distinguish between the two. I think I was holding the baby. It was a very happy moment with this little baby. A very small baby. It didn't speak or anything yet. So it's still just a newborn."

Walter's dream suggests an identification with his unborn child. The man/child in the dream may represent Walter as child, conjuring his own lost innocence and spontaneity. And it may also reflect anxiety about having to care for a helpless infant. The dream may also express Walter's wish that the infant be an adult too. This infant would take care of itself and alleviate his own parental responsibility.

Gordon's dream suggests the rebirth of his own nurturing feminine capacity, as represented by the first girl, as he readies himself for fatherhood, as represented by the "real" baby. Allen conveys a sense of communing with his newborn, perhaps identifying with the baby's dependence and helplessness.

A few men experienced dreams about the relationship with their parents:

Randy: "I had dreams about just me and my dad. I was a teenager. An adolescent- where he was humiliating me. No particular reason that I even remember. I just remember it and waking up feeling terrible."

Randy's dream represents a continued effort to work through the humiliation and terrifying experiences he had with his own father. Randy's dream as a symbolic continued working through perhaps signals his desire to diminish the impact of the wounds he endured as a child. And as this occurs, he will be less likely to repeat his father's parental mistakes and transmit his own emotional wounds to his children.

A similar theme may be expressed in a dream Ira had:

Ira: "I'm part of a student demonstration in Rumania. An anti-fascist demonstration. The police hit me with a nightstick. Not really hard. Hard enough to sting across the back of my neck. The back of my legs rather. And I

woke up at that point when they hit me in the back of my legs. And my calf was stinging from that."

The association I have is to Ira's relationship with his "fascistic" mother who he referred to as like "Eva Peron". Perhaps in the dream Ira attempts to subvert the terrifying power of his intrusive, authoritarian mother. His willingness to join the anti-fascist resistance may symbolize a desire to overthrow or at least diffuse the compelling and hurtful authority she wielded.

Gary's dream provides a more indirect reference to his father:

Gary: "There was one of a close friend of mine who was somewhat adopted into my family- with my mother. He stayed with us for nine years because his mother left him for a while. And me and him aren't close anymore because of a certain feud that we had. For years I wanted him to be my best man. And now he won't be unless he makes a change towards me in a positive direction."

The experience of separation and rupture in his friendship and the consequent disappointment he feels parallels Gary's experience with his father. As Gary noted during his interview, his father remained an unreliable figure throughout Gary's youth. This left him feeling a profound sense of disappointment and anger. While Gary and his father appear to be on better terms now, the dream may symbolize deeper feelings he continues to harbor towards his father and a wish that he become more actively involved in his life.

While my interview did not allow for an extended discussion of men's dreams, the dreams men reported illuminated important emotional issues that surfaced during the pregnancy. The intensification of men's dependency needs coupled with, or perhaps the result of, experiencing the unborn fetus as rival generated an important although unstated source of anxiety for my interview subjects. Yet

these dreams also expressed the need and desire to work through and repair some of the emotional wounds sustained in the relationships with their parents.

Summary

In this chapter, I have examined important emotional and psychological changes men experience as they become fathers. As a transitional moment, pregnancy affords men an opportunity to confront the evolving trajectory of their lives. For many of the men I interviewed, the pregnancy engendered an internal dialogue between an established and inchoate sense of self; between the self as adolescent and the self as parent. At this point in time, the salient theme emerging in the interviews focused on letting go or giving up individual freedom associated with being an adolescent. These men were becoming aware of the essential connection between the changes occurring in their lives and the need to give up or let go of certain aspects of their identities as men. Or put another way, these men confronted how change necessarily involves the experience of loss.

The other general theme I want to mention here involves the theme of repetition. For most men, the intensified emotional dependence on their partners, the awe and reverence towards their partner's bodies, the feelings of helplessness about being responsible for their infants, the consensus about ceding the primary caretaking role to their partners and the need to establish autonomous areas of control, resurrected important facets of their

childhood relationship with their mothers. This regressive aspect of pregnancy generated considerable anxiety for men. At a deep and primitive psychological level, the interaction with their seemingly omnipotent partners threatened both their identities as men and their experience of having a physically bounded separate self.

However, prospective fatherhood also appears to offer men an opportunity to begin or continue a process of reparation. Some of the dreams reported by my interview subjects, for instance, expressed a reparative theme. And this theme represents the focus of my next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

PARENTHOOD AS REPARATIVE GESTURE

Introduction

In this chapter I want to explore how parenthood represents a reparative gesture. Specifically, I will discuss how parenthood provides men with an opportunity to repair: 1) their father's identity as father, when men offer the grandchild to their fathers to compensate for the loss of their children; 2) the father/son relationship, when men identify with their fathers as they become fathers themselves; 3) their own emotional wounds as sons or a self-reparation.

I would like to mention here that the reparation of the father's identity remains dependent on the son's desire to have his father assume an active role in the grandchild's life and the father's availability and desire to undertake the responsibility of being a grandfather. And the possibility of effecting a self-reparation relates to the son's ability to acknowledge to himself and/or communicate to his parents feelings of disappointment, anger and hurt he experienced as a child. An important part of this self-reparative process involves a man's identification with his unborn child and the hope that he can create a different relationship with that child than he experienced with his own father. The self-reparation made possible by parenthood ultimately rests on a man's ability to mourn his own childhood.

I will present the reflections of ten interview subjects who were selected on the basis of how they illuminated both the range and the striking recurrence of the reparative aspect of becoming a parent.

Allen

Allen is the oldest interview subject. He is also one of the most articulate and psychologically-minded. There is a fierceness about his demeanor. His face often becomes rigid when he talks and expresses some deep pent-up anger and frustration that results in a forceful interpersonal style. But there is a pronounced vulnerable quality about Allen too; a vulnerability that appears almost childlike in its softness and innocence.

Throughout the interview, Allen contrasted the sense of stagnation he feels in his life with the feeling of renewal associated with having a child:

Interviewer: What do you most look forward to in being a father?

Allen: "I guess two things come to mind. One is reawakening a kind of immediacy and playfulness that is unintellectually complicated with this new being whose needs will be very direct and pure and wild and not so focused as all our lives become. And it's reawakening whole dimensions of my own life that have disappeared maybe. So there's an interest in seeing young children play. Or the direct and unmitigated love between a parent and a child."

Allen experiences having a child as a rebirth. Becoming a parent reawakens ways of being and seeing that atrophied in his adult life. Allen clearly identifies with a child's innocence and playfulness. The contrast he draws between adulthood and childhood,

the stolid, self-conscious adult versus the vital, spontaneous child, emanates from reflections about his father's life:

"In thinking of a full phase of a person's life, children are important. In my own father's life, who was an alcoholic administrator, very stuck in a lot of ways, I think about how much through us, through our own wildness-I'm in the arts and my brother's a religious person, how much he lived through us. So I think the idea of having a child is at every phase to go back and to be opened into life more fully."

Allen's identification with and perhaps idealization of the infant remains colored by his relationship with his own father. The phrase "unintellectually complicated" has special meaning for Allen as his father established a seemingly relentless work schedule as an academic and administrator:

"One of his colleagues thought he could be the first person to work, but he never in his life beat my father. He'd get there at 3 in the morning but my father's car would be in the lot. So we were raised with this. He would come home and wake us up for school, and it would be lunchtime for him. So by the end of the day, he would be tired and he'd drink. So he would get in this exhausted drunken state and be very ugly. He would be petty and mean."

Allen's identity as a performing artist represented a clear rejection of his father's world:

"The arts, which for me are so much an elaboration and an opening to the imagination and that kind of wildness and immediacy, were not a part of his life. His whole writing stuff-from reading his books- maybe it's my aversion to the social sciences. I was raised in that tradition and then had a complete falling out with the whole thing. Partly because I think to me the arts somehow captured what was missing from my father's life. But I understood his language and profession. He could tell me about what he was doing. But when I entered the arts, I think he thought I was wasting my mind. I think he said that to me."

But as Allen now works in an academic setting, the professional and personal distance between father and son has diminished in recent years:

"For all I resented about the academic life, I feel that it's actually a strong component of my lifestyle. In my own work, I feel that need to control that I felt in my father. To control the situation."

The experience of first rejecting and then entering his father's professional world and acknowledging important emotional similarities between them symbolized an emerging rapprochement with his father. And before his father died, Allen sensed a need for emotional reconciliation in his father:

"I think he was coming to a phase in his own career where he was feeling the limitations of all that he had done. He was I think more appreciative of my work and that dimension of life."

Unfortunately, his father's death prevented any extended discussion of changes occurring in their professional lives and/or their relationship. Nevertheless, Allen clearly experienced improved relations with his father prior to his death.

Allen appears ready to augment this reconciliation by utilizing his own prospective fatherhood to redefine the relationship with his deceased father. He imagines that the birth of his child would have engendered greater intimate contact with his father:

"I think that was another very sad thing when he died. Because we had been thinking in the last three or four years about having a child. And I think one of my positive motivations for having a child was actually a family one. That it would have brought the family closer together. But especially me to my father. I think he would have loved the child. He loved kids and I think he was getting more in touch with that part of his life- the world of the child where you don't have anything to accomplish or to do or control. So to share that with him, that kind of new energy and watch him be in that playful mode with the child, that would have been very exciting and wonderful for me."

As Allen wished that a child would enable him to become more spontaneous, he expresses a similar hope regarding his father. Allen

believes that having a child would restore a youthful spontaneity and wonder to his father's life and repair the emotional damage wrought by his stolid academic career.

Allen's desire to repair aspects of his father's life necessarily involved a reparation of the emotionally distant father/son relationship he experienced as a child. Allen's wish to resurrect a youthful spontaneity in his father would enable his father to soothe the emotional wounds Allen sustained as a child and as a young man and to communicate his approval of Allen's career choice as a creative artist. Seen this way, Allen's imagined reparation of his father remains bound up with a desire to repair the father/son relationship by establishing a greater intimacy between them.

Allen fantasizes that becoming a father would enable his own father to acknowledge and express a playfulness that he recalls his father only rarely displayed while alive. Having a child would make the nurturant father available to him once again.

As Allen elaborated:

Interviewer: As you become a father yourself, do you understand your father any differently?

Allen: "I think yeah. That would happen most in the area of- the kind of nurturing and playful concern that he must have had. That was a part of his personality that as a teenager, I didn't see in him very much. And I kind of missed it. So it's remembering that he would have had that. If he had been a grandfather it would have allowed me to see that in him again. Just watching him hold the baby. To provide and care for it."

As Allen becomes a father himself, he recaptures a strong positive image of his own father. His positive identification with his father comes from two distinct sources. Allen conjures up an

image of him raising two boys while aggressively pursuing an academic career and assuming both a father's and a mother's role after the death of his wife. As Allen observed:

Interviewer: What would you be like as a mother?

Allen: "I think I might have it in me. Maybe the example of my father. He had to be a mother in a way. He doesn't seem cut out to be the traditional image of the mother and nurturing. But somehow he made that work."

"I think I have more appreciation for the care and commitment he gave to me. I have much sympathy for what it was like to bring up two boys alone for all those years. I just can't even conceive of that. In the midst of a very busy, very full career. That's just an astounding undertaking. I'm sure it's going to seem more astounding as I become a parent myself."

Allen's relationship with his father remained characterized by emotional distance and lack of communication. This produced significant emotional wounds:

"It was always the sense with him, even when you were with him, that he had other projects going and all the balls were up in the air. And we were one of them. However, we felt we were very different and maybe one of the most important ones. I didn't feel that he didn't love me or think about me. But he had to do it within the context of his very busy life."

Allen imagines his father would recapture the personal qualities he cultivates in his artistic work. And this would represent further evidence of a father/son reconciliation. His father would be recognizing and validating Allen's aspirations in both his professional and personal life.

Understood this way, Allen's fantasized father/son reconciliation involves receiving respect and recognition from his father that remained tenuous while he was growing up. The reparation of the father and the father/son relationship appear bound up with

the need for some self-reparation; the need to heal some emotional wounds Allen sustained in their relationship.

As Allen imagines his child would restore spontaneity and child-like vitality to his father's life and enable him to appreciate Allen's artistic persona, the reparation of the father and the father/son relationship involve the use of his unborn child to effect a deeper validation of his identity as child/son and as an adult man. As Allen imagines his father's reaction, he confirms a semi-conscious hope that becoming a father will engender a sense of renewal, in his artistic work and perhaps in his marriage too, as he approaches midlife. The wish to repair his father and his relationship with him provide the means to effect a self-reparation, an emotional embrace of himself that he never consistently received from his father.

Tony

Tony is very direct and concrete in his answers to my questions. He is not very expressive or emotional.

Tony's parents have each been married and divorced four times. His parents were first divorced when he was four. After the divorce his father disappeared:

"My father's never really been there for anything. There was a period of time of two years after my parents were divorced and my father was still in the area. In that two year period, I probably didn't see my father when he was still in town. Actually, there probably was a ten year span in there when I didn't know who he was and he didn't know who we were- when I was probably 5 to 15."

As Tony talked about his father, I quickly became aware of his considerable yet unvoiced hurt and angry feelings:

"My father is just out for himself. He built his own little world and he's living in it. And now he wants us to be part of it. It's not that I dislike my father. He did what he did when he was 20, 21 years old. He left his wife and 3 kids. It's not his fault. It could have been my mother's fault. I wasn't there. I don't hold that against him but I don't have much good to say about my father because he's out for himself and only himself. He's built his own little world and he's got to live in it. And we're not part of it."

The experience of being abandoned by his father feels difficult to acknowledge and work through. Tony tries to gloss over his emotional pain with feeble attempts to rationalize why his father left. But ultimately these explanations fall short leaving him to contend with powerful angry feelings.

The lack of any redeeming positive identification with his father might generate anxiety about becoming a father himself. The absence of a constructive role model could produce feelings of uncertainty about how to be a good enough father for his own children. Yet, Tony's relationship with his father appears to have given him an indelible sense of what to avoid in being a father. He derives some emotional security from his conviction and desire to be a different kind of father. The blueprint of how not to be is clear in Tony's mind:

"I'm anxious to develop with my own son or daughter a relationship with them that I do know. He went off and made his own little world and did his thing. I can't fight or argue with him because I'm the same type of person. But I feel from what I do know that he just basically abandoned the situation and took off. And I don't think I could ever do that to somebody from what I have gone through."

Fortunately, Tony was not completely bereft of a compassionate male presence. One of the men his mother dated for several years,

and who Tony eventually worked for, became an important father surrogate:

"Well, Phil was there. I was interested in hockey and he was a trainer in hockey at the time. He got me involved. He took us places and did things with us. It was almost like they were married. If something was broke he fixed it. He was around."

So while his father disappeared, Phil provided a positive male presence in Tony's life. But Phil's role, and his mother's active participation and nurturance, could not undo the profound sense of loss and sadness Tony feels about his father's absence. Tony's difficulty expressing feelings represents an unconscious attempt to defend against the sadness and anger with a tight seal of emotional indifference: what he does not allow himself to feel cannot hurt him.

Given the extreme emotional distance between Tony and his father, it was interesting to learn how Tony replicated an important scene from his father's life. During the interview, he discussed how his mother became pregnant with his older brother before his parents were married. His mother's parents apparently disliked his father and the pregnancy represented the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back precipitating a rift between Tony's parents and his mother's family. Later in the interview, Tony described how he and his wife had been high school sweethearts but tension between him and his wife's parents ended the relationship. While they ultimately reunited, the parallel with his father's life remained striking. When I raised this similarity with Tony, he appeared amazed:

"Yeah, I never thought of that. I never really made that comparison. It's hard to compare. I don't know what my

father was like. The situation is definitely similar but I don't have all the facts in order to compare."

The emotional distance between father and son coupled with Tony's inability to closely examine his strong feelings about his father produces an emotional void. I sensed that Tony endeavored to fill this void and struggled to leave some passageway open to his father with actions rather than words and feelings. Tony's repetition of an important aspect of his father's life provided an important potential basis for understanding his father and enacted Tony's desire to remain connected to him. That is, an emotional connectedness hammered out through reenacted life experience. Tony's repetition of a painful event from his father's life illustrates a need to remain connected to his father without working through his powerful angry and hurt feelings.

The process of becoming a father provides an opportunity to establish closer ties with his father. Yet understandably, Tony experiences great difficulty imagining how the birth of his child will affect the relationship with his father:

"He may accept it and fall all over it. But if it involves changing his lifestyle to come out here and visit, I'm not holding my breath. He's not going to come out of his way to visit."

Yet when I asked him whether he would want his father to be an active grandfather, he replied:

"He's more than welcome to. And I would not hide my past from him. I would not say that he's a great father. I would think he's starting from ground zero and if he could play the role of a grandfather, that's fine."

However, he quickly added:

"I don't know if he could play any role. I don't know what to expect. It's different because he lives so far away

too. And you can't expect him to be here and visit all the time. But to visit and to write the kid a birthday card or anything. But my father doesn't have a lot of time for anybody but himself. And I really find it hard to believe that he would do what a typical parent or grandparent would do."

One can clearly detect an uneasy balance between the hope that his father will be more actively involved as a grandfather and the experience of his own childhood. Tony expresses both an underlying wish about his father's involvement and a sober assessment of his probable behavior.

Yet Tony's observations reflect a capacity to forgive his father's past and present transgressions. He remains open to the possibility of his father becoming a more active grandfather that will enable his father to create a meaningful relationship with both his son and grandson.

But Tony also communicated another important theme:

Interviewer: What would it be like to hand your baby to your father to hold for the first time?

Tony: "It would probably be like handing it to the next door neighbor as far as being my father versus somebody else. But probably the fact that he's getting some enjoyment out of what he missed. He's probably going to look back in his own life and say, geez, why did I screw up the way that I did?"

Tony hopes that the birth of his child will give his father pause to reflect and begin to feel remorse or regret. Clearly, Tony would like his father to feel his anger and hurt without having to directly communicate these feelings. Here again he would like to use actions to communicate what cannot be put into words. Tony would like to use his child's birth as a way of placing into his father feelings he cannot readily communicate to him. Yet alongside this,

Tony hopes that the birth will begin to repair his father's emotional wounds. As he elaborated:

"In a sense I hope he would feel some regret. Not that I'm trying to feel that he should for my sake. I think he needs to for his own sake. That would be a plus."

But I question whether Tony could allow his father to assume a more active role as grandfather without acknowledging and expressing his own anger about his father's inadequacies as father.

Nevertheless, his father's emotional absence provides a powerful contrast for Tony's sense of the kind of father he wants to be:

Interviewer: What do you think makes a good father?

Tony: "Someone who's there, who will share with you. I try to be more open. He was just so cold and he was gone. I don't think becoming a father makes me be like him at all. And I probably would never ever have a marriage end in divorce because I've seen too many of them end in divorce. And I've seen what people live without, meaning kids and wives and families."

Ultimately, Tony's fervent commitment and loyalty represents a self-reparative wish that he can create for himself, both in his relationship with his partner and in raising a family, what he never experienced as a child.

Clark

Clark is a very poised and articulate man. Yet he recognized his difficulty being self-reflective. He observed he does not usually get caught up "thinking about things" but just "plows ahead with his life". He revealed that he hoped the interview would help him "get in touch" with himself more.

Clark was raised by his mother and stepfather. He knows practically nothing about his biological father:

"We don't know anything about him. The children don't. My mother may, but I really don't think she does though. I suspect he was a hard drinking sailor of the old cartoon characters. And not much of a provider other than a financial provider."

Apparently, his father, a sailor, abandoned his wife and family when Clark was five. Yet, curiously, Clark expresses no interest in him:

"I think my stepfather has supplanted any role that my biological father was supposed to have played. If I hadn't been cognizant at age nine that my mother was getting married again, the man could very well be my father for all I really know. I haven't attempted to find out more about him. I move ahead in life. I don't try to dwell on things that are in the past. And it was so long ago."

While Clark's stepfather was physically present, he appeared to be an emotionally unavailable father. Clark described him as a martinet:

"With him rules are rules and you follow them and they are not bent. There are very few exceptions. He disapproved of tv and one of his edicts was we could only watch 4 hours of tv a week. And you had to sign up on sunday when the tv guide came what hours you were going to watch that week. Men were called sir and woman were called mam. We answered both my parents with, yes sir and yes mam and no sir and no mam."

Moreover, Clark's relationship with his stepfather produced considerable emotional anguish:

"You knew that he was disappointed in your behavior and that you had let him down if you had broken his trust. And after initially confronting you for what you did, he would become silent and allow you to stew in what you had done for several days. It wasn't uncommon to go 2 or 3 days and dad wasn't talking to you."

"He doesn't relate well to other people and I think he had difficulty dealing with sons. His positive emotions were forced. I could see that. Even when he said, we love you,

I felt even as early as 9 or 10 that he didn't really mean that. That he was saying it because it was what he was supposed to say."

Despite the anguish, despair and perhaps humiliation generated in his father/son relationship, Clark held out the hope of securing his father's approval. But this hope was ultimately dashed:

"I was a good kid. I got good grades and I had nice friends. I didn't steal cars and drive through the neighborhoods. It didn't really seem to satisfy him a whole lot."

Clark experienced moving away from his parent's house and becoming an adult as escaping the yoke of his father's control and domination:

"As your parents get older, you start taking care of them more and now you're the adult and I see a role reversal in our interactions. Though he resists it intensely. I do have opinions of my own now where before I would just parrot my father's philosophy. I've changed a lot, largely through the influence of my wife. And I've lived outside my parent's influence for 15 years now."

Moreover, he senses he has equalled and perhaps even surpassed his father in important ways:

"Now I realize that I do many things better than he does. And it's very gratifying. My father's not too handy. And I somehow acquired those skills over the last ten years. And he was amazed at the things we've done with our house. I think he's a bit jealous of that. He says, where did you learn to do this stuff?, I didn't teach you that. It's amazing that people can learn things that their fathers didn't teach them."

The intense rivalry here between father and son may stem from the fact that Clark is the oldest son from his mother's marriage. The two of them perhaps competed to be the man in his mother's life. Whatever the reason, Clark believed his father inhibited any expression of his independence. As a result, Clark imagines that the

birth of his child will represent another step in his quest to be recognized and accepted as an adult:

Interviewer: How do you think the birth of your baby will affect your relationship with him?

Clark: "It will further the demand that they accept me even further as an adult. I think that when you finally procreate yourself, the grandparents have to accept their children as adults because they can no longer look past it. It smacks you in the face, oh, now they have children and they're doing the same thing that we did therefore they're adults."

His comments suggest an intense father/son struggle involving recognition of Clark's status as an adult. Clark implies his father feels uneasy or perhaps threatened by his increased personal autonomy and responsibility as an adult and now as a parent. At the very least, Clark imagines the birth will provide his father with irrefutable evidence of his advancing age; that his generation is in decline. As Clark elaborated on his father's reaction to becoming a grandfather:

"I suspect that it will be a smack in the face of aging again to him. He likes to think he's youthful and keeps up playing tennis and does all these things. But being a grandfather puts you in another category and you just moved from being a parent to being a grandparent. I think that age once again is going to play a role there emotionally."

Clark's aggressive imagery involving a "smack in the face" reflects his struggle for recognition; a struggle that involves Clark's wresting parental responsibility and even a sense of potency as a man away from his father.

The latent but intrinsic aggressive dimension of becoming an adult and then a parent clearly outpaces the reparative aspect for Clark. In part, the potentially reparative gesture of parenthood

depends on the son's desire to make the parent an active grandparent.

Yet this is precisely what Clark hesitates to do:

"We have reservations about how much of a role we want the grandparents to have on this child because we have a lot of negative feelings about our parents. So there's much discussion in our house about how we are going to shield the child from the influences of the grandparents."

Interviewer: What do you imagine it will be like to physically hand over your child to your father to hold for the first time?

Clark: "Oh god. I suspect there will be a great fear and trepidation and anxiety that I have to do that. A major concern is what effect these people will have on my child. I don't want them to impart any of their negative qualities."

Clark's concern about his father's influence on his unborn infant underscores a need to circumscribe his father's role as grandfather rather than a need to utilize his child's birth as a way of repairing his father/son relationship or his own emotional wounds. I believe this emanates from his father's inability to accept the inevitable transformations wrought by Clark's transition to adulthood. I can imagine Clark's father stubbornly refusing to acknowledge how becoming an adult and a parent alters the nature and distribution of power between them. As Clark experiences his father's reluctance to recognize him as an adult, Clark's focus remains on exerting his own personal power against his father's parental authority. The continued father/son rivalry and the deep anger, hate and sadness this engendered over time continues to prevail over the need for reconciliation, reparation and forgiveness.

Walter

Walter is a quiet, serious and thoughtful man. His observations about his life were perceptive and evidenced clear psychological-mindedness. During the interview, his emotional reserve was occasionally punctuated by a boyish playfulness.

Walter's father and a younger sister died tragically in a fire when Walter was eight years old. This tragic incident has rarely been discussed between family members. The absence of any emotional dialogue reflects the traumatic impact of this event on the entire family.

A recurring theme in our interview involved Walter's concern about being a dependable and responsible father. This concern reverberates at some deep level against the experience of losing his father:

"I fear being the one who has to be in charge and to take care of someone who's absolutely dependent rather than to be the dependent one. Rather than being able to fall back on someone else, I'm the one who's going to be fallen back upon. I think it has to do with my personality. As a child, I was pretty fearful and shy and probably was very, very, very afraid of new experiences. I think that for me to be out there on my own without a safety net somehow is scary for me."

Walter asserts that being autonomous and responsible evokes images of aloneness and abandonment; of being without a safety net. The experience of moving forward in life without a safety net undoubtedly refers to his experience of being permanently separated from his father, of losing the security of a parent's protection. A child who experiences a sudden and traumatic permanent loss experiences the world as an unsafe and unpredictable place. In the

interview, Walter described himself as a timid child who was emotionally dependent on his mother. Implicitly, Walter understood if he lost his mother he would be psychically and physically orphaned. As Walter anticipates becoming a father, he worries that the trauma he endured will be transmitted to his child:

"I'm sure that a part of what I'm grappling with is how can I make sure that I am there for my child. Not insofar as what kind of a father my father was when he was around, but just to be around."

By remaining physically and emotionally available to his child, Walter will eventually become the father his own father never was. Consequently, some of the anxiety he experiences can be understood as a variant of unconscious survivor guilt: there is residual anxiety about surviving his father and living beyond his father's age.

The traumatic loss of his own father interferes with Walter's conscious identification with him. For instance, Walter was the only man who could not specify how becoming a father affected and/or altered his thoughts and feelings about his own father:

Interviewer: Have your thoughts or feelings about your father been affected in any way by becoming a father yourself?

Walter: "Nope. I've almost wished there would be something. But nothing has surfaced. So not to my knowledge but I'm sure that in the years ahead it will be one thing I'm working on internally. I think the denial that I have has in some ways been put into play during this pregnancy."

A salient issue for Walter appears to involve grieving his father's death so he can work through any guilt about surviving him and enjoy being a responsible father himself. An important way he might diminish his anxiety and guilt would be to consider his father as someone to identify with. Yet Walter's feelings about the loss of

his father are suspended. He remains unable to more deeply mourn his father's death and cannot readily internalize and identify with him.

The process of becoming a father might provide Walter with an opportunity to finally embrace both the need to keep his father alive inside himself, to appropriate his memory and identify with him in the service of assuming his own paternal role, and the need to finally mourn his father's death in the service of putting him at rest. As Walter described it, this had already begun in a vivid and uncanny fashion:

"I have educated myself about family history so that I know a lot more about my father's and my mother's families. And I've also gone to visit my father's grave. This is something that- it's indicative of how much this was put out of mind for everyone in the family. My mother has never been to the grave and my brother has never been. People didn't even know where he was buried. I had to do some digging around- isn't that an interesting choice of words? I had to do some exploring and investigating to find out. It was last fall that I went and visited his grave. So I have done some reconnecting with it and started to talk some with my mother and brother about it. I think more needs to be done. It's delicate and it has to go slow. But it almost seems paranormal. The best I can figure it, we may have conceived the week that I went there. So that I couldn't have known that she was going to be pregnant but it was almost at the exact time that I went to see his grave. I think it's more than coincidence. I don't know how to explain it, but there's some connection there. It was like closing one chapter and opening another."

Walter understands that making peace with his lost father requires "some digging around". His imagery is striking. The possible temporal coincidence between his visit to his father's grave and their child's conception attests to his father's continued emotional presence. It would appear that Walter excavates the memory of his father to receive a blessing for his own fatherhood. And this blessing may represent an important way of uncovering and

appropriating his father in the service of bolstering his own emerging paternal identity. Yet this process of excavating his father's memory may also refer to a process of burial, of finally putting his father to rest, enabling Walter to move forward with his life more vigorously.

Walter struggles with his ability to provide a safety net he needs to embrace adult and parental responsibilities; to be a father to himself. Yet the prevailing paternal image Walter has is of an unreliable protector; a figure who can easily disappear. Walter worries that he too will be unreliable, placing his child at risk to replicate important aspects of his own childhood trauma. The need to appropriate his father's memory by more fully mourning his death might enable Walter to keep alive an important emotional connection to his father and repair some of the emotional wounds suffered when he died. This could engender a safer identification with his father and bolster a more secure sense of his own ability to father. Ideally, this would strengthen Walter's capacity to provide what he never received in his own childhood: to be a physically and emotionally present father to his children.

Sean

Sean gives the impression of being a vulnerable young man. The great emotional and physical distance between him and his family appears to leave him deeply angry, hurt, bewildered and isolated.

Sean's memories of growing up focus around a traumatic divorce between his parents that occurred while he was in high school. Sean

suspects his father had been having affairs before the marriage ended. But the discovery of his father's infidelity and the subsequent divorce had a lasting emotional impact on him and his mother:

"I went through this major traumatic change when the divorce happened. I'm still very close to her [his mother]. We both realize that we've been through a lot."

"When my family broke up and my parents separated, things really fell apart. It destroyed a part of me and I hope to keep my sanity by having a close family."

As Sean elaborates, what got destroyed was an image of his father as a person he could admire and positively identify with:

"Something that might help you understand why I feel about my father is what happened after they were divorced. He immediately started seeing a woman that I feel- I'll never know- that he was seeing while he was married to my mother. And then he dated some other people and then married again. And I really felt like he was marrying these women for their money. And at that time I really perceived my father as this wicked individual."

His powerful negative feelings about his father generate a disturbing image of his own role as father:

"As the child gets older to being an adolescent and feels they're in charge of their life, I'm afraid that they'll turn away from me at that point. I'm afraid of rejection by my children because I have a great sense of loss about the relationships in my family and what happened to them."

Sean fears that the unresolved conflict in his own father/son relationship will undermine his relationship with his children and result in a disastrous repetition of his troubled history. In light of Sean's considerable anxiety about recreating his relationship with his own father, one can readily understand his desire to engineer a rapprochement with him:

Interviewer: What's the fondest memory you have of your father?

Sean: "Probably just the fact that at this point I've reestablished ties with him. And the fact that he's been so receptive in wanting to be closer. That's the thing that sticks out in my mind as being the most important thing that I have to hold onto."

During the interview, Sean acknowledged that the timing of his overture to his father coincided approximately to the conception of his child. Sean's gesture affords his father access to the changes occurring in his life and enables him to assume a more active role with his son and grandson. Moreover, Sean believes that having a child will signal entry to adulthood and transform the basis of his father/son relationship:

"Having a child is responsibility and responsibilities aren't for kids. Raising a child is one of the biggest things in life for most people. I think that it's definitely going to be adding the sense that my life is gone to a new stage. And I hope that it will mature the relationship that we [he and his father] have in a positive sense."

Sean associates his father's acknowledgment of his adult status with being accepted as his father's equal. And Sean imagines this will engineer a solidarity between them as men and as fathers:

"I'll be able to identify with him more because it's something that we have in common, which is very nice. Because being very close to my father and having a common tie with something like being a father is very good. It's definitely adding a lot of interest [on his part] to the relationship that I have with him."

In effect, the common experience of raising a family bridges the distance between father and son. Sean hopes that the birth of his child will promote greater mutual positive regard between him and his father. Presumably this may enable Sean to resurrect a more positive image of his father that he can appropriate for his own identity as a father.

But what about Sean's anger and resentment towards his father? Does this newfound solidarity and intimacy preempt these darker feelings? As Sean explains:

"Once I reestablished ties with him, I pretty much decided that either I could reestablish ties with him and try to develop a normal relationship or I could keep hanging on to these things which are still very real and still hurt to think about. These are things that I can remember him by and they're not very pleasant. But it was drawing a line at that point and saying I could put it aside and try to develop something which would hopefully have positive implications for him and I."

While Sean acknowledges the continued existence of his anger and sadness, their intensity threatens to overwhelm any effort at improving relations with his father. As a result Sean needs to put them aside.

Sean feels he cannot hold both his loving reparative feelings, that prompted him to initiate contact with his father, and his hate.

Yet as he continues to recognize his unresolved emotional pain, he does not appear to want a closer relationship in the service of undoing their troubled history. Rather, Sean wants to suspend these feelings somewhere within himself. He wants to seal them over and expend his emotional energies in creating a more satisfying relationship with his father.

Despite Sean's loving intentions, he appears to remain aware of some aggressive implications of becoming a parent on relations between him and his father:

"As far as grandparents go, I'm afraid that when they find out that they're a grandparent, that it's another one of those shockers that I am getting older and that life is passing by. I hope to see him get a great deal of satisfaction out of being a grandparent. But then there's also a small side of me that's worried about the way that I think I might feel when I become a grandparent. And the

way that I think it affects some people- the fact that they're not ready for hearing someone call them a grandparent yet."

So while it will be exciting to present his father with a grandchild, Sean remains aware that making his father a grandfather provides evidence of his advancing age:

Interviewer: What do you imagine it will be like handing your baby to your father to hold for the first time?

Sean: "I think it will be really emotional. I can almost see myself crying. Just the devastating reality of the whole situation, the reality of me giving my father my child."

Sean's depiction of the scene as "devastating" captures both the sense of a profound emotional impact and the metaphorical destruction of his father as father. Sean believes that the child could deliver a narcissistic blow to his father. The child represents, in Sean's mind, concrete evidence of his father's aging and his generational decline. Yet it remains unclear whether Sean's statements reflect his father's vulnerability or his own projected anger and hate, or, most likely, both. Sean's aggressive and hateful feelings also surfaced as a concern about the baby's welfare and his own personal safety:

"I worry about something going wrong physically. I started getting worried that something will happen to the baby once it's in my care, that the baby will be injured. Dropping the baby or something awful happening. Also, I do a lot of rock climbing and I worry that something would happen. And you're afraid that you invite it and then you'd be out of the picture and not be able to participate [as a father] in the same way that you would have."

While Sean's concerns reflect the appropriate anxiety of a prospective father, his imagery expresses an identification with his father's aggressive and destructive behavior. In effect, injuring

the baby would replicate the traumatic separation effected by his parent's divorce. But these images also represent sublimated forms of aggression against his father and turned towards the only available objects: his helpless baby and himself. This becomes necessary as he attempts to seal over and obviate any direct expression of his anger towards his father.

Sean focuses on rehabilitating his father's role as father and his own positive image of him. For Sean, the fear of losing his father altogether and the ego strength generated by a positive identification with him, and of being engulfed by the intensity of his own aggression, seemingly contradicts and outweighs the desire for a deeper working through of the emotional wounds sustained in the father/son relationship and thus a deeper self-reparation.

Ira

Ira is droll and sarcastic. He uses humor and logical, rational thinking to ward-off intense and frightening feelings and memories.

Ira's family life appears to have been bleak and horrifying. The family pivoted around his mother, who Ira described as "manipulative" like "Eva Peron". She would fly into unpredictable and terrifying rages against him and his brother:

"She would say that we were killing her and that she was going to die. She said that we were a miserable 9 year-old and 7 year-old. Scum of the earth. She would just get into rages and furies. But the main thing she would do is yell at you. Get you in the corner and give you a continual lecture for 20, 30, 40 or 50 minutes. And I would try to visualize her as no bigger than one of the panels on the wall."

Ira describes his father as "aloof and semi-detached". He remained unable, perhaps unwilling, to protect Ira from the intense emotional distress and fear his mother caused. Ira blames his mother for undermining the relationship with his father:

"I just got the feeling that he would get home and my mother would tell him what my brother and I did wrong that day. And he was the discipline guy and he would say, what did you do wrong? And I was resentful of my mother because she would ruin the evening with my father. He listened to the most reasonable person, in this case my mother, and he made his decision accordingly."

On a deeper level, he feels anger and resentment towards his father for being unable or unwilling to defend him against his mother's rages:

"He didn't know what a horror show was going on with my brother and my mother. He didn't really want to know. He doesn't believe me. I told him that I considered that my brother and I were abused children and he immediately reported that to my mother and some years later she just brought it out, ha, ha, ha, you say you were abused, what nonsense, ha, ha, ha."

While Ira acknowledged harboring angry feelings towards his father, he also noted his father appeared anxious to bury the past:

Interviewer: Do you still feel angry or upset at your father?

Ira: "Yes. But things have gradually gotten better over the last ten years. There's been a decision by everyone not to display old feelings. My father's mostly of the opinion that emotions of the past should be given a funeral. Should be buried. He doesn't really understand why it's sometimes hard to do."

The presence of charged negative feelings associated with his mother contrasts vividly with the bland reflections about his father:

Interviewer: What's the earliest memory you have of your father?

Ira: "I think something to do with a moving day. I was playing with a ball. I was about three or four. Just bouncing the ball.

Any feelings associated with the memory?

Ira: "No." Laughs.

What's the fondest memory you have of your father?

Ira: "Playing baseball with him in the backyard. Playing catch. I didn't spend that much time with him. I didn't feel close with him."

It remains easier to depict the empty emotional space between father and son than to closely examine the deeply felt anger and resentment about being emotionally abandoned by him. As Ira conveys the remarkable blank space between them, he communicates some agreement that "emotions of the past should be given a funeral". Yet these deeper feelings had a way of resurfacing during our interview. When I inquired what Ira feared most about being a father, he replied:

"I'm worried that the baby's going to cry all the time. And be miserable and get a miserable start psychologically and get the feeling that the world is a place alternating between fear and horror by crying all the time. There are kids who do cry all the time."

Ira's anxiety about his unborn child reflect the painful and horrifying content of his own childhood. But the sense of horror appears too profound to consciously appropriate as his own. Rather, they are displaced onto his unborn child. Ira's concern exemplifies how an unborn fetus functions as a safe receptacle for the parents' unwanted anxieties and feelings. Ideally, these feelings can be acknowledged, experienced and accepted as the parent's own as the child develops. The fact these feelings are barely acknowledged in Ira's family clearly contributed to the fear and terror Ira

experienced as a child and the concern he feels about his parents' impact as grandparents:

Interviewer: Has your father talked about becoming a grandfather?

Ira: "No. He thought probably- (laughs) he walks through and doesn't know what's going on. Walks on out again."

Interviewer: What kind of a grandfather do you imagine him to be?

Ira: "Oh, to be a grandfather is easy. All you have to do is to be reasonable and the kids will get to know you as a dispenser of affection and toys. So he'll be a great grandfather. My mother I'm terrified of exposing my child to."

Ira's reflections about his own parents as grandparents amount to a repetition of his own childhood experience: a semi-detached father and a terrifying mother. But Ira's sardonic description of being a grandfather thinly conceals his anger. His father will perform well as a grandfather as long as he remains a "dispenser" of gifts. The demand for greater involvement will produce the semi-detached, emotionally absent figure he experienced as a child. As Ira elaborated:

Interviewer: What thoughts and feelings do you imagine he will have receiving your baby to hold?

Ira: "Don't let me drop this baby. I think he would be- don't let me drop it. Yes, yes, yes, you're a nice baby, you're going to cry if I hold you for too long. I better hand you to the nearest available woman which will be my mother."

Ira imagines his father will have difficulty "holding" the baby just as he remained unable, in Ira's experience, to hold, contain and express much feeling and provide much safety during Ira's childhood.

The possibility for reparation between father and son appears slight as there remains no real possibility of using the birth as a

way of bridging the existing void between father and son and no acceptable outlet for the expression of Ira's hostile feelings. Moreover, Ira depicts family members as being locked into playing out and repeating their assigned roles. He most clearly expressed this while discussing his relationship with his mother:

Interviewer: Did your relationship change with your mother as you grew older?

Ira: "No. It got papered over successfully. More and more layers of paper. Less contact and the contacts are more choreographed. You can write the conversations ahead of time. Each side not wishing to provoke an enormous nasty scene. So it usually works out."

The apparent safety offered through scripted and lifeless family interactions actually entails a profound emotional cost. If we fail to acknowledge and work through dysfunctional modes of interaction, they continue to wield an oppressive power in the form of our attitudes and feelings about ourselves and our place in the world. Accordingly, when imagining himself as a father, Ira painted a disturbing repetition of his father's behavior:

Interviewer: If you were to imagine handing your baby over to your father to hold for the first time, what do you think you'd be thinking and feeling?

Ira: "Jesus, I don't know. I can't picture myself giving it to my father for the first time. I picture my partner giving it to my father. I'm not even in the picture. Laughs. It's a walk through. I'm detached to some degree and I'll always detach- I have a feeling of walking through and holding the baby and playing."

The birth of Ira's baby does not represent an opportunity for reparation as family members remain embedded in their scripted roles. Ira's inability to express and work through his aggressive feelings reflects his parent's prohibition. In Ira's experience, his father remains bent on burying the past while his mother denies the past

altogether. But the past looms as a powerful spectre influencing the shape of present and future family interaction.

Ira's bottled aggression and hate, coupled with the continued repetition of dysfunctional family roles, provide a very real and disturbing basis for the fear about his child being as inconsolable as he appeared to be in his own childhood.

Joel

Joel is a soft-spoken, sensitive and thoughtful man. Yet occasionally I experienced him as somewhat controlling and had difficulty creating room for myself in our conversation.

When Joel discussed his deceased father, he seemed acutely aware that his father had been disappointed in him:

"I suppose the thing that I'm most anxious about in my relationship with my father is that I had two older brothers and both of them were very smart and did well in school and went on to be engineers which I think he was impressed by. Both were very physically active and grasped concepts. Also, my father was an avid sailor. We'd go sailing and my brothers were much more ambitious about that than I was. So I think he was a little bit let down by the fact that I wasn't as active and I wasn't as smart as my brothers."

Joel's vivid childhood memories often evoked the same powerful theme:

"When I was a real little kid, I used to cry a lot and everybody gave me trouble about that. I wasn't really good at dealing with pain or fear so I'd cry a lot. One time we were playing some game on the lawn and my dad was doing something and I kind of cowered because I thought he was going to hit me with whatever he was doing- a ball or his arm. He got really angry that I was afraid of him and he came over and he slapped me. And I ran into the house. It was his birthday and I ran into the house crying and told him, well, happy birthday, and ran off. I guess I go back

to that every time I think of some instance where he might be disappointed in me."

A salient theme of Joel's memories involves competing with his brothers for and being unable to secure his father's approval. Yet Joel also appears to have deeply feared his father. In Joel's story, one senses he ran back into the house to be comforted by his mother; Joel felt safer to remain with her rather than to venture out and incur his father's wrath. This may suggest an oedipally tinged rivalry between Joel and his father and the related fear of his father's reprisal. Another possibility is that Joel projected his own anger about not receiving his father's approval onto his father. Joel depicts his father's inability to be empathically attuned to his fear and reticence as a focal point of his childhood anxiety. These interpretive strands highlight a vivid contrast between a passive, cowering and sensitive little boy and a virile and menacing father.

However, during the last years of his father's life, Joel noted their relationship changed. Joel believed that his becoming involved with and then getting engaged to his wife transformed his father's view of Joel's life:

"The last years were really good because I met my wife and my parents really loved her. They really like her a lot because she has a great sense of humor too and she's just a very fun loving person. My father really appreciated having her around. Also, I think he really thought that she was a good influence on me. I was doing better in school and I was doing the things that I really like to do and I think he just felt like I was growing up at that point when I met her."

In the interview, Joel discussed his own deep longing for his father only after he acknowledged the shift in his father's feelings:

"He didn't make it to our wedding. He died a few months before our wedding. But he was very happy when we announced our engagement. He was happy. I think we were as close- I didn't share things with him, I didn't talk about my problems with him as much as I really would have liked to. I'd love to have him around so I could do that. But I just feel like he had more respect for me these last years. He knew that I was going to be ok. That I was growing up."

This interview sequence, involving a discussion of his father's approval followed by acknowledging his own longing for his father, replicated Joel's actual experience with his father. His father's increased availability enabled Joel to articulate his own emotional needs and initiate a reparation of the father/son relationship.

The connection between securing his father's approval and involving him in his life provided a context for Joel's speculations about how the baby would affect his father/son relationship. Joel believed his father would experience his baby as a significant achievement:

"He'd be proud that I did this. That I had gotten over those obstacles that were slowing me down as a teenager. He would think that I was doing the right thing having a child. I think he would be proud of that, that I'm experimenting with life."

Joel imagines presenting the child as evidence of his ability to assume adult challenges and responsibilities. Having a baby would represent an instance of proving his virility as a man: a man capable of standing up to his father as an equal. This is critical in light of Joel's observations about his father's physical prowess and professional success. In Joel's reflections, his father assumes a larger than life status. One senses Joel idealized his father as the kind of man a boy should grow up to be. Yet his father generated fear and anxiety. He provided a male role model Joel felt he could

never successfully rival or equal. However, becoming a father oneself represents evidence of being like his father. So Joel imagines that having a child would soften his father's disappointment and his own personal sense of inadequacy.

The birth of Joel's child represents an opportunity to cement a positive identification with his father, as both a father and as an adult man. Moreover, Joel believes this would engender a deeper emotional reconciliation between father and son:

Interviewer: How do you think the birth of your baby would have affected your relationship with your father?

Joel: "I think it would bring us a lot closer. I think he would find more time to be with me now because he would want to see his grandchild. I know he would be really excited about having a grandchild. I think we'd be closer. I think maybe we would be able to run through some of the things that we were meaning to talk about. If I come across problems with my kid, perhaps I'd share with him the problems that I'm having and we would go back to my life or maybe even go back to his life as a child. Figure those things out and I would learn things from and about him in that process."

One of the interesting aspects of Joel's observations involves his "use" of his father as a source of expertise and knowledge without it producing a threat to his status as a son or as a man and/or resulting in a diminished sense of himself. Rather, Joel imagines that having a child would provide a different relationship characterized by greater access to his father as a person. Joel would get to learn about his father's personal experiences as a father and as a son.

But as Joel painted an idealized picture, I wondered whether he envisioned discussing the emotional wounds sustained while experiencing his father's disappointment and anger. It remained

clear that Joel internalized his father's critical evaluations and this continued to undermine his self-esteem. The competition with his more favored older brothers and nagging self-doubt about his professional and personal success remain unresolved issues:

"I guess the other thing that depresses me a little bit is that neither of my brothers are interested in having children. Especially my oldest brother. He just doesn't want to have anything to do with it because he's on a yuppie track and wants to make a lot of money and do a lot of things. He sees children as impeding. And I do share that a little bit and I guess that's what bothers me. Am I doing the right thing?, I'm not going to be like my brother if I have this child."

The personal recognition Joel received during the last months and years of his father's life, and imagined having after the baby's birth, are critical to the sustained development of his identity as an adult and as a father. However, these must now be matched by Joel's effort at self-reparation. I sense that an important and unresolved aspect of this work involves defining and pursuing professional and personal goals and coming to terms with the aggressive and hateful dimensions of assuming this responsibility. That is, how defining oneself as an adult and making commitments in the proverbial areas of work and love ever-increasingly usurps parental responsibility and carries one away from one's family of origin. This appears especially loaded for Joel because his father's disappointment in him generated powerful angry feelings. The need to assert himself as an adult man, rather than remain a cowering, ineffectual child, appears fraught with charged envious and rivalrous aggressive overtones and meanings.

Randy

Randy speaks with a loud resonant voice and is quite gregarious and extroverted. He also appears to be earnest and sincere. Yet during the interview, I sensed Randy remained afraid of or disturbed by unvoiced shame and anger. I kept imagining how scary it would be to experience his booming voice bellowing at me in anger.

In Randy's experience, his late father epitomized the career military man:

"He was a real mean guy. A career air force sergeant. And while I always respected him, I always feared him too."

At times, his father's harsh behavior became irrational and unpredictable:

"He had this kind of mentality- this sums it up- my brother would do something to me and I'd go running to my parents and say, George [his brother] did this to me. And my dad would say, well, do you think your brother should get a beating and I'd say yes. And then he'd beat the shit out of me. So that's the kind of logic I was dealing with. I never knew what to expect. I don't want to be that way with my children."

And these angry outbursts often humiliated him:

"He didn't abuse me. He humiliated me. He made me feel like shit but he didn't abuse me. He poured milk over my head when I was three years old. Maybe even younger. I was always a milk fanatic. I still am. I was sitting there screaming for my milk and he picked it up and poured the whole thing over my head. And that pretty much says it all. He would humiliate me in front of my friends. He would give me spankings in front of my friends."

Randy understands his father's insensitivity as emanating from his abusive relationship with his own father:

"I've come to understand in the last few years that he had a terrible relationship with his father. I never did meet my grandfather. It was the same deal. I guess his father just beat the living daylights out of him. He was abused."

But no matter how profound and true his understanding runs, the deep emotional scars remain. Unfortunately, his father's recent death shortcircuited a process of increasing intimacy between father and son, leaving important relationship issues unresolved:

"I always had a lot of trouble wondering if he had any respect for me at all. And towards the end I thought he did. He never told me he loved me until he died."

Yet despite the personal difficulties between them, Randy never stopped longing for his father's recognition and approval:

"I've always been an artist. And he was a career serviceman. So he wanted me to be too. I'm sure he had other things in mind that were a lot better than musician or artist. That's where our problem really took off, when I was about 18 or 19. We really hated each other. But towards the end we got together and he saw some of my art work and he heard me play once in a while. He indirectly let me know that I had his approval. And it was nice. It made me feel good."

Moreover, Randy managed to salvage a positive image of his father by transforming a disturbing trait into something admirable:

"He was always a big fearful type of individual. The type of guy you would be proud to say is your dad in one way and scared to in another. I did always look up to him for the way he would bear himself. He was a very proud man. And I'd like to make sure I do the same thing."

But what about the profound shame of being humiliated by his father in front of family and friends?; what about the intense anger and hatred generated by his father's seemingly arbitrary use of physical punishment? A more extensive consideration and working through of these experiences give way to a rationalization or even exoneration of his father's harshness. As Randy observed:

"That's what I've come to understand lately. That was his way of trying to teach me what he gave value to. Some of the things he valued and he wanted me to value and the way he would try to teach me was the hard way. He felt everything had to be learned the hard way. You couldn't learn anything the easy way. I think that's what he was

trying to do. He was trying to teach me the hard lessons so I would remember."

While Randy continues to struggle with making sense of the irrational quality of his father/son relationship, he appears to be generating a stronger positive image of his father that he can perhaps use in establishing his own paternal identity. As Randy elaborated:

"I think that's one thing that I did sort of understand about him towards the end and now that I'm going to become a father- that he wasn't really, he didn't mean to be nasty, he was trying to give me lessons. It was his way of teaching."

While his attempt to exonerate his father takes precedence over staying in touch with and working through the emotional distress wrought by his father/son relationship, he does not deny or rewrite his painful memories. He remains quite clear about wanting to establish a different relationship with his own children:

"I'd like to make up for some of the mistakes my father made. Or at least not make the same mistakes. I hope that I've learned something from our relationship. Another thing, I think he could have spent more time. Even if he was a bastard it wouldn't have mattered to me at that time. I just wanted to be with him more. So I figure the more time I can spend and influence in a positive way- that's another thing he made a mistake with- there wasn't any positive reinforcement- so that would be one influence I'd like to have."

"I just see myself as the kind of dad that kids will want to hang out with, where I didn't have that with my father. And I want to make up for that."

Randy's desire to be a different kind of father remains inextricably bound up with images of his unrequited longing for his own father. Implicitly, he identifies himself with his unborn child and by imagining a more satisfying relationship with his children,

Randy effects a reparation of the emotional wounds he endured while growing up.

However, the impending birth also strengthens an identification with his father. As Randy noted:

"Having a baby just makes me think about maybe what he thought about. I try to put myself in his place. And the same sort of worries about money and just having a family. Being able to deal with all the problems and the things that are bound to come up with children. It makes me wonder how he felt about it. Maybe that we're the same in a lot of ways, as far as what we're going through."

And as Randy elaborated, this identification produces a greater sense of equality between him and his father:

"He must have felt some of the same things that I'm feeling and so it's the very first time that I can put us on that same plane. That I know we felt the same way about certain things. I know we are going through a similar thing. He went through three wars and I never even had to consider dealing with something like that. It makes me feel that we're on par that way and that maybe some of the things he did were lessons that helped me."

After being subjected to his father's arbitrary and humiliating use of parental authority, I sense that considering himself his father's equal represents a personal emancipation. But at what cost to the memory of his father?: How would he respond to the challenge of accepting his son as an equal?; to palpable evidence of his advancing age?; would he relinquish, share, or tenaciously defend his authority and identity as a father? These critical questions remain unanswered and this imbues Randy's commentary about his father/son relationship with nagging uncertainty and sadness.

These feelings contrast with his discussion of the baby's impact on his mother:

"I think it's something she's been anticipating for years. She's ready. She wants a grandchild. She wants to be a

grandmother. She just lost her mother last year. So this is maybe making up for an emotional gap that she's been having. So she's been really positive about the whole thing."

The loss of his mother's mother, preceded by the loss of her husband suggests that an important consequence of having a child will be to offset the experience of death in the family. Moreover, it appears clear that having a grandchild will create a new love object and purpose and meaning in life for his mother. In this sense, Randy's child will effect a reparation of his mother's life.

The use of the baby to repair the emotional pain of separation and loss connects the baby's impact on Randy's relationship with each parent. When he elaborated his fantasies about relating to his children, Randy's thoughts drifted back beyond his child's birth and his own childhood to the sadness and pain of his father's youth:

"I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that we have a good relationship. And I really hope they feel that at least I did the best job I could. And even though I do have problems about my father, I do feel like he did the best job he could. That he was trying. The way it turned out wasn't probably the way he expected it to. But maybe he expected it to turn out the way it turned out for him and his dad. My guess would be he thought it would be worse. So I just hope I don't make those same mistakes."

Randy's comments highlight the emotional thread binding together his desire to have a different relationship with his children and the concurrent identification with his father. Both point to different aspects of the same process of self-reparation. Being a different father repairs the emotional wounds of his childhood. His identification with his father establishes an important bridge between father and son and satisfies some of the profound longing for his father's acceptance. But Randy's observations illuminate yet

another important reparative theme. As we repair our own emotional wounds sustained as children and as sons, we necessarily come across our father's pain and sadness that we have taken inside of us. To repair ourselves, we necessarily attempt to repair our fathers too.

Brian

Initially, Brian appeared to be quite wary of my questions but gradually he relaxed during the interview. He warded off his anxiety with a smart-alecky sense of humor and an inflated sense of self-importance. While mostly pleasant, he occasionally expressed irritation with me if I did not understand what he was saying.

Brian describes his father as being uninvolved in his upbringing:

"He does not involve himself with family and I don't think he involves himself very much with other people. He keeps to himself. He's so obsessed with his work. So he wasn't one of the big influences on me. If anything, his uninvolvedness was a bigger influence."

When I asked Brian about the earliest memory of his father, his response captured the essence of what he wanted to communicate about his father/son relationship:

"The earliest memories I have of him are at the dinner table. I remember the place and the dinner table. That's probably where I saw him. He'd come home late and I'd be in bed an hour and a half later. He used to play classical music on the hi-fi during dinner. I remember the family arguing. Not my father, he was never involved. Arguments between my mother and everybody else."

The emotional and physical contact between father and son remained slight. The charged social interactions pivoted around Brian's mother.

Brian also reflected on a troubling and difficult adolescence that generated conflict in the family and strained an already distant father/son relationship:

"I think he was disappointed in me. I can't think of exact instances but that was the feeling. That I wasn't a great scholar or a great student. Or I wasn't an athlete. I was involved with drugs and I was slobby."

The relationship patterns established during Brian's childhood, with an uninvolved and disappointed father and an intrusive and dominant mother, appear operative in his adult life too. On the one hand Brian and his mother share a professional business practice. This professional arrangement increases the time they spend together and raises, as it did during Brian's childhood, boundary issues regarding the relative separateness of Brian's personal life:

"She wants to control areas of my life she really has no- actually, she's pretty good with me at this point. Of course I work with her so everything's relative. I suppose if I were further away- but she does like to be involved."

"We still argue occasionally and we occasionally revert back to mother and son, except now occasionally we revert back to father and daughter. She needs to be reined in on occasion. Although some of the old habits are more likely to come up than the new ones."

Brian experiences the partnership with his mother to be professionally productive and rewarding. Yet this business arrangement also appears to sustain an enmeshed personal relationship between them. As Brian observed:

Interviewer: Do You experience your mother as less controlling or intrusive now?

Brian: "I do but you should talk to my wife. It's hard to tell because I spend so much time with her. I don't see her as being intrusive. Maybe I've just become used to it. Or maybe she's less. Or maybe she sees so much of me that for the normal mother/son relationship she would be

considered intrusive. But with the quantity of time it just blends in. My wife may have a different opinion."

The lack of clear personal boundaries between mother and son surfaced when Brian discussed his unborn child's impact on his mother/son relationship:

"I think it will be helpful. She will want to become very involved. That's essentially clear to me now. She jokingly refers to it as her child. She's expressed an interest in having the kid come to the office and babysit. She wants to take grandmaternity leave, which is another joke in the office- which she's not going to do."

Brian's belief that he can manage his mother's controlling and intrusive proclivities does not begin to address how their business partnership reactivates or reinforces unclear personal boundaries between them. His mother's humor about the baby is a clear and striking illustration of an unsettling lack of boundaries. However, Brian insisted he remained aware of this sensitive theme:

"I'm hypersensitive to the distance between my mother and myself because we work together. And I want to make it clear that- to me, if nobody else, if not the world, that she doesn't run my personal life."

However, Brian does not address how the relative lack of boundaries between mother and son reverberates against his desire to be father and business "partner" to his mother.

The emotional charge present in Brian's relationship with his mother contrasts with the ongoing distance in his father/son relationship. For instance, I asked Brian whether he ever discussed his professional partnership with his father. Brian observed that:

"He and I never talked about that specifically but he's been generally supportive as far as I can tell. I think he likes it. He approves- I know he approves. I think he likes it- it's interesting for him. But no, we never confront- I'm going to confront him on issues other than that. We never deal directly on that level."

Yet despite the relative lack of communication, Brian reported that in recent years they have gradually established a functional reconciliation:

"In college when I started to come around, when I started to calm down, to become career oriented and becoming more serious and communicative, I saw him reaching out a little bit. He tried a little harder. Slowly the facade, the father image melted away. For a few years I was angry with him and now I'm not angry. He's a nice guy. Now he wants to be pleasant- he really does work at it the best he can."

The experience of becoming a father provides an opportunity to consolidate the reparation of the father/son relationship:

"I think it forces you to reexamine your relationship with your father. To discover what mistakes he's made so you don't do them and hopefully to adopt those things that he does well. It will also give a new empathy from my part to my father- to what he was going through."

This leaves unanswered how his father will react to the baby's birth. In an important sense, a father's acceptance of his identity and role as grandfather sanctions the reparative gesture of parenthood. When a father assumes this new role, he signals his desire to remain available as a source of expertise and advice to his son and affection and gifts to the grandchild. By maintaining an active presence in his son's life, he can represent a source of continuing identification as a father.

Yet despite the increased good will between Brian and his father, his father's availability as a grandfather remains unclear. Brian's fantasy about handing his child over to his father clearly expressed this uncertainty:

"I will be curious to see how he handles it. I suppose A if he wants to- I'm not sure he will- and B how he relates to it. I think he'll be a little anxious. Feeling of being watched- I think he'll feel self-conscious. The

other thing that's going on is that he's retiring or slowing down. So he'll have more time and I assume that he'll be interested, although he's not interested in my nephews. But one of them is very difficult. I like to think that he'd take an interest in my kid."

His father's lack of interest or involvement may seriously limit the reconciliation between father and son. Moreover, their apparent inability to discuss intimate and difficult emotional issues suggests that Brian may have to shoulder the burden of working through the emotional wounds sustained in the father/son relationship.

Another important issue involves the continued impact of Brian's business partnership on his father/son relationship. When I asked Brian who initiated the increased closeness between himself and his father, his mother's presence loomed large. It appeared that the rapprochement effected between father and son remained at least partially brokered by Brian's relationship with his mother:

Interviewer: Who initiated the increased closeness between you and your father?

Brian: "I think it was unspoken. I don't think either one of us initiated it. But since I work with my mother in the same office, the intense contact between my mother and myself necessarily meant that he was going to spend more time with me too. And he is comfortable with that. He likes that. He sees me as a friend and as an ally."

Brian's alliance with his father derives from his continued intense relationship with his mother. One could conclude that any further intimacy between father and son will unfold only as the personal boundaries between mother and son become more clearly drawn and maintained. Brian's need for more contact with his father in the service of generating a more positive image of him and bolstering his self-confidence as a father, might prompt him to insist on more clearly defined personal boundaries with his mother.

Kevin

Kevin is a lively and gregarious young man. He exudes a boyish charm and seemed to be very willing and ready to discuss any issue I raised.

When Kevin talks about his recently deceased father, he quickly expresses the love and devotion he feels. Moreover, his father assumes an idealized stature:

"He had electricity at work. He had more friends than I and my brothers and sisters could ever have. At work everybody loved him. He was the boss and they'd want to work for him. And he could set that same fireworks at home. We'd all be in a great mood when he was home because it would be, "dad's home" and he'd always have something planned for us. He'd have things planned for us every night."

His father's emotional and physical presence was considerable during Kevin's childhood and early adolescence:

"Ninety percent of the time he was my number one friend. We would do everything. Go out and play ball or watch a game or rent a movie. He was my best friend. I would do ten thousand more things with him than I would do with my best friend at work or school."

And Kevin's discussion of the fondest memory of his father revealed that his idealization of him stretched at least back to early adolescence:

"I think one of the best times was when I was 12 or 13 and I was playing baseball and our team was in the championship game. But we had a family vacation planned at the time to go to Pennsylvania. And I wanted to play in that game. I was the starting first baseman. He talked to me and we left and I didn't get to play. I was so dejected on the ride up. But he made that a great experience. We went everywhere. He took me everywhere. He tried to make it up so damn bad to me. And it worked. I had a great time. We lost the game though. And I said, I don't care. That was my best memory because I was so dejected at one point and then he just made it right up to me."

In his story, Kevin's father begins as a frustrating parent who prevents him from basking in the light of personal achievement. Kevin's disappointment appeared to be profound. However, his father transforms Kevin's despair and redeems himself as a parent.

The theme of his father disappointing and then successfully redeeming himself to Kevin provided the central focus of another important childhood memory:

"When I was about 6,7 or 8 he started drinking a lot. And he would come home and he would get into a real dogfight with my mother. I really hated that. I would take my mother's side because he would come home drinking a lot and he would be swearing and then he'd go to bed."

His father's drinking resulted in a several months long separation, as Kevin's mother demanded that her husband leave the house. This painful separation between father and son produced feelings of anger, sadness and a profound sense of shame in Kevin:

"I missed my father very bad. I was going to school and kids would talk about and bring their parents in at show and tell. My mother would come in and everybody asked me where my father was. What was I going to tell them, oh, he's probably drunk somewhere? But probably he was being rehabilitated."

Kevin's memories of his idealized father far outweigh the memory of his father's alcohol problem and their consequent separation:

"He was a great father. We'd argue from time to time, but if I thought a great father would be someone who wouldn't argue, then he'd probably be a fake father. You gotta have arguments. He was right ninety percent of the time and sometimes I was right. Minus the drinking he was a perfect man. Well, not perfect, nobody's perfect. He would be a father figure that I would idolize and be somebody I'd want to be."

Kevin's rehabilitation of his father appears to have cemented a vague yet powerful identification with him:

"His parents died when he was young. And I was only 19 when my father died. So he grew up very fast too. He was the wild one also when he was young. And I was kind of wild too. Both of us have settled down a lot."

For Kevin, the identification with his father assumes an uncanny dimension as he and his wife conceived their child on his father's birthday and the baby's due date falls on the day he died. As Kevin noted:

"The baby's scheduled to be born on the day in August that he died. It's creepy almost. I've been thinking about that since we found out. I said, oh my god! I didn't know what to think. It's kind of neat I think because one generation really is replacing another one. The same exact day."

However, the theme of one generation replacing the other appears to coexist with another theme involving the continuity of generations: the coincidence of birth and death here represents a resurrection of his father; he lives on through the baby's conception and birth.

The important experiences and events Kevin related about his father involved his father's redeeming himself and Kevin resurrecting his father after previous disappointments and/or transgressions. The essential connection between Kevin's resurrecting his father and his consequent identification with him was illustrated by a dramatic series of dreams Kevin had after our first interview [Note: because of Kevin's work schedule, our interview was broken up into two parts]:

"All I remember was that it was dark and him, me and Gina (his partner) were there. My mother wasn't there at all. All of a sudden my father appeared and I looked and he said, so what's up? That's what he would say. And I said, how did you get here? I can't remember it all. I remember telling him about the baby and he was really thrilled. And all of a sudden, the day the baby was born, my father was

with me the whole time. It was like I was the only one who could see him. Not Gina. She couldn't see him. Then when the baby was born, I turned around and he was gone. It was almost like boom! One left and one came. I remember there was a doctor there and Gina was on the bed and I was standing right next to her. My father was sitting right behind me. Then I don't know if I was looking at Gina or I heard it or I watched the baby being born. And all of a sudden I turned around and he was gone. And that was it."

The absence of his mother and other family members coupled with Gina's inability to see his father illuminate the father/son identification theme. The simultaneous birth of the baby and disappearance of his father suggests, as Kevin noted, a relationship between the departure of one and the emergence of another generation. In this context, the coincidence of dates marking his father's birthday and death and the baby's conception and due date, may express a use of the baby to keep his father's memory alive. It may also represent a denial of some unspecified generational conflict between Kevin and his father that cannot be acknowledged just now. Or it may express a related desire to undo his father's death.

But at another level, Kevin's father has not disappeared at all. Rather, he is incorporated into Kevin's own emerging paternal identity. The dream symbolizes his father's resurrection in Kevin's body. Kevin's discussion of some other dreams during the pregnancy supported this line of interpretation:

"It's almost like a sequence. I dreamt when the baby was born, when the baby was young, then in school, then as the baby grew up and I could see myself getting older in all these pictures. Just like my father was when I was younger. I could see him getting older. But I wasn't at the point where I was really ever old. The last one was the kid graduating from high school. It's funny because the last picture of me and my father is after my graduation."

In these dreams, Kevin experiences himself as he once experienced his father. And the basis for distinguishing between them becomes blurred.

Kevin's identity as prospective father and the memory of his own father remain closely connected. In fact, it appears difficult for Kevin to imagine being a father in ways that diverge from his father's image. And this close identification enables him to repair or at least deny any aggressive associations to replacing his father's generation.

When I asked Kevin what it would be like to hand his son over to his father, he revealed another important means by which the theme of eclipsing his father could be successfully repaired:

"I think it would have been great. I think he would have felt that it's a pride that I'm giving him my child. A sense of security, a sense of knowing that there's somebody else in the household as opposed to him. As I flew the coop when I was 17 or 18, now he has another kid here who he can baby until he's about 17 or 18. He has another kid right there and all the love that he gave me, he can give the kid."

Kevin believes that his baby would have effectively replaced himself in the household as someone to nurture and parent. And his imagined offering of the child to his father exemplifies an important dimension of the reparative gesture of parenthood.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented interview material to discuss parenthood as a reparative gesture. Parenthood provides men with an opportunity to repair their: 1) father's identity as father; 2) father/son relationship; 3) own emotional wounds as sons. The

reparative aspects of parenthood for the interview subjects I presented can be summarized as follows:

<u>reparation of father</u>	<u>reparation of father/ son relationship</u>	<u>reparation of self</u>
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Allen
Randy
Kevin

Allen
Sean
Joel
Randy
Brian
Kevin

Allen
Tony
Walter
Randy
Kevin
Brian

no reparation

Clark
Ira

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

I have been told that the British Concorde flies so high that one can view the curvature of the Earth. I had this visual image in mind when I began thinking and reading about the experience of prospective fatherhood. Becoming a father appeared to be one of those benchmark life events that afforded men a concurrent backward and forward glimpse over the trajectory of their lives. It seemed to be a transitional moment catapulting men into a new, exciting yet uncertain future while conjuring images or reenacting aspects of one's childhood.

In my interviews, men revealed important dimensions of this transitional period in their lives. Most of the men I interviewed struggled with the tension between assuming new paternal responsibilities and giving up self-definitions associated with being an adolescent. New and inchoate paternal identities, not yet integrated with existing self-representations, generated considerable anticipation and anxiety. Moreover, the pregnancy engendered a reenactment of aspects of a man's earliest relationship with his own mother: idealizing a partner's mothering capacity coupled with some awareness of being marginally important to the unfolding pregnancy, experiencing helplessness in imagining how to caretake an infant and perceiving the remarkable bond between mother and child beginning with the unborn fetus, all induced men to attribute an omnipotent and magical power to their partners,

resurrecting aspects of their earliest relationships with their mothers.

In this context, the comments several of my interview subjects made about maintaining a sense of control in their lives and the need to respect personal boundaries, represented responses to the incomparable mother/infant bond. But these observations did not merely provide evidence of male defensiveness, or envy of a woman's seemingly omnipotent power to sustain and/or take life away, they reflected a need to fashion some distinctively male mode of interacting with their imagined infants.

While this distinctive interactive style may be necessary to establish the rudiments of male gender identity in boys, this does not begin to address the critical issue of integrating male and female self-representations. The issue of integrating gender representations and establishing an experiential association between being male and nurturant gets to the heart of contemporary feminism's cultural project: to reevaluate how we imagine and enact feminine and masculine gender roles.

But our gendered imaginations and practices reverberate against the considerable loss that becoming male or female and experiencing our gendered selves entails: we will not be like our mothers and we have not been fathered by men who reconciled being nurturant with their masculinity. Becoming a father and witnessing the miraculous changes occurring in a partner's belly provides men an opportunity to reexperience the original injury and loss embedded in developing a gendered consciousness. Moreover, prospective fatherhood enables men

to both identify with their fathers and more keenly acknowledge the fathers they never had as children; the fathers they do not want to be for their own children.

I focus here on the experience of loss because becoming a father offers men important choices between doing reparative work and/or remaining caught in unwitting repetitions of the relationship with one's father. Invariably, we engage in both, but being aware of the "necessary losses" invites us to embrace more of our affect in the service of minimizing the painful legacy we have received from our fathers: the legacy of unspoken words and feelings. And if we are to more successfully refashion our gendered imaginations and practices and better integrate our polarized sense of being male vs. being female, then we need to recognize and begin to repair the wounds we received as boys. As the poet Galway Kinnell expressed it:

"...the pebble on the windowsill does not wrinkle, does not die,
though one day it will get lost,
or be thrown out,
maybe by the father the boy who stuck it in his pocket in the
first place becomes,
when he forgets what it was he wanted the pebble to remember.

(Galway Kinnell, from Memories of My Father.)

We need to remember what we wanted the pebble to remember; to turn the stone back into the emotional wounds we can acknowledge and embrace as our own. To put it bluntly: prospective parenthood confronts us with choices that we remain only half-conscious of: to repeat the emotional pain we have forgotten or to repair and heal the pain we have remembered from the relationships with our parents.

Understood in this context, the reparative work we do and the repetitions we engage in both emanate from the experience of loss: a loss of the mothers we will never be and the fathers we never had.

As the reparative dimension of parenthood became increasingly evident during the course of conducting my research interviews, commonplace phrases like: "I want to be a different kind of father to my children" or "I finally understand what it was like for my father", assumed new meaning. Many if not all of us live within the tension between struggling to become different from our fathers and recognizing how similar we really are. I have discussed three inter-related aspects of reparation in parenthood, involving an effort to repair the father, one's father/son relationship and the need to repair oneself.

For three interview subjects, Allen, Randy and Kevin, the process of becoming a parent facilitated reparative work on all three dimensions. The important factors promoting this were a clear awareness of how becoming a parent represents: 1) a major accomplishment in their lives that would engender their father's respect and approval and/or 2) an opportunity to establish a different relationship with the unborn child than they experienced with their fathers.

For others, like Tony, Walter and Brian, their father's emotional and/or physical absence, through death, parental divorce or their father's aloofness, interfered with a reparation of their father's identities as fathers or of their father/son relationships. Given their father's unavailability, these men focused on utilizing

the experience of parenthood to consolidate their own individual development.

Two other subjects, Sean and Joel, illuminated an important tension between self-reparation and repairing the father/son relationship. For these men, the need to establish positive images of their fathers, in the service of securing their father's approval and/or bolstering their own fledgling paternal identities, preempted an extended consideration and a working through of their own feelings about their father/son relationships.

Finally, two subjects, Clark and Ira, experienced considerable difficulty imagining any reparative work as part of their prospective parenthood experience. The intensity of their aggressive/hateful feelings towards their fathers and related inability to maintain a positive image of and identification with them, appeared to preclude reparation of their father's identities or the father/son relationship. And their inability or unwillingness to examine and express their angry feelings appeared to minimize the self-reparative potential of prospective fatherhood.

The success of any reparative gesture rests, I believe, in an ability to hold onto and integrate how different and similar we are to our fathers. By recognizing differences, we offer ourselves the opportunity to heal the emotional wounds we endured as children. We can more clearly and deeply mourn the fathers we never had and perhaps recognize in the stillness of our hearts what is truly difficult to bear:

"The truth, which always hurts, hurts now-
 I have always wanted another father: one
 who would sit quietly beneath the moonlight,
 and in the clean, quiet emanations of some
 essential manhood, speak to me of what
 a kind man myself, I wanted to hear."

(Michael Blumenthal, from Waving
 Good-Bye to My Father, in Shinder,
 ed., 1983)

The need to be different fathers stems from an identification with our own children, and the hope that being different we will also heal our own childhood wounds, and a related need to father ourselves in ways our fathers never could. Yet as we examine and seek to repair these wounds, we begin to recognize that they represent an inheritance. Our wounds are our fathers' wounds too. As we mourn for ourselves, invariably we come across what one writer recognized as the "wounded father" within each of us. (Osherson, 1986)

Certainly there is more to emotional differences and similarities than a consideration of emotional wounds. But these frightened, hurt, vulnerable and hateful parts of ourselves and our fathers necessitate the gesture to repair.

The reparative dimension of parenthood does not involve a process of making something whole again but represents a recognition of what has occurred and what cannot be undone. The desire to repair flows from an awareness that despite all, we need to maintain a sense of connectedness or relatedness to our parents, to the parents within us and to the deeper parts of ourselves.

The reparative gesture contrasts with the urge to repeat, to enact the inheritance of emotional wounds without explicitly

recognizing this is occurring. And to the extent that we do not recognize and embrace differences and similarities, we remain liable to reenact hurtful aspects of our relationships with our own fathers that we seek to avoid. If we only focus on wanting to be different from our fathers, we deny important parts of ourselves and ignore the reality of similarities. As we ignore or deny similarities, they assume an apparent life of their own in our behavioral repetitions.

The recognition of differences and similarities can be recast in terms of a concurrent movement away from one's father and a recognition of a more essential connection to him. Becoming a father represents an important benchmark experience signaling one's increasing separation and autonomy from one's father and family of origin. Yet as we become fathers, we become more like our own fathers. We recognize at some deeper level, who it is they are and the emotional space they have occupied as fathers.

The movement away from and towards a father are embedded in the process of becoming an adult and a parent. As we struggle to become autonomous adults and define ourselves as different from our fathers, we necessarily transform and symbolically destroy the actual interpersonal relationship with and our intrapsychic images of our fathers. This expression of intergenerational aggression and hatred appears critical both to individual psychological development and to the process of societal renewal and change. The aggressive challenge to parental and social authority and the existing order of things militates against individual and collective stagnation.

However, as I stated in the introduction, transitional moments are characterized by a dialectic between transformation and reparation. The reparative processes embedded in fatherhood express the need for: continuity amidst change and similarity amidst differences. We also desire a father's approval and validation amidst the emotional distance and the loss of a parent as parent we experience as the price for increasing separateness and autonomy. At a moment in our lives when we more truly become fathers to ourselves, we also want and need our father's blessing and approval. Perhaps this is because we remain fearful of killing our fathers as we usurp their authority and displace their personal and generational authority. Or perhaps we have a deeper, fuller appreciation for who they are as men and as fathers and recognize how we are becoming more like them. Or relatedly, perhaps we already glimpse and are humbled by how our children will confront us with our own mortality.

The hateful and loving dimensions of becoming an adult and a parent appear inextricably bound up together. But the reparative work of parenthood is not inexorable. Fathers who remain unavailable to become active grandfathers and/or to assume an emotional presence in their son's lives, clearly impede the reparative process. If we understand reparation as a way of building a bridge back to our fathers, it helps that fathers are receptive. If not, sons must shoulder most or all of the emotional work of reparation on their own. They must work alone to make sense of their father/son relationships and elaborate who they want to be as fathers. And they must scavenge the memory of themselves with their fathers to embrace

the fathering they had and grieve the fathering they never received. As we work, either in conjunction with our fathers or mostly or totally alone to effect this integration, we destroy the illusion of being wholly different and alleviate the anxiety of recognizing similarities between ourselves and our fathers. We are both what our fathers never were and have always been.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Participant's Name:

Date:

In this study, I am interested in exploring the experiences of men becoming fathers for the first time.

If you choose to participate in this interview, then I will be talking with you about yourself, your feelings about your parents and family of origin, your relationship with your wife, and your thoughts and feelings about becoming a father. I am sensitive to the fact that the material we discuss may be very personal at times. Please remember that you may let me know if a particular topic is too distressing, and that you are free to withdraw your participation from this interview or this study at any point without penalty. Although I cannot provide monetary compensation for your effort, I will be pleased to send you the results of the study at its completion, and will be happy to answer any questions or discuss the study with you at this time.

I will be tape-recording our interview for my own use. Please be assured that our discussion will be kept strictly confidential. In writing up the results of this study, I will disguise all identifying information about you and your life.

I hope you will find your participation interesting and enlightening.

Participant's signature

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Questions about family background: personal age and occupation; ages and occupations of partner, parents and siblings; length of marriage; when is your baby due?
 - 2) How has your wife's pregnancy been going?
 - 3) How did the two of you decide to have a baby?
 - 4) What do you most look forward to in being a father?
 - 5) What do you least look forward to in being a father?
 - 6) Has your wife's personality changed since she became pregnant?
 - 7) Since the pregnancy began, what has made you irritated or angry with your wife?
 - 8) What has it been like for you to observe the changes in your wife's body during her pregnancy?
 - 9) How has your life changed since your wife's pregnancy began?
 - 10) During your wife's pregnancy, have you experienced any kind of illness, even mild ones?
- Family of origin:
- 11) If you had to describe your father using a list of adjectives, what would they be?
 - 12) What was your relationship with your father like when you were growing up?
 - 13) Did the relationship change as you grew older?
 - 14) What is the earliest memory you have of your father?
 - 15) What is the fondest memory you have of your father?
 - 16) What is the least pleasant memory you have of your father?
 - 17) If you had to describe your mother using a list of adjectives, what would they be?
 - 18) How would you describe your relationship with your mother when you were growing up?

- 19) Did the relationship change as you grew older?
- 20) What is the earliest memory you have of your mother?
- 21) In what ways are you and your father alike?
- 22) In what ways are you and your father different?
- 23) In what ways are you and your mother alike?
- 24) In what ways are you and your mother different?
- 25) What do you think makes a good father?
- 26) To what extent was your father a good father?
- 27) To what extent was he not a good father?
- 28) Are there things you feel your father should have done differently in raising you?
- 29) How do you think the birth of your baby will affect your relationship with your father?
- 30) How do you think the birth of your baby will affect your relationship with your mother?
- 31) How does becoming a father affect the way you feel about your father?
- 32) Do you recall the birth of any of your brothers and/or sisters?; if so, what was that like for you?
- 33) What was your relationship with your brother(s) and/or sister(s) like when you were growing up?; who did you feel closest to?; who did you feel least closest to?
- 34) Did you have any caretaking responsibilities for brothers and sisters while you were growing up?
- 35) What would it be like to have a baby growing inside of you?
- 36) What would it be like to give birth to a baby?
- 37) What would you be like as a mother?
- 38) If I asked your father to describe your greatest strength and your greatest weakness as a father, what would he say?
- 39) If I asked your mother to describe your greatest strength and your greatest weakness as a father, what would she say?

- 40) If I asked your wife to describe your greatest strength and your greatest weakness as a father, what would she say?
- 41) Has your sex life been affected by your wife's pregnancy?
- 42) Have you ever fantasized about having an extra-marital affair during your wife's pregnancy?
- 43) How will the birth of your baby affect your relationship with your wife?
- 44) What do you feel will be your wife's greatest strength and greatest weakness as a mother?
- 45) How is she similar to and/or different from your own mother?
- 46) Have there been periods during the pregnancy when you felt particularly excited about becoming a father?
- 47) Have there been periods during the pregnancy when you felt particularly anxious about becoming a father?
- 48) Describe any dreams you've had during your wife's pregnancy?
- 49) Do you imagine your baby to be a boy or a girl?
- 50) How will your child feel about you when he/she is your age?
- 51) Are there any other issues that you would like to talk about?

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