A Woman’s Experience of Father Longing

by

Nancy Elizabeth Campbell

A clinical case study
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology

Meridian University
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ABSTRACT

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This clinical case study focuses on the father-daughter relationship. Research demonstrates that the impact that a father has on his daughter’s adult life is far reaching, significantly affecting her in such areas as romantic relationship, academics, and career. Included is a literature review of a woman’s experience of father longing that comprises biological, cognitive/behavioral, sociocultural, and psychodynamic perspectives, as well as imaginal approaches, which is a foundational component to the study.

The sources included in the literature review provide the context for interpreting the therapy of a 31-year old woman through nine months of individual treatment, as she grieved the death of her father. Therapy progressed through stages of the client’s initial overwhelm and anguish, to an exploration of her dynamics with her father and the way that she experienced her world as a result of their relationship. Themes brought out in the therapy included issues of self-mastery, sexual agency with men, and triangulation issues within her interpersonal relationships. Her idealization of her father and his breach of interpersonal boundaries in their relationship were explored as therapy developed.

The mythic dimensions of the father-daughter relationship are incorporated in this case study, with themes of a daughter’s self-sacrifice as demonstrated by the fairy tale, “The Handless Maiden.” A girl’s integration of the positive father archetype is
highlighted by the story of the “Wonderful Wizard of Oz.” A review of the imaginal structures brought out in the therapy reveal the archetypal patterns of the eternal girl, the favored daughter, and the father’s daughter.

The Learnings of the Clinical Case Study point to the issues of projection and shadow. Triadic dynamics inherent to a woman’s experience of father longing were revealed as well, and indicate that these issues can be uncovered through engaged awareness of imaginal structures between client and therapist during the course of treatment.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Clinical Topic

The topic of this Clinical Case Study is a woman’s experience of father longing. Father longing refers to a deep yearning that a woman experiences in relation to a father figure. It is a term synonymous to the experience that Margaret Maine names, father hunger, which can be understood as the unrelenting need for emotional connection with the father that is experienced by all children.\(^1\) Beth M. Erickson maintains that a woman’s longing for a positive connection with her father is instinctive; left unfulfilled this unmet need may cause a woman to turn addictively towards food, work, sexuality, or substance abuse as a means to allay her yearning.\(^2\) Suzanne Fields addresses the phenomenon of longing as well: “In most female recollections [of father] there persists a brooding, elegiac lyricism of yearning, yearning always for more, more, more, a hunger for something never quite captured in that secret place in the heart.”\(^3\)

Theorist Lynda Booze points out that of all family configurations the father-daughter dyad is the most complex, as it places together the two familial figures most asymmetrically opposed in terms of generation, gender and status.\(^4\) Yet, generally there is an understanding that this relationship is as important as it is complex. Researchers such as Victoria Secunda explain that a girl’s emotional and social growth are formed in vital ways by the quality of her connection to her father.\(^5\) How she relates and feels about him
may influence all of her subsequent relationships, predominantly those with men, but also with the world at large.\textsuperscript{6} It is a relationship that will inform her choices, and also fuel her sense of \textit{agency}: her ability to move in the world with self-reliance and independence.\textsuperscript{7}

In considering the role of the father with regard to human development, Aftab Omer poses that, “The father is the first other, the doorway into the greater world. If this doorway has been found to be safe, then one will be able to participate with the rest of the world.”\textsuperscript{8} Andrew Samuels makes the claim that, for a girl child, it is the father’s difference from her that will catalyze her into the next stage of development.\textsuperscript{9} Further, Samuels maintains that, “The internal father symbolizes both an individual’s relationship to authority and also the capacity to be authoritative.”\textsuperscript{10}

With regard to the body of current research on a woman’s experience of father longing, Patricia Reis explains that of all family configurations the relationship between father and daughter is historically the least studied and the least understood.\textsuperscript{11} Reis points out that research on fathers has customarily focused on their potential for abuse, their absence, and the impact that they have on their sons, while study on the effects of positive fathering on girls remains untapped.\textsuperscript{12} The study of a woman’s experience of father longing will foster societal understanding of the impact that this relationship has on both daughters and fathers. Greater focus and attention on the many variables that influence this relationship will benefit those who work with children and families, and is relevant to fathers, daughters, and the people who love them.

This clinical case study will consider biological, cognitive/behavioral, sociocultural, psychodynamic perspectives and imaginal approaches that contribute to a woman’s experience of father longing. The biological perspectives section focuses on the relationship
at the level of physiological functioning, including a father’s impact on his daughter’s future mate preference, and the influence that a father has on his daughter’s age of menstrual onset.

A cognitive/behavioral perspective holds that a father influences the way his daughter thinks and feels about herself and subsequently acts in the world. The research included in this section addresses the impact that a father has on a girl’s core beliefs, as well as his function for modeling behaviors that she then incorporates as her own.

The sociocultural section reviews the cultural construction of gender-roles and the father’s influence on his daughter’s gender role-development. A feminist perspective on child development is reviewed, as well as the father-daughter dyad in patriarchal society. The psychodynamic section on a woman’s experience of father longing assumes that unconscious family dynamics inform the father-daughter relationship. Presented in this section is an overview of Freud’s *psychosexual phases of development*. Exploration of the *Oedipal phase* is central to this section, as many psychodynamic theorists mark this stage as the father’s entry point into his child’s intrapsychic life.

The imaginal approaches literature on the subject of a woman’s experience of father longing explores the archetypal dimensions of this relationship. Imaginal psychology may be described as a soul psychology. Imaginal approaches place attention on the emergent image, not as a means to fix or solve issues, but to tend to soul. The archetypal patterns that are relevant to the father-daughter dynamic as represented by myth and story are included in this section, as well as the positive characteristics of the archetypal father.

There are a number of key points in the literature that are relevant to this case study. There is a general acceptance that the woman a daughter grows into is shaped significantly by the relationship that she has with her father. The key points indicate
that a father impacts his daughter in multiple areas pertaining to her social, emotional and cognitive development. A woman’s feelings of ambition, her experience of autonomy and inner authority, and the sense of herself as a sexual being are affected by her connection to her father.\textsuperscript{17} If he has been present for her, she will be able to locate these qualities within herself. If he has been emotionally or physically abusive, or absent in some way, a daughter may grapple with issues of dependency, lack of initiative, mistrust and challenges in her intimate relationships.\textsuperscript{18}

A general theme is that a daughter will experience her father as the bridge to the world beyond her home and family.\textsuperscript{19} Thus, the two foremost areas of a women’s life thought to be affected by this relationship are in the sectors of career and sexuality.\textsuperscript{20} A woman’s sense of competence in financial affairs, her ability to make and handle money, and her feeling of mastery on the work front are directly influenced by her father’s own abilities in these areas.\textsuperscript{21}

Regarding sexuality, there is the widely held view that a girl’s father forms the base that her future love interests rest upon. Writing from a psychodynamic perspective, Secunda describes a girl’s father as her first love, a “template,” for all of her subsequent romantic interactions.\textsuperscript{22} The kind of man her father is, and how he treats her informs the type of relationships that she will gravitate towards in the future.\textsuperscript{23}

Sources primarily from the psychodynamic perspective point out that the overall task of the father in the area of sexuality is to walk the fine line of admiration and appreciation for his daughter, while steadily maintaining an appropriate distance.\textsuperscript{24} A father may fall into a dangerous pattern of sexualizing the relationship by subtly or overtly endorsing her erotic feelings for him. The effects of a sexually seductive father
are far reaching and may block a girl’s move towards independence. This paternal behavior can have a debilitating effect in all areas of a woman’s life.25

A father who is seductive in his relationship with his daughter is one of many patterns of paternal behavior described in the psychodynamic, and imaginal sections of the literature regarding father-daughter interactions. The seductive father often has a favorite child, as was the case with my client. Different sections of the literature focus on the qualities and characteristics of the father’s favored daughter, termed in various sources as: the female Oedipal victor, the anima woman, the eternal girl, pampered puella, darling doll, princess, or hero’s daughter.26 Across these literature sections this pattern in a woman is characterized by such qualities as childlike, dependent, entitled, passively receptive, charming, and attractive to men.27 Women exhibiting this pattern are described as having a tendency to idealize men, while often mistrusting women. They may project positive traits onto men, believing that they cannot attain these qualities for themselves.28 Additionally, the father of a favored daughter endows her with her sense of self. Without him she grapples with who she is, and how to act in the world.29

One chief issue for a woman who presents with this pattern is that in her idealization of the father she has turned away from her mother, and the world of women that the mother represents.30 This move is thought to be part of a natural developmental process understood in psychodynamic thought as the phallic, or Oedipal stage of maturation, which occurs at approximately three years of age.31 This stage brings out issues of triangulation, as father, mother, and daughter vie for primacy with one another.32 According to many theorists writing from a psychodynamic, or an imaginal approach, after this natural move toward her father, a girl must re-identify with her
mother, and the domain of women that her mother signifies. This move back to her mother strengthens her essential feminine nature.\textsuperscript{33}

One point presented in both the sociocultural perspectives and the imaginal approaches section of the literature is that generally all women suffer from a cultural father-wound due to the historic imbalance of power afforded by a system of patriarchy.\textsuperscript{34} In a masculine-dominated system, qualities and conditions associated with the feminine, such as emotional expression, vulnerability, and creativity, are rejected.\textsuperscript{35} Writers from the imaginal approaches section explain that a female child in a traditionally male dominated culture is particularly susceptible to the projection of qualities denied by others, particularly her father, whose \textit{shadow}, or disowned aspects of the self, may infiltrate her psychic life.\textsuperscript{36}

Concerning the wounding that a woman may experience in relationship to the cultural and personal father, a chief point to emerge from the imaginal approaches literature is that there is a natural movement of the psyche towards wholeness.\textsuperscript{37} The father as an archetype is a representation of specific qualities: self-agency, inner authority, strength, presence, order, discernment, and restraint.\textsuperscript{38} These characteristics are not gender specific, and both men and women may embody qualities of this archetype.\textsuperscript{39} Theorists, such as Linda Schierse Leonard, maintain that women have access to all of the positive qualities of the father archetype, even if the personal and cultural aspects of the father are insufficient. Leonard poses that these positive characteristics may be integrated in a woman as she works with her unconscious material.\textsuperscript{40}
The subject of this clinical case study is a 31-year-old woman named Ada (pseudonym), who worked on matters in therapy that pertained to father longing. These concerns were catalyzed by her father’s death six months before she entered therapy. When Ada first came to see me, I considered her symptoms to be those of normal grief. As her therapy continued, I began to formulate the hypothesis that issues that concerned her life experiences, affect, behavior, and thought process pertained to the dynamics of early childhood, with specific focus on how she was parented by her father. In therapy, Ada cried out, and called for him. She grieved for want of holding and protection from her father that harkened to a much younger age, and to a relationship characterized by intensity. Ada described herself as a “daddy’s girl” and explained that in their dynamic she had felt a sense of specialness just in being around him.

Her father’s death had left Ada feeling groundless. Missing the structure provided by her father, Ada struggled with how to make sense of her life. In conversation, and through the expression of subjective states, Ada would recycle through themes of self-mastery, and personal agency. These terms she herself defined as the ability to achieve the goals that she set for herself regarding her career and ability to support herself financially.

Ada also struggled in her interpersonal relationships. She described a series of broken relationships with men, and during therapy began to face a conflict with a man whom she had felt to be “the love of her life.” She experienced triangular dynamics in relationship with men and other women, which were highlighted by her feelings of jealousy, competition, and insecurity. Her relationship with her older sister was an area of such conflict.
As therapy continued Ada began to discuss her father’s use of pornography, and to describe the occasional offhand flirtatious comments that he made to her. She discussed her position as her father’s, “cheerleader,” and revealed her parents separation when she was a teenager, and a bout with bulimia that began during this same time frame. In therapy she linked her bulimia with a desire to be thin and beautiful, like the women in her father’s magazines.

I chose Ada as the subject of my case study because I was drawn in by her experience. My own work in the world had focused on women’s issues, yet I felt that I knew little about the dynamics that existed between fathers and daughters. As I became more deeply involved in the case study, I came to believe that a certain synchronicity had played a part in my choice, as I had my own wound regarding the masculine to be attended to.

**Personal Exploration of the Subject/Topic Choice**

My entry into the topic of a woman’s experience of father longing, focused by this case study, cracked open a long shut door leading down into my very core. I had worked in therapy and in graduate school with issues pertaining to this subject matter, yet it was not until embarking on my work with Ada, that I truly grasped how deeply father longing had affected me.

My experience with the topic began to quicken when I was captivated by an image. The image was auditory; a cry that escaped unbidden from Ada’s previously pressed together lips, one that echoed and resonating with that of my own psyche. The cry was of loss and longing, the cry was of, “Daddy!” Her expression of abject yearning
reverberated inside of me. I began to ponder her depth of expression, as well as the responding keen that it seemed to awaken in me. I brought up this first client session in my clinical supervision group. All around me the eyes of the other female interns began to dampen. One woman waved me away, claiming that she could not begin, “to delve into that area.” That area. The longing that my client expressed for her father was like a tangible body, alive for me, and for these other women as well.

In my own family I am the eldest child. When I was born my father was in law school, and my mother was working to help support his educational pursuits. In these early years my father was focused on completing his law degree, passing the bar exam, and beginning a career. My parents employed traditional parenting roles in which my mother cared for our home and family while my father set about establishing his career and providing for us financially.

Like many little girls I remember thinking that my father was the most handsome father around. I have a memory of my best five-year-old girlfriend and I earnestly discussing who had the most attractive father, and my unreserved disbelief when she professed it to be her own. I felt sorry for her; my five-year old self noted that this clearly was not the case. My father was not only handsome, as I grew older, I was proud that he was a lawyer. The man who he was, out there in the world, mattered to me. Yet my father was also a mysterious figure. He left early in the morning, and often did not arrive home until after dark. Mostly I knew of him through my mother. He was also bigger and louder than the rest of us, and his moods seemed unpredictable and at times scary.

As I grew older, the gulf between my father and I grew. During my teenage years, I felt critically judged by him. I experienced what I imagined to be his lack of interest in
me. I submerged my needs and feelings, and shut myself off from the discomfort of this relationship. I immersed myself in the world of women, and kept my conscious expectations for men to a minimum. As a young adult, I worked solely with women, in social service atmospheres, committed to women’s healing. Often, it seemed, this healing need arose from the hands of men.

Eventually, I married a man who had grown up without a father in his life at all. Creative and darkly charming, my ex-husband is in some ways the antithesis of my own father. He is a genius of a man who lives in the realm of eternal possibilities. We share two children together, and while he loves his children more than anything, he has been unable to create a stable living environment, or the financial means to support a family. As a result, I essentially act as the sole provider and nurturer to our children.

My own psychological work and contemplative practice had led me away from the bleak sense I had of being victimized by either my father or my husband. Yet I had come to equate my choice in mates, and some of the ways that I moved in the world, as indicative of a father-wound. As a student of depth and imaginal psychology I was interested in the archetypal traits of father. Thomas Moore explains that, “Without the mythic father’s guidance and authority, we are left disoriented and out of control.”

Devoid of the deep sense of father in my psyche, I was absent many qualities, as fathering can be understood as our organizing principle, the means for finding our way in the world, our sense of legitimacy, and inner sovereignty. I was wanting in these areas. Essentially propped up; I acted as if I had these characteristics, while inside I balked at responsibility, struggled with disorganization and an inner experience of not being worthy.
During graduate school at Meridian University the wall built around my father wound began to crumble. Being in the field of the school, impacted by Omer’s representation of the father principle in imaginal psychology, and the influence of some of my instructors, catalyzed both the capacities of the archetypal father, as well as the overwhelming feeling of longing to be cared for in this way. During course work, one class in particular grounded my feeling of illegitimacy, of being un-fathered, as a vast experience of being ungrounded in the world.42

The difference between Ada and myself is that her particular manifestation of the father wound presents in her as that of a favored daughter, termed by Leonard as a pampered puella, or eternal girl.43 My own position is that of a father’s daughter, or Armored Amazon. The puella is characterized by her girlishness and receptivity, while the Amazon identifies with her ability to act in a male dominated world, divorced from some of her deeper feminine traits and needs.44 Both positions revolve around a father wound; something has gone awry in relationship to the personal or cultural father. Both positions have qualities that the other needs, but have projected outwards. Holding the tension between this split moves a woman forwards in her healing.45

Framework of the Treatment

Ada’s therapy sessions took place over the span of nine months at Lomi Psychotherapy Clinic, a not for profit agency located in Santa Rosa, California, where I worked as a psychology intern. Lomi Psychotherapy Clinic is a training center for both Psychology and Marriage Family Therapy Interns. Lomi holds the theoretical orientation
of a somatic, mind-body-spirit approach, and trains interns accordingly. The clinic also has office space for licensed therapists, and workshops that take place in its group room.

Ada originally sought therapy at Lomi to gain support in managing her grief response to her father's death six months prior. Her father’s death had stirred up questions for Ada regarding her childhood, her life purpose, and the family of origin-based patterns that had begun to arise in her current relationship.

We started weekly sessions in October of 2003 and ended in June of 2004. We had two phone sessions in April and May of 2004, and infrequent telephone contact during her treatment. There were no intentional or chance meetings outside of our clinic sessions.

In terms of adjunctive materials, I offered Ada Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls, by Mary Pipher. She had been cycling through issues in her personal history that appeared to be rooted during her teen years. She stated that she had read the book, and thanked me for it. We did not discuss it again. At two points in therapy poetry was brought in to our sessions. Once, Ada read a poem that was on the wall in the room that we used, and once I read a poem by Mary Oliver.

Confidentiality and Ethical Concerns

Care has been taken with regards to the confidentiality of my client throughout this case study. Pseudonyms have been introduced for her name, and for that of her boyfriend. Other facts specific to her life circumstances and history have been altered as well, while pertinent historical information has been retained for accuracy. I was not
working directly from a transcript in my writing, and my presentation of our work in therapy arises through a combination of memory and clinical case notes.

After I received authorization from Meridian University to move forward with this particular case study client and topic, I called Ada to request her consent to be the subject. It had been some time since we had spoken, and I was nervous about calling. Ada called back immediately and expressed her curiosity about what I was writing about. When I told her that the topic was a woman’s experience of father longing she asked questions about what would be needed from her, and wondered if she would be able to read the study. I explained that the recommendation was not in favor of participants reading the case study as a whole, and she seemed satisfied with my reasoning.

Ada confirmed that this topic held a deep significance for her, and agreed to allow me to write about our work together. I explained that I would be sending her three copies of a consent form in the mail for her to sign, one for her records, one for my records, and a copy to be included with the case study. I clarified for her that this would be the only documentation of her name, and that it would not be included in the final published manuscript. I received these signed consent forms back in the mail shortly after sending them to her.

For the duration of Ada’s treatment I received supervision once a week for one hour with my primary supervisor, a licensed psychologist. Her orientation was a combination of psychodynamic and humanistic. She helped me to separate out my counter-transference issues with Ada. I also received group supervision for two hours weekly with a Marriage Family Therapist. The orientation of this supervisor was somatic, with a Buddhist outlook, which informed his work. I attended group supervision with six
other interns, and was schooled in learning to track my somatic reactions to each of my clients, as well as in mindfulness practice. There were no significant ethical concerns that arose during Ada’s treatment.

**Client History and Life Circumstances**

Ada grew up in a middle-class household as the youngest daughter of her parents, both educated professionals who were Jewish, second generation, of Russian ancestry. She has a sister who is two years older than she is. Ada describes her parents as loving to her, but also as harboring anger and resentment towards one another. The two separated when Ada was 14, and then reconciled, finally divorcing when she was 21 and living out of the home. Ada earned her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of California at Santa Cruz when she was 23, and since college graduation had supported herself as a waitress while training as an integrative yoga therapy practitioner, and as a macrobiotic chef. Ada has previous personal therapy experience. She received individual therapy for approximately one year in 1999, and for seven months in 2002, after the break-up of her second long-term engagement. Ada attended some sessions conducted by a grief counselor after her father’s death, and upon occasion, retained this counselor after beginning her therapy with me at Lomi Psychotherapy Clinic. She described herself as having a history of addiction to psychedelics drugs, specifically to psilocybin mushrooms and LSD while in college. She explained that this addiction was linked to her history of an eating disorder in that, “the drug use was fun and kept me thin.” For the duration of her therapy Ada was actively seeking to heal herself from a persistent psoriasis condition, and was committed to a healthy and drug free lifestyle.
At the time of her therapy, Ada was single and living in a van while completing a nine-month training in eastern medicine in Sebastopol, CA. Her boyfriend and mother lived over 200 miles away, and she was traveling to see them on weekends. During the course of treatment, she rented a room close to the training center. Key life moments during the therapy include this move, a four week hiatus from therapy, a car accident, trip to New Mexico to complete her father’s business, her decision to move from the area, and to end her relationship with her boyfriend.

**Progression of the Treatment**

This section provides a general summary of the progression of treatment, beginning with my client’s initial request for therapy. General themes of the therapy are included, as well as the interventions employed. The section concludes with the ways in which my client may have benefitted from therapy.

Ada was in treatment with me for a total of nine months. During her initial phone call she stated that her father had died six months before and she felt that she was having difficulty managing the particulars of her life, especially as they pertained to her interpersonal relationships and career. During the first six weeks, the focus of treatment was built around providing a container for her open expression of grief, and the exploration of her feeling that her emotionality was negatively affecting her relationship with her boyfriend. Interventions introduced in therapy at this time were employed for the duration of treatment: opening each session with a moment of silence as a means for centering, and to foster focus on emergent images; expression of paradoxical emotions and work with *multiplicity*, the awareness of multiple states of self existing within the
experience of the same individual.\textsuperscript{47} Dream imagery and the use of metaphorical language as a therapeutic tool were introduced as well.

The next six weeks of therapy centered on the theme of triangulation. Ada struggled with this issue in her relationship with both her boyfriend, and with her roommates. During this time Ada explored family of origin dynamics, concentrating on her relationship with her father and her sister. This area of focus culminated in a triangular issue arising between me and Ada, and Ada’s grief counselor, in which Ada chose to halt her therapy for four weeks.

Upon her return Ada seemed energized and had a new capacity to attend to therapy. She brought up the subject of her past eating disorder, and her father’s sexualized behavior towards her and his use of pornography. During the remaining months Ada worked on integrating new understandings that pertained to her relationship with her father. She ritualized his death, and integrated both his passing, and some of the contributions she had gained from their relationship. During this time she came to a greater understanding about the ways that she had relied on her boyfriend to take care of her, and finally made the decision to move from the area, and to live separately from him.

My sense is that Ada benefitted from therapy. She had an overall decrease in her feelings of overwhelm at the loss her father, and reported that she had spoken about some of the harder aspects of their relationship for the first time. She expressed an increased empathy for her mother and older sister. She seemed to have integrated aspects of the father principle such as a heightened sense of personal agency and authorship for her personal choices. I also believe that Ada would have benefitted from more time in therapy. Left unaddressed were matters pertaining to how she was mothered.
Learnings

The learnings drawn from this case study are based upon the interpretation of my own and my client’s distinct *imaginal structures* evoked during the therapeutic process. Imaginal structures are comparable to *core beliefs*; a way of thinking or acting in the world that is so entrenched that one does not recognize its influence. Imaginal structures are explained by Omer to be; “assemblies of sensory, affective and cognitive aspects of experience constellated into images [that] both mediate and constitute experience.”

Image in this use may be described as the symbolic representation of an individual’s experience. The imaginal structures that arose in the therapy represent transference and counter-transference issues that occurred between Ada and myself.

The learnings suggest that a woman’s experience of father longing is a multifaceted experience that has origins in a girl’s experience of the triangular, or Oedipal stages of her development. While there is already established theory supporting the position that a girl’s turn towards her father is embedded in her relationship with her mother, this clinical case study suggests that the mother’s position in the triad of father, father’s favored daughter, and mother may be understood as a position that is relegated to the shadows of the relationship, and to the shadow within the psyche of the father’s favored daughter. This dynamic may be played out in the therapy through the interplay of client and therapist’s imaginal structures.

Personal and Professional Challenges

While I had a great deal of experience working with women, I had never directly worked with issues pertaining to father longing. Exploring this topic moved me into an
area of research that was unfamiliar. On a personal level this study was particularly challenging because of the emotional reaction it brought up for me around my own experience of father longing, and personal desire for my children to have an involved and present father.

I was also challenged by a dearth in my own capacities of father as an archetypal mode of expression. I learned that these qualities could be equated with inner discipline, will, and structure. A lack in this area created difficulties in my ability to attend to the linear process required for the case study. Working toward the completion of this set goal fostered my capacities in this regard.

On a professional note, I began working with Ada when I was just starting out as an intern. I found myself in the new role as therapist and attained abilities in many areas: obtaining informed consent, formulating a treatment plan, and consultation with supervisors and outside professionals. During the therapeutic process my capacity for empathy was also confronted and developed. I was challenged by some of the ways that Ada’s issues came out in therapy, particularly her feelings of competition with other women, including her sister. I also had difficulty with her expression of father longing, which persisted despite her revelation of her father’s boundary violations in their relationship. As I was able to stay present to what Ada was bringing to therapy, the more I witnessed the courage that working with this material took for her. I felt honored to be witness to her process, and felt my capacity for empathy broaden to include her father, and men in general. As I complete this study, I find that I now have an increased understanding and appreciation for the role that fathers play in all sectors of their daughter’s development.
CHAPTER 2

CLINICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction and Overview

There are many theorists who point to the father-daughter relationship as one colored by an intricate array of expectation, disappointment, and ambivalence. However, the term *father longing* is not a distinct concept that appears in the current clinical literature. As such, effort has been made to draw from the existing literature material that most clearly applies to the topical area of father longing. This literature explores the complexity of the daughter’s relationship to her father as viewed from the vantage point of five distinct theoretical orientations: biological, cognitive behavioral, sociocultural, and psychodynamic perspectives; imaginal approaches to this topic are presented as well. Each of these five positions contributes insight into the nuances that shape this important facet of the father-daughter relationship.

To this end, the biological perspective section includes a review of the physiological impact that a father has on his daughter in both the areas of mate selection and sexual maturation. The cognitive behavioral perspectives section reviews the ways that a woman’s thoughts about herself and subsequent actions in the world are influenced by the way that her father parented her. The review of the sociocultural perspective on a woman’s experience of father longing recognizes the impact that gender roles and a disparity of power have on the father-daughter relationship. The section on the
psychodynamic perspective of a woman’s experience of father longing illustrates the
importance of unconscious early family dynamics and how they inform the relationship
between father and daughter. Freud’s concept of the psychosexual stages of development
is relevant to this perspective, with an emphasis placed on the Oedipal stage as the stage
in which the father first enters into the child’s consciousness, breaking up the dyadic
relationship between mother and child. Finally, the imaginal approaches section of a
woman’s experience of father longing explores the symbolic and archetypal aspects of
the father-daughter dynamic. This section includes Jung’s concept of the contrasexual
archetypes, the anima and animus, as well as images of father and daughter as depicted
through mythology and fairytale.

**Biological Perspectives on the Psychology of the Father–Daughter Relationship**

The biological perspectives section focuses on the underlying physiological
mechanisms that influence the father-daughter relationship. This study emphasizes the
question of how a women’s early relationship with her father affects her later preferences
in the area of mate selection. Included in this section is research on the topic of
*assortative mating*, mating between individuals with like characteristics, and *sexual
imprinting*, time sensitive, early-age learning that informs future mate choice. Finally this
section includes the work of theorists who study the effects that paternal investment and
physical proximity of father and daughter have on a girl’s sexual maturation.

Much of the research regarding mate selection and the similarity of parental
characteristics to those of a current partner focuses on the phenomenon of *imprinting* as
the underlying mechanism. The term imprinting is used in the fields of psychology and
ethology to describe learning that occurs during a particular phase of early development. The two types of imprinting are filial imprinting and sexual imprinting.1

Filial imprinting describes the way that a young animal in a particular developmental stage will learn who its parents are by observing in them certain distinguishing qualities.2 Sexual imprinting is similar to filial imprinting, except that it refers specifically to the way that a young animal determines the necessary traits of an appropriate mate by creating a template of the physical characteristics, or phenotype, of its parents that determines future mate selection.3

Regarding imprinting and mate choice Delbert Thiessen and Barbara Gregg, in a hypothesis based on a demography, or population study, propose that, “Individuals gravitate toward those of similar, but not identical phenotype, and genetic similarity. Early imprinting and learning within the family unit act as the mechanism for establishing the criteria for optimal mate selection.”4 Here Thiessen and Gregg describe one premise for a similarity of physical traits between partners: that assortative mating, mating between individuals with like traits, ensures that there may be enough of a genetic similarity to have a stabilizing effect on the gene pool, without weakening it though inbreeding or mating when there is a kinship relationship. This phenomenon is termed by Patrick Bateson as optimal outbreeding, where amongst species equilibrium is found between inbreeding and outbreeding (mating between those with no kin relationship) that exists to optimize gene similarity without undermining the gene pool.5

Regarding a father’s influence on his daughter’s future mate choice, research indicates that an imprinting-like phenomenon is at work, and that the observable characteristics of the opposite-sex parent may act as the primary prototype. Glenn Wilson
and Paul Barrett constructed a questionnaire study involving 314 women. With age as an indicator, researchers found small but significant tendencies for the daughters of older fathers to favor older partners. Gianna Zei and Paola Astolifi, examining census records, found that daughters of parents who were greater than the age of 30 at the time of the daughters’ births often chose husbands who were older than them. These women appeared to be more attracted to “age cues” in male faces than daughters of parents who had been under the age of 30 at the time of their daughters, births. In similar research conducted by David Perrett et al., 48 woman and 35 men responded in questionnaire format to computer-generated facial features. Results demonstrate that women of older fathers reported themselves to be less impressed by the attributes of youth.

Other paternal characteristics have been the subject of study as well. Davor Jedlicka observed race as a measure of a parent’s influence on the mate choice of their offspring by evaluating a population sample of marriages in Hawaii. Jedlicka found that more than 60 percent of the time, daughters of a mixed-race coupling chose to marry someone of the same race as their fathers. Hair and eye color have also been features observed in the process of mate selection. Wilson and Barrett found that daughters more often chose boyfriends with the same eye color as their fathers. Anthony Little et al. report findings from a self-report analysis involving approximately 700 men and women that indicate that the opposite-sex parent is most often the predictor for the hair and eye color of one’s actual partner. In review of why this phenomenon occurs, Little writes, “It is worth noting that we find that offspring appear to be attracted to the opposite-parent’s traits which is suggestive that the underlying mechanism is not indiscriminant and therefore implies an adaptive function on some level.” Little et al. propose that the
underlying mechanisms are related to an imprinting-like phenomenon in humans, as well as an occurrence of assortative mating.\textsuperscript{12}

There are studies that propose that the imprinting-like phenomenon in human mate selection is not simply a process of the child’s passive absorption of parental traits, but is also influenced by the quality of the parent-child relationship. Tamas Bereczkei hypothesizes that children form a mental representation of their opposite-sex parent that serves as a template for obtaining a mate later in life.\textsuperscript{13} According to Bereczkei’s results from a 2003 facial analysis study, the resemblance between a woman’s husband and her step-father was positively correlated to how much warmth and investment she perceived in her early relationship with her step-father.\textsuperscript{14} Since these daughters were adopted, Bereczkei proposes that the imprinting-like function in humans calls for social interaction; hence, he indicates that it is attachment and proximity that shape the daughter’s mental template, and not solely genetic kin recognition.\textsuperscript{15}

In similar facial metric research, Agnieszka Wiszewska and Lynda Boothroyd report a significant correlation between the proportions of a father’s face and a chosen partner's face, but only in cases where the female participant reported a good relationship with her father during childhood.\textsuperscript{16} Quoting Boothroyd to this regard:

\begin{quote}
The quality of a daughter’s relationship with her father has an impact on who she finds attractive. It shows that our human brains don’t simply build prototypes of the ideal face based on those we see around us, rather they build them based on those to whom we have strongly positive relationship. We can now say that daughters who have a very positive childhood relationship with their fathers choose men with similar central facial characteristics to their fathers.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

The next segment of the biological perspectives section on a woman’s experience of father longing reviews research on the timing of a girl’s sexual maturity, and how it can be a measure for issues associated with her environment. The affect that a father has
on the advancement of a daughter’s sexual maturity is highlighted through specific research on environmental stress, the introduction of unrelated males into a girl’s life, and her perception of early paternal investment.

Much of the research on the subject of a girl’s age at menarche, the onset of menstruation, draws upon studies on family stress. These studies explain that the home environment in a girl’s early stages of life affects her later strategies for reproduction. A 1982 anthropological study by Patricia Draper and Henry Harpending concluded, “in evolutionary and biological terms,” that whether her father is present or absent in the home in which a girl grows up has an effect on her future reproductive strategies. They link this effect to a particular theory of paternal investment, which holds that how much a father cares for and is connected to his daughter in the early stages of her development influence the age at which she reaches menarche. Researchers found that a home where the father was absent resulted in the girl reaching menarche at an earlier age, as well as exhibiting other sexual behaviors that promote early reproduction.

Jay Belsky et al. proposed their evolutionary theory of socialization to evaluate why the effect as described by Draper and Harpending took place. Belsky et al. speculated that it was the quality of the early family environment that influenced pubertal timing in girls, and that in particular a stressful environment would influence the onset of menarche. Such stressors include poverty, family conflict, insufficient parenting, and the absence of a biological father in the home.

Belsky et al. report that taxing or traumatic early family environments predispose girls to develop a condition of lowered metabolism, which in turn, promotes weight gain that accelerates early menstruation. Belsky et al. maintain that the developing female
physiologically interprets the stressful environment as one in which resources are limited, thus, it is in the best interests for the advancement of the species that she reproduce as quickly as possible, resulting in her earlier age of reproductive maturity.

Researchers Draper and Harpending, as well as Belsky et al., propose that a possible stressor occurs when the developing female is exposed to unrelated males. In animal studies, this is referred to as the male effect. The male effect is a phenomenon in which a number of female mammals are observed to demonstrate an earlier onset of menstruation when males originating from outside the colony are introduced into the family group.

The male effect is hypothesized as the underlying cause of early menstrual onset in the work of other researchers. Robert Matchock and Elizabeth Sussman present the idea that paternal pheromones, chemical olfactory signals that repress or stimulate the hormonal reactions that promote sexual maturation, play a part in an evolutionary ploy to suppress inbreeding. In a research sample of 1,938 women, Matchock and Sussman conducted an examination of family structure and pubertal timing in women and found that the absence of a biological father, along with the presence of stepbrothers, was associated with earlier menstrual onset. Matchock and Sussman theorize that a girl's biological father emits pheromones that alter her sexual maturation. This effect prevents inbreeding, and thus promotes gene advancement.

Researcher Bruce Ellis also attributes early onset of menarche to pheromone activity. Female development and pubertal timing have been the focus of investigation in a series of studies performed by Ellis and fellow researchers, with particular emphasis on the relationship that a father has to the onset of his daughter’s sexual maturation. In a
longitudinal study performed in the United States and New Zealand, Ellis and his research team followed 762 girls from the age of five to menarche, and found that girls from homes in which the biological father was present tended to experience puberty, as well as their first sexual encounters, at later ages than girls who did not have a biological father present in the home.\textsuperscript{30}

In comparison, the absence of a biological father was associated with a girl’s earlier age at menarche, while the presence of a stepfather increased this likelihood. This result led Ellis and colleagues to conclude that a girl’s prolonged exposure to unrelated males increased her chances of an earlier initiation into puberty. Most significant to Ellis et al. was the finding that the more affectionate the father-daughter bond in early life, the later the girl’s reproductive development occurred.\textsuperscript{31}

Based on this research, Ellis has developed a theory of paternal investment that is similar to that of Draper and Harpending; that a girl’s reproductive maturation and behavior is particularly responsive to the \textit{effort expended} and amount of \textit{time} that a father spends with his daughter during her early developmental stages. Ellis states: “Girls detect, and internally encode, information specifically about the quality of paternal investment during approximately the first five years of life as a basis of calibrating the timing of pubertal maturation and certain types of sexual behaviors.” \textsuperscript{32}

In summary this section contains two distinct segments. First, the biological impression that a father makes on his daughter with regards to her future mate selection has been reviewed. This segment explores research on imprinting, and assortative mating as an underlying factor of human mate choice. The final segment reviews research on the
ways in which a father’s paternal investment may impact his daughter’s age of reproductive maturity.

This section of the literature points out that a father may influence his daughter on a very basic physiological level. The subject of this case study, Ada, worked on issues of father longing, and pointedly referenced the similarities of her father to her own love interest. From this perspective Ada’s father longing may be viewed as an experience generated by biological necessity.

**Cognitive/Behavioral Perspectives on the Father-Daughter Relationship**

This section of the literature review explores the father-daughter relationship through the lens of thoughts and behavior. It begins with a brief overview of cognitive-behavioral terms, including the concepts of cognitive distortions and schemas. How these cognitive structures form in a family and influence a father’s parenting is considered. Observational learning of a father’s behavior by a daughter is also discussed.

A cognitive/behavioral approach to psychology is based on the work of Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck. Ellis maintained that everything that people do, including acting, feeling, and thinking, could be understood as behavior. A person’s thoughts and feelings about themselves and the world around them are based on their belief systems, which are the result of their cognitions. Thoughts, perceptions, mental attitudes, and patterns for interpreting life experiences are all forms of cognitions.

The preceding concepts are important when working with issues pertaining to family relationships, such as that of father and daughter. Cognitive family therapists Richard Bedrosian and George Bozicas write that the greatest determining factor of an
individual’s self-perception and world-view are always based on that person's childhood interactions with their primary caretakers.\textsuperscript{37} Bedrosian and Bozicas explain that \textit{cognitive structures}, implicit core views that are often unknown to a person, can result from faulty thinking called \textit{cognitive distortions}, or \textit{cognitive errors}.\textsuperscript{38} Perpetuated into adulthood, cognitive distortions contribute to \textit{maladaptive behavior} and \textit{dysfunctional belief systems}.

Cognitive structures can also be held within the family unit as a whole. Frank Dattilio describes the concept of \textit{family schemas} as, “stable, entrenched long-standing beliefs that family members jointly hold about family life.”\textsuperscript{39} Jeffery Young posits that when childhood experiences are negative, the result is a dysfunctional belief system.\textsuperscript{40} Young has differentiated out 18 maladaptive schemas that form in early childhood. In stressful life circumstances these dysfunctional schemas and coping strategies are activated, making people susceptible to psychological issues.\textsuperscript{41}

The thesis that parents transmit cognitive dysfunctions to their children is pertinent to the father-daughter dyad, as the way that a man approaches parenthood effects how this relationship is shaped. Theorists Jim O’Neil and Melissa Lujan, and James Mahalik and Jay Morrison research the dysfunctional or distorted thought patterns of men so as to better understand what impedes a man’s parenting capacity, and to convey a cognitive treatment modality towards reconciling masculine cognitive distortions. The theories presented by these researchers addresses male schemas that are based on cultural mores, and the impact that they have on the way that children internalize their own belief systems.

Mahalik and Morrison explain that the way that a man thinks about masculinity impacts his actions as a father.\textsuperscript{42} These theorists describe \textit{restrictive masculine schemas}
as masculine ideologies that men internalize through social means. A masculine ideology becomes a restrictive schema when a man is not able to alter his behavior or thought process to accommodate a new experience, thus constraining him to only respond with thoughts and actions that conform to the ideology.\textsuperscript{43} Mahalik and Morrison regard restrictive masculine schemas as a type of dysfunctional cognitive schema as outlined by Beck, which contributes to problems with cognition, behavior, and within interpersonal relationships.\textsuperscript{44}

O’Neil and Lujan point out that the way a man acts as a parent serves as a measure for the overall health of both himself, and his family.\textsuperscript{45} These authors posit that Gender Role Conflict (GRC) in men significantly influences his thoughts, feelings and actions around parenting. GRC is defined as a “psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences for the person or others. GRC occurs when rigid, sexist, restrictive gender roles result in the devaluation or violation of others or self.” \textsuperscript{46}

Both theories note that these challenges to men result in specific maladaptive masculine schemas that have a particular affect on a man’s ability to function as a father. Schemas common between the two hypotheses include: emotional control/restriction; work primacy and pursuit of status; self-reliance; and restriction of affection between males. Mahalik and Morrison include, “power over women,” as a schema, while O’Neil and Lujan maintain that “fear of femininity” lives at the center of a man’s GRC experience.\textsuperscript{47}

To illustrate how these schemas may effect a man’s parenting capacity, and his relationship with his daughter, a man’s thought process might include such beliefs as,
“positive fathering means stern discipline, and constrained emotions.” Or, “nurturing children is woman’s work.” If a man has a restrictive ideology regarding a woman’s abilities or value, the relationship between the two will be impacted. In both of these models, theorists recommend cognitive-behavioral therapy, in which a man’s cognitive distortions are uncovered, tested for their validity, and ultimately restructured.48

Based on the preceding literature, a generalization can be made that maladaptive schemas and cognitive distortions that exist within the family, and those personal to the father, affect a woman’s psychological health; how she thinks about herself, and consequently acts in the world. Research that more specifically links a woman’s psychological issues to her relationship with her father can be sited in the field of eating psychopathology.

Concerning early paternal care, Ceri Jones et al., Hannah Turner et al., and Robert Eme have each conducted research studies involving fathers and the cognitive structures of eating disordered women. Ceri Jones et al., studied core belief patterns and body image.49 Sixty-six women in treatment for eating disorders were asked to complete three questionnaires, including the Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ). The researchers report that participants described core belief patterns of abandonment fear, belief in innate defectiveness, and a sense of vulnerability to harm. Jones et al., hypothesize that the combination of these core beliefs, co-joined with perceived paternal control, and paternal rejection, is central to women with eating disorders.50

Hannah Turner, et al., describes results of a research study aimed at exploring the psychological characteristics, including schema and perceived parental support, of overweight female adolescents.51 Turner et al., reports that the 17 and 18 year-olds
described negative self-belief schemas relating to emotional deprivation, fears of abandonment, insufficient self-control and subjugation. Additionally, these girls perceived their fathers as being significantly more overprotective and significantly less caring than girls from the two control groups did.\textsuperscript{52}

Seeking to broaden the field of study regarding a father’s impact on his daughter’s maladaptive eating style, Eme et al., presented research involving 110, 15 year-old girls from intact families.\textsuperscript{53} Eme et al., found that girls who reported greater levels of maladaptive eating where more likely to report overall distress and dysfunction, poorer communication with fathers, poorer problem solving skills with their fathers, and problems with autonomy. Of the girls who reported maladaptive eating, a significant number of fathers described a family structure of triangulation, wherein the daughter was caught in the middle of spousal conflicts.\textsuperscript{54}

In review, the cognitive behavioral research presented in this segment of the literature review indicates that cognitive structures, such as schemas, are garnered through early childhood experience. Schemas can exist in an individual, as well as in the family unit. Dysfunctional, or maladaptive schemas are formed through negative experiences, and can lead to psychological disorders. Schemas that pertain to men and their ability to parent may result from of a man’s concretized conformity of social roles. Maladaptive schemas and core beliefs in woman with eating psychopathology indicate that the inception of the disorder is, in part, paternally influenced.

The following segment of this section of the literature is based on Albert Bandura’s \textit{Social Cognitive Theory}.\textsuperscript{55} Bandura observed that children learn both by direct reinforcement and punishment, and by imitation and mimicry of the behavior of
those around them. Bandura posited that observational learning of the father is important to a child’s understanding of masculine behaviors, and that fathers influence their daughters in the way of modeling: a girl acquires the skills relevant to relating with men through a sequence of reinforced learning experiences that she has with her father.\(^{56}\)

Scott Hall cites Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory in his research on positive paternal influences and a daughter’s disposition (described as her intentions, attitudes, and beliefs) towards marriage.\(^{57}\) Hall hypothesized that the observed nature of her parent’s marital relationship would have a cognitive impact on a daughter’s perceptions of marriage. Nine hundred and seven college age women, and 307 men who served as comparison, answered questions presented in a series of questionnaires on the relationship satisfaction of each parent, as well as their own views of marriage. Hall found that the female participants who affirmed the positive treatment of their father towards their mother also reported that they were attracted to others who reminded them of their fathers. Positive paternal influence also related to a greater desire to marry. Based on results Hall reasoned that daughters who held positive assumptions about long-term heterosexual relationships based these assumptions on their observed experience of their father’s behavior in his marriage.\(^{58}\)

Julia Perin utilized Social Cognitive Theory in a study on the correlation of father’s communication competencies to that of their daughters.\(^{59}\) Twenty father-daughter pairs were asked to self-report on their communication competence; their ability to communicate appropriately in a range of social interactions. Based on results, Perin found that a father’s relationship with his daughter’s mother formed a model for communication behaviors that the daughter considered to be standard; that observing
their fathers over time modeled to these girls how to react and communicate with men.60

Masa Aiba Goetz, Marjorie Honick, and Nikki Marone also write about the power of observation and modeling of daughters to their fathers. Goetz conducted over 200 interviews with families for her book on father influence.61 Goetz maintains that fathers bring their children out into the world through direct action. Accordingly, fathers are more inclined than mothers to let children experiment; their “matter of fact, brisk manner” encourages children, fostering the belief that they are capable and competent.62 Goetz states that fathers act as role models for heterosexual relationships by demonstrating the way to treat a daughter’s mother.63

Honzik found that fathers who demonstrate a “friendly attitude” towards their wives had daughters who were more likely to achieve intellectually, resulting in the hypothesis that a fathers support laid the ground for a daughter to accept their mothers as role models.64 In kind, Marone explains in a book geared towards helping fathers to raise successful daughters that modeling is an important mechanism towards a father’s influence.65 Marone posits that a father’s reaction to his wife sets a standard for behavior; the most effective way for a father to impact his daughter’s behavior is through verbal encouragement, which is then modeled behaviorally by how he acts towards her mother and other woman.66

Marone further explains that it is the job of the father to challenge the behavioral choices of girls, and to do so often means that the father and the family as a whole must work at the level of belief systems regarding what girls can accomplish. Marone maintains that a father is the best influence on a daughter’s nontraditional career choices, such as in the fields of science and engineering.67
In sum, the cognitive behavioral research holds that a father is part of a family system that influences the development of a daughter’s cognitive structures. Cognitive structures such as core beliefs and schema affect the way that she thinks and feels about herself, and as a result the ways that she acts in the world. The concept of observational learning and modeling behaviors of the father to the daughter has been presented, and how this form of cognitive learning influences a daughter’s thoughts about heterosexual relationships and career choice.

**Sociocultural Perspectives on the Father-Daughter Relationship**

Theorists who hold a sociocultural position believe that issues of race, ethnicity, social class, and gender cannot be separated from the way one feels and moves through the world. This principle is of such psychological import that the American Psychological Association has established the Guidelines on Multicultural Education for Psychologists, which state:

Culture has been described as the embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions. It also encompasses a way of living informed by the historical, economic, ecological, and political forces on a group. These definitions suggest that culture is fluid and dynamic and that there are both culturally universal phenomena and culturally specific or relative constructs.68

To this end, the authors reviewed in the sociocultural perspectives section of the literature review on the father-daughter relationship pose that the roles held by father and daughter are social constructions that have shifted throughout history. Foremost, father and daughter can be viewed from their positions as male and female in society. The development of gender roles is reviewed in this section, as well as the father’s contribution to his daughter’s gender-role development. Next, this section will turn to
feminist research on child development, and then finally to the respective positions of father and daughter within a patriarchal system.

*Gender*, according to Dina Anselmi and Ann Law, as distinguished from the biological aspect of the sexes, refers to the attitudes, actions, and emotions that are associated with men and woman.\(^69\) Anselmi and Law, Sandra Bem, and Alice Eagly believe that gender and *gender roles* are predominantly determined by culture. Gender roles, as maintained by Anselmi and Law, are “socially and culturally defined prescriptions and beliefs about the behavior and emotions of men and women.”\(^70\)

Bem and Eagly both discuss the socializing components of gender-role-development. Bem poses a gender schema theory wherein children absorb parental and societal dictates for gender, then integrate these roles as core beliefs.\(^71\) According to Bem, experiences that the child has in the culture perpetuate these belief systems. Eagly's social role theory offers another explanation for gender development based on gender-role- *stereotypes*, which are the over-generalized beliefs that are prescribed to a group of people.\(^72\) Eagly contends that social norms are maintained through the division of work that is based on stereotypes for male and female behavior. Eagly distinguishes feminine and masculine gender-stereotyped characteristics as *communal* and *agentic*. Communal behaviors of nurturance, emotional expression, and domestic activity are applied to women, while the agentic role of assertion, independence, and participation in public affairs is associated with men.\(^73\)

Eagly and Bem affirm that education regarding gender role stereotypes begins the moment that a child is born, with the strongest influence on gender role development occurring within the family as parents transmit their own beliefs about gender.\(^74\) The
ways in which both fathers and mothers contribute to the role development of their children has been the subject of much theoretical research, producing a wide range of results.\textsuperscript{75}

Considering the influence of the father, researcher Joseph Pleck writes that the predominant thought of mid-twentieth century American culture held the belief that the father was expected to set the standards for appropriate sex-role behavior in his children, particularly boys.\textsuperscript{76} In discussion of girls, Rachel Devlin maintains that during this same time in history, a father was thought to be essential to his daughter’s emerging feminine role and sexuality.\textsuperscript{77} Later in the century, social learning theorist Walter Mischel posed the idea that the sex-role socialization of children was contingent on a reward and punishment system for appropriate and inappropriate gender behavior imposed first by the father, and then by other social forces.\textsuperscript{78} Miriam Johnson introduced reciprocal-role theory, which also stressed the socializing factor of the father. Johnson underscores the father’s importance in regards to his daughter’s feminine sex-role development.\textsuperscript{79}

Seeking more specific research on the influence that both parents have on the origins of gender-role development, researchers have focused on the differential treatment that fathers and mothers employ when engaged in care and play with their children. In analysis of this body of research literature, Michael Siegal found that more than half of the studies reviewed indicated that there was a significant difference between a father’s treatment of boys and treatment of girls.\textsuperscript{80} Similar metaanalysis of the research, performed by Hugh Lytton and David Romney corroborated these findings.\textsuperscript{81} Both analyses revealed that fathers, more than mothers, showed differential treatment of their
children. Common themes describe fathers as harder on boys, and more likely to engage in gender-stereotypical play with both children.\textsuperscript{82}

Particular studies that reveal the tendency of fathers to perpetuate gender stereotypes are highlighted by the work of Margaret Tauber, Jeanne Block, and Carol Nagy Jacklin et al. Tauber observed 145 school-age children in play with their fathers, and found that fathers actively engaged with sons, but withheld support from their daughter’s active play, instead participating in more sociable play.\textsuperscript{83} Block’s review of a series of longitudinal studies on socialization noted that fathers discouraged “rough and tumble” behaviors in their daughters, but were on the whole more lenient with them than with sons, who were encouraged to be more independent.\textsuperscript{84} Jacklin and fellow researchers observed 54, 45-month-old children in a series of free play session and found that fathers were more likely to engage in play that maintained traditional sex-roles, leading them to conclude that fathers tend to be the “discriminating influence of sex-appropriate play.”\textsuperscript{85}

The preceding research indicates that fathers, to a greater degree than mothers, tend to emphasis gender-appropriate standards for their children. According to this premise, in Western cultures, upon which this body of research is drawn, a father would emphasize communal characteristics in his daughter, as defined by Eagly, and steer her away from agentic, or masculine, behaviors.

There are studies as well that underscore the psychological health of more androgynous behavior in women, and cite the influence of the father. According to Bem, androgyyny is a gender definition in which one person holds a balance between the characteristics traditionally thought to be feminine and masculine.\textsuperscript{86} Individuals who are
psychologically androgynous are thought to have more flexibility in behavioral choice, as skills are available from both gender sets. Bem notes that women with higher degrees of *sex-inappropriate* behavior, or androgyny, tended to utilize their masculine aspects to better deal with the world. Bem suggests the converse as well; women with traditional sex-role feminine behaviors have been described as “dissatisfied and vulnerable.”

Studies to support the father’s influence on the development of androgynous characteristics in daughters are cited by Jeffrey Kelly and Leonard Worrell, Gordon Forbes and Leah Adams-Curtis, Isabella Crespi, and Stephanie Weiland Bowling. Paternal warmth appears to be a common factor found in this research. Kelly and Worrell pose that androgynous females perceive their fathers, along with mothers, to be both warmly expressive and active in their daughter’s intellectual development. Forbes and Adams-Curtis report from results of a study conducted with 395 female students that androgynous gender role typing in girls is correlated to closeness with both parents, particularly to the father. Crespi’s research on gender socialization led her to conclude that a positive relationship with the opposite-sex parent significantly reduces behaviors that are culturally ascribed down gender lines. Crespi, as well, cites a warm relationship between father and daughter as a determining factor in a girl’s non-traditional sex-role behavior. Weiland Bowling’s research concludes that a factor of sexual responsibility in adolescent girls is a warm relationship with a father who encourages the expression of androgynous behaviors.

An additional theory of gender development that is important to the study of father-daughter relationships is *gender hierarchy theory*, which poses that gender differences are an outcome of the disparity of power between men and women in
This theory rests on the premise that women generally have limited access to publicly recognized areas of power, which maintains the power differences between men and women.

One form of gender hierarchy theory emerges from the work of feminist psychologists such as Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan as a challenge to the practice of ascribing norms of human behavior to women based on research with male subjects. Before the research of these theorists, the prevailing models for psychological development held that healthy growth was the result of the child’s progressive independence as the child separated from the mother. Chodorow and Gilligan were some of the scholars to emphasize the differences in male and female development, noting that in a patriarchal, individualistic framework, boys are supported to move towards self-reliance while girls are encouraged to affiliate with others.

Chodorow affirms that as boys develop, they need to separate themselves from their mothers in order to identify with men. Taking the cue from culture, as well as their own re-identification process, they learn to devalue the role of women. Gilligan maintains that cultural expectations for girls emphasize relationships, and they are more focused in this area than boys.

These issues outlined by Chodorow and Gilligan may affect the father-daughter relationship in some significant ways. A father may hold a view of women that is based on cultural denigration, as well as on his own experience of turning away from women as a child. Also, in light of Gilligan’s work, a daughter’s need for connection and affiliation may evoke anxiety in her when her father, as a male, does not share the same focus. She also may not speak up for herself in relationship with her father for fear of losing the
relationship. Finally, the power differential of their relationship may keep her from authentic expression.\textsuperscript{98}

Issues of power and control, as highlighted by the preceding research, are important to the study of the family and its members. Scott Coltrane and Ross Parke maintain that, “to be a father has almost always implied power over others, especially woman and children.”\textsuperscript{99} Coltrane and Parke note that the institution of patriarchy, or rule of the father, is our “historical legacy,” and though there may be an argument that the reigns of patriarchal control have loosened in current society, we still rest on a historic platform of social inequalities that have altered but have not yet disappeared.\textsuperscript{100} Coltrane and Park argue that fathers and families have always acted as a means to control the spread of wealth and social status down family lines, and that study of the father cannot discount this entrenched societal construct.\textsuperscript{101}

Entering this conversation with regards to father and daughter, Lynda Boose and Betty Flowers also pose that the dyad first needs to be understood through its placement in the context of dominant culture and all of the “political, sociological, and religious” connotations that this placement indicates.\textsuperscript{102} Boose and Flowers describe the historical ideology of family that dominates Western thought as a closed, nuclear system that is hierarchical, patriarchal, and patrimonial.\textsuperscript{103} The nuclear system is defined as a system consisting of father, mother, and children, where there is a division of power in which the father has authority over women and children, and where name is passed down through the male line.\textsuperscript{104}

Discussing the ramifications for family life within this identified system, Boose makes note of the historic invisibility of the father-daughter dyad. She argues that this
phenomenon is based on traditionally prescribed family roles, wherein, “…the father weighs most and the daughter least. To consider the daughter and father in relationship means juxtaposing the two figures most asymmetrically proportioned in terms of gender, age, authority, and cultural privilege.” 105

Adrian Rich and Gerda Lerner are among the feminist writers to comment as well on the role of the daughter in a patriarchal family as that of the least recognized participant. These authors contend that the establishment of patriarchal culture was a process spanning thousands of years, and that even now it can be complicated to uncover, as its tenets are infused into every aspect of our daily lives. Rich writing on patriarchy describes it as:

the power of the father: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men, by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part a woman shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. 106

As part of her thesis on the formation of patriarchal culture, Lerner describes the daughter’s role as one deeply rooted in ownership, subordination, and the rejection of her feminine strength and autonomy. In stark contrast, the father has held the historic position as the leader and director of his family. 107 In some cultures still, the father alone names a child as legitimate. His words and actions determines if a child will live or die, a power most often exercised down gender lines, with girls much more often than boys being denied or put to death. 108

The daughter born into a traditional patriarchal system is not imbued with her own rights. 109 She is temporarily cloaked in her father’s name, as well as his placement
in a society’s class system. She gives up these effects when she moves from the rule of her father to the rule of her husband.\textsuperscript{110}

In this movement, Lerner describes the cultural concept identified by anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss as \textit{exogamous marriage}, or marriage outside of the family.\textsuperscript{111} This “exchange of women” was posed by Levi-Strauss to result from \textit{incest taboo}, the cross-cultural prohibition of sexual relationships between family members.\textsuperscript{112} Levi-Strauss felt that exogamous marriage was less about incest taboo, and more about the creation of social organization.\textsuperscript{113} He described the exchange of women as the beginning of the subordination of women, but also as a step toward the creation of human culture. Daughter exchange provided a mediating factor between groups, thus establishing a reciprocal relationship connecting male-dominated groups as kin relations.

Boose and Lerner each write that it is the father who regulates exogamous marriage, and the daughter who is the most obvious family member available for exchange.\textsuperscript{114} In her family of birth, states Boose, the daughter is a transient, the one member who does not actively continue the family line. Instead, she enters into a new family system through marriage, and retains her status as an outsider until she bears a son and continues the bloodline of her new family. To this point, Boose states, that the daughter “essentially lacks parentage and is almost by definition illegitimate. Unlike the son, she is a temporary sojourner within the family, destined to seek legitimacy and name outside its boundaries.”\textsuperscript{115}

Posing an additional hypothesis for daughter exchange, Boose suggests that to the patriarch, the exit of a daughter from the family is felt as a personal defeat, that in a system that thrives on closed boundaries, the daughter’s traverse over the threshold of her
father’s house equates her with the experience of loss. To gird against his inability to retain his daughter, the father in a patriarchal system seeks to control the inevitable loss by managing the exchange, thus establishing dominance over his daughter’s mate choice, sexuality, and inevitable departure from the home.116

In summary the sociocultural section reviews the work of researchers who pose that the concept of gender, and gender roles is dictated by societal influences. Father and daughter may be viewed through their respective positions as men and women in the cultural systems in which they live. This section has explored the way that a father may impact his daughter’s gender role development. A feminist perspective on child development has been reviewed, as well as the father-daughter dyad in patriarchal society.

Viewed from a sociocultural position, Ada’s experience of father longing can be understood as entwined with issues of power and equality. To paraphrase Boose, as the youngest child growing up in a traditional nuclear family Ada may be viewed as the figure on the bottom rung of the family system, while her father was on the highest. Denigration of women in the culture of Ada’s family of origin is suggested by her father’s use of pornography. Accordingly, Ada’s longing may be representative of the ingrained value that she placed on her father’s position of power in both her family and society, while the roles held by woman, epitomized by her mother and older sister were seemingly devalued.

**Psychodynamic Perspectives on the Father-Daughter Relationship**

The psychodynamic section of the literature includes the work of theorists who focus on the way that early, unconscious family dynamics contribute to human development. The work of Sigmund Freud is presented in this section, with review of his
concept of the *psychosexual stages of development*. This is a key theory in the psychodynamic literature on father-daughter relationships as it addresses the Oedipal, or phallic, stage as the entry point of the father into his child’s developmental life. Followers of Freudian theory use this concept to launch their own ideas as to the cause of a daughter’s move towards her father, and the role that he plays in her life. This section reviews as well the works of psychodynamic writers who discuss the ways in which a father contributes to his daughter’s sense of mastery in the spheres of worldly accomplishment and her sexual agency.

Freud conceptualized the human maturation process as a series of stages, termed the psychosexual stages of development.\(^{117}\) He proposed that there is a *libidinal*, or instinctual, drive that propels a person into the essential action necessary to satisfy the needs of each stage. Each psychosexual stage is characterized by two central components: the involvement of specific bodily zones, or *erogenous zones*, that are pleasure seeking, even as they are biologically functional, and a certain type of *object-relationship*, a term used by Freud to describe the person or thing which will satisfy the pleasure seeking and instinctual need of the stage.\(^\text{118}\)

The stages begin in infancy and continue on until adolescence. They are designated as the oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital stages. According to Freud, in the earlier stages the mother is the first love object and source of *identification* for the child. Identification is an important function in Freudian theory, referring to the unconscious process by which an individual takes on the characteristics of another person.\(^\text{119}\)

For Freud, it is the third psychosexual stage, the *phallic*, that is core to psychic organization.\(^\text{120}\) This phase begins at approximately three years of age, when the father
crosses the threshold into the child’s psychic life. This phase is also called the *Oedipal* phase, a descriptive title rooted in the myth of Oedipus to acknowledge the key conflict of this stage. Here, the child becomes aware of the father and moves out of the mother-child relationship. This move provokes a desire for an exclusive relationship with the opposite-sex parent, creating a rivalry between the child and the same-sex parent.

According to Freud, the girl’s entrance into this phase is prompted by the realization that she is not like her father in that she is missing a penis. This understanding propels her into a state that Freud termed *penis envy*. The girl will experience feelings of envy directed towards the male, symbolized by the penis that she herself is lacking. Eventually she reconciles her desire for her father’s penis into a wish for a baby by him, resulting in both her identification with femininity and her rivalry with her mother.

Psychodynamic theorists following Freud evaluated the girl’s Oedipal crisis, and questioned the dynamics that move a girl towards her father. In critique of Freud’s explanation of penis envy, many theorists such as Helene Deutsch, Alice Balint, and Lilian Gordon posed that a girl’s move towards her father is embedded in her relationship with her mother. Deutsch noted the feminine dilemma of *triangulation*, the idea that the girl’s relationship with the father competes with the “primacy” of the mother. Balint hypothesized that it is the infant’s confrontation with the separateness of the mother that will provoke the *reality principle*, the move towards the father’s domain existing outside of the mother-child bond. Lillian Gordon posits that Oedipal attachment rescues the child from the mother, “the dangerous giantess of the nursery.” These theorists each argue that the move toward the father in the Oedipal stage is an act of rebellion against the omnipotence of the mother.
As described, the function of identification is significant to the psychodynamic orientation. Identification refers to the unconscious process of taking something in of the other, or the object, and assimilating it to the self. Psychoanalytic theorists Doris Bernstein, Nancy Kulish and Deana Holtzman, Betty de Shong Meador, Jessica Benjamin, Adrienne Harris, and Christine Kieffer evaluate the function that a daughter’s identification with her father has on her development, and how this will inform the woman she becomes, particularly in the areas of worldly achievement and sexual agency.

Bernstein discusses the function that father-daughter identification has during the phallic and adolescence stages. Bernstein describes the task of a girl during these stages as momentous in that she is both struggling to establish an identity as separate from her mother, while also seeking to preserve her femininity. According to Bernstein, if a girl were able to use her father as an ego resource and to identify with his ability to leave her mother and go out into the world, much of her internal conflict would be eased.

Kulish and Holtzman note the qualities of competition and aggression that correspond with the Oedipal stage, and state that the addition of the father during this phase evokes these feelings in a girl that she directs towards her mother. A girl’s successful navigation of this stage results in the development of her sense of self as a sexual as well as aggressive agent. Meador also affirms that a girl’s identification with her father is vital, as it enables a girl to inhabit the aggressive aspects of her personality “as thoroughly female in relation to men.” Meador states that this important move to her father can only truly occur after a girl has made a pre-Oedipal attachment to her mother. Attachment to the mother forms the base from which she is able to work on the more complex triangular issues of the Oedipal stage. A girl’s return back to her mother,
after identification with her father, strengthens her essential feminine nature. Meador asserts that if the Oedipal ties with her father are not broken, and re-identification with her own femininity does not occur, that a woman may never build relationships with men that are based on equality.132

Benjamin highlights the relational aspects of identification during the pre-Oedipal stages of development, believing that it is not just an internal psychic experience, but also a relationship in which each recognizes themselves in the other, a process termed by Benjamin as mutual recognition.133 Mutual recognition occurs when a daughter expresses her wish to be like her father, and he responds reciprocally. Benjamin poses that penis envy arises in a girl when her father fails to support her subjectivity, the person that she is, separate from him, during the Oedipal stage.134

Theorists Adrienne Harris and Christine Kieffer each cite Benjamin in their own work. Harris explains father-daughter relations to be a “two-way street for desires and identifications.” Harris asserts that father and daughter exist in one another’s imaginations, both as objects and in the process of identification; both are like and liked by each other.135 Kieffer states that mutual recognition results in “mature self-object function,” in which father and daughter find in one another a non-pathologizing interdependence.136

Reviewing what impedes father-daughter identification, Bernstein poses that the opposition is often due to conscious or unconscious discomfort on the part of both of her parents. A girl’s turn towards her father provokes anxiety that is due to cultural prohibitions, termed by Bernstein as forbidden identification.137 Bernstein explains this to mean that identification between father and daughter is unconsciously banned. One
reason for this rests in the child’s belief of the all-powerful, “engulfing” mother of infancy. A resolution for the child’s early stage sense of helplessness is found in the perception of the phallic-phase father who seemingly has power over the mother. As a result, it is in the best interest of both men and women to uphold male privilege as a means to negate the powerless state experienced with the mother in early infancy. A girl who seeks to identify with her father, and with men, confronts this privilege. According to Bernstein this creates unease in the cultural field, as a girl manages not only her own anxiety, but also that of her parents and of society.  

Bernstein proposes that a father may also bar his daughter from identification when he confronts his own separation-individuation issues, re-awakened by her physical body. Bernstein writes, “To the extent that the father’s individuation rests on a biological base of difference from mother, to the extent that he continues to mobilize the ‘no I am unlike’ to maintain autonomy, the more unable he is to permit or welcome his daughter’s identification with him.”  

A daughter’s identification with her father can also fail to adequately support her. Both Kieffer and Secunda describe the predicament a girl finds herself in when she is her father’s favored daughter. Kieffer explains that by winning this position she becomes the female Oedipal victor. According to Kieffer, the female Oedipal victor will experience great conflict. Citing the works of social psychologists, Kieffer notes that for a girl, maintaining relationship with others is of foremost concern. One dilemma for the female Oedipal victor is that if there is a winner it is a victory had at the expense of another. Her conflict is further aggravated by the fact that the defeated one is her own mother, and when she wins her father’s love, she is isolated from her. As the daughter
also unconsciously identifies with her mother, her victory results not only in the 
devaluing of her physical mother, but also the symbolic womanhood that her mother 
represents. Kieffer states, “Her very femininity may be experienced as a humiliation by 
the Oedipal victor.” Unconscious identification with her denigrated mother may result in 
her seeking out these conditions as an adult, finding punishment and degradation in her 
romantic life.¹⁴³

Kieffer asserts that the favored daughter ultimately sacrifices her autonomy, as it 
is her father who supplies her sense of self. On his part, her father may view her as an 
extension of himself, only maintaining the relationship as long as the girl relinquishes her 
right to exist separately from him.

when the daughter starts to demand recognition of herself as a similar though 
independent person, the narcissistically vulnerable father may react with 
astonishment and then outrage….The father may either actively thwart the 
daughter’s autonomous strivings, or simply withdraw.¹⁴⁴

Secunda explains that the favored daughter role creates an emotional conflict in 
which the girl experiences herself as both entitled and coupled with a nagging self-
doubt.¹⁴⁵ As a favored daughter a girl will often come to expect special treatment from 
others, while also guarding against the nagging suspicion that her worth exists only in 
relationship to being her father’s “little girl.” Secunda explains that the failure to be 
recognized for herself is “traumatic” for a daughter, and that one result is seen in the area 
of romantic love in which she may avoid relationships, or unconsciously be drawn 
towards men with whom this experience is repeated.¹⁴⁶

Benjamin, Annie Reich, and Ruth Garfield each discuss a girl’s idealization of her 
father. Idealization is the process of placing positive qualities onto an externalized object. 
Idealization, as described by these theorists, results in the individual’s experience of these
qualities as belonging outside of themselves, existing as the sole domain of the idealized object. Benjamin poses that it is frustrated identification experienced by a daughter when her father fails to recognize her that causes her to abandon her aspiration for achievement, instead idealizing men, “who got away with their grandiosity intact.” Reich portrays the experience of women who suspend their own agency, placing this quality on a powerful male to affirm their sense of self as an object of his interest. Reich describes these women as experiencing a vicarious pleasure evoked by their closeness to the man’s power. Similarly, Garfield maintains that unresolved idealization of the father leads a woman to seek out a man to care for her, not just to enhance but to “elevate” her life in some way.

In further discussion on the topic of romantic relationship, researchers Mary Williamson, Fields and Secunda each pose that an erotic element between father and daughter is important to ensure the daughter’s positive psychosexual development. Williamson asserts that in order for a girl to develop a strong sense of her womanhood, there needs to be a metaphorically sexual element in her relationship with her father. Fields, based on the results of a questionnaire sample, affirms that a close relationship with her father during childhood allows a woman to experiences sexual and emotional closeness in her adult intimate relationships.

Secunda describes the significant impact that a woman’s father has on her experiences with men. In an interview study including 150 woman and 75 fathers, Secunda found that women who were well-fathered in childhood (defined as those who experienced involved, caring, and present paternal support) tended to stay away from relationships that jeopardized their well-being. In contrast, women with fathers
described as rejecting, controlling, or absent had a tendency to engage in romantic involvements with men who possessed these qualities as well. Based on the results of the study, Secunda affirms that a daughter’s father is her first love, and becomes a “template” for all of her subsequent romantic involvements. Secunda states, “The greatest impact on a woman’s romantic choices and her ability to feel comfortable in her own skin is how her father treated her in childhood.” 154

Secunda, Erickson, and Fields each reference the strong emotional component that daughters express when father loss is experienced, whether due to his physical absence, or emotional distance. Secunda explains that most of the women in her study experienced their fathers as existing in the background of their lives. This distance between father and daughter creates a longing; a father hunger that often gets acted out in a woman’s adult relationships with men. 155 Similarly, Erickson maintains that a woman’s longing for a positive connection with her father is instinctive. If this need is not fulfilled, Erickson reports that a woman will turn to addictions of food, work, sexuality, or substance abuse as a means to combat her need. 156 Fields discusses this phenomenon as well, eloquently describing the emotional state of paternal deprivation:

In most female recollections there persists a brooding, elegiac lyricism of yearning--yearning always for more, more, more, a hunger for something never quite captured in that secret place in the heart. Instead there is a terrible sadness, or an overwhelming and destructive rage. 157

Theorists Harris, Davies, and Salman Akhtar underscore the emotional give-and-take of the father-daughter dynamic. Returning to the idea of the Oedipal victor, Harris comments that both father and daughter must succeed in their claim of primacy with one another, as well as steadily renounce it, each simultaneously having an experience of being an Oedipal winner as well as an Oedipal loser. 158 Davies acknowledges the
dangers associated with the father who moves in too close to his daughter, even as she argues that a daughter needs to be “libidinized” in order to understand her impact with regard to her own lovers.\(^{159}\) Harris asserts that it is a formidable responsibility for a father to take pleasure in the burgeoning sexuality and maturity of a daughter, but that it requires a “rueful but steady renunciation of her moves to freedom and otherness in her self and in her loves.”\(^{160}\)

In kind, Akhtar suggest a series of tasks for the father in his daughter’s development, stating that one of them is to reflect the femininity of his daughter while employing a contained reciprocity. Akhtar writes that this will “enrich her gender identity, and gives direction to later sexual object choices.” Additionally, Akhtar expands on the ways that a daughter also affects her father:

Having to renounce his sexual gratification, while retaining a modicum of the erotic resonance, in response to the girl’s Oedipal overtures (both during her childhood and later when she is blossoming into a young woman), strengthens the incest barrier in the father’s mind….It is this accomplishment that I call the civilizing influence of a daughter on her father.\(^{161}\)

The overall assignment of the father, as maintained by these theorists, is to warmly acknowledge the appeal of his daughter while not falling over the edge into a seductive sexualizing of her. Kieffer writes of the psychologically seductive father as one that gets too close to his daughter, stating that a father’s sexual seduction of his daughter is an unconscious reenactment of his own separation-individuation issues.\(^{162}\) According to Kieffer, the sexually seductive father may subtly or more overtly promote his daughter’s erotic feelings for him. Often this functions as a means to control her romantic relations and vocational aspiration, an unconscious ploy to block her moves towards independence. This can have a debilitating effect in all areas of a woman’s life.\(^{163}\)
In conclusion, the psychodynamic section of a woman’s experience of father longing reviews the impact that early unconscious family dynamics have on the father-daughter relationship. The research presented builds on Freud's early work on the psychosexual stages of development and underscores the importance of the Oedipal stage as the father’s entry into his daughter's psychic life. Identification of the daughter with her father in both the pre-Oedipal and Oedipal stages is highlighted, as well as the concept of idealization and the effect that this has on a woman's self-esteem and future relationships with men. A father’s contribution to his daughter’s psychosexual development has been reviewed, as well as the works of Secunda, and Fields which underscore the experience of longing, or father hunger, that gets played out in a woman’s adult relationships.

Much of my analysis of Ada’s therapy is derived from a psychodynamic perspective, which holds that unconscious childhood experiences manifest as adult issues. I found the psychosexual developmental model to be particularly useful, as the third, or Oedipal stage is key to understanding father dynamics. This stage is highlighted by an increase in complexity in intimate relationship, which is natural as a dyad forms into a triad. Ada frequently found herself tussling back in forth with triangular dynamics. The Oedipal stage is believed to resurface during adolescence, and Ada’s issues and affect were often reminiscent of this stage of development. The psychodynamic section also presents compelling writing on the erotic interplay between father and daughter. This was a tension that I felt to be alive in Ada’s psychological work.
Imaginal Approaches to the Father-Daughter Relationship

This section of the literature on an imaginal approach to the father-daughter relationship begins with a brief overview and definition of imaginal psychology, including a historical summary of how image is viewed as a reflection of psyche. This section continues with an account of Carl Jung’s significant works on the archetype and the collective unconscious, and an exploration of the psychological dynamics between father and daughter as contributed by Jungian followers. Included is the archetypal depiction of these dynamics as characterized by myth and story. Turning towards the works of Thomas Moore, Andrew Samuels, and Aftab Omer, the affirmative components of the archetypal father are reviewed. Lastly, this section concludes with a synopsis of the key concepts of Imaginal Transformation Praxis as described by Omer. This theory provides an important frame for the beliefs and bias that I brought to this therapeutic work, and case study process.

Imaginal psychology is defined by Omer as “a distinct approach to psychology which holds the care of the soul as its primary concern.” At the heart of this approach rests the concept of the image as mediator for the expression of soul. To Noel Cobb, the world of images is alive and embodied, and we live inside and outside of the image simultaneously. Moore describes soul as existing inside, as well as around us, stating that we, “dwell” in soul.

For a therapist employing an imaginal approach, tending to the expression of soul can be viewed as the overarching interest, while the actual therapy may occur through the engagement of other psychological orientations. A therapist who holds this overarching interest may utilize innumerable forms from which to work with their
client’s images, such as art, story, song, bodily gesture, posture, and dreams. Somatic and psychological symptoms are also forms of image posited by Moore to contain all that we need to bring us in contact with healing. Moore explains that this is done, not to cure the soul, but to care for and nurture it.

Working with images in this way allows that which has previously been unseen to come to light. Penny Lewis explains that this is a concept long understood by creative arts therapists. Lewis believes that a great amount of any therapeutic process takes place in the, “transitional space of the imaginal realm,” and is done through somatic counter-transference, in which the therapist tends to aspects of the client that arises from this unseen, imaginal world. Lewis refers to the client and therapist as existing within a bipersonal field in which images as multilayered symbolic representations arise. Similarly, Barbara Sullivan writes that therapists need to work in the dark, with information rising from the, “domain of image.” Sullivan describes faith as a key attribute for a therapist working in what she describes to be a feminine approach to psychology. According to Sullivan, one must have faith in a world that is unseen, faith in the therapeutic process, and faith in the reality of the soul, or psyche.

The concept of the image as a mediator can be grounded historically. According to Paul Krugler, Plato believed that “images arose a priori from ideals existing independently, with the gods.” Aristotle felt image connected the inner world of sensation with the outer world of reason, and employed art and writing to portray the images of one’s inner experience. Kant demonstrated that comprehending an idea, or even a tangible item could not occur through pure reason, but through embodied
imaging.\textsuperscript{178} Later, Freud explored images as presented in dreams and free association, as a way of accessing an individual’s unconscious life.\textsuperscript{179}

As a student of Freud, Carl Jung also took up this work, though consequently moved beyond these more personal images of the psyche, into other areas of interest. Considered to be one of the fathers of imaginal psychology, Jung is credited with stating, “Image is psyche.”\textsuperscript{180} He believed that image and soul were one and the same and that the image functions as a liaison between an individual’s inner and outer worlds.\textsuperscript{181}

As a hypothesis of where symbolic images originate, Jung described the collective unconscious as the part of the unconscious that is impersonal and common to all people, an unconscious where universal motifs, or archetypes arise.\textsuperscript{182} Jung characterized archetypes as deep ordering principles within the psyche. He noted the impersonal elements of the archetype, as depicted in myth and fairytale, but also posed that an individual could become activated by its energetic representation, personifying the collective pattern in a unique way, specific to that person’s subjectivity.\textsuperscript{183}

According to Jung the psyche contains energies, emotions and instincts that are naturally contradictory, a concept he referred to as the principle or tension of opposites.\textsuperscript{184} Jung felt that the confrontation between these often conscious and unconscious poles produced a charged tension, “a spark of life,” from which emerged a new position or perspective.\textsuperscript{185} This emergent, “third thing,” is termed, the transcendent function. For Jung, the activation of the transcendent function is essential to the human maturation process.\textsuperscript{186}

Jung’s orientation was well rooted in the psychoanalytic perspective of the time, thus central to his hypotheses is the view that unconscious early family dynamics inform
individual experience. Applying his theory of opposites, Jung felt that there was a male and female side to each individual, as well as an unconscious, internal component of the opposite sex, termed the *anima* in men and the *animus* in women.\(^{187}\) Considering a girl’s father, Jung posed him to be “the first counter-image of her unconscious, the first manifestation of her masculine energy, later crystallized into the figure of her animus.”\(^{188}\)

Jung and his early followers such as Francis Wickes, Esther Harding, and Amy Allenby felt that men and women were naturally imbued with specific, archetypal qualities. If a woman possessed qualities believed to be the domain of the masculine, such as rationality, objectivity, and the capacity to react decisively, then she was viewed as having a highly developed animus.\(^{189}\) Conversely, an *anima woman*, as described by Esther Harding, is a term for a woman “who is all things to all men.”\(^{190}\) Demure and innately receptive, this woman takes on the outward projections of a man’s anima, often beginning with that of her own father.\(^{191}\)

These early followers of Jung detailed what it meant for a woman to experience a *father fixation*, defined as an intense preoccupation with the father that led to her development of marked intellectual and spiritualization, as well as inertia in her sexual maturity related to “unconscious incest” on the part of her father.\(^{192}\) Wickes, working with children, noted that a little girl with a strong father fixation would intuit his problems and reacted with poor behavior.\(^{193}\) Harding posed that a woman with an overdeveloped masculine side was at risk of leaving behind her feminine instincts.\(^{194}\) Harding felt this to be a symptom of modern culture, stating that, “while a father fixation remains unresolved, it destroys the ground in which womanhood is rooted.”\(^{195}\)
This quote from Allenby describes the dilemma of the father fixation. It also highlights the particular characteristics designated by Jung as belonging to the masculine. A father fixation occurs when a little girl gets prematurely immersed in a psychic world for which she is not yet prepared, and her personality development begins on foreign ground. In his archetypal relevance the father embodies for his daughter not only the first heterosexual love object, he also represents the larger world as ruled by instinct and spirit, he represents authority and law, the realm of ideas, the domain of religious and spiritual values. In brief, the father represents the sum total of life, which lies beyond the immediate scope of feminine concern.

Contemporary Jungian analysts Marion Woodman, Maureen Murdock, Linda Schierse Leonard, and Patricia Reis discuss, through the use of myth and story, the archetypal dynamic inherent in the father-daughter dyad. Each of these analysts proposes that archetypal forces that are also played out by the greater culture influence the relationship. These analysts assert that in a masculine-dominated system, qualities and conditions associated with the feminine, such as emotional expression, vulnerability, and creativity, are rejected. As a female child, the daughter is particularly susceptible to the projection of qualities denied by others, particularly her father, whose disowned aspects may infiltrate his daughter’s psychic life. A central thesis of these works is that patriarchal-based societies, as a whole, have become burdened by the shadow of the father. Shadow is a Jungian term used to describe unconscious qualities that are repressed and disowned by a person, or a culture, and then placed or projected onto another individual or group.

Through the use of mythological imagery, Woodman, Murdock, and Leonard discuss the dynamic of the father’s daughter. Woodman terms the father’s daughter “The Half Unconscious Queen,” as she mediates between her father’s conscious and intra-psychic life. According to Woodman, this little girl greatly admires her father’s
strength and power. As his favorite, she is drawn into a form of “spiritual incest” that binds her to serve as his anima.\textsuperscript{200} Woodman maintains that this is a psychological dilemma that often leads a girl to self-injurious behaviors, such as food or substance addiction. As adults, these \textit{anima women} struggle to step out of this early family dynamic, often unable to move into true womanhood. Additionally, Woodman points out: “While all women are not father’s daughters, we are all daughters of the patriarchy.”\textsuperscript{201} It is safer to reflect competitive and action oriented masculine values and to deny and suppress the feminine values of nurturance and \textit{being}.

Murdock describes the father’s daughter through the archetypal lens of the hero, and the hero’s daughter.\textsuperscript{202} The “hero’s daughter” is her father’s \textit{favored daughter}.\textsuperscript{203} Murdock explains that in this dynamic a father and his favored daughter are each imbued with an archetype, and also project an archetype onto the other. The “heroic” father takes on “bigger than life” magnetism. Concurrently, the daughter requires his protection and masculine guidance and possesses an “endless desire to please and reflect him.”\textsuperscript{204}

The conflict of the hero’s daughter is that, as her father’s “chosen” favorite, she only experiences a sense of specialness in relationship to him.\textsuperscript{205} Murdock maintains that the allure of the father’s power and protection, and the favored daughter’s designated role as his muse, make it extremely difficult for her to move beyond her childlike role and take grown-up action in her life.\textsuperscript{206} Further, Murdock asserts that the father may unconsciously eroticize the relationship with his daughter by creating a sexual tension in the home environment. This will wrongly bind his daughter to him, even if there is no physical contact between the two.\textsuperscript{207}
Idealizing her father often results in the rejection of her mother, and also the greater feminine. Murdock underscores that a girl may move away from her mother and towards her father for reasons such as emotional abandonment, addiction, depression, or death. In these cases the father fills the void created by her mother’s absence. Rejection of mother, and overvaluing of father are often issues that a woman avoids facing until confronted by the father’s weakness, as in illness or death.  

Leonard describes a woman who embodies the hero’s daughter archetype as vacillating between two poles, which she terms the *Pampered Puella* and *Armored Amazon*. The primary function of the *puella*, or eternal girl, is to hold the feeling function for her father, connecting him to the instinctual world of the feminine that is denied by him and the greater culture. The puella’s job is to inspire; she is not to act for herself alone. To escape from her dependent puella position, Leonard claims that a woman will seek to emulate qualities that typify masculine power. In this role, she is the Armored Amazon, who upholds patriarchal culture and denies the feminine principle of emotionality by suppressing her own feeling life. Leonard maintains that these two opposing patterns are often found in the same woman, and represent a father wound in the daughter that is the result of her unconscious experience of her father’s rejection. Finally, Leonard posits that a woman may come into contact with the positive qualities of the father archetype, even if the personal and cultural aspects of the father are inadequate. Leonard poses that these positive characteristics can be incorporated in a woman as she works with her unconscious material.

Contributing another perspective on how patriarchal culture influences the father-daughter archetypal dynamic, Reis notes that many fathers in male-dominated society are
burdened by their role regarding financial responsibility and the denial of their feeling life. The result is described by Reis as “paternal melancholy;” a deep, often unconscious, depression that may permeate the family. Reis describes the myth of the father-god Saturn swallowing his children to describe the daughter of such a father. Saturn’s daughter is one who is seemingly “swallowed alive” by her father. Left to carry aspects of the father’s life that are denied expression by the culture, her own creative nature is stifled. Reis notes that the melancholic father experiences boundary confusion. He may stand too close, infiltrating the physical and psychic space of his daughter, or remain remote, leading to her confusion and sense of abandonment.

Woodman, Leonard, and Reis each pose that a woman who suffers from a father wound must return to the sphere of women. In the formation of the father-daughter bond, a woman may have denied her own mother, and as a result the archetypal great mother and the pattern of “mother” within herself. Healing occurs as a woman accepts her feminine nature, and returns to the realm of the divine feminine, described by Woodman as “the unhurt virgin ground of her soul.”

As demonstrated by the previous theorists, imaginal approaches to the father-daughter relationship draw attention to universal and archetypal qualities. In her study of women who struggle with eating disorders, Margo Maine discusses these qualities as they pertain to father longing, and a girl’s experience of “unrequited love” in connection to her father. Reporting on case study findings, Maine poses that a girl may begin to feel ashamed of wanting a deeper connection with her father, particularly in adolescents, and as a result will begin to question the legitimacy of all of her desires. Maine observes that when a girl’s father fails to connect with her in an authentic way, she is often flooded by
feelings of “rejection, abandonment, self-doubt, anxiety, fear and sadness.” Maine describes the longing that a daughter may feel for her father as father hunger:

a deep, persistent desire for emotional connection with the father that is experienced by all children. When this normal craving is satisfied, children are likely to grow up feeling confident, secure, strong, and “good enough.” Often this need is not acknowledged, and the child’s hunger and need for a bond with father grows. This causes self-doubt, pain, anxiety, and depression, as well as learning and behavior problems.

Universal themes of longing and sacrifice are often depicted in the mythological stories of the father and daughter. Often in these ancient tales, the father’s lust for wealth and dominance culminates in the forfeit of his daughter’s life or wellbeing. Woodman and Murdock each depict the fairytale of the Handless Maiden, in which a young girl has her arms cut off by her own father, to describe the state of helplessness a woman may find herself in at the hands of the personal and cultural father.

Furthering the discussion with regards to myth and fairytale, Clarissa Pinkola Estes and William Indick each write that all of the components and characters portrayed in these stories can be likened to aspects of an individual. According to Estes, stories that pertain to a woman’s developmental process often begin with a betrayal of the daughter at the hands of her father. Estes explains that the character of the father in these stories represents the part of the psyche that draws the young feminine out into the greater world. Often the father’s betrayal is the result of an immature fathering aspect within the woman’s psyche. According to Estes betrayal on the part of the father breaks the girl out of her innocent state, propelling her into the healing “underground forest” of her instinctive and intuitive feminine nature. Estes maintains that “without this separation from her father, a daughter will create only what will please him, thus destroying her feminine self.”

Indick, in kind, emphasizes that all aspects of a story represent aspects of a person. The protagonist is likened to an individual on a psychological journey, while the supporting characters often represent shadow parts, and those traits needed to bring the main character into greater balance. Indick portrays the Wonderful Wizard of Oz as a girl’s quest for qualities of the archetypal great father, explaining that Dorothy’s incorporation of these traits contributes to her maturation process, and eventually facilitates her journey home, representative of her greater self.227

The work of the prior authors describes some of the complexities that present a challenge to a girl and her personal father, and various mythological themes that represent the archetypal dimensions of the relationship. The affirmative archetypal qualities of the father are depicted as well through the works of Moore, Samuels and Omer.

Moore explains that, “One is left disoriented and out of control without the deep father who settles into the soul and provides a sense of authority, the feeling that you are author in your own life, the head of the household of your own affairs.” 228 Moore observes that the current cultural response to patriarchy is to fluctuate from embracing a denigrated form of patriarchy that oppresses and tyrannizes, to then criticizing and turning away from it. Moore maintains that political patriarchy should not be confused with the patriarchy of the soul, which includes a sense of profound morality, order and community. Moore cautions that without the support of the “mythic father” one is left confused and in chaos.229

Samuels states as well that, “The internal father symbolizes both an individual’s relationship to authority and also the capacity to be authoritative.” 230 According to
Samuels, the focused cultural attention on qualities of the negative father reflects a positive psychological interest. Samuels explains that when patients bring negative parental images into their analyses, it can signify that there is something positive that they are seeking to develop. In this sense, the culture at large is challenged at this time to work with issues of the father in order to assimilate the positive aspects. Samuels maintains that the idea of incest can be viewed as, “a complicated metaphor for a path of psychological growth and development.”

Expanding on this thought, Samuels posits that when children experience incestuous feelings, they can be viewed as unconsciously making an effort to augment their levels of experience through contact with the parent; thus the psychological function of incestuous sexuality is to make possible the tangible expression of love. Samuels asserts that metaphorical incest contributes to a woman’s capacity to go beyond the mother-role in society, depending in part on her liberation by her father from her perceived internment.

Strange as it may seem, it is the young female’s apperception of herself as a sexual creature, facilitated by her erotic connection to her father, that enables her to spin through a variety of psychological pathways, enjoying the widest spectrum of meanings inherent to the ideogram, “woman.”

Another view of the archetypal masculine is represented by Omer in his explanation of the Father Principle in Transformative Learning. According to Omer, the father principle describes a way of speaking to a particular mode of experience. The father is not gender specific, but instead describes the personification of a particular quality of energetic expression. A person can be activated by the father, seek to activate the father, or become aware of when the father as an energetic mode of experience is either active or dormant in a group, a person, or an organization. The father can be experienced through the embodiment of such qualities as strength, presence, order,
discernment, and restraint. Omer suggests that one can have a somatic sense of the father, often experienced as the felt sense of verticality.\(^{236}\)

Additionally, Omer states that “The father is the first other, the doorway into the greater world. If this doorway has been found to be safe, then one will be able to participate with the rest of the world.”\(^{237}\) Omer describes one’s ability to tolerate “otherness” as linked to the experience with one’s father as the first “foreigner” to arrive at the threshold of the mother-child dyad. The father is always separate from the individual, existing as all that is “not me.” In this sense, according to Omer, whatever negative qualities were expressed by one’s father now live in the shadow of that person. Thus, work with the shadow is work with the other within, the shadow masculine. Omer poses the question for one to ask: “What would my life look like if I had been deeply fathered?” as a form of inquiry and entry into this archetypal mode.\(^{238}\)

The proceeding segment of the imaginal approaches section of a woman’s experience of father longing reviewed the works of Moore, Samuels and Omer on contributions of the archetypal father. The following segment of this section highlights some key concepts of imaginal psychology as described by Omer. The inclusion of these concepts is important as they frame the educational foundation that forms the belief and bias that I have brought to this work with my client.

Omer’s theory is termed Imaginal Transformation Praxis. Returning again to image, Omer poses that “we are ‘embedded’ in imaginal structures, assembles of sensory, affective, and cognitive aspects of experience constellated into images that both mediate and constitute experience.”\(^{239}\) According to Omer, our imaginal structures are made up of personal, cultural, and archetypal influences.\(^{240}\) Individuals have multiple
imaginal structures, and Omer employs the term *multiplicity* to describe “the existence of many distinct and often encapsulated centers of subjectivity within the experience of the same individual.” Psychological growth can begin when one begins to *disidentify*, or separate from these imaginal structures.²⁴¹

Disidentification is largely the result of a strengthened capacity for *reflexivity*, a concept developed by Omer that describes the ability of an individual to simultaneously engage with and be aware of their imaginal structure. Omer maintains that psychological distancing from ones imaginal structures afforded by the capacity for reflexivity activates the *experiencing I*, or observer. The result is an increased self-awareness, freedom to make different choices, and a sense of personal spaciousness.²⁴²

In addition to the capacity of reflexivity, an individual who is embedded in the limiting experience of an imaginal structure may be made aware of their unconscious patterns through the aide of the Friend. The Friend is described by Omer as “Those deep potentials of the soul which guide us to act with passionate objectivity and encourage us to align with the creative will of the cosmos.”²⁴³ The Friend may be understood as the impartial and archetypal means in which an individual apprehends both their greater life purpose, and their restrictive conditioning.

The outcome hoped for in transformative learning is *reflexive participation*. As we shift from impulsively reacting to our ongoing psychological triggers, to engaging *reflexively*, we are better able to participate with all aspects of life. According to Omer reflexive participation is “the practice of surrendering through creative action to the necessities, meanings and possibilities inherent in the present moment.”²⁴⁴ Creative action can be understood as the common function of the imagination. If we are freed up
from our imaginal structures, yet reflexively informed by them, we are able to make use of this function of the psyche, and partake directly in life.

In conclusion, the imaginal approaches section on a woman’s experience of father longing has reviewed some of the fundamental tenets to an imaginal approach including the concept of the image as the expression of soul, and the modes in which psychologists may employ this approach. The historical roots that join image with soul have been brought out, as well as significant contributions arising from the field of Jungian psychology. The affirmative aspects of the archetypal father as described by Moore, Samuels and Omer have been reviewed, as well as components of Omer’s Imaginal Transformation Praxis.

Imaginal psychology is foundational to this clinical case study. In Ada’s presentation of issues I tracked the images that she brought forward; images embedded in her story, affect and emotion. Her story was that of a father’s favored daughter, an anima woman who presented with mannerisms of the eternal girl, or puella, yet desired to meet the challenges of her life as a grown woman. An imaginal stance helped me to view Ada’s process of integration as a transformative journey leading her to psychic balance and healing.

**Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed a woman’s experience of father longing from the vantage point of different psychological perspectives: biological, cognitive/behavioral, sociocultural, psychodynamic, and imaginal approaches. Each section reviews literature on the father-daughter relationship, and the impact that this relationship has on aspects of a woman’s
experience of herself, and the world around her. While there is an evident joining together of ideas and theory, each perspective focuses on a distinctive element of the father-daughter relationship.

In summary, the biological perspective views the relationship at the level of physiological functioning. Included is the imprinting-like mechanism in humans that may influence mate selection, as well as the father's impact on his daughter’s age of menstrual onset. The cognitive/behavioral research holds that a father influences his daughter in the development of cognitions, which affect the way that she feels about herself and as a result acts in her world. This section addresses the impact that a father has on a girl’s core beliefs, as well as his function for modeling behaviors that she then incorporates as her own. The sociocultural section explores the roles of men and women in society and the ways in which these roles impact a woman’s experience of father longing. A feminist perspective on child development is reviewed, as well as the ways in which power dynamics inherent to patriarchal society impacts the father-daughter relationship.

The psychodynamic perspective on a woman’s experience of father longing assumes that unconscious family dynamics inform the father-daughter relationship. This section includes an overview of Freud’s psychosexual phases of development. The Oedipal phase is key in this section, as it is thought to be the father’s entry point into his child’s intrapsychic life. The imaginal approaches section views father longing as an opportunity to tend to soul. The positive characteristics of the archetypal father are presented in this section, as well as the mythic dimensions of the father-daughter relationship as found in myth, culture, and story.
In comparing these sections of the literature one idea that stands out is that of paternal warmth. Writing from a biological perspective, Bereczkei points out that attachment and proximity of the father influences a daughter to choose a mate with traits similar to his. Ellis posits that paternal investment demonstrated by time and effort on the part of the father influence pubertal timing. Both researchers hypothesize that a girl takes in this information at an early age and physiologically makes use of the experience later in life.

Similarly, many theorists cite affirmation on the part of the father as a quality that lends itself to a daughter’s well being. Literature highlighted in the sociocultural section link non-stereotypical behaviors in females to a warm relationship with their fathers. Theorists writing from a psychodynamic perspective discuss the necessity of a father to express a warm recognition of his daughter’s burgeoning feminine nature. Secunda, for example, describes this as being, well-fathered, explaining that a well-fathered daughter has a sense of being affirmed and cared for by her father.

It can be ascertained by this phenomenon that paternal investment, equated with paternal warmth, is important. The absence of paternal warmth may be understood as an experience that initiates father longing; the daughter misses a quality of parenting that is provided by a father’s engaged presence. Her longing is the representative affect of its lack.

Imaginal psychology may be viewed as holding a fundamentally hopeful view in the face of this lack. Father longing can be considered as psychological suffering that brings a woman into contact with what she need to move into psychological wholeness. This idea is depicted by Samuel’s hypothesis that a patient’s engagement with aspects of the negative father may signify that there is something positive that they are seeking to develop. Leonard speaks to this as well in her affirmation that women have access to all of the positive
qualities of the father archetype, even when the personal and cultural father lacks them. Viewed from this optimistic vantage point, imaginal approaches can be understood as a means to bring to light the capacities inherent, yet unknown, to the individual.
CHAPTER 3

PROGRESSION OF THE TREATMENT

The Beginning

Ada began treatment at the Lomi Psychotherapy Clinic in October of 2003. Her father had passed away the previous June, and Ada had been referred to Lomi by a local therapist who believed that this clinic’s somatic, body-mind-spirit approach was congruent with Ada’s own belief system. Ada’s first contact with the clinic was made when she called and spoke to another intern therapist who was staffing the phone lines. Throughout this initial phone call, Ada wept openly while speaking of her grief regarding the death of her father. She stated that she needed help with stress management, and with the general handling of her life. This intern therapist arranged for Ada’s appointment to be with me due to a common availability in each of our schedules, and our initial appointment together was set for two weeks after this preliminary phone call.

When Ada came in for her first appointment it was late October. She had scheduled an evening appointment, and the outside was cold and dark as she entered the waiting room amidst a swirl of autumn leaves. A large scarf was coiled around her neck, and her small figure was seemingly engulfed by a dark blue, down jacket. When she entered the room where we were to conduct our sessions, she sank deeply into an over stuffed chair, and the resulting effect was that she appeared much younger than her 31 years.
I was a brand new intern and I eyed her nervously as I dutifully reviewed the intake data sheet with her, aware that her tears were imminent. I went over the clinic’s policy on confidentiality and privacy practices, and described my intern standing, and those instances that might require my breaking her confidentiality including consultation with my supervisors, and the necessity of disclosure if I felt that a client was a danger to themselves or others, as well as the need to report elder, or child abuse.

Ada clutched and twisted a tattered handkerchief between her small hands, as I awkwardly made my way through this preliminary aspect of what would be our work together. With paperwork complete, word after word tumbled chokingly out of Ada, as if a dam had just broken. From where I sat, directly across from her, I felt myself moved and taken in by her story. Her dark hair was matted and wet, as it was raining outside, and her blue eyes were blood-shot from crying. With tears, as well as anger, Ada told me of her father’s death that previous spring. Sobbing, she stated that she felt immobilized in her grieving process, stuck, and unable to proceed in a life without her father. Continuing on, she revealed that her emotionality was having a negative impact on her work, and on her relationships with family and friends. Most importantly to Ada was the effect that she felt that her emotional reaction was beginning to have on her new boyfriend, who while initially very supportive, was now questioning his role in her grieving process. She also stated that she felt betrayed by her father for dying, and guilty for having these emotions.

As her words tumbled out, I began to piece together the major components of Ada’s story. She had been living in the Monterey area when she had arranged to do a nine-month work-study of eastern medicine in Sonoma County. During the workweek she was living in her van in Sonoma County, and showering and eating at the training
center. On the weekends she would travel to Monterey to spend time with her boyfriend. This routine had taken a toll upon her, and by the time she began therapy she was exhausted, rundown, and had been physically ill with a cold and a painful skin condition for weeks.

During this first session, on the forefront of Ada’s mind, was how misunderstood she felt by her mother, her boyfriend, and her friends. As she spoke of her longing for her father, her cries rang out with her missing of him; only he “got” her, and only he had understood her. I primarily listened, and reflected to her how important and individual the grieving process was, and that she needed to grieve in the way that was personal to her. I encouraging her to bring her feelings to our sessions, as a means to mediate the sense she had of being too much for the significant others in her life to handle. I felt an easy and immediate rapport with her and noticed also a sense of protectiveness.

Our session completed with a conversation that centered on the challenges she had been having with just *being* in the world. Ada admitted that since college graduation she had struggled to support herself. She had worked as a waitress, and had spent time traveling back and forth between her mother’s home in Monterey County, and her father’s in New Mexico. She had also experienced two broken engagements in the past four years. At the time of her father’s death, she felt that she had found the, “perfect man,” and was embarking on an important career path in eastern medicine. She was terrified that all of the feelings that were coming up in response to her father’s death would derail her life, just as she felt that it was getting on track.

During the session Ada alternated between anger, and sadness. Her tone was soft, and at times petulant and ostensibly childlike. She wept often. By the end of our session,
she was visibly relieved and relaxed, as if just letting out these complex and conflicting feelings had proved to be a release.

After Ada left and I was writing up my notes on our session, I contemplated my reaction to her and to the content of our meeting. I reflected that during our time together I had experienced a strong sense of protection for her, and a somatic sense of myself as holding a big, round, shielded space in the room. I wondered about this, as well as the feeling that I had of her as much younger than her years. I also worried that I had not questioned her more thoroughly for symptoms of depression. Going over her paperwork again, I noticed that her past history included an eating disorder, and use of “psychedelics.” She also wrote that at times she had a debilitating case of psoriasis that predominantly affected her hands.

**Treatment Planning**

After three sessions with Ada I wrote up an initial assessment that included the diagnosis of normal grief. Ada’s therapy centered on creating a therapeutic alliance that would allow her to bring out her feelings pertaining to her father. For the initial treatment plan, a fifty-minute therapy session was proposed, once a week for as long as Ada wished to attend. In the beginning of our work together the central focus of the therapy was to provide a psychological container in which Ada could express her grief regarding the loss of her father. Fundamental to providing this therapeutic container was the recognition that the loss of a family member through death is one of the highest possible life stressors that one can experience.¹ This understanding, coupled with Ada’s desire for stress management, necessitated that our initial treatment plan include strategies aimed at
ameliorating her level of internal tension. Ada was also concerned about her professional life. She felt that at 31, she ought to have established herself in a career, and wondered why she was, “floundering,” in this area.

The short-term goals of the therapy took a binary course; one aspect was centered on supporting Ada’s complete expression of grief, while the other component focused on delineating strategies that would support the management of her daily living. A more long-term goal included addressing Ada’s professional concerns.

My approach to our work was an Imaginal one. This approach holds the focus of tending to the movement of soul, as may be expressed through the psychological symptoms presented by an individual. The idea of tending in this way can be viewed as the overarching interest, while the actual therapy occurs through the engagement of other psychological orientations, such as cognitive behavioral, psychodynamic and depth psychology.²

One aspect of my working imaginally was to create the space of the therapy room as a temenos, a sacred container in which my client’s work could deepen.³ Therapy would begin with my welcoming Ada into the room, and having us together take a moment of intentional silence before we began speaking. I would then inquire as to what image or affect she was stepping into the room with. One purpose of this inquiry was to build the sense of the therapy as existing outside of local or linear time, as a place where the unseen world could become manifest.

Another purpose to my inquiry was that I hoped to foster Ada’s ability to begin differentiating out her various subjective states. Working in this way demonstrates the notion of multiplicity, the idea that as beings, humans are plural, multifaceted, and multi-
natured. It has been said that just the very suggestion of this idea will bring relief to a person. This proved true for Ada, who was struggling with how to manage all of her ostensibly divergent, strongly affective reactions. Psycho-education was used to normalize the complexity of the grieving process. Included was the support of Ada’s expression of seemingly paradoxical emotions, such as longing, anger, guilt, and resentment. The predominant practice was conversation, with a focus placed on differentiating out her internal voices, or subjectivities.

As Ada’s therapy continued I began to understand that her father’s death had served to bring to the forefront issues that pertained to how she was managing her life. In conversation, and through the expression of subjective states, Ada would recycle through themes of self-mastery, and personal-agency, terms that she herself brought up and defined as an ability to achieve the goals that she set for herself regarding her career, health, and interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships specifically included her desire to understand her feminine expression and sexuality in relationship to men. This broader view of our therapeutic work was made explicit through my description of these themes and use of terminology. For example, I would discuss her grief as it pertained to her personal father, but also the work she was doing around the experience of being fathered in the world.

In response to Ada’s engagement with issues catalyzed by the loss of her father, my treatment plan was modified to include other long-term goals. Specifically, I hoped to facilitate her connection and understanding of the aspects of herself that felt powerless without the structure provided by her father. A key element for reaching this goal was to encourage Ada’s emerging connection to the Friend, termed by Omer as, "Those deep
potentials of the soul which guide us to act with passionate objectivity and encourage us to align with the creative will of the cosmos.” The Friend may be understood as the impartial and archetypal means in which one is able to bring awareness to the personal constructs that impede psychological growth, as well as understand one’s greater life purpose.

The Therapy Journey

The narrative content of Ada’s therapy sessions centered on four primary themes that revolved around a central axis representative of her relationship to her father. One area of focus concerned her grief process: her grief at her father’s death, and also grief generated by the particular ways in which he had fathered her. Another important theme pertained to the impact that this relationship had on Ada’s adult interpersonal involvement with men. An additional topic had to do with her feeling of self-mastery in the world, which included the felt or somatic sense of being safe and comfortable in her own skin; follow through and completion of goals and tasks; and the ability to support herself financially. The theme that I came to describe as triangulation; competition with women when an important male figure was present, also came out during the therapy. Over the course of nine months notable changes occurred in each of these areas. The most significant shifts occurred through the practice of reflexive participation; attending to the imaginal structures that were evoked during these sessions.

Ada’s therapy continued weekly through the remainder of the autumn. Her standing appointment remained in the evening, when she would arrive after her day at school. That fall was a particularly wet one, and as had been the case of our first session,
Ada often arrived sodden, with her top layer of clothing soaked through. This created in me the sensation that the natural world was grieving along with Ada; that she was moving in a watery, and emotional realm, and then brought that world with her when she stepped over the threshold into the therapy room.

In the therapy room, the story of her relationship with her father began to unfurl, along with other details of her life. Through her words, I was to formulate an image of her father as a dynamic man, one who influenced much of how Ada interacted with the world around her. Ada described herself as a “daddy’s girl,” explaining that as a child she had lived for the time when her father would return home from his work as an accountant. By Ada’s report, she has little memory of her mother and older sister during this time, but does recall that by the end of her day she was actively marching up and down the family’s small living room, chanting, “Where is my dad, I want daddy.” She describes a family anecdote in which she made a sign to this effect, and clutching it tightly into her small fists, she would “picket” before the front door, ever watchful for the turn of the front door knob that would signify his arrival. Ada remembers feeling as if life would begin when her father stepped into the room.

When he came home, he would often take her out to places. Ada’s parents were second generation Jewish, of Russian ancestry, and involved in a big community. Her father would take her to visit friends, or to his after hours job as an illustrator. By Ada’s account, these after work sojourns were the highlight of her day, a special experience that she alone shared with her father, and a way to walk with him into his exciting world.

The images embedded within the recounting of Ada’s experience of her childhood became important facets of our work together. In our third session I reflected back to Ada
the image that she had shared of waiting for the doorknob to turn and for her father to enter the room, a moment when life would eventually begin for her. I wondered out loud what a daughter in this position did while she was waiting, and how life happened for her when the father was no longer there.

In response to my question, Ada sat very still. I waited, fighting with the urge that I had to fill up the space that was forming in the wake of her silence with my own words. I noticed a lump in my throat, and internally berated myself for being so insensitive as to have highlighted her fatherless state. In the silence that continued, Ada’s eyes began to fill and a flush of red began to creep slowly up her face.

“How could this happen?!” Ada’s cry moved through the room like liquid heat. She repeated the question and followed with, “I hate this,” simultaneously throwing a pillow across the room. As a therapeutic tool I invited Ada into an imaginal process where she could speak her words directly to her father, as represented by a chair with a pillow in it. I moved my own chair close and slightly behind Ada, with the intention to support her, while encouraging her lead in the conversation.

In the presence of this imaginal father, Ada’s anger was palpable, yet her words were seemingly caught in her throat. She kicked at the ground, and let her long hair cover her face. I could feel my own face becoming flushed, and felt my own jaw clench. As the silence continued, Ada turned towards me, her eyes brimming with tears, and indicated that she could not speak. I asked her if I could speak some of the words that she had previously said to me, letting her father know how I, as Ada, was affected by his death. Ada nodded her consent, and in clear, firm voice, from the position of Ada, I spoke to my father. I stated how much I missed him, and also how very angry I was at him for dying,
and for leaving me behind. After each sentence I spoke I looked at Ada, non-verbally inviting her to continue on where I had left off. Finally she choked out, “Why didn’t you take better care of yourself, why did you have to go? You were my father…wasn’t I enough of a reason for you to live?” Ada dissolved into deep sobs as she uttered this final exclamation.

I sat quietly for some moments, as Ada’s sobs slowed. The room where we were meeting had a throw folded-up on the back of the couch, and I asked her if I could put it over her shoulders, to which she nodded an affirmative. I tucked the blanket in around her, and asked her if she had the sense of any response coming from her father. She cried harder and stated that there was only silence, that her father had turned his back on her.

As the session neared the end I reminded Ada to be gentle with herself, to treat herself as she would a young girl who had recently lost her father. “Be there for her, let her talk about her father, and allow all of the feelings, for there are none that are good, or bad or right, or inappropriate; hold her, soothe her; know that she will have a hard time with big worldly issues and help her to find her way.”

The following session Ada described how disturbing the image of her father’s turned back was to her, and shared that she had dreamt about her father during the week. The strongest memory that she had of this dream was that she was riding in the backseat of a car being driven by her father. All she could see was the brown tweed of his back, and when she tried to get his attention, he did not seem to hear her. With horror she had awoken when she caught a glimpse of the man in the rearview mirror, and realized that the man was not her father at all.
I made no interpretations of the dream, but asked her what stood out the most for her. In response she described the feeling of terror that had threatened to overtake her when she first could not get her father’s attention, and then realized that the man driving her was a stranger. At this point in our session, I invited Ada to close her eyes and focus in on the sensation of terror, which she described as a tightening in the area between her chest and throat. After some moments I asked Ada to place her hand on this area, and breath into the feeling of tightness, speaking of her experience if she was able.

Minutes passed with Ada’s breath at first coming in ragged gasps. “I am alone here. There is nobody, it is cold and I am so scared.” On cue her teeth began to chatter and her body to shiver. “What does this child need?” I asked. “If the father is not there is there someone else who can care for her?” I instructed Ada to just track her breath for a moment and to see if anything arose. As her breathing slowed, a small smile began around the corners of her mouth. “A warm feeling came over me,” explained Ada. “It loosened the pain in my chest, my heart. Then, “sweet girl-you will be alright.” These words came to me,” exclaimed Ada. “It was a woman’s voice.” As this session ended I encouraged Ada to take in this feeling of warmth as a sensation that she could evoke when she was feeling particularly alone and frightened.

Concurrent to navigating the experience of loss that she felt for her father, Ada was focused on her boyfriend, and the impact that her emotional response to her father’s death was having on their relationship. Ada had met this man three weeks before her father was hospitalized. By her description he had been her champion. He had offered to fly with her to New Mexico, where her father had lived, and stood steadfast by her side during the long nights in the hospital, and later as she made funeral arrangements,
attended to his burial, and eventually began to clear out some of his belongings. Ada reported that Jason was, “My true love. My rock. I felt like I could only do this because he was there.” Jason would spend long hours just holding Ada as she cried, story after story of her early family life pouring out of her. Her grief, and her anger at her father for not taking care of his physical health, her sense of betrayal; Jason was able to meet all that came up for Ada with steadfast compassion. Even in the midst of her deepest sadness, the two made plans for their future. They both wanted to travel together, and had long reveries where they imagined journeying through India, a land that Ada felt could support and enhance the couple’s spiritual connection, and interest in eastern philosophy.

According to Ada, the two had experienced a deep and passionate bond throughout the summer. As the season wound to a close, Jason was very supportive of Ada’s decision to begin her holistic internship in Sonoma County. She felt secure in their love, and excited about working with a particular teacher in Sonoma County. She knew that the training would be arduous, but felt ready to take it on.

What Ada had not bargained on was that she would begin to feel insecure. Jason had been so present for her, and so overt in his expressions of love that she was taken off guard by the cold fingers of doubt that began to wrap around her heart at the physical distance between them. During our fifth session, I asked Ada to give voice to this sensation. I inquired as to what this feeling might say if it could speak. Ada was able to describe the feeling as her fear of “losing” Jason. “He will grow tired of me, I will not be able to keep his attention. I am too much for him to handle.” Identifying a self-critical voice, I intervened by requesting Ada to speak further from the position of this voice, in order to understand the form of self-attack and self-criticism that she was under.
Speaking from this position the words came out cruelly, “Ada needs to be positive, she can’t be a “problem.” She can’t be too dark, too emotional. It is her job to be pleasant…pleasant, happy…and always beautiful. She is not beautiful when she is crying all the time.” Ada sneered out the words as she took on this character.

Later in this session Ada revealed that it had been her role to be the “family cheerleader.” She described her father as a, “bear of a man,” who could be loud and grumbly, and “mean” if he felt that he was being disrespected. Ada had quickly learned that in her family she was the one who could make him smile, that she had the power to turn his moods. Conversely, she also learned that her older sister, Anna, could bring about the opposite response from her father.

It was during this session that Ada first spoke in depth of her relationship with her sister. I had the sense as she did so that it was a relationship that was deeply rooted in the family system of her childhood. She spoke from a fixed position in which her sister, who was two years older, was experienced as a threat to the stability of the family. At the mention of Anna, Ada’s expression changed into one of palpable disdain. I suggested that she seemed angry with Anna, to which Ada replied that Anna had, “Always caused problems.” Ada cited examples of Anna’s depression as a teenager, explaining that she had withdrawn, and had occasionally cut her skin with sharp objects until she drew blood, and that even now, as a wife and mother, Anna was on anti-depressants. Ada’s lip curled into a sneer of disdain as she spoke of her sister’s issues, and I noted out loud, that the way that she spoke about Anna was much the same as the way that her own self-critical voice spoke to her.
Contemplating the system of Ada’s early family, I wondered at the positions held by these two sisters. Ada seemed competitive and also angry with Anna. When I reflected this to her, and commented that Anna had obviously been suffering, she snapped at me, stating that, “Anna had caused suffering.”

The ground that I was on felt precarious. I felt that Ada was overly identified with her childhood position, and also sensed that to challenge this directly at this point would not benefit our therapeutic alliance. Gently I asked Ada to tell me more of her experience with her sister, to which Ada stated, “Anna rocked the boat, and made my father angry.”

The room as she said these words got very quiet, and I repeated the words that Ada had just spoken out loud, stating them into the quiet space of the therapy room. “Anna rocked the boat, and made my father angry.” In the space that ensued Ada’s eyes began to fill with tears. I asked her quietly what would happen if her father got angry, and was she, Ada ever able to be angry. Ada shook her head and stated, “not at my Dad, that was not allowed.”

“Maybe it was safe to get mad at Anna?” I asked with a question in my voice. Furrowed brow, Ada appeared pensive, and shrugged. We would not speak of Anna again for some months.

In the weeks that followed the tension between Ada and Jason grew. Ada was traveling back and forth between Sonoma County and Monterey. During the week she began to agonize about what Jason could be doing, and when he would be calling. In late November, during her birthday weekend, the two got into a huge fight centering on Jason’s inattentiveness. In early December Ada and Jason went to celebrate a friend of Jason’s birthday in Tahoe, and had a similar argument. On both occasions the fight was
initiated by Ada’s suspicion of Jason’s interest in other woman. Ada would accuse Jason of eyeing, or flirting with another woman. By Ada’s report she would become verbally abusive during these times.

Listening as Ada described these events I was once more struck by her girlishness. I noted that she vacillated between a more capable self-expression, to the position of an angry and petulant child. In this childlike state, Ada seemingly demanded that she be loved, while at the same time defended herself from the fear that she wouldn’t be.

It was during this time in the therapy journey that Ada began to speak of her recovery from bulimia in her early twenties. She acknowledged that being in relationship with a man brought up the impulse to binge and purge, an urge acted out on during her teens and early 20’s but now held in check due in part to her commitment to her physical health. Ada explained that she had difficulty being physically demonstrative and sexual unless she felt that she was very thin. During the trip to Tahoe the argument between the two had taken place at a hot-tub party. Ada admitted that she had felt exposed in her bathing suit, and afraid that Jason would compare her negatively to the other woman present.

In further exploration of her fight with Jason, a pattern in Ada’s romantic relationships with men began to emerge as well. Ada described two previous broken engagements, stating that at a certain point she had felt that both men had stopped seeing her as special. In the apparent monotony that ensued, Ada had ended each engagement. As she recounted these events, Ada brought up her father, suggesting that, though he had never said so directly, he had seemed relieved. “In high school and college my father was
friendly and jovial with my boyfriends, but kind of belittling when talking to me about them. When I ended my last relationship, my father said that I could do better.”

The therapeutic conversation regarding family of origin dynamics to follow in this session became an ongoing reference point in Ada’s therapy as we discussed how it was that one could look to their current relationships to gain insight as to how they were parented. In a moment of realization, Ada stated that the reverse also seemed true, that she could perhaps look to how she was parented to see how she might respond in her relationships. This understanding resulted in a review of how her perception of Jason reminded her of her father. A dominant quality was that her father was adventurous, as was Jason. Ada felt the need to keep up with Jason, and like she would lose him if she were not also this way.

The idea that family of origin dynamics influence one’s adult interactions continued as a theme when, in late December, Ada found a home to move to that was close to the holistic training center where she had her internship. Ada had come to believe that living as she had been, between her van and the center, had contributed to her feeling of chaos and overwhelm. She felt that renting a room in this home would be a step out of this chaos, and a move towards getting her life in order.

The room that Ada rented was in a home with a mother and her teenage daughter. The mother’s boyfriend was a frequent presence in the home as well. Immediately Ada began to experience herself as the one who was left out in this arrangement, a position that she reportedly found intolerable, and worked on in part during our next three sessions together. She stated that she felt comfortable with the mother’s boyfriend, but had the sense of being small and young when comparing herself to the teenage daughter.
Specifically, Ada maintained that the daughter and her mother ignored her opinions, and that she was not really wanted, but merely tolerated in the home. Ada was able to intellectually reflect on her status as tenant, versus that of family member or friend, but these reflections did little to minimize her discomfort.

When Ada shared her feelings of not belonging, and described her interactions with the teenage daughter as tense and awkward, once again I had a sense of how scared and young she felt. I asked Ada about her own experience as a teenager, and encouraged her to give this facet of herself voice. Ada was now familiar with the concept of speaking from one aspect or part of herself, and from the position of her younger self, moved into an expression of anger that was focused on the daughter. Her voice was vehement, “You always get your way, you think you’re better than me, but you are not! You act like I don’t belong; you’re just a selfish, self-absorbed bitch!” In a more conversational tone Ada explained herself further to the teenage daughter, represented by the space on the couch across from her. “I know that you would like me to leave, and that you would like to have everyone’s attention for yourself, but I exist, and I am here!” Ada then turned to me and stated that the only person who was kind to her in the home was the mother’s boyfriend. Ada struggled with the perception that when he was not in the home the two ignored her.

Later in this session as she spoke of her experiences as a teenager, Ada brought up a time that her parents had separated when she was 14 years old. Her father had picked her up from school and had told her that his mother and he were separating. Ada described her sense of panic, anger and fear that she was alone with her mother and sister while her father stayed away from the house, looking for an apartment in town. By the
end of the week he returned home, and the event was not discussed again with the
children. Yet, to the teenage Ada, the impact was great. Shortly after this occurred she
reportedly began a nine-year bout of mild bulimic behaviors, which she kept hidden from
her family.

As we deepened into January, approximately three months into her therapy, I
began to feel myself precariously walking an edge of concern that Ada’s grieving process
would develop into a more pervasive depression, symptomatic of a Major Depressive
Disorder. Her relationship with Jason was on shaky ground, she was uncomfortable in her
new home, her courses at the center were demanding, issues regarding her body image
were up, she was running out of money, fighting with her mother, and reporting that she
could not seem to gain control over her emotions. My rapport with Ada felt solid at this
point, yet I was worried that my interventions were not providing enough therapeutic
containment.

My concern came to a head when Ada revealed that she had called her grief
counselor in Monterey over the weekend to find out if the sadness and anger that she was
still experiencing over the loss of her father were within the normal range typical of a
grief response. Ada had shared her bias against medication early on in treatment with me,
and therefore I had never suggested that she have a medication evaluation. When I heard
from Ada that she had contacted her grief counselor, and that he had suggested that she
could greatly benefit from anti-depressant medication, I had two primary concerns;
Firstly, I was afraid that I had overlooked the gravity of her more extreme symptoms.
Secondly, I worried that I had missed something in the therapy that had initiated her quest
for outside support. Carefully I went over the warning signs demonstrated when normal
grief traverses into a more complicated depression, and asked Ada if her hopelessness was so great as to put her at risk for self harm, or even suicide. I inquired as to what she thought of having a medication evaluation as the grief counselor had suggested.

Ada considered my query for a long moment and then replied that she had, “lost” her dad, and that no response that she could have was too extreme. She did not feel that she wanted to die. Further, she stated that she did not require medication, and actually felt that she needed to not be in therapy, or in grief counseling, at all right now, but just needed to “be.” She proposed that she take a month long leave from therapy altogether, returning back in early-March.

In the moment I felt flummoxed by this proposal. My dominant instinct was to trust this as her need, and to take what Ada had to say at face value. At the same time, I felt deeply troubled that something in the therapy was not working, and that her departure would result in her terminating care. I was also concerned that my question about medication had put her off. Yet, when I posed these concerns, Ada denied them, and eloquently expressed again her need to “be.” I conceded to her need, and we set our next appointment for March.

In speaking with my supervisor about our session, it was decided that I would continue to make phone contact. I was anxious, wanting to do the right thing by Ada, and as a new intern was grappling with my professional responsibilities and boundaries. Yet underneath this, I felt that I trusted Ada’s process, and wanted to trust her intention to return when she was ready. At the same time, I wanted to let her know that I was available. I left two messages during this period conveying my support, to which she
responded with brief return messages. In March Ada returned to therapy as scheduled, and thanked me for my “understanding.”

Ada’s sabbatical emerged as therapeutically fruitful. Upon return she appeared to have left the standstill places of winter behind and moved into her work of healing with the vigor of a young sapling, turning the illumination of the approaching vernal equinox towards some of the more hidden facets of her life. During her next few sessions, her disclosures were many. She had visited with her sister during the month, and the two had discussed their childhood and their parents at length, including her teenage bout with bulimia/anorexia, her sister’s previous self-injurious behavior, and her mother’s apparent lack of impact on the family structure as a whole. She explained how good it was to speak with her sister of these issues, and reported her sister’s description of feeling excluded from the “Daddy-Ada” dyad. They were just beginning to uncover the competition that existed between the two of them, and Ada was excited that this relationship could possibly grow into one of support.

Since her return we were now meeting on Thursday mornings in a southern facing room that was dappled with sunlight. During her third session back, Ada began to quietly speak of her experience of sifting through and packing up her father’s belongings after his death. Finally, looking up at me through guarded eyelashes, she told me that she had “found things, really sick things.” I waited in silence for her to continue, feeling very aware of the calm sensation in the room growing in the way that it does when you are entering into a deepened state.

“It was gross stuff, really,” she said, “Sexual stuff…pornography, but not typical pornography.” As Ada continued she described the stacks of magazines and movies,
explaining that it looked as if he was continually upping his own anti, because the most current items had to do with, “menstrual blood, very large woman and menstrual blood.” Ada looked at me with outrage in her bright eyes, her small being seemingly electric with, “how could he?!”

“I don’t know,” I said, answering her unspoken question. The spaciousness was in the room, and a question was in her eyes. “Was this a surprise? Were you aware of pornography in your childhood?” Ada nodded slowly, explaining that the bathroom and even the front coffee table had always exhibited *Penthouse* and *Playboy* magazines, and that it had embarrassed her when her friends had come over.

I wondered out loud how her mother had felt about these items being around her girls, with a question in my voice. Ada shrugged thoughtfully, and her words were slow. “I don’t know, they would fight about so much, and that was part of it. It always made me feel weird, to have all of these pictures of naked woman around.” She shivered as she spoke.

I asked her if she felt unsafe, and after a moment of hesitation, she said yes, that she did feel unsafe, unsafe being female, and also unsafe with his explosive rage. She brought up an incident from her early childhood, speaking of how her father surprised her with his anger, and how she had felt terrified, though she felt, “confused,” as to why, because she knew her father loved her, and would never hurt her.

I nodded slowly. “There is usually an element of confusion in the family system, or field when someone is actively addicted, and it sounds like your father may have been addicted to sex, or at least pornography.” Ada stared at me blankly. She stared at me as if
she had never seen me, and as if many wheels were spinning in her mind all at once, very rapidly. “You think my father was a sex addict?” She said cautiously.

“Uh oh,” I thought. I felt my face get hot. Wasn’t that clear? I found myself wondering. “Well, what it seems like your describing is a certain type of compulsive action…” Internally, I stammered. Ada stared over my shoulder, her look more pensive than angry. She appeared to be in deep contemplation.

Later as I reviewed our session, I felt myself wince; “It sounds your father may have been addicted to sex.” The sentence ran around in circles in my brain, and I felt a sinking sensation. I chastised myself for how abrupt I had been, fearing that I had ambushed her with my words. At the same time I was also curious about what the word, “addicted” brought up for her.

During our next session, I asked her as much, and apologized for using labels to describe her father’s behavior. Ada looked at me silently for some time, “But I think that you are right.” She sighed. “He flirted with everyone. He even flirted with me, and one time a therapist said that I may have been sexually abused.” I asked Ada what she thought about this, and she shrugged confusedly. “No…nothing like that, he never physically touched me.” She then described an experience that she had had with her father about two years before his death, when he had commented on how attractive she was, as she was mid-yoga pose. She noted how odd, and uncomfortable the experience had made her feel. During the remainder of this session and our next, the conversation revolved around what it meant to be sexualized, and the differences between overt sexual abuse and covert sexualization. Ada began to link her history of anorexia/bulimia with her relationship to her father, and his use of pornography, stating that she only felt
valuable and sexual as a woman if she was extremely thin. She explored a coming realization that to be charming and attractive was, “To be on my father’s side, which was the safe side to be on. And the only way to get his attention was to be beautiful, like the women in the magazines.”

At this point in my own supervision, I expressed my concerns that Ada had been sexually abused, and just as Ada and I spoke of covert and overt sexual abuse, so did my supervisor and I. It was decided that I would proceed slowly and indirectly, loosely holding the question to myself as she delved into the spectrum of experiences that she was having as she reviewed her relationship with her father in this new light.

It was now mid-April and we were six months into therapy. One weekend Ada and Jason were in a serious car accident in which Ada’s car was damaged beyond the point of reasonable repair. The accident occurred when a raccoon wandered into the road in front of her car, causing Ada to suddenly slam on her brakes. The car spun around 360 degrees, and careened sideways into a large tree.

As Ada told me about the accident, her eyes were shining. She explained that she did not know how to make sense of it, but that on the night of the accident she had dreamed of her father, and now felt that he had protected her during the accident. Later she had pulled Raccoon from a friend’s deck of sacred animal cards, and learned that it meant, in part, a trickster like energy. The accident resulted in a new car for Ada. Since she had never liked her old car, and had exited the accident unscathed, she trusted that her father had been instrumental in the occurrence.

I was taken off guard by this turn of events and by Ada’s strong response of joy. Our previous sessions had centered on her father’s sexual addiction and questionable
boundaries, and my supervisor and I had been discussing ways to facilitate Ada’s exploration of paternal betrayal. Now, seemingly bathed in the emitting radiance of Ada’s love and trust for her father, I was confused as how to proceed. At this place in therapy my interventions again were based on the concept of meeting the client where they are by following the images and the affect that they bring with them into the therapy.

In following the image and affect, I got very curious about two things; I wondered about her use of the term trickster to describe her father, and I hoped to empathically understand her present affective state of elation, or joy. I asked her how the term *trickster* resonated with her, regarding her father, and she laughingly explained that, “he was just that.” Adventurous and seldom maintaining the status quo, her father, she explained, was difficult to define. I mentioned then that we had been recently speaking of things that had been hard in her relationship with her father, and wondered out loud what some of the other qualities were that she admired. She listed seven qualities, and we discussed the ways in which she possessed these qualities as well.

The following session Ada had done more research on the imagery of the trickster, and reported that the archetype was that of a boundary pusher, a complex, highly sexual, breaker of societal rules. This was her father, she resolutely explained. Yet, while she was vibrant with her discovery, I found myself privately wondering about her attachment to the idea of a father who “saves” his daughter by placing her in harms way. I did not make my thoughts explicit, but for the remainder of the session we discussed the feeling of careening out of control that had occurred during the accident, and how for Ada this experience could be coupled with excitement and adventurousness, qualities that she had subscribed to her father.
In mid-spring, approximately a year after his death, Ada needed to return to her father’s house in New Mexico to complete some of his business. He had been an illustrator, and had many commissioned pieces of work that had yet to be sent out. Ada described the process of gathering her father’s materials, and of formulating a package to his former clients that included the work that he had done for them, some of his poetry, pictures of him taken over the years, and a letter from her addressing her father’s love of his work, and personal vignettes from his life.

As Ada described what she had done she was clearly filled with pride at the memory and with the accomplishment. I commented that it seemed like this had been a way to really ritualize both her father’s death, and his life. That in completing his work in this way she could step into her own sense of authority. In this session, and those to follow we focused on the archetypal father as a symbol for her moving out into the world with self-respect, and legitimacy in her own work.

In the late spring Ada finally came to a decision that she had been grappling with regarding whether or not to move to Monterey County when her work-study came to an end. She had initially hoped that Jason would ask her to move in with him, but as it became more and more clear that she could not get along with his female roommates, she realized that this was unlikely, and began to look for a home of her own in the same area. Ada was very disappointed by this, but at the same time clearly able to proceed forward with her plans. She began to question the way that she had turned to Jason as her rescuer when her father died, and began to believe that he was possibly not an appropriate partner for her, in the long run, but a friend that had showed up for her during her time of grief.
My final session with Ada took place in June, nine months after her initial session. Ada had requested that we continue with phone sessions when she left the area, and I had agreed, but encouraged her to imagine that she could find someone to work with in her area, as she had expressed her desire to create a community and home there. In this final session Ada agreed with this, and we said our goodbyes by lighting a candle, and reviewing the work she had done in these last nine months as she had grieved for her father. In this session Ada surprised me by verbally invoking what she named, “The Great Mother Goddess,” and gave thanks for her presence. Some weeks later I received a final card from her in which she thanked me for supporting her during this time in her life.

**Legal and Ethical Concerns**

While there were no overt crisis issues to arise during the course of Ada’s treatment, in the beginning of our work together I was concerned that her grieving process could develop into a Major Depressive Disorder. When Ada disclosed that she had called her former grief counselor to find out if the profound emotional response that she had been experiencing was typical of normal grief, I was afraid that I had misread her symptoms, and had failed to build a therapeutic alliance that would have enabled Ada to bring her concerns to me. In review of our work together, I believe that it would have been ethically sound to ask for a release to speak with her grief counselor at the onset of treatment. In retrospect, I believe that this would have provided greater containment for Ada’s grief, and would have fostered trust in me as her therapist.
Another area of concern was the question of overt sexual abuse between Ada and her father. I was able to discuss covert sexual abuse with Ada, and to validate it as a legitimate violation. Yet I questioned if I had a responsibility to push for further answers, and wondered if I let Ada down by not doing so. Consultation with my supervisor was helpful in this matter, and at this juncture I believe that it was important to trust Ada by following her lead in the process.

**Outcomes**

Our therapeutic journey came to a close when Ada completed her work-study and made the decision to move from the area. At this time Ada had completed an important ritual regarding her father’s death. She reported that even as she had moments of deep longing for him, she no longer felt inundated by her loss, and that her feelings of anger and abandonment were gradually dissipating.

About this time, her relationship with the man whom six months earlier she had described as her “rock” began to crumble. Ada was able to attend to the difficult work of self-evaluation, assessing the ways in which she may have found a “rescuer” at the time of her father’s death, a man that adored and protected her as her father had, and a man who exhibited similar challenges in his ability to be emotionally present with her. An additional area of change was to be found in the softened way that Ada began to speak of her sister, as well as a greater desire to explore her relationship with her mother. She also began to speak of the ways that she had felt uncomfortable and objectified in her relationship with her father, and to begin to hold the tension of ambivalence between her
love and longing for him, as well as her feelings of anger and abandonment. She began to look at the competition that she experienced with women.

Shortly after moving to Monterey, Ada opened her own business as an eastern holistic health practitioner. She sent an announcement of her work to Lomi Psychotherapy Clinic, addressed to me. A year after this she began sending a monthly work blog to my business email address. In this blog, I could follow her career, and read her inspirational announcements focused on holistic health. She wrote as well of her travels throughout India, and Bali, which she journeyed to by herself.

At the time I contacted her regarding consent for this clinical case study, we spoke for some time. Ada shared with me that she had located a therapist in the Monterey area, six months after moving there, and that this therapist had told Ada that her father had sexually abused her. Ada had promptly ended therapy with this therapist, and stated her anger in our phone call. “She did not even know me,” Ada claimed. “It is just not that simple. I loved my dad. And parts of our relationship were also difficult.”

Ada then recounted the following waking dream that had come to her in a moment of longing for her father; “I was crying, asking my father to take me with him, to carry me like he did when I was little. Then these words came to me. *I am just a man. You are my beautiful girl. And you can do this.*” Ada repeated the phrase, “I am just a man,” several times, as if turning the words around in her mind. She explained her belief that her dream father was telling her that she had what it took to live her own life, a life without him.
As our phone call came to an end, Ada teasingly said that it was perhaps time to work on issues surrounding her relationship with her mother. “But you know,” she laughed ironically, “It still seems to be all about my dad.”
CHAPTER 4

LEARNINGS

Introduction

The learnings discussed in this chapter are formulated from approximately nine months of individual psychotherapy with a 31-year old female client who, while grieving her father’s death, worked on issues identified as father longing. This chapter includes; 1) The key concepts and major principles supporting my understanding of the therapy; 2) A description of what happened for this client during the progression of treatment; 3) An exploration of my own imaginal structures; 4) An interpretation of the client’s primary imaginal structures; 5) A primary guiding myth used to make meaning of what happened during the therapeutic process; 6) An account of my personal and professional development resulting from my work with this client; 7) A description of how an imaginal approach to a woman’s experience of father longing was applied to the therapeutic process.

Key Concepts and Major Principles

What happened with my client over the course of treatment can be framed within an imaginal approach to psychotherapy, as well as supported by psychological theory that pertains to father-daughter relationships. This section reviews the concepts and principles that the interpretation of the therapy draws upon. Included in this chapter are my own and
my client, Ada’s, imaginal structures. Imaginal structures, comparable to core beliefs or complexes, are defined by Omer as, “assemblies of sensory, affective, and cognitive aspects of experience constellated into images which both mediate and constitute experience.” The key concepts and major principles that are first presented in this chapter provide the context for understanding the imaginal structures described later in the chapter.

The learnings are framed by a number of concepts arising from an imaginal approach to psychology. An imaginal approach holds the care of the soul as a primary concern, as well as the idea that we care for the soul by attending to emergent images as the medium in which the soul communicates. Physical and psychological symptoms represent a form of image that reflects both an individual’s area of wounding, as well as the means for their growth and healing. Issues that a client brings into therapy may be viewed as a catalyst to the natural healing and balance of the psyche. Viewed from this perspective, Ada’s experience of father longing becomes the agent for psychological healing, the natural inclination of the psyche’s move towards wholeness.

Jung’s concept of archetypes as universal patterns of the psyche is key to this study. An archetype can be conceptualized as a template for a specific set of qualities and characteristics. Jung believed that people are archetypally influenced, and Jungian followers, such as Leonard, explain that the positive archetypal patterns are available as inner templates, even when external role models in the family, or in the culture are lacking.

Characteristics specific to the archetypal father, as described by Moore and Omer, are thought to encompass such qualities as responsibility, strength, presence, order,
discernment, and restraint. The absence of this set of archetypal traits contributes to an experience of illegitimacy, chaos and “disorientation.” Ada’s overtly expressed desire to work on issues of self-mastery and personal agency, coupled with her sense of groundlessness is further indication that she was working in the domain of the father.

The idea of the shadow is another Jungian concept presented in the learnings. Shadow is a term used to describe qualities that are repressed and disowned by a person, or a culture and projected onto another individual or group. A female child in a traditionally male dominated culture is susceptible to the projection of qualities considered insignificant by societal standards. Additionally Omer states that work with the father as the first other to enter a child’s awareness is always work with the shadow.

There are further concepts that provide the means for interpreting Ada’s therapy. The experience of father longing alone is a key concept. Erickson likens the sense of longing that a woman has for her father to an instinct. Maine uses the term father hunger to describe a girl’s desire for connection with her father, while Fields depicts the experience that a girl has for her father as one of yearning. Murdock emphasizes the intensity and ambivalence of a girl’s feelings, stating that most daughters evade issues that pertain to father longing until they are faced with his illness or death.

The feeling tone described above demonstrates in part that a father provides an important function in the life of his daughter. Maine posits that he is the means in which his daughter enters the greater social order, and that he acts as her protector as she does so. Additionally, a father will influence the way that his daughter views and acts in her romantic involvements with men. Secunda conceptualizes this idea by describing a girl’s father as a “template” for all succeeding loves. This fatherly influence is due to his role
as representative of the world of men, but is also linked to an erotic element existing between father and daughter believed to be important to a daughter’s positive sexual development.  

A father must hold a firm but loving boundary with his daughter regarding their mutual attraction in order to ensure her psychological health. Kieffer discusses fathers who cross this line, describing the sexually seductive father as one who promotes his daughter’s erotic feelings for him. Comparable is Murdock’s view that a father who eroticizes his relationship with his daughter wrongly binds her to him, even if he does not physically abuse her. This concept is congruent with both Ada’s account of her father, and the presentation of her issues. Like Ada, it is often a father’s favored daughter who is faced with this form of attention, which results in additional boundary confusion in her roles with men.

A series of concepts surrounding the father’s favored daughter are relevant to Ada’s therapy as well. A favored daughter presents with a number of marked traits, including a sense of entitlement, and dependent, childlike behaviors. Leonard describes a form of favored daughter as a woman activated by the hero’s daughter archetype of the Pampered Puella. The puella is the eternal girl, and her primary function is to act out her father’s disowned emotional, feeling life. Leonard maintains that the puella is one half of a polarity; with the converse side termed the Armored Amazon, the daughter who upholds patriarchal values. Leonard posits that these opposing patterns are often found in the same woman, representing a personal and cultural father wound.

The favored daughter has a clear relationship with the concept of triangulation, an issue to play out in Ada’s interpersonal relationships. According to Freudian followers,
such as Deutsch, triangulation issues are rooted in Freud’s third stage of psychosexual development, the *Oedipal* phase. In this phase the child becomes aware of the father and moves out of the dyadic mother-child relationship. For a daughter, this move creates rivalry in relationship to her mother, as each member of the triad competes to be first with one another.\(^2\) Kieffer describes the favored daughter as an *Oedipal Victor*; a girl who wins her father love, and takes on her mother’s role.

A daughter who attains a primary position with her father learns to devalue her physical mother, and ultimately herself. Woodman and Reis pose that a woman who suffers from a father wound in this way must return to the sphere of women, as well as the archetypal Great Mother that she embodies. Healing occurs as a woman learns to accept and trust her feminine nature.\(^2\)

**What Happened**

The key concepts and principles presented above provide the framework for the interpretation of what happened during the course of Ada’s therapy. Beginning with an imaginal lens, focus is placed on the emergent image. For me as therapist the image was auditory, emanating from deep within the center of my client, Ada. This cry echoed and resonated with a related place in me. It was a cry of loss and yearning, a cry for, “Daddy!”

Ada’s father had died six months before, and her anguish was unabated. This is consistent with Murdock’s point of view that a woman’s personal issues that pertain to her relationship with her father often come to the foreground in the face of his illness or
death. Ada’s grief had catalyzed an exploration of her father-daughter wound and personal father complex.

For Ada, the journey had begun long before. The historical content that she brought to the therapy was a story of herself as her father’s youngest and favored child. Ada describes herself as, “a daddy’s girl.” One of the most captivating images of our work together was one that she shared of her early childhood when she would stare fixedly on the doorknob, waiting for the doorknob to turn, her father to come home, “and her life to begin.”

As Maine explains, a girl’s father may serve as her protector, and also her entryway into the greater world. The description of Ada as placed on hold, and dependent on her father for activation is also congruent with the archetype of the puella, or eternal girl, who splits off her ability to act and projects her sense of self-agency onto her father. This position is problematic in that it will arrest a girl in a childlike state where she perpetually acts as the ingénue in her own life, a position held long after the role is appropriate or satisfying.

Ada brought forward the puella in various ways. In terms of somatic expression, she was small in body mass and stature, and could periodically take on an exaggerated fragility. This came through in her dress, which was much younger than her years, and also in the way she could recede into the background, sinking into bulky jackets and sweaters, and the furniture behind her. In the area of affect, at times her whole being could take on an air of petulance and pout, expressions indicative of a much younger age. Ada herself clearly spoke to her girlish qualities by describing the challenges that she had
with moving confidently in the world, establishing a career, and financially supporting herself. These latter issues she hoped to work on in therapy.

An indicator of Ada’s experience of dependency on her father arises through the dream image of herself in the backseat of a car that her father is driving. Ada tries to get his attention but cannot; she is literally taking a back seat to him, as he takes her on his own course, seemingly unresponsive to her needs. Then, with a growing sense of horror, Ada discovers that the driver is not her father at all. One explanation for this phantom driver is that the “father” who is driving her is of an archetypal nature.

Concurrent to working with issues of self-agency, Ada explored the ways that she interacted while in romantic relationship with men. As a favored daughter, Ada experienced a certain amount of entitlement and a sense of herself as special. She freely expressed her beliefs that her boyfriend or her mother should do a particular thing for her to show her their love, while at the same time she desperately seemed to guard against the belief that she was unlovable. This characteristic is in alignment with Secunda’s explanation that the favored daughter carries the dual belief of, “I am entitled, and I am a fraud.” 26 The favored daughter learns that to hold her position, she needs to retain her ability to charm her father, as well as her by proxy romantic partners.

This is an exhausting position and one that is difficult to maintain in a long-term relationship with an adult male. As part of her historical reporting Ada described a series of relationships, including two broken engagements where she had ended the relationship with men when the feeling of herself as “special,” had diminished. In therapy, her current relationship with Jason was approaching the stage where the shine of first attraction and projection were dissipating, and Jason was beginning to make seemingly typical moves
toward independence, including questioning some of the ways that the two interacted as a couple. In response, Ada struggled with insecurity, questioned her beauty, and had a resurgent inclination, reportedly not acted upon, to binge and purge. Secunda explains that the favored daughter “may be bedeviled by feelings of her inherent phoniness, the sense that her true self got lost somewhere in childhood.”

When the favored daughter turns towards her father, this move can be a turn away from her mother and the symbolic womanhood that her mother embodies. This turn from the feminine was brought out in the therapy by Ada’s mistrust of women, and anger directed at her sister, anger and indifference in relationship to her mother, and her difficulty nurturing and creating a home for herself. Cut off from the maternal mother, as well as the Great Mother archetype, Ada was isolated from the feminine grounding that she needed to feel whole within her female body, and safe in the world of women.

Psychoanalytic thought maintains that the daughter’s move towards the father is always entrenched in relationship to the mother, and this brings forward issues of the mother-father-child-Oedipal triangle, or triangulation. In Ada’s therapy issues of triangulation gave form to a great deal of our work, and contributed to much of Ada’s suffering. The dynamic was such that interpersonal relationships found Ada anxiously trying to know what her place was and vying for primacy. During early sessions she expressed this in reaction to her mother and boyfriend, whom she felt had, “ganged up on her,” during her birthday, and her childhood anger and competition with her sister. Throughout therapy she experienced many jealousies that occurred in relationship to her boyfriend and other, seemingly non-threatening, women.
When Ada moved into her new home she began to feel angry and anxious in relation with her female landlord and the landlord’s teenage daughter, particularly when the landlord’s boyfriend was present. This boyfriend she got along with quite well, stating that she, “felt safe with him in the home,” in contrast to how pushed out she felt by the landlord and her daughter. This dynamic was possibly reflective of Ada’s inner world, a world where she had learned that an admiring male was safe, in contrast to women whom she felt alienated by.

The dynamic in the home evoked a great deal of conflict for Ada, who brought the triangle issue to the forefront in therapy when she began to go back and forth between the grief counselor, and myself. This grief counselor happened to be a man that she trusted and who had provided care and insight for her when her father had first died. I did not know that Ada was still in communication with this therapist, and felt blindsided by her disclosure. This session was also when Ada decided that she needed to leave therapy, deciding that she wanted not to, “do anything, but just to “Be.”

One interpretation of this event is that in therapy Ada recreated her own therapeutic triangle. Stepping out of the triangle was in a sense setting a boundary, and a move out of the middle. When she stepped away from this triangle she underscored her need to, “be.”

Ada: “I just need to be right now.”

Me: “Is there a way that you can just be while in therapy?”

Ada: “No I need a different kind of being.”

Woodman explains that Being is the domain of the feminine, “The feminine is a vast ocean of eternal Being.” 29 The Latin verb esse, means, “to be,” and is the root of
the word essence.\textsuperscript{30} Ada’s evocation and move into a state characteristic of the feminine principle is a move back to the grounded domain of her essential, albeit disowned, nature.

When she came back from her month away Ada seemed freed up. During this time that she had spent, “being” she had been immersed in the nurturing arts section of her training, caring for herself with healthy foods, herbs and oils, doing what she stated her female teacher had named, “Goddess work.” When she came back she had effectively healed her psoriasis, as well as a persistent cold. She had also reconnected with her sister and the two had spoken of their lifelong family dynamic. In therapy Ada was able to go more deeply into her past, bringing up events from her childhood, and giving them form.

When she returned to therapy she brought up the issue of her father’s pornography and unconstrained sexual energy. In the charge of erotic energy that must be allowed, yet always resisted in the father daughter dyad, Ada’s father had crossed the line.\textsuperscript{31} Murdock asserts that the father who overtly or unconsciously eroticizes his relationship with his daughter by creating a sexual field in the environment of the home inappropriate binds her to him, even if there is no physical contact between them.\textsuperscript{32}

In the next sessions Ada was able to explore some of the more murky aspects of her father’s personality, revisiting his anger, and describing how uncomfortable she felt with pornography in the house. She also began to talk about her eating disorder, describing the ways that she hoped to be thin and beautiful because that was the expectation of woman as clearly indicated by her father’s magazines.

Ada’s ability to go down into the darker places in her history with her personal father, and to let herself truly re-experience some of the ways that she felt betrayed in their relationship, initiated the shattering of the idealized image she had of him. When she
was able to do this she was opened to identification with his more positive traits. This move was activated by the experience of her car wreck, caused inadvertently by her “father” as the raccoon/trickster.

Intrinsic to the father archetype is the conviction that he will provide for and protect his daughter. In review of the accident, Ada repeatedly maintained that her father had protected her from harm, and had also provided her with a new car. Trickster as represented by the raccoon, is the mythic embodiment of contradiction and paradox. In a moment of soul restructuring, Ada attempts to hold the paradox of her father as one who raged, who infused the household with ungrounded libidinous energy, and projected youth and beauty onto her, with the father who loved her, took care of her, and brought her out into the greater world.

This facet of Ada’s therapy gives pause to consider Leonard’s contention that there is an instinctive progression of the psyche towards a state of wholeness, and that even as our external role models fail us, there are archetypal patterns available as our inner guides. Holding the paradox of her father enabled Ada to list the qualities that she admired in her father, and also experienced in herself. The list includes: “enthusiastic, adventurous, he knew how to make a good living, good at bringing his personality into business-his clients respected him and liked him, handsome, quick witted, generous.”

Shortly after creating the list Ada was mobilized into the business of work in the world. She was able to finish clearing items from her father’s house, communicating with his clients, and completing his work for them. With further assimilation of the positive masculine Ada was quite literally doing her father’s work in the world, by embodying, as described by Moore, “a sense of authority, the feeling that you are author in your own
life, the head of the household of your own affairs.” 36 This new found authorship supported Ada as she found her next home in another county and prepared to live there alone, having come to the realization that she had clung to her boyfriend as a protector when her father died, a role she did not feel she needed him to play any longer.

In her final session Ada invoked the Great Goddess archetype as a means of closure. Ada had never done this before, and I felt it to be an indication of her inherent understanding that her healing would occur in the sphere of women, and through her acceptance of her feminine nature. 37 Additionally, her invocation served as a recognition and honoring of our work together.

**Imaginal Structures**

Included in this section are my own and my client’s imaginal structures. Imaginal structures, comparable to core beliefs or complexes, are defined by Omer as, “assemblies of sensory, affective, and cognitive aspects of experience constellated into images which both mediate and constitute experience.” 38

**How I Was Affected**

This section of the learnings chapter reviews some of the somatic, emotional, and cognitive reactions that I experienced over the course of Ada’s therapy. The nine months of treatment brought a mix of emotions and experiences that fell on a spectrum ranging from compassion, admiration, curiosity and awe, to frustration and confusion. At times I felt incredulous and judgmental. These latter feelings arose in response to Ada’s expression of competition with women. When Ada responded so venomously about her
older sister, who grew-up dealing with depression and self-injurious behavior, I felt afraid. Something important felt blocked off to me, and what I felt to be Ada’s lack of empathy made me anxious for her psychological health.

There were times when Ada spoke to her experience of being “too much” in her grief, of wanting to get it over with and to just be done so that life could move on. She seemed ashamed of all of her emotions. In response to this I would feel angry, righteous and protective. The feeling in my body was a streaming up and down in my trunk and thighs and arms. I had a strong sense of wanting to guard Ada from judgmental eyes and thoughts. A fierce belief in the necessity of grieving, and in protecting this need as Ada’s right, would come over me. Sometimes my anger and righteousness would dissipate, and what would come through was my heart. Full and round, I would experience myself as huge in these moments, and all encompassing, a sense of being a channel, and feeling as if warm healing energy was emanating from my heart, hands, and belly.

I felt scared when Ada told me that she had spoken to her grief counselor, and that she wanted to take a leave from therapy. I had a sinking feeling that I realize in writing this was shame. Internal critical voices told me that I had been naive. I had been tripping along doing lightweight work when my client was clearly not getting her needs met, and might even be having a life threatening depression. I was a bad therapist. I had not consulted with her other care providers, and now she was going to leave. I was scared and embarrassed, a sinking sensation in my belly. I scrambled to try to fix it, to make amends.

When I spoke about this openly with my supervisor, I was filled with a sense of maturity and verticality. When I called her during that month away, this feeling continued. Maybe I did, ”blow it,” but I could show up in this work for her anyway. I felt
proud of myself for facing my fears. Co-joined with this feeling of pride in the
development of a new capacity was a sort of, “good girl” structure; “See, I will make it
better.” This feeling also came up when I carefully went over warning signs of depression
with Ada, and when I was exploring possible sexual abuse issues with her.

When Ada felt competitive of the teenage daughter of her landlord, I felt
frustrated and judgmental. “You have got to be kidding me,” I thought, with a mental
eye-roll. “Grow-up.” I felt protective of this mother-daughter dyad, and nervous that Ada
seemed to be getting on with the mother’s boyfriend. I wanted to change her mind about
what she was experiencing and get her to act more maturely. I had a voice that said that
she should be a role model for this young girl, not competition.

In the beginning of therapy there was a way that Ada’s grief and longing for her
father were foreign to me. I felt as if I were visiting from a far off land. I trusted her
experience and was moved by her story, but could not locate my own “daddy’s girl.” I
have given up my own desires to be the special one. I did not feel that my father loved me
in this way. Yet, when Ada described her relationship with her boyfriend I felt wistful
and had my own sense of longing, and a stretching out towards something beyond reach.
She seemed so sure of his devotion to her. This feeling would also arise in response to
Ada’s report of how her father took her places, bought her things, and expressed his love
for her.

A frustrated impatience arose in me when Ada would speak of wanting to be
special. “Who do you think you are to expect everyone to treat you this way?” I thought.
If this voice was truly given its due, I believe that it would rage from its own unmet
needs, and desire to be prized and precious to someone.
When Ada described her father’s pornography use, I felt nauseated and anxious. This feeling slowly gave away to outrage, when I learned that he had made sexualized remarks to Ada. When this feeling overtook me, I felt that I wanted to, “do” something to get Ada to see how he had crossed this boundary between them. When she began to openly speak of this, clear relief washed over me. This feeling was dashed when Ada moved into her excitement regarding her accident with the raccoon, and the feeling that her father had, “protected” her. I was confused and frustrated. These feelings eventually gave way to one of resolution.

There were times in the therapy that I felt absolutely alert and extremely focused. Penetrating gaze, I felt that I could cut through content and chaos to track something vital that hovered on the edge of our therapeutic field. I felt like a clear channel in these moments, with charged energy streaming through me.

Often during therapy I had a sense of an open and grounded feeling. These moments were distinguished by my experience of calm and of presence with Ada, and to our work together. The room would become thick and slow with this feeling. In these moments, I was filled with a sense of the sacred. This feeling occurred as Ada was dropping down into deeper work with her own structures. Ada, or myself would say something, and in that moment time would seemingly stop. I would feel as if the two of us were leaning, timeless, motionless, over a deep precipice. Then we would drop, falling into a depth that stood outside of chronological time. At the close of these sessions, I would be filled with honor and gratitude to have been witness to Ada’s journey, and thankful that I was part of it in some small way.
My Imaginal Structures

Several imaginal structures were evoked in my role as Ada’s therapist. The dominant structures were The Good Mother, The Failed Mother, The Armored Amazon, The Righteous Feminist, The Fatherless Waif, Clarity and the Mother Goddess.

The Good Mother was the first figure to come forward in my work with Ada. When Ada sat before me, a small, fragile form with tears streaming down her face as she cried for her father, this figure wanted to come out and hold her. Big, soft and inviting, the Good Mother rocks the weeping Ada, gathering her up in her imaginal skirts. She was comfortable with Ada’s tears and emotion. She understood that grief takes as long as it takes, and was infinitely patient with Ada’s process. The Good Mother tucked the blanket around Ada’s shoulders, validated her many divergent emotions, and instructed her on self-care and self-soothing.

Counter to the Good Mother, stood the Failed Mother. This figure was anxious, and suffered from guilt when she felt that she had not affectively mirrored or adequately meet Ada’s needs. This figure came out many times in therapy, and was especially prevalent when Ada disclosed speaking with her grief counselor, and then wanted to leave therapy.

The Armored Amazon was another structure evoked during the therapeutic process. This figure is named for one half of the wounded woman pole described by Leonard, and is placed opposite the Eternal Girl. This character has become her own patriarchal father. She is very capable in handling matters of material life, and she denies, and does not experience her need for male attention. This character has so shut off her needs and her feeling life that she finds the expression of need in others to be somewhat
repugnant. This character became impatient with what she felt to be Ada’s unreasonable demands for attention. Underlying this impatience is an agitated envy. “How can she expect that?” She wondered. The Armored Amazon has walked away from the molten crucible of the father-daughter dyad, and keeps her own counsel with regards to issues pertaining to men.

R revolving around the Armored Amazon are two distinct structures, the Protective Feminist, and the Fatherless Waif. The Protective Feminist is passionate and expressive. She feels that all women are sisters who need to support each other in battle against patriarchal oppression. This figure does not trust women who vie for male attention. This character came up during Ada’s conflict with her landlord’s teenage daughter, when she felt protective of this mother-daughter dyad. The Protective Feminist was also very triggered by Ada’s frustration and competition with her sister, Anna. She wanted Ada to understand that both sisters were caught in a patriarchal system where the Father was the master who dictated their lives. The Protective feminist had a strong sense of what constituted right relationship between women, and Ada was not holding the party platform.

Another structure is small and scared and hides behind the shield of the Armored Amazon. She is the Fatherless Waif, a scared and hurt child who could not get her own father’s attention. She was frightened away by his size and his loudness and his distance. This figure learned that the world of women was much safer than the world of men. Despite this, she longs to be cared for by her daddy, to tuck her small hand into his big one and to feel safe and protected. This structure holds my own father longing, kept
safely at bay by the Armored Amazon. Wistfully, this character whispered her longing as Ada spoke of going places with her father, and of her relationship with her boyfriend.

Two structures served to evoke a sense of the sacred in the therapy field. These figures are Clarity and the Mother Goddess. Clarity had an instinctive eagle eye vision that could track an emergent image from a seeming distance. Clarity had complete trust in the image as the voice of the soul and harbinger of healing and transformation. When other voices came in that questioned the direction of the therapy, such as Ada’s experience with the raccoon, Clarity would hold the anxiety and fear voices at bay with a steely blade of discernment and unwavering focus. The gesture associated with Clarity was an upright, vertical stance, hand held at eye-level, tracking the horizon line.

The Mother Goddess provided the sacred space of the therapy and could hold the deep well of emotional content in the room. She was similar to the Good Mother, but was more the mother of All, while the Good Mother was specific to Ada. When the Amazon felt that there was too much chaotic neediness, and the Feminist was disgusted by all of the competition between women, the Mother Goddess could normalize the range of emotion, emanating compassion and acceptance for all feelings, and all experience. With this character came the sense that the entirety of human emotion, including anger, longing and grief, were but waves to wash over her. Not only could she be present with these emotions; she literally bathed in them. The Mother Goddess was able to deeply love Ada as the little girl who wanted her father, as well as love the father who suffered from his own confusion, and his own battles in this life. She also held the presence of Ada’s mother as part of the family, though she was seldom spoken of. The Mother Goddess had
a righteous aspect that was deeply protective of Ada’s need and right to all of her feelings, and in this sense proved an effective mediator for the agitation of the other structures.

The Client’s Imaginal Structures

There were several imaginal structures brought forth by Ada during the course of treatment. These structures can be understood as, The Waif, The Entitled Princess, The Distressed Damsel, The Unfathered, The Individualist and Inner Wisdom.

The first three imaginal structures cluster around the figure of the favored daughter. The Waif is a structure that I first met in therapy crying out in grief at the loss of Ada’s father. This figure experienced herself as an orphan in the world. She is reminiscent of the Little Match Girl. Alone in the snow, growing cold to her core, she dreams of what may have been, and that which she believes only her father can bring. She is fixed to her spot, unable to move or act in her world. Nose pressed against the glass, she longs for warmth and nurturing that is beyond reach. This warmth is actually unattainable to her in the form that she seeks it in, for the Waif is the un-mothered child. This is the child that turned away from her mother, for some reason not ascertained in Ada’s therapy. She manifests as frightened and distrustful of the world of women, and yearns for a daddy who will protect her.

The Entitled Princess believes that she is special and the world revolves around her. She is angry when she does not get her way, and stomps her foot and imagines insults from others who have failed to notice her special qualities. This figure protects the Waif from knowing how absolutely bereft she is by focusing only on her “specialness.” This figure had the experience of being the, “anointed” child in the household, and as
such, treats her sister as a much abhorred lesser relation. This figure was present as Ada made sneering reference to how her sister caused problems in the family. She was also present in Ada’s insistence that her landlord and her landlord’s daughter pay more attention to her.

The Distressed Damsel believes that she needs someone to protect and “rescue” her. She can be charming, and her rescuer is often a man, who she is adept at drawing in. The Damsel came out in Ada’s relationship with her boyfriend who helped her during the tumultuous weeks after her father’s illness and death. The Damsel hovered around Ada’s experience with her landlord and landlord’s teenage daughter and boyfriend. Feeling discomfort in the home, the Damsel may have vied for protection from this man. The Damsel believes that she cannot survive in the world without the security of a male.

The Unfathered is a figure who is murky, and one that I am only able to feel my way towards in the dark. My sense is that this character is so fused with the experience of her “good father” that she cannot know another experience. This structure is one that I felt when Ada froze in response to my question about sex addiction, as well as other moments in the therapy when Ada’s discomfort with her father came out. This structure has most likely split both herself and her father into, “good” and “bad,” and only lets herself be aware of the, “good.” This concept goes along with Secunda’s explanation that the favored daughter carries the dual construct of, “I am entitled, and I am a fraud.” Murdock’s comment that the father who eroticizes his relationship with his daughter inappropriately binds her to him supports this supposition, as well.

The Individualist is the part in Ada that drives her forward on her path as a practitioner, teacher, and spiritual seeker. The Individualist says, “no” to the Eternal
Girl(s) of Ada’s psyche, and doggedly follows the bigger dreams that she has for herself. The individualist is objective about Ada’s formative years, and because of this objectivity is able to face some hard truths about Ada’s father, and Ada’s life. When Ada embodied this character she seemed solid, upright, connected and grounded. I had the experience of her as taller, and taking up greater space in the world.

Inner Wisdom is the character that brought Ada to therapy. This figure manifests as a clear-eyed voice of truth that knows the steps of Ada’s transformational path. It was this figure who resolutely said, “I just need to Be,” when she decided to take a break from therapy. This figure came through when she described the raccoon that she swerved to miss as her father, and came up with the archetype of the trickster, an apt description for him. This figure enabled her to send a montage of her father’s photos and early art work to his friends and clients. This character also evoked the Great Goddess in our final session together.

New Learnings About My Imaginal Structures

Six distinct learnings surfaced from my experience with the imaginal structures evoked during therapy with Ada. First, the presence of a structure may be indicated by somatic reactions, including a bodily gesture. Second, an archetypal, or transpersonal feel characterizes some imaginal structures. Third, imaginal structures that play out in the therapy reproduced the client’s internal psychic dilemma. Fourth, structures have a relational and reciprocal nature; the presence of a structure in one person may activate a structure in another. Fifth, the presence of a structure in an individual may indicate that the polar opposite exists also as shadow material. Sixth, there is a developmental
sequence to imaginal structures, in which the more vulnerable structures are protected by foreground structures.

The presence of an imaginal structure can be discerned through shifts in somatic experience. These changes varied in intensity, ranging from obvious physiological reactions to the more subtle, and could be felt by such responses as a tightening in my chest, a clenching of my jaw, or a feeling of light-headedness. Somatic shifts became an indicator for me to slow down the process and attend to my reactions. Doing this afforded me some distance and objectivity from a structure that I may not have otherwise been aware of. Viewing the structure from a distance deepened my capacity for *reflexivity*, defined by Omer as, “the ability to engage and be aware of the imaginal structures that shape and constitute experience.” The capacity of reflexivity helped me to better track my counter-transference material and personal biases in the therapy.

Equivalent to bodily sensations, imaginal structures may also be associated with a gesture. One example of this is the visceral response that I had to Ada’s feelings of being alienated by her landlord and her landlord’s daughter. The Feminist made herself known by a certain willful impatience. Her gesture was an imaginal foot stomp and a close-fisted pound of her hand on a hard surface, reminiscent of a gavel. Other examples include the Failed Mother’s inclination to bring her hands up to her face in a gesture of shame, my sense of the Good Mother’s encircling arms, and Clarity’s sword like precision and vertical stance. The sensation of a gesture alerted me to the characteristics of an emerging structure, which in turn provided insight into my responses to the therapy. A counter movement of engaged curiosity directed towards Ada, but also including the structure,
allowed me to further disidentify from the structure, while also remaining open to the information provided by its presence.

In contrast to structures that appear to arise from my personal history, such as the Armored Amazon, and the Fatherless Waif, some structures have a more objective and transpersonal feel to them. My structures of Clarity and the Mother Goddess, and Ada’s structures of Inner Wisdom and The Individualist seem to express the archetypal positive father and mother. When these structures were present, I had the sense that a greater truth could be accessed. These structures seemed to deepen the therapy, and to catalyze the Friend into the therapeutic field.

The imaginal structures that arose and played out in the therapy reproduce the client’s internal psychic dilemma. An example of this can be found in my experience of the Good Mother/Failed Mother structures evoked during the therapy. It is possible, that in my experience of, “failing” to mirror and mother Ada, I was stepping into a family of origin dynamic wherein she turned away from her mother towards her father. This experience and subsequent hypothesis highlight how imaginal structures bring out reliable content that informs the therapy. My work with Ada was so focused on her father, that the elements of her difficulty attributed to the family structure as a whole might have been overlooked. The Failed Mother structure provides a rich overlay for better understanding the complexity of Ada’s experience.

Another learning associated with this study is the idea that imaginal structures are relational and reciprocal in nature; the presence of a structure in one person may draw forth a structure in another. My Good Mother structure, for example, was activated by Ada’s Waif structure. The dissatisfaction of the Entitled Princess brought forth my Failed
Mother, while her Damsel in Distress activated the Protective Feminist. The relationship between structures is also reciprocal, as my structures in return provoked Ada’s structures.

Similarly, the emergence of a structure in an individual may indicate that the counter to this structure is internalized in this same person as shadow material. For instance, the structure triggered in me of the Armored Amazon has a shadow counterpart that is my personal Eternal Girl, or Fatherless Waif. This structure corresponds to the places in myself that are young and dependent, have not been adequately parented, and just want to be taken care of. The needs of the Waif had been pushed out of my conscious experience.

An additional supposition regarding my imaginal structures is that they seem to represent different ages of development, with one imaginal structure “protecting” a younger, more primitive structure. For example the Armored Amazon structure defends, or stands in front of, the structure of the Fatherless Waif. Similarly, Ada’s Favored Daughter constellation of the Entitled Princess and Distressed Damsel structures stands in front of her Waif/Unmothered Child structure. It may be that the structure that is more readily experienced in the foreground serves to protect one from experiencing those structures that represent deeper vulnerabilities.

In myself, the Armored Amazon and Protective Feminist are structures that are foreground. The Amazon feels annoyed by neediness and vulnerability, and the Feminist can’t stand the way Ada plays up to men, and disregards women. If I stayed with this presenting story and failed to more deeply relate to each structure, then I would miss the part hidden behind the imaginal curtain. In this situation, my Fatherless Waif wants to be
protected and taken care of. She desperately longs for the experience of being prized by her daddy, and she mourns with grief akin to Ada’s that she did not receive this. As a therapist, my ability to locate this structure within myself fostered my capacity to empathize with my client.

To summarize these learnings, I have come to understand that imaginal structures can be detected by somatic sensations, and physical gestures. Embodiment of an imaginal structure in the form of a gesture can transmit to an individual the archetypal qualities inherent to the structure. Structures that arise in the therapy reproduce the client’s internal psychic dilemma. Imaginal structures are relational and the presence of one may activate an opposing structure. This may happen in an individual, where the presence of one structure may indicate that there is a polar opposite that has been relegated to the shadows of consciousness. Structures may be activated at different stages of development. “Younger” structures represent our most vulnerable and earliest wounding, while “older” structures keep us from truly feeling the trauma associated with these more primitive structures. Because of this effect, presenting structures may serve as a portal into the deeper wounds and symptoms of the psyche. A practice, such as reflexive participation, that fosters the ability to attend to the somatic, feeling sense, and gesture of a structure enables entry into the portal.

**Primary Myth**

Many father-daughter myths abound with themes of sacrifice. Often in these ancient tales the father’s lust for wealth and dominance culminates in the forfeit of his daughter’s life or wellbeing. In this section of the learnings, the pattern of feminine
sacrifice within the father-daughter relationship is considered, as depicted in the fairytale, “The Handless Maiden.”

The fairytale, “The Handless Maiden,” describes one central theme of Ada’s therapeutic process. In this story a once wealthy miller is down on his luck, and quickly approaching poverty. One day when he is out chopping wood an old man appears to him. Seemingly incredulous, the old man inquires as to why the miller, once known for his good fortune, is engaged in such a common task. The miller explains his plight, and the man replies that if the miller will only give him that which is behind the barn, he will be showered with infinite riches. The miller, believing that behind the barn there only grows an old apple tree, agrees to the arrangement. Immediately his pockets are filled with coins, and his tattered clothes transform into rich velvets. The old man tips his hat to the miller, and promises to return in three days time, leaving the miller to run home to tell his wife of their great fortune.

When his wife hears of what has transpired, she shrieks with fear, for she understands immediately that this old man is the devil. “Look at what you have done!” She exclaims, and points behind the barn where their precious daughter is sweeping the ground around the apple tree. The miller realizes the gravity of his error, but unfortunately can see no way out of these tragic circumstances.

In the father-daughter relationship, both personally and culturally, the true creative aspects of the feminine principle can be relegated to the, “back of the barn.” In the shadows, unknown to the father, stands his daughter, and though he has no conscious intention of sacrificing her, he does knowingly give up the apple tree. Woodman writes that the apple tree symbolizes nature, which is described as belonging to the realm of the
feminine. The father, for promises of external wealth, willingly gives up the apple, long
associated with feminine fertility, and sweet and fecund wildness. The mother in this
story knows the truth of the situation, but is ineffectual, which again represents the denial
of feminine wisdom.

As promised, the devil arrives for the maiden three days later, but she is so pure of
heart, that he is unable to take her. He claims that her hands are, “too clean,” and orders
her father to cut them off with his silver ax. The miller is horror-stuck by the devil’s
request, but when his own life is threatened, he agrees to carry out the devil’s order.

Shamefaced, he tells his daughter what he must do, explaining that he will be
taken by the devil if he does not cut off her hands. The girl replies, “Dear father, do with
me what you must, for I am your very own child.” She lays her hands upon her
father’s chopping block, and he quickly severs them from her body. In her grief the girl
weeps all through the night, and her tears bathe and protect her. In the morning the devil
is still unable to take her, and relinquishes his right to her. Her father offers to keep her,
forever to live in luxury, for she has made him a rich man. To this, his daughter refuses,
believing that she is now but a beggar, destined to rely on handouts from strangers.

Wandering into the world the now handless maiden soon realizes how vulnerable
she is, as she is unable to gather food and to feed herself. To this end, the daughter who
sacrifices her connection to her own essential sense of self in service to the personal or
cultural father is like the maiden; helpless and dependent, she is cut off from her ability to
care for and nourish herself, and to create in the world. Murdock writes that in many
father-daughter relationships, it is the daughter’s sole function to catalyze, or connect her
father to his creative self. In this relationship the daughter abdicates her own creative
impulses, and loses the ability to take action in her life, as signified by the loss of the maiden’s hands.\textsuperscript{47} Leonard describes a woman who suffers in this way as the eternal girl: a “pampered puella,” whose sole function is to hold the feeling, and fertile wildness that is denied her father. She is demoted to both her father’s shadow and to the shadow of the cultural psyche.\textsuperscript{48} She serves as muse, but cannot act or nourish herself alone.

Reaching out and creating in her life was an edge that had led Ada into therapy. At thirty-one she had surfed lightly over the surface of her life, dabbling in the healing arts, and her own emotional life, but placing primary importance on her romantic involvements with men. Like the maiden of our story, Ada also suffered an affliction of the hands, which, though still intact, where at times covered with painful and itchy psoriasis. She reported that occasionally the ailment was so agonizing, that she was unable to safely drive her car. As a “handless maiden,” Ada also wandered. With no true home of her own, she depended on, “handouts from others.”

As the story continues, a king discovers the maiden as she is attempting to eat pears from his orchard. Captivated by her beauty and vulnerability, he takes her home and marries her. The maiden, now queen, is protected and coddled. Preserving her beauty, while perpetuating her helplessness, the king fashions for her a pair of exquisite, yet useless silver hands. Eventually, she and the king have a child, but though she feels she should be satisfied with her life, she is not. Chancing the hazards of the wilderness, she once again leaves, “her father’s house,” and takes her child into the forest, where ultimately she recovers her own flesh and bone hands, and returns to wholeness.

Estes writes, “To leave ones father’s home is a crucial factor in developing one’s creativity. Without this separation from her father, a daughter will create only what will
pleased him, thus destroying her feminine self.” 49 Leaving is one of the first steps to a girl’s healing, but it can only occur when she can acknowledge the way that she has colluded in her own degradation. Despite the undeniable power differential existing between father and daughter, a daughter on the path towards wholeness must look over her own wounds to find the areas of her life where she has said, and continues to say, “Dear father, do with me what you must, for I am your very own child.” Recognition of her father’s betrayal, and of the part that she has played in this betrayal of self, propels the daughter into the greater world.

Like the handless maiden, Ada needed to acknowledge the aspects of her relationship with her father that had been a betrayal to her feminine nature. This was not an insignificant act, as Ada deeply loved her father, missed him terribly, and in part, longed to be his darling and protected daughter forever. Despite this, she began to bravely bring to light the ways in which he may have eroticized their relationship, objectifying her as a woman through his addiction to pornography, and his occasional, off-hand comments on the beauty of her body. She looked at her relationships with men, noting how her current boyfriend had acted as a savior of sorts, and how she had fallen into an old pattern of compulsive longing for him that was reminiscent to the days of her active eating disorder.

At the end of the tale the maiden is returned to wholeness. She finds her home deep in the forest, and in some versions of the story, the king, her husband, joins her there. Her return to nature signifies that she has moved into the instinctual feeling territory of the divine feminine, described by Woodman as “the unhurt virgin ground of her soul,” 50
Like the maiden, Ada’s healing journey also took her to reclaim her severed relationship with her feminine nature, and one of the way’s that this occurred was through the healing of her skin affliction, and thus her hands. For Ada, the healing was found through a specific macrobiotic diet, which ultimately led her to a career in this field. As she nourished herself with the foods that her body craved for healing, she nourished her feminine soul. She also began to experience a deepening in her friendships with other women, and to experience some compassion and curiosity in relationship to her sister and to her mother. She focused on finding her own permanent home, alone by the ocean, and her final therapy session were spent in consideration of the Goddess.

**Personal and Professional Development**

The therapy journey and writing of this clinical case study have cultivated an array of capacities that support both my personal and professional development. These capacities include an increase in reflexivity, accountability and personal responsibility, as well as empathy. In addition, I have broadened my knowledge in this field of study, and bring this to my work with women and families.

Developing a greater capacity for reflexivity is the direct result of learning to attend to the somatic changes and gesture associated with an emergent imaginal structure. Experiencing my imaginal structures in this way has helped me to better track my counter-transference material and personal bias during therapy. Reflexivity is a capacity that informs interactions in all aspect of life. I have a greater appreciation for the power of turning my attention towards a somatic reaction, knowing that this reaction is a cue to
an imaginal structure. Reflexivity helps me to be accountable to myself, and to those that I am in relationship with, both personally and professionally.

An example of how a greater capacity for personal accountability is born out of the capacity of reflexivity is observed by my experience with Ada when I realized that I had not consulted with her grief counselor, and she spoke of leaving therapy. Until writing this case study, I had been unaware that my response was one of shame. What I was conscious of at the time was the internal feeling of collapse, and the gesture of wanting to hide my face. This alerted me to the presence of a self-critical voice, and I knew that I did not want this voice to limit my ability to responsibly attend to my client. I made a decision, based on the information provided by the structure, to make a move that was counter to one of collapse.

My capacity for empathy and trust in the therapeutic process were also confronted and developed in many ways during therapy with Ada. This was especially true when Ada shared information about her father’s taste for pornography, and also his sexualized comments towards her. I found his actions to be particularly dehumanizing to women, and felt repelled and angry, and subsequently frustration when Ada did not seem to share my reactions.

My frustration came to a head when after her car accident, Ada shifted direction away from her father’s sexualized behavior, to focus on his positive traits. I questioned whether I had allowed myself to be moved too quickly away from the topic of sexual abuse, and feared that I was colluding with Ada’s own possible denial. My supervisor reflected to me that, even as I had been contemplating a different direction in our work, I had ably tracked Ada’s lead, and that she had come into the session presenting the image
of her father as a protector. My supervisor suggested that perhaps the therapy was allowing Ada to explore the complexity of her relationship with her father, helping her to make peace with the aspects that had been supportive and affirming, with those that were challenging and even painful.

The more I was able to stay present to what Ada was bringing to therapy, the more I witnessed the courage that it was taking her to even begin to bring this material up and out of her, all the while holding the deep love and yearning that she had for her father. My judgment and insistence that she feel angry would possibly have derailed her natural movements towards healing.

Eventually I found that my empathy broadened to include Ada’s father. As she was able to list his positive traits, and locate them in herself, I found a similar response in myself; the appreciation for her father’s better qualities as a man, and a felt sense of honor for his life. My capacity for empathy also increased to include the broader world of men, which includes my own father, and my ex-husband. Empathy in this direction is, in part, the result of the months that I spent sifting through the material that would in time make up the literature review section. Research into the sociocultural perspectives section particularly had the effect of moving me out of my small story regarding men, into the context of the greater cultural picture.

Exploring the father-daughter relationship has moved me into an area of research that was unfamiliar to me. I have an increased understanding and appreciation now for the role that fathers play in all sectors of their children’s development. This informs the work that I do with families, including education that I can provide to families who live apart. I feel that I am better able to speak to the greater ramifications that a child may
face when separated from their father, as well as describe a path for healing when this separation is inevitable.

**Applying an Imaginal Approach to Psychotherapy**

The therapeutic structure that I used in my work with Ada was based on an imaginal approach, an approach that allowed me to meet my client in the terrain of her own landscape of father longing. This imaginal stance may be framed by Thomas Moore’s view of cultivating and caring for the soul. According to Moore this viewpoint differs from that of modern psychology, which emphasizes the suppression of psychopathology. Moore maintains,

> Care of the soul is not a project of self-improvement nor a way of being released from the troubles and pains of human existence. It is not at all concerned with living properly or with emotional health…We care for the soul solely by honoring its expressions, by giving it time and opportunity to reveal itself and by living in a way that fosters the depth, interiority, and quality in which it flourishes. Soul is its own purpose and end.  

Working in this way required me to attempt to be steadily present with my own imaginal structures that were afraid, and wanted to have a clear map illuminating the path of Ada’s therapy. I endeavored to hold these structures at bay; maintaining the view that my client was truly the midwife of her own unfolding psychological journey, and my work was to facilitate and accompany her.

In this way, the therapy journey was supported by the application of several imaginal practices. Firstly, I held the space of the therapy room as a *temenos*, a sacred container in which my client’s work could deepen. Welcoming Ada into the room, and entering into mindful silence before we began speaking cultivated this sense of a strong container. My inquiry as to who was stepping into the room with her also provided a
sense of the sacred, as if we were engaged in a process that was occurring in a space that was outside of linear time, and engaged with the unseen world.

Inquiring as to who was stepping into the room invited an exploration of Ada’s multiplicity, as “the existence of many distinct and often encapsulated centers of subjectivity within the experience of the same individual.” 53 This presumably fostered Ada’s sense of herself as a multifaceted being with understandably diverse, often paradoxical, viewpoints. Working in this way, Ada could begin to disidentify from one structure or another, and explore her many ambivalent thoughts and emotions.

Much of the movements that I made as a therapist were imperceptible, as I attended to a rich landscape of imagination. Lewis explains that a great amount of any therapeutic process takes place in the, “transitional space of the imaginal realm,” and is done through somatic counter-transference, in which the therapist tends to aspects of the client that arise from this unseen world. 54 My own attention in therapy would be taken up by an emergent image. At different points, I would be overcome by the figure of a weeping child, or have the imagined experience of standing upright with my hands braced on Ada’s upper back. I would imagine the room as having a huge grounding cord, connecting us to the earth, or my hands gently cupping Ada’s child face. I did not make these images overt, but believe that, as Lewis writes, they were, “known through the unconscious-to-unconscious connection.” 55

Because we were working with the personal and archetypal father I would also bring in images and language that depicted the father principle from Omer’s work, and the archetypal father as described by Jungian theorists. The image of father was embedded in such concepts and language as verticality, authorship, uprightness,
legitimacy, responsibility, building, and discernment. I was not overt in this way, but set
intention to infuse the field with qualities associated with the positive father.

Finally, I made use of dream imagery, such as the dream of her “father” driving
the car, and reflected metaphor. Reflecting back Ada’s own metaphorical language, I
would repeat phrases that Ada had said that I found to be particularly potent, or use her
language as an image for where she was psychologically. One such image was of Ada
waiting for the doorknob to turn, her father to come in and for “her life to begin.”

In conclusion, employing an imaginal approach to psychotherapy required me to
tavel into unknown territory with my client, trusting that all that she needed for her
journey existed inside of her. As her therapist, I was to accompany her on this expedition,
making use of the emergent images rising from dreams, language, and imaginal structures
that we encountered along the path. Imagining the therapy room as temenos, a sacred
vessel for holding the work, and trust in the healing properties of the psyche provided the
containment and deepening necessary to the journey.
CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS

Personal Development and Transformation

The act of writing this clinical case study and of immersing myself in the domain of the father has been a journey that has impacted me considerable. This journey signifies a developmental process of moving from student to practitioner, of trainee to researcher. Traversing the terrain unfamiliar to me of women and father longing was unsettling at times, as was producing a paper of this scale. As I emerge from the research process, I find that my position as a practitioner of an imaginal approach to psychology has taken form. I have gained skills and capacities along the way, and have grown in my abilities as a therapist and educator. A deeper trust and confidence in my chosen life path are the boon of my journey.

This final chapter reflects; 1) My personal development and transformation; 2) The impact of the learnings on my understanding of a woman’s experience of father longing; 3) The mythic implications of the learnings; 4) The significance of the learnings; 5) The application of Imaginal Psychology to psychotherapy; 6) Bridging Imaginal Psychology to mainstream settings and clients; 5) Areas for future research.

Aftab Omer made two remarks regarding the father principal in imaginal psychology that have provided ballast for me. The first comment was an invitation into an inquiry: “What would your life look like if you had been deeply fathered?” 1 It was
this question that I turned around in my mind as I attended to the rigors of research and writing. I pondered what qualities I would need in order to reach completion, and whose cloak of experience I was to don to do so. I felt confused about my relationship to the masculine as defined by the father principle, and yet here I was, in the center of it with regards to both topic and necessity, as the qualities of the archetypal father were essential to accomplish the project.

Sifting through the myriad materials that would eventually make up the literature review section was both compelling, and arduous. The tasks inbuilt in the research were compounded by the emotional reaction that I experienced as I went through study upon study that outlined how important an involved and present father was for the emotional, social, and cognitive development of children. I felt that my heart would break from the longing I had for my children to have this kind of father. I worried about my daughter’s unmet fathering needs, and how my son would ever be initiated into the world of men.

Reading about the favored daughter also brought forth a fair amount of personal distress. While Ada had dealt with important issues regarding boundaries within her relationship with her father, my experience with my own was one of distance and estrangement. I worried that the expanse between my father and myself had created a chasm within my psyche that could not to be traversed, and that I was destined to have poor relationships with men, as well as an impairment in my ability to respond to life with inner authority. There were moments when grief and fear for both my children and myself held me in a shackled, debilitating grip.

Frozen, this imaginal structure responded to a harsh inner critic who questioned my abilities and baited me for getting into a project of this magnitude. This critical voice
maintained that I was irresponsible. It attacked everything that I did, and questioned my intelligence, and self-discipline. Delving into the literature review material provided further ammunition. My father wound was too deep, this voice stated. I began to question where the impetus to take on such a project had come from, and was haunted by the idea that my personal structure of the Amazon had set out to prove something by initiating this expedition into a hierarchical system of education.

The father principle is one of deep order that is about acting and responding in the material world. It will bring form from chaos, and it breaks into the symbiotic union illustrative of the mother child relationship with a resounding, “I am.” Imaginal structures that arose as I attempted the completion of my doctorate degree were challenged by these functions. Younger, inchoate parts with no sense for this type of order, could not easily attend to the linear process and discipline that was required by the case study. These structures could not find the action, the will, or the upward momentum necessary to do the work. My Amazon’s false adaptive armor began to melt in relation to my doctoral degree. Underneath my child self alternated between frozen terror and frustrated rebellion.

“What would my life look like if I were deeply fathered?” I turn the question around again. With a hand on my upper back, providing support and balance, the image of the archetypal father who comes forth in response to this question has a generosity of spirit, and the qualities of courage, humor, authority, and faith. He is reliable, and has high expectations that are tempered by patience and respect. He loves me.

My work in this process has been learning to breath in these qualities; they still my fears, and temper my primitive responses. Step by step, I have turned again and again
to my case study. One word at a time, one day at a time, one week at a time: form emerges from formlessness, structure surfaces from chaos.

Omer also stated that working in the domain of the father as the first other to enter the child’s experience is the equivalent of working with the shadow.\textsuperscript{2} This interplay of father and shadow represents a difficult landscape in which, “nobody really wants to do the work.” Omer maintains that to meet this other within, one needs to keep the experience of, “not wanting at the forefront, and then keep sacrificing it.” Working with the father requires you to be aware of the experience of “not wanting,” as one of resistance. Feeling into the resistance, and into the not wanting, you move towards it anyway. This is the father principle.

This describes my process. Time and again I held the image of the part of myself that did not want to delve into father issues, or write my case study. Turning towards the not wanting required both reflexivity and courage. Sacrificing the not wanting by doing the work anyway engendered a sense of personal authority and dignity that I equate with the felt experience of the good father, who with compassion and generativity transmitted the signal of, “I understand that you are afraid, and I trust that you will do it anyway.”

Even as grief and longing arose as my response to much of the literature, I also found comfort in the material presented from an imaginal approach, which held the focus of soul engagement, instead of pathology. An imaginal approach informed me that the image of father that had captured Ada, and me was a transmitter of healing, not a wound of incapacitating magnitude, but an emergent image heralding growth.

I was affected as well by my research into the sociocultural section. The material presented in this chapter moved me from my personal experience with my father and ex-
husband, into a story placed in the context of culture. This movement helped me to disidentify from a position of personal victimization to one in which all of us were shaped by the constraints of cultural. I felt compassion for the burden placed upon my father as a male in patriarchal culture, and grateful for the years that he had spent working to provide for his family, sacrificing his own feeling side to the demands of a patriarchal imbalance.

Shored up by my own developing capacities, I find that I have trained my senses to track a certain quality of fathering. Evidence of the father principle, and of the archetypal, “good father,” seem to manifest all around me. My community of parenting friends has provided endless demonstration of amazing and admirable fathering. My brother, and brother-in-law, my cousins, and uncles, each of these men are men that I am honored to witness in their fathering. My own father, as grandfather, is softer, now. His natural charisma, sense of fun, and taste for adventure has burgeoned with retirement. He is enjoyable company, and more importantly, an accessible grandparent.

My ex-husband suffers from physical and emotional limitations that keep him from finding his way into what I would describe as a full-bodied fathering role. Yet, he is my children’s father, and they have a deep love for him, and longing to know and be known by him. Writing this case study, and involving myself in this area of study has fostered my belief that children feel a need for connection with their fathers. This has enabled me to focus on my ex-husband’s positive qualities and contributions, of which there are many, and to bring this focus forward to my children. I believe that my ability to do this has contributed to the psychological health of our family.
Part of my journey has revolved around finding psychological balance. In the middle of my writing I was accepted into a co-housing community with the requirement that I would participate in the construction of the home. For twenty hours a week I actually donned a tool belt and hard-hat, and learned the ins and outs of handling power tools. This took place while I also worked as a full time case manager with foster youth and families, parented my own two children as a single mother, and attempted to complete this case study. The result was an absolute imbalance in my life. Moving in this way typified the archetypal masculine forces of heroic doing, qualities that could only be taken up by my Armored Amazon structure. On completion of my home, my body rebelled against this goal-focused experience. I was instructed by health providers to slow down, and to be. I made a conscious effort to turn toward these gifts of the deep feminine: beauty, pleasure, and nurturing play with my friends and children.

Holding the tension between the poles of masculine-feminine, father-mother, Amazon-puella is where I find myself at this juncture. The capacity of reflexivity allows me to recognize when I am being pulled off balance, the capacity for courage facilitates my turn towards that which I need to turn towards. Developed is an inner authority, and the sense of discipline required for this focused attention: the domain of the father.

**Impact of the Learnings on My Understanding of the Topic**

One understanding derived from the learnings pertains to Omer’s position that work with the father may be considered to be work with the shadow as the, “other within.” This concept may be viewed as an overarching theme of Ada’s therapy, brought forth by the following proposed learnings: First, I posed that the presence of an
imaginal structure may indicate that the opposite structure also exists, though consigned to an individual’s unconscious. Second, in relationship between two people, as highlighted here by the therapeutic relationship, imaginal structures may polarize, with each person experiencing one end of the opposition. Third, the mother in the favored daughter triad of mother-father-daughter may be viewed as relegated to the shadows of the relationship, and to the shadow within the psyche of the father’s favored daughter.

These learnings emerged from an exploratory process of imaginal structures. The first point was brought forth by the discovery of the fatherless waif of my psyche who cowered behind the Amazon. This figure personifies my own buried longing for the masculine attention of the father. For a long time during this research I had difficulty locating myself within Ada’s expression of longing for her father. As my research into the topic deepened, I came to understand that though I may not have had the experience indicative of a favored daughter, I had embodied characteristics of a father’s daughter, one who has identified with the masculine and rejects qualities associated with femininity, such as receptivity, and emotional expression. I had projected these qualities onto women who embodied such attributes as represented by Ada’s Damsel, and Entitled Princess.

Projection, as described above, is a concept that points to the shadow. Exploration with the imaginal structures delineated in Ada’s therapy indicates that therapist and client were polarized. In the split described as that belonging to the father’s daughter, I had projected my eternal girl onto Ada, while Ada had projected her Amazon onto me.

In the relationship between client and therapist, this polarization may act as a therapeutic tool in two important ways. Firstly, it serves to bring the client’s
psychological dilemma to light, but perhaps more significantly, it activates what Jung termed as the tension of opposites. Jung described this concept as the confrontation between conscious and unconscious poles that produces a charged tension from which emerges a new position or perspective. This emergent, “third thing,” is termed, the transcendent function. Jung felt that activation of the transcendent function was imperative to the human maturation process. The following quote by Jung speaks to the concept of the shadow, as well as the tension of opposites:

To confront a person with his shadow is to show him his own light. Once one has experienced a few times what it is like to stand judgingly between the opposites, one begins to understand what is meant by the self. Anyone who perceives his shadow and his light simultaneously sees himself from the two sides and thus gets in the middle.

Another new concept for me regarding the topic of a woman’s experience of father longing is that the relationship that a girl has with her father is one that is embedded in her experience of her mother, and thus always an issue of triadic construct. I began my research into the literature after therapy with Ada had ended. During the therapeutic process, I was singularly focused on her father. Given his recent death at the time of therapy, and Ada’s grief, this focus seemed appropriate. I like to believe that had Ada continued in therapy our work would have naturally expanded to include her dynamic with her mother. As it stands, I am left wondering if my own un-mothered parts conspired with Ada’s to perpetuate the consignment of her mother to the shadows, as she was seldom brought into the context of Ada’s therapy.

Despite this, Ada’s and my imaginal structures demarcated the psychological impasse, as the figures of a failed mother and an un-mothered child hovered in the periphery of our work together. As indicated by Murdock, a girl may move away from
her mother and towards her father for many reasons, such as emotional abandonment, addiction, depression, or death. The father is called upon to fill the void created by her absence. When the daughter shines her light of love and longing on her father, the shadow cast on her mother, and on her own desire for mothering, is far-reaching.

The tension of opposites was held in Ada’s therapy in multiple ways; the therapeutic relationship an interplay of shadow and light, of reflection and absorption. In the bipersonal field that constituted this relationship, opposites such as mother-child, father-mother, waif and princess, favored daughter and unfathered daughter, were each made manifest, each position held and known in its reciprocal nature. In the psychological make-up of the father’s favored daughter her longing keeps her childlike, while at the same time enables her movement forwards. The tension held between these points is part of a multi-stepped dance towards wholeness.

**Mythic Implications of the Learnings**

In order to expand on the significance of my learnings I will discuss the story of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz as illustrative of a woman’s father longing. One way to understand this tale is as an Oedipal phase story, as well as one of a girl’s coming of age. The Wonderful Wizard of Oz may also be viewed as an archetypal move towards wholeness, with traits of masculine and feminine and their shadow counterparts folded into Dorothy, the heroine’s, journey.

This popular turn of the century tale begins by introducing the adolescent Dorothy in conflict with her family. Dorothy lives with her Aunt and Uncle, and after a disappointment wherein these surrogate parental figures fail to protect her and her dog
Toto from a negative feminine character, Dorothy runs away. This takes place during a violent windstorm, and Dorothy is struck on the head by a windowpane. The rest of the story unfolds as Dorothy’s dream: She is taken up, house and all, by a tumultuous whirlwind, finally setting down in the colorful and magical land, where she is celebrated for landing upon and destroying an evil witch.

Dorothy, a true innocent, is dismayed that her house has caused such a calamity, and only wants to go back to her own land. Providing comfort and care, Glinda the Good Witch arrives on the scene and protects Dorothy from the Wicked Witch of the West, who is furious that Dorothy has killed her sister. In a moment of relief, Glinda points Dorothy in the direction of the province of Oz, and the Great and Powerful Wizard, who is sure to help her find her way home.

The Oedipal phase of development, which is reflected again in adolescents, is understood to be a time of conflict, as the child is leaving one stage behind for one of more psychological complexity. The chaos of this experience is depicted by the tornado, a violent act of nature that describes the child’s inner experience. The house, symbolic of the self, crushes the “bad mother,” of this stage. These violent destructive feelings directed at the mother are too great for the child, portrayed by Dorothy, who vacillates back and forth, “caught,” between the archetypal good mother and bad mother figures of Glinda and the Witch. Finally Glinda directs Dorothy towards the father, in the form of the Wizard, who will protect and save her.

William Indick writes that the Wizard holds the most significant position in Dorothy’s story, and that her journey towards The Great and Powerful Wizard is an attempt to integrate aspects of the archetypal father within her. This integration process
is described in the next part of the story as Dorothy meets the characters of the Scarecrow, Tin Man and the Lion who respectively represent the masculine qualities of intelligence, emotional strength, and courage. Indick maintains that Dorothy must locate her own inner masculine powers in order to develop a more balanced sense of self.12

Upon reaching Oz, The Wizard appears as a huge, awe inspiring figure. With a roaring voice he introduces himself as, “Oz the Great and Powerful,” while Dorothy introduces herself as, “Dorothy, the small and meek.” The Wizard promises to provide all that the group is asking, if they can first bring back the broom of the Wicked Witch.13

Accomplishing this perilous task, and destroying the witch in the process, the group returns, only to realize that behind the Great and Powerful image, the Wizard is only a small and rather bumbling man. Dorothy, voicing her betrayal, chastises the Wizard as a charlatan, to which he replies, “I am a very good man, I’m just a very bad wizard.”14 This part of the story describes the way that a father’s daughter relinquishes her power to her seemingly omnipotent father. He is big, she small, he is powerful, while she is meek. She looks to him for protection and to provide her with what she does not have, and believes that she can never attain without his help.15

When this bigger than life father asks her to do an unspeakably dangerous task, confront the Wicked Witch of the West, Dorothy innocently agrees. Woodman writes that the eternal girl as a father’s daughter lives close to his shadow, and that while this father has projected goodness, beauty and light on to his daughter, he often has projected his own internal dark mother witch upon other women, primarily his wife. According to Woodman, a father like this will unconsciously send his little daughter out to do battle with his unconscious projection, often in the form of her own mother.16 The ambivalence
that a girl is in this position feels about her mother is described by Dorothy’s upset at the witch’s demise, as with quivering lip she explains, for the second time in the story, that she, “did not mean to kill the witch”

When Dorothy returns and finds that the Wizard is just a mortal man, her feeling of betrayal moves her towards maturation. Murdock explains that for the father’s daughter, betrayal marks the end of her innocence, and the birth of her self-awareness, as a woman does not separate from her father until she is willing to let go of being her daddy’s little girl. Unmasking the man behind her projection is a crucial aspect of returning to her own sense of self. Discussing this scene, Murdock poses that the Wizard is expressing his human side to Dorothy, and helping her remove the projection that she has on him. In this way he is acting as a good father to her.17

Glinda as well has portrayed her role as the archetypal good mother, who during the Oedipal stage of attachment endorses her daughter’s move towards her father, as Glinda does when she shows Dorothy the way to Oz. At the end of the movie, Dorothy misses the ride home, and fails to be rescued by her father, the Wizard. Glinda explains to Dorothy that the way back has always been inside of her. This ending depicts the successful Oedipal resolution of a girl’s turn back towards her mother, and ultimately herself, after attaining capacities intrinsic in her relationship to her father.

As a myth the story of the Wizard of Oz may have multiple meanings. The themes explored in this section highlight the learnings significant to this case study. The experience of the father is important as the first other relationship to break up the symbiotic bond of infancy. The child experiences the father as not me, and thus the relationship is prime for the development of projection and shadow matters. For a girl
this stage evokes a longing for her all-powerful father that is characterized by feelings of ambivalence for her mother. As a girl accepts the mortal father behind the grand mask of, “Great and Powerful,” a father’s daughter removes the projection of her own positive attributes from her father, and like Dorothy, she discovers that all along, she has had the power within herself to find her way home, to her greater self.

**Significance of the Learnings**

This study indicates that a woman’s experience of father longing is a many faceted experience that has origins in a girl’s experience of the triangular, or Oedipal stages of her development. While there is already established theory supporting the position that a girl’s turn towards her father is embedded in her relationship with her mother, this clinical case study suggests that the dynamic may be played out between client and therapist within the bipersonal field of the therapy and can be revealed by the interplay of imaginal structures between client and therapist.

The learnings in this study demonstrate that imaginal structures have a relational quality wherein the structures of one person may draw out the structures of another. In the bipersonal field of client and therapist these structures reproduce the internal psychological dilemma of one or both members, as therapist and client each affect and are affected by one another. The learnings point as well to the triadic dynamics inherent to a woman’s experience of father longing, and indicate that these issues can be uncovered through engaged awareness of imaginal structures during the course of treatment.
The therapist’s experience of their imaginal structures is thus an important instrument in the therapeutic process. When the therapist is able to gage and respond to their own imaginal structures it directs them to the client’s internalized psychological issues. The therapist becomes aware of imaginal structures through the capacity of reflexivity, which may be understood as the ability to be both engaged and observant of personal reactions as they occur. Imaginal structures are often ascertained by physiological means thus the capacity for reflexivity calls for the therapist to focus on their somatic responses. An engaged practice in which therapists broaden their abilities and skills to work both somatically and with emergent images could serve to hone this therapeutic skill.

**The Application of Imaginal Psychology to Psychotherapy**

The application of Imaginal Psychology to psychotherapy shifts the focus back towards the soul as the core of psychological transformation. In so doing, an imaginal approach recognizes the important contributions of other psychological perspectives, including physiological, cognitive/behavioral, sociocultural and psychodynamic. Employing aspects of each of these perspectives, Imaginal Psychology provides the key ingredient of imagination, which creates an opening to possibilities that can only be known in relationship to our emergent images. This relationship may be supported through expressive arts, somatic, spiritual and contemplative practices, and through engagement with the archetypal and mythic layers of experience.

Imaginal practitioners believe that psychological signs and symptoms are messages from the soul, and as such, do not attempt to suppress or cure them. Instead, a
practitioner working in this way seeks to facilitate their client’s engagement with the very nature of that which is ailing them. This requires stepping into the domain of image, and of faith. Sullivan describes faith as a key attribute for a therapist working in this way: faith in a world that is unseen, faith in the reality of the psyche, as well as faith in the therapeutic process.19

Working in the realm of image brings us into contact with the mythic and archetypal layer of experience. Images are symbolic representations that are layered with meaning. Archetypes themselves can be understood as templates for human capacities. They live autonomously from us, even as they arise from within us. Because of this, attention to images or archetypes may bring one out of their small life story, into a story of greater magnitude. This move into a greater story enables one to disidentify from the life role that they have been enacting, and to then move into different possibilities, as well as access qualities of being that are associated with the archetype.

Utilizing an imaginal approach in this way is well summed up by Lewis; “In this transitional space exists all that impedes us from our growth and wholeness but also all that can serve to heal the wounds, bring us to balance, transform inner relationships, and direct us on our unique life journeys.” 20

Bridging Imaginal Psychology

Imaginal Psychology may be brought to mainstream settings and clients in a variety of ways. At the core of this approach attention is placed on emergent images that can be best understood through the senses. Working with various means, images arise through collage, painting, drawing, or sculpture. Image may be experienced through
movement, such as, posture, gesture, dance, authentic movement, soul motion, and improvisation. Imaginal structures can be brought out through work with archetypal material accessed through psychodrama and role-play.

One way to normalize the importance of working with imagery is found in the area of trauma, and brain research. This research emphasizes working with images to access the experiences that are incorporated by the right brain hemisphere, which is understood to be older and more primitive than the left. Working with images allows contact with both the preverbal experiences of infancy and childhood, as well as the non-verbal experiences associated with trauma. Access in this way allows for the mediation of these experiences.

Additionally, long term and lasting change may occur as an individual’s imaginal structures are challenged while other ways of being are embodied through reflexive participation. A therapist working in this way helps a client to imagine and embody another way of being. Personifying an image as representative of a different self creates a new and lived experience. This concept may be bridged with challenging core beliefs, or schemas, as understood from a cognitive/behavioral framework.

Areas for Future Research

Two areas for further research arise from this case study. First, my broad exploration into the literature uncovered only a small number of sources that consider a woman’s experience of father longing from an imaginal viewpoint. As this study indicates, imaginal structures arise in the therapeutic field, which brings to light the client’s psychological issues. Research that focuses on a practice of engaging imaginal
structures as a therapeutic means is needed in order to validate their use. Practices, such as reflexive participation, can help therapists learn to uncover and to work with imaginal structures.

Areas of research that engage the imaginal structures that stem from an individual’s experience of the triadic stage of development can potentially further work with the personal and archetypal father. This therapeutic work may apply to sons and daughters alike.
APPENDIX
APPENDIX 1

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To:

You are invited to be the subject of, or referred to in, a Clinical Case Study on father longing in women. The study's purpose is to better understand how a woman's relationship with her father affects her ability to be in the world.

For the protection of your privacy, all my notes will be kept confidential and your identity will be protected. In reporting of information in published material, any and all information that could serve to identify you will be altered to ensure anonymity.

This study is of a research nature and may offer no direct benefit to you. The published findings however, may be useful to other woman and may benefit the understanding of the nature of the father-daughter relationship.

The Clinical Case Study does not directly require your involvement. However, it is possible that simply knowing you are the subject of the study could affect you in ways which could potentially distract you from your primary focus in therapy. If at any time you develop concerns or questions, I will make every effort to discuss these with you.

If you decide to participate in this Clinical Case Study, you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time and for any reason. Please note as well that I may need to terminate your being the subject of the study as any point and for any reason; I will inform you of this change, should I need to make it.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may discuss these with me by calling xxx xxx-xxxx, or you may contact the Clinical Case Study Coordinator at the Institute of Imaginal Studies, 47 Sixth Street, Petaluma, CA, 94952, telephone: (707) 765-1836.

I, __________________________, understand and consent to be the subject of, or to be referred to in, the Clinical Case Study written by Nancy Campbell, on the topic of father longing in women. I understand private and confidential information may be discussed or disclosed in the Clinical Case Study. I have had this study explained to me by Nancy Campbell. Any questions of mine about this Clinical Case Study have been answered, and I have received a copy of this consent form. My participation in this study is entirely voluntary.
I knowingly and voluntarily give my unconditional consent for use of both my clinical case history, as well as for disclosure of all other information about me including, but not limited to, information which may be considered private or confidential. I understand that Nancy Campbell will not disclose my name or the names of any persons involved with me, in this Clinical Case Study.

I hereby unconditionally forever release Nancy Campbell and the Institute of Imaginal Studies (and all of its trustees, officers, employees, agents, faculty, successors, and assigns) from any and all claims, demands, and legal causes of action whether known or unknown, arising out of the mention, use, and disclosure of my clinical case history, and all information concerning me including, but not limited to information which may be considered private and confidential. The Institute of Imaginal Studies assumes no responsibility for any psychological injury that may result from this study.

The terms and provisions of this consent shall be construed and interpreted pursuant to the laws of the State of California.

Signed this ___ day of ______________, 20__, at ____________________, California.

By: __________________________________________________________________

Client’s signature

____________________________________________________________________

Print client’s name legibly and clearly on this line
NOTES

Chapter 1


7. The term agency was used by the subject of this case study. Her description of the term described the ability for one to act in the world. This definition is equivalent to one described in Social Cognitive Theory as presented by Albert Bandura, as an agentic perspective in which, “Individuals are producers of experience, and shapers of events.” Quote from abstract. Bandura, Albert, “Exercise of Human Agency Through Collective Efficacy,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 9 (2000): 75-78, [online source], Sage Publications, http://www.sagepublications.com; Internet accessed; 19 October 2010.


10. Ibid., 25.


12. Ibid.


15. Positive qualities of the father archetype, or principle are found in many sources: Amy Allenby, “The Father Archetype in Feminine Psychology,” *Journal of Analytic Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1955): 80. “he also represents the larger world as ruled by instinct and spirit, he represents authority and law, the realm of ideas, the domain of religious and spiritual values.” Samuels, *The Father*, “decisiveness, courage


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.


23. Ibid.

24. The idea of erotic infusion within the parent-child relationship is a predominant thesis in the psychodynamic literature. Theory points to Sigmund Freud’s psychosexual stages of development, and theorists discourse pre-Oedipal overtures of the child, vs. those of the Oedipal stage. General agreement is that the task of the father is to both engage and repeal a daughter’s sexual overtures; that to be libidinized mobilizes a girl, allowing her to know her impact on the world. Salman Akhtar and Henri Parens, *Real and Imaginary Fathers: Development, Transference and Healing* (Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 2004), 78. Akhtar discusses the, “civilizing affect,” that renunciation of sexual desire for his daughter has on a father, identifying the mutual benefit of the relationship. Adrienne Harris, “Fathers” and “Daughters,” *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 28 (2008): 39-59, 50.


27. Ibid.


36. Ibid.


38. Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*, 36.

39. Ibid.


42. Aftab Omer, *Group Process II*, course at Meridian University, author’s notes, Summer 2000. Illegitimacy was brought out in a process with Omer and teaching assistant, who linked the term to a pervasive sense of fatherlessness.


44. Ibid., 17.

45. Ibid.


Chapter 2


2. Ibid.


12. Ibid. 49-50.


14. Ibid., 1132.

15. Ibid., 1133.


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid. By author’s report, girls born into homes without a strong father presence show sexual interest at an earlier age, earlier engagement in sexual activity, and poor ability in establishing long-term relationships, so have multiple sexual partners. 255-256.


22. Ibid., 534.

23. Ibid.


26. Ibid.


28. Ibid.


31. Ibid.


34. Ibid.


36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 34-35.
38. Ibid., 37-40.


41. Ibid., 343-344.


43. Ibid., 64.

44. Ibid.


46. Ibid., 50.


50. Ibid., 312.


52. Ibid., 383.


54. Ibid., 44.


56. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 8-10.


60. Ibid.


62. Ibid., 6-9.

63. Ibid.


65. Marone, How to Father a Successful Daughter, 118.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., 148-159.


70. Ibid., 195.


73. Ibid., 16-22.

74. Ibid., Bem, “Sex Role Adaptability.”


82. Ibid., Siegel, “Are Sons Treated More Differently.”


87. Sandra Bem and Ellen Lenney, “Sex Typing and Avoidance of Cross-Sex Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 33, no. 1 (1976): 48-54. According to researchers, these individuals are also thought to possess both the stereotypically male qualities of independence of judgment, and the stereotypically feminine characteristic of empathy.

88. Ibid., Bem, 1975.

89. Ibid.


97. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). According to author, the desire of a girl for affiliation can keep her from speaking out, or taking a stand that differs from her friends and loved ones. Gilligan’s work has been furthered by Lyn M. Brown, *Raising Their Voices: The Politics of Girls Anger* (Boston MA: Harvard University Press. 1998). Brown writes that a girl’s inability to speak out, as described by Gilligan, is the result of gender oppression. Instead of confronting their frustration with males, and with society, girls take out their feelings of powerlessness on each other.

98. Both Kieffer and Maine discuss the contribution of Gilligan and Chodorow regarding the father-daughter relationship. Kieffer, “Selfobjects Oedipal Objects, and Mutual Recognition, 73-74. Maine, *Father Hunger*. Maine cites themes presented by social and feminist psychological research in her explanation of the potential problems fathers and daughters face as males in western culture are taught to separate and females to connect. 45-54 and 47-63.


100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.


108. Ibid., 89.


110. Ibid.

112. Ibid., Strauss, 481. Lerner, 24.

113. Ibid., Learner, 24.


116. Ibid. Goose concludes her thesis by stating that even to address the once invisible father-daughter dyad indicates the changing perception of the dominant ideology of the family. The daughter, once the most unseen family member, is rapidly changing positions with the father, who according to research is gradually exiting his role in family life. 31.


121. Kulish and Holtzman, *A Story of Her Own*, 7-8. In brief, the myth of Oedipus the King was written by Sophocles as an Athenian tragedy in 429 B.C.E. In this play King Laius hears from the oracle that his own son, born of Queen Jocasta, will grow up to kill him. King Laius orders the baby to be put to death. The boy is spared by a compassionate servant, and is raised in a distant county by a shepherd. While traveling as a grown man Oedipus meets King Laius on a crossroads. The two men, father and son, are unknown to one another. They fight over right of way, resulting in the death of Laius. Oedipus, by answering the riddle of the Sphinx, wins the hand of dowager Queen Jocasta. The two marry, and have children before both find out that Oedipus is Jocasta’s son, and that he has killed his father. This knowledge results in Jocasta’s suicide by hanging, and Oedipus’s self-inflicted blinding and subsequent self-exile.

122. Ibid, 8-9.


124. Ibid.


130. Kulish and Holtzman, *A Story of Her Own*, 86. Oedipal stage issues include those in which a woman has not resolved her feelings of competition towards her mother, and thus the feminine as a whole.

131. Meader, “Forward into the Past.”

132. Ibid.


134. Ibid.

135. Harris, “Fathers” and “Daughters,” 52.


138. Ibid.

139. Ibid., 32-37.


144. Ibid.


146. Ibid., 253-259.

147. Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*, 86. Benjamin takes idealization back to Freud’s concept of *penis envy*. The little girl is idealizing that which she does not have.

148. Ibid., 288.

150. Ruth Garfield, “Making a Case for Father Hunger in Girls,” in Akhtar and Parens, *Real and Imaginary Fathers*, 41. Similarly, Garfield describes the conflict experienced by daughters whose fathers encouraged their academic and professional achievement only so far, eventually pushing their daughters towards a more traditionally feminine role.


154. Ibid., 27.


158. Harris, “Fathers” and “Daughters,” 52.


160. Harris, “Fathers” and “Daughters,” 52.


163. Ibid.


166. Moore, *Care of the Soul*, xiii.


171. Lewis, *Creative Transformation*, 5-23. Lewis describes holding, or rocking an imaginal infant self, a figure belonging to her client.
172. Ibid.


174. Ibid.

175. Ibid.


177. Ibid.


181. Ibid.


183. Ibid. 47-48.


186. Ibid., 3.


191. Ibid.


195. Ibid.


200. Ibid., 35-36.


203. Ibid.

204. Ibid., 72-73.

205. Ibid.

206. Ibid., 110.

207. Ibid., 64.

208. Ibid., 16.


210. Ibid., 16.

211. Ibid., 32.

212. Ibid., 22.


214. Ibid., 47.

215. Reis, *Daughters of Saturn*, Reis uses the term, The Wild Zone, described as, “a strictly female space, women-centered, women-defined, women-loving space. It is where women find each other as support and resource, it is where women’s culture is formed,” 36. Leonard, *The Wounded Woman*. Leonard writes that the paradox of redeeming the father is to find what had been projected onto men, and seek the feminine spirit within, 167. Woodman, *The Pregnant Virgin*, 57.


218. Ibid., 74.
219. Ibid., 3.

220. Murdock, *The Hero’s Daughter*, 65-67. Also in Murdock, the tale Donkeyskin describes a father who desires to marry his own daughter, describing the dilemma of psychological incest and the sacrifice of the daughter’s innocence. Leonard *The Wounded Woman*, describes Euripides’ rendition of the Trojan War, depicting father Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia to gain power for himself and for Greece. 26-30.


223. Ibid.


225. Ibid.

226. Ibid.


228. Moore, *Care of the Soul*, 36.

229. Ibid., 39.


231. Ibid., 29-30.

232. Ibid.

233. Ibid., 25.


235. Omer, *Engaging the Father Principle*.

236. Ibid.

237. Ibid.

238. Ibid.

239. Omer, personal communication with author, (Petaluma, CA: Meridian University, July, 2006).


242. Ibid. For Omer, enduring psychological change occurs when an imaginal structure is transmuted into a mature capacity. A mature capacity enables one to respond to certain experiences with a corresponding strength: the experience of fear transforms into the mature capacity of courage, grief transforms into compassion, anger into fierceness, shame/humiliation into dignity, and so on.


244. Ibid.


Chapter 3


7. Omer, personal communication, 2006.

8. The Friend is described by Omer as “Those deep potentials of the soul which guide us to act with passionate objectivity and encourage us to align with the creative will of the cosmos.” Additionally, The Friend may be understood as 13th century Sufi mystic, Jalaluddin Rumi’s expression of god. The Friend, as translated by Coleman Barks, is portrayed as, “The presence within, and infinitely beyond your senses.” Jalaluddin Rumi, *The Essential Rumi*, translated by Coleman Barks, with John Moyne (San Francisco: HarperCollins 1995), 132.

9. Omer, personal communication, 2006. According to Omer, *reflexive participation* is, “the practice of surrendering through creative action to the necessities, meanings and possibilities inherent in the present moment.” The practice of Reflexive Participation rests on the faculty of *reflexivity*, which Omer describes as, “the capacity to be aware of those imaginal structures that shape and constitute our experience.” Reflexivity may be understood as self-awareness and self-reflection, and requires one to have some distance, or disidentification from their imaginal structures.

Chapter 4

1. Omer, personal communication, 2006.


5. Ibid. 48.


7. Moore, Care of the Soul, 226-228. Omer, Engaging the Father Principle.

8. Moore, Care of the Soul, 36.


11. Omer, Engaging the Father Principle.

12. Erickson, Longing for Dad, 36.


14. Secunda, Women and their Father’s, 27.


16. Kieffer, “Selfobjects, Oedipal Objects, and Mutual Recognition,” 16. According to Kieffer this unconscious tactic on the father’s part serves to control her romantic relations and vocational aspiration, thus blocks her moves towards independence.


19. Ibid., 16.

20. Ibid., 32.


23. Murdock, Hero’s Daughter, xv.
27. Ibid., 259.
42. Omer, personal communication, 2006.
43. For example, In Euripides’ rendition of the Trojan War, father Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia to gain power for Greece. In another tale, greed and carelessness result in King Midas’s freezing his beloved daughter into a golden statue at his touch, while in the tale of Rumpelstiltskin, in threat of her life, a daughter must perform the futile task of attempting to spin straw into gold due to her father’s pompous boasting of her powers.
45. Ibid.
47. Ibid., 111.


51. Moore, *Care of the Soul*, xv.


53. Omer, personal communication, 2006.

54. Lewis, *Creative Transformation*, 5-23. Lewis describes holding, or rocking an imaginal infant self, a figure belonging to her client.

55. Ibid., 54.

**Chapter 5**

1. Omer, *Engaging the Father Principle*.

2. Ibid.


4. Omer, *Engaging the Father Principle*.


6. Ibid., 3.


9. L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Chicago: George M. Hill Co., 1900). The Movie: “The Wizard of Oz,” (MGM Studios: 1939). One difference between the book and the movie is that Dorothy, the heroine’s, age is depicted as much younger in the book. The movie presents Dorothy as a 12-year old girl, which supports the idea of the myth as a coming of age, and second stage Oedipal tale. Images presented in this section are based on author’s recollections of the movie.

10. Kulish and Holtzman, *A Story of Her Own*, 144, 157. Authors describe the Oedipal stage as the triadic stage, noting that adolescence is a time of integration for these issues. “Psychoanalytic interpretation of this stage stresses it’s Oedipal struggle.”


12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 175.


21. Allan Shore, “Relational Trauma and the Developing Right Brain: An Interface of Psychoanalytic Self-Psychology and Neuroscience,” *Annals of New York Academy of Science* 1159, 189-203. http://www.allanshore.com/pdf/SchoreAnnNY09Trauma.pdf. [online source]; Internet accessed 2 February 2010; http://www.johngouletmft.com/EMDR_in_treating_attachment_disorder.pdf. “The function of the right brain is non-linear and non-temporal, which explains why triggered traumatic memories are so vividly experienced as happening in the present. The right brain is closely connected to the physical states of the body... Memories in the right brain are retained in fragmented form as somatic and auditory sensations, visual images and intense affect states, which is why the most common form of trauma recall is visual. Because trauma memory is stored in this fragmented form in the pre-verbal, non-logical limbic system, separate from the brain’s language center, traditional talk therapy alone cannot resolve it. The body cannot be verbally and intellectually “reasoned out of” reacting to a stimulus that triggers the limbic system. Psychotherapy is a form of new learning and must impact the limbic system in order to be effective.”
REFERENCES


