

Paternal Role in Gender Identity Differentiation¹

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Serious problems in child development are usually associated with the nature of family relations. Figuring as predictors of adaptive-disadaptive behavior in preschool children and adolescents are the family structure, parental attitudes, upbringing styles, role preferences and much else that distinguishes the family as a whole.² As the primary significant object for any child, the mother is assigned a special role in its cognitive and personal development.³

A number of writers point out that a deficient relationship in the mother—child dyad, “in the case of an inadequate, insufficient, or unsystematic childcare distinguished by excessive anxiety, hyperprotection, rudeness, rigidity, general inconsistency, irregularity, redundant stimulation or simply incomprehension and indifference”⁴ is likely to result in “a basic fault” (M. Balint), “depressive anxiety” (M. Klein), “separation anxiety” (J. Bowlby), “grandiose self” (H. Kohut), as well as various psychosomatic deviations and pathologies (anorexia, asthma, enuresis, encopresis, erythrophobias, hyperhydrosis, and others). And conversely, close, affiliated contacts with the mother assist in the development of a mentally healthy and integral personality.⁵

Though the maternal role is the focus of active studies, researchers tend to underestimate the father's participation in child development. For example, investigations devoted to how dyadic relations become triadic, i.e., the point in time when the father begins embedding himself in the so-called “transaction spiral” (T. Benedek), describe his influence on child development in a thoroughly negative or formal way. The chapter called “*Clinique infantile*” in J.-J. Lustin's *Abrégé de psychologie pathologique* remarks briefly that “the father does join this ‘spiral’, albeit gradually, but it is impossible to say when precisely he makes his appearance... If initially he is just a partial object... or an element of the ‘joint parent,’ he becomes individualized as development proceeds.”⁶ This remark, however, does nothing to clarify how the father impacts on the child's inner world; it only points to the existence, and, evidently, the necessity of taking into consideration such an essential determinant as the masculine influence.

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Some works describe paternal functions in a sufficiently clear manner. According to J. Stork, the father holds an extremely important position as a third alternative object in mother—child relations; where he is absent, the child is deprived of “a symbolic paternal function and therefore is involuntarily stuck in symbiotic unity with the mother.”⁷ Going on with the theme, Stork claims that the father helps the child to abandon its dyad with the mother and to get rid of maternal dependence, thus assuring that the child is given a chance for free personal development. Apart from weakening the symbiotic relationship with the mother, the father helps the child to calm down its aggressive impulses. He also explicates and maintains in the child its uniqueness, and determines its stance in the world as a relatively independent subject. “The father is someone who has no fear of the mother, who can avoid the effect of the imagined omnipotence of the mother's image, who is free.”⁸ The paternal influence is not restricted to the separation processes which, taken by themselves, may seem excessively demonstrative. The male principle determines details of development, triggering some most intricate psychological mechanisms directed at a differentiation of psychic peculiarities and at an occasionally painful, if frank, identification of strong and weak points in the child in the process of its intellectual and personal development.

The process of the formation of sex identity that sometimes is directly related to an individual's biological sex is one of the most significant components that shape a personality's inner world. From my point of view, differentiating the notions of sex and gender identity is a sufficiently conventional thing because the gender-associated social stereotypes are assimilated as a subject comes to realize his or her sex assignment and forms an acceptance/nonacceptance attitude towards it. In this article I use the notion of “gender” in deference to the existing tradition that singles out such gender traits (characters) as masculinity, femininity and androgyny.

This study focuses on the differentiation of masculine and feminine characters in gender identity in keeping with the self-representation of an assessment subject (adolescent, young man/woman), an imaginary man (father) and an imaginary woman (mother).

The aim is to define differences in adolescents' self-representation, as dependent on an imaginary—paternal or maternal—representation subject. The following assumptions have been formulated.

- *Hypothesis 1*: A decline in masculinity-femininity differentiation is observed in adolescence; as I see it, this is a consequence of a child reaching puberty and assuming a negative attitude to its new corporeality.
- *Hypothesis 2*: The most obvious gender differences between boys and girls appear as they reach preadult age.
- *Hypothesis 3*: As seen by boys/girls, young men/women, men tend towards a more differentiated assessment of their identity—in dependence on their masculine/feminine traits—than women.

Methodology

The study involved 109 adolescents aged from 13 to 14 years (56 girls and 53 boys) and 76 young women/men aged from 18 to 19 years (42 and 34 respectively).

As our methodologies we used Masculinity and Femininity Test (MFT), a modified version of the list of masculine and feminine qualities suggested by T. Bessonova, and G. Murray's Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

MFT includes a list of 22 words denoting masculine and feminine characteristics, as well as those that are neutral in relation to the masculinity/femininity symptom complex.⁹ The testing procedure implies that a testee should consistently work with these eight unfinished sentences: "In fact, I am...", "I wish I were...", "A man must be...", "A woman must be...", "Men believe that I am...", "Women believe that I am...", "My real sexual partner...", "I would like my sexual partner to be..." rounding them off with each of the 22 words from the standard list of characteristics. A testee also had to mark the reply that in his/her view applied the most to him or her ("always," "usually," "sometimes," "never"). For example, if finishing the sentence "In fact, I am..." with the word "courageous," a testee could choose the answer "sometimes," if he viewed himself sooner as a coward; "usually," if more often than not he was bold; or extreme variants of replies, if he was definitely courageous or coward. As we processed the results, we calculated the masculinity/femininity profile in each of these categories. If femininity values exceed 17 points, while masculinity indicators are below that level, this personality type is called *feminine*; if masculinity is higher and femininity lower than 17 points, this identity type is termed *masculine*. If both indicators are higher than the norm, they correspond to the *androgynous* type. Low values in both indicators characterize a *nondifferentiated* identity type. For moral reasons, this study does not use the last two unfinished variants of sentences.

We must, however, specify the details that have a bearing on such objects of the test as "Man" and "Woman" (the instructions "Men believe that I am...", "Women believe that I am..."). We assumed that for adolescents "Man" and "Woman" were associated with the father and mother images. Our assumptions were confirmed by a post-test poll of the testees, whereby we wished to clarify whom the adolescents meant as they worked with the test. The majority of respondents named father or mother or their substitutes. This tendency persists into early preadult age. In different periods of adulthood the association of the "Man" and "Woman" objects with the father and mother images becomes weak.

A standard procedure was used in the Thematic Apperception Test: Testees were offered thematic pictures (20 tables), and a story had to be devised on the basis of each of these; they had to take into account the time (past, present, future), and the personages' thoughts and feelings.¹⁰ In processing the data, we analyzed the stories based on the pictures that we used to clarify the respondents' attitudes towards father and mother: 1 and 5 (general tables); 6GF, 7GF for girls;

and 6BM, 7BM for boys. To operationalize the resultant data, the following categories were established: "attitude to parents," "parental feelings for the child," "parental communicative strategies."

Results and Their Discussion

To check our hypotheses, we held a preliminary analysis of results that made it possible to control a number of secondary variables and ensure a high inner validity of the study (Table 1).

A preliminary analysis of the data implied a comparison of the following results:

1) the idea, or representation, about man and woman (specifically, about father and mother) in adolescence and preadult age;

2) gender differences between boys and girls, young men and young women. The representation about man and woman in adolescence were determined on the basis of the instructions "A woman must be" and "A man must be."

According to our results, the boys believe a woman must be androgynous, i.e., possessing both feminine and masculine traits (although her feminine characteristics must at the same time heavily overshadow her masculine ones); as for the girls, they believe she must be feminine, i.e., predominantly womanly. Man is perceived as masculine by both adolescent groups. We can claim that the man and woman images are close to traditional views on women as feminine and men as masculine types of personality. In preadult age, the man and woman images remain identical to the adolescent views.

Table 1

Medians of Masculinity (M) and Femininity (F) Characteristics of Objects: Man, Woman, I the Real, I the Ideal, I as Seen by Women and by Men

Instruction	Girls		Boys		Young women		Young men	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
"A woman must be"	18	22	19	23.5	19	20	16	21
"A man must be"	22	18	23.5	16.5	20	18	22	17
"In fact, I am"	16	18	17	17	17	18	19	17
"I wish I were"	22	20	23	18	20	19	21	17
"Women believe that I am"	17	18	18.5	18.5	18	18.5	18	18
"Men believe that I am"	17	21	19.5	18	18	19	19	15

Based on the obtained results, we may assume that self-representations in adolescents of different age will not be considerably different from male and female stereotypes. To clarify this matter we used data obtained in response to the query "In fact, I am." The data showed that the Mann-Whitney criterion had failed to reveal any differences between boys and girls either on masculinity ($U = 208.5, \alpha = 0.25$) or on femininity ($U = 190.5, \alpha = 0.12$) counts. Differences found between young men and young women concerned solely masculinity ($U = 367.5, \alpha = 0.009$). The quantitative indicators of femininity ($U = 511, \alpha = 0.37$) are the same in both groups and do not exceed the average values. Ideally, girls/young women prefer to be androgynous, while boys/young men, masculine.

To obtain some more differentiated results, we abandoned the "gender character" parameter in favor of the "identity" parameter, holding a cluster analysis of data on the basis of I-masculinity and I-femininity (the "In fact, I am" instruction). The cluster procedure resulted in four groups of testees found corresponding to the four gender identity types—nondifferentiated, masculine, feminine and androgynous (Table 2).

The ϕ^* criterion (Fischer's angular transformation) helped to reveal significant statistical differences between boys and girls in nondifferentiated ($\phi^* = 1.8, \alpha = 0.03$) and androgynous ($\phi^* = 2.1, \alpha = 0.01$) identity categories, and between young men and women in masculine ($\phi^* = 1.8, \alpha = 0/03$), feminine ($\phi^* = 3.5, \alpha = 0$) and androgynous ($\phi^* = 2.9, \alpha = 0$) identity categories. According to the data we obtained, the differences between boys and girls were due to the fact that a nondifferentiated identity was found in the majority of boys (three-fourths of the sample), while the masculine and feminine identities were observed in its rather insignificant remainder; the feminine and nondifferentiated types of identity were quite pronounced in girls, with the masculine and androgynous ones showing somewhat weaker. I must emphasize at this point that, unlike boys, the girls demonstrated a much greater variety of gender identity with a clear feminine pull.

The level of nondifferentiation of masculine and feminine characteristics in the male group declines in a statistically significant way towards the preadult age, something that leads to the smoothing of differences in this identity type ($\phi^* = 0.3, \alpha > 0.1$) between young men and women. And yet, not less than one-third

Table 2

Number of Testees in Different Age Groups (%) Possessing Nondifferentiated, Masculine, Feminine and Androgynous Identity

Identity	Girls	Boys	Young women	Young men
Nondifferentiated	34	61	35	31
Masculine	17	22	18	38
Feminine	39	17	45	8
Androgynous	1	0	2	23

of the entire sample under study remained nondifferentiated in the masculinity-femininity symptom complex.

Where other identity types were concerned, the following differences were observed. Young women differed from young men in that they possessed an expressed feminine identity matched with de-emphasized masculine and androgynous identities. It means that at the start of preadult age the self-representations of oneself as a feminine young woman and a masculine or androgynous young man become increasingly stable.

The results we obtained warrant the following conclusions. The first hypothesis postulating that the likelihood of a slide down in masculine-feminine differentiation grew considerably in adolescence is confirmed only in part because this peculiarity refers to the boy sample alone ($\phi^* = 2.01, \alpha = 0.02$). In girls/young women, the nondifferentiation of masculine and feminine characteristics is observed only in a certain part of the sample whose size is constant and does not vary in different age groups ($\phi^* = 0.09, \alpha > 0.1$).

We confirmed the second hypothesis, which says that the most obvious differences between boys and girls due to gender characteristics become apparent at the start of preadult age. It was demonstrated that in adolescence the differences concerned only the nondifferentiated and androgynous identities, whereas in the preadult period, the three main types of identity (feminine, masculine and androgynous) were involved. We can describe the dynamics as follows: boys and girls differ in the number of gender characteristics, while young men and women in their quality.

To test the third hypothesis to the effect that in the view of boys/girls and young men/women, men rather than women tended towards a more differentiated assessment of their masculinity-femininity identity, we used replies by the testees in different age groups to the assertions "Men believe that I am" and "Women believe that I am." These results were compared with replies to the assertion "In fact, I am" (Table 3).

Table 3

Differences in Adolescent and Preadult Boys' and Girls' Views on How Men and Women Assess Their Gender Identity

Groups of testees	Gender Identity							
	Nondifferentiated		Masculine		Feminine		Androgynous	
	ϕ^*	α	ϕ^*	α	ϕ^*	α	ϕ^*	α
Girls	2.43	0*	0	>0.1	2.2	0.01*	1.2	>0.1
Boys	1.6	0.05*	1.13	>0.1	0.68	>0.1	0	>0.1
Young women	2.92	0*	0.2	>0.1	1.3	0.09	0.35	>0.1
Young men	0.79	>0.1	1.9	0.02*	1.6	0.05*	2.9	0*

* Differences are statistically significant.

Our empirical study indicates that a comparison of the testees' representations regarding their assessment by men and women revealed seven significant differences, six of which confirmed the hypothesis that it was men who were capable of a more differentiated identity assessment.

The methodology identifies representations about expert estimates, not expert estimates per se. It is common knowledge, however, that there is a connection between both. Table 3 shows the difference between male (paternal) and female (maternal) assessments of the nondifferentiated gender identity: in all three cases men resort to such strategies less frequently than women (in 7% of cases as against 31%, as seen by girls; in 12% of cases as against 39%, as seen by boys; in 8% of cases as against 24%, as seen by young women). At the same time young men believe that men perceive them as masculine more often than women do (in 62% of cases as against 35%) and less often as feminine (in % of cases as against 27%). Girls believe that men more often perceive them as feminine (in 55% of cases as against 27%). From young men's own point of view, their assessment as androgynous is characteristic of women (15%), not men (0%).

To enhance the external validity of the study, we used results obtained with the help of TAT. The data were analyzed on the basis of three criteria: "attitude to parents," "parental feelings towards the child," "parental communicative strategies."

The "attitude to parents" criterion revealed no clear negative assessment of parents by their children either in adolescence or in preadult age. Their feelings towards the adults were mostly positive, and paternal-maternal behavior was seen as rational, expedient, supportive or controlling. Even in cases where parents made their children engage in different activities (for example, play a musical instrument), children estimated this attitude to themselves as affiliative ("The parents made a boy play the violin, but he would later thank them for that and be grateful").

Nevertheless, there occur certain cases of children feeling wronged by their parents. Resentment is a consequence of parental indifference and leads to a buildup of mutual alienation, emotional coldness and emptiness. This detached parental attitude may be due to mothers and fathers conceiving erroneous views on the exceptional role that peers play in the life of their children and on the insignificance of their own influence. These attitudes can disrupt the balance in relations between persons of different age and slow down the handover of experience from generation to generation. The level of a child's need for spontaneous activities is equivalent to its expectation of reasonable restrictions being imposed thereupon. If an adult fails to perform these functions, the danger arises that increased inner tensions will discharge in some impulsive and uncontrolled, rather than spontaneous, activities.

TAT results helped us establish the fact that an emotional attitude to the mother on the part of girls/young women and boys/young men differed significantly from an emotional attitude to the father. In girls, mediated (triadic-like) loving relations with the mother were observed. A third alternative object was another woman—grandmother, sister, nanny—rather than the father. The moth-

er's position was described as conciliating, supportive, wait-and-see, and controlling. The father was either absent from the girls' accounts or, like the mother, was a third alternative object in relations of two personages, most often male and female (husband and wife, for example), where he figured as a fair judge.

In boys, relations with the mother were spontaneous, natural in character and expressed in a shift of emotional experiences to the mother, who displayed negative feelings caused by a buildup of separation processes. The son's emotions were practically not described, although the fixation of mother—son dyadic relations was likely to lead, in a boy, to some excessive sensuality, timidity or shyness. His relations with the father were also spontaneous. They were displayed in the establishment of equal, often friendly, contacts. The father acted as an adviser, tutor, guide and partner.

The second criterion—"parental feelings towards the child"—was used to discover the presence or absence of mutual emotional contacts of adolescents, young men/women with their mothers and fathers. Our analysis of TAT records showed that regardless of the testees' sex, the parental attitude to children was on the whole emotionally positive. But the mother was more pitying and hopeful, expressing passive emotions, while the father loved and showed an interest in the child, taking an emotionally active stance.

The difference between paternal and maternal feelings consists not only in that their emotional reactions differ in intensity but also in the subjective nature of the emotions. The mother's feelings can only state the existence of a problem and compensate it only in part. The compensation signs are increased attention to the child (better-than-usual care), frequent and hefty nutrition, and supervision of its rest, primarily sleep. The paternal status capabilities are displayed in the father getting to the core of a problem and looking for solutions. The most favorable solution is discussing and organizing, jointly with the child, some intellectual and practical moves, expanding the range of opportunities, and finding some alternatives.

In other words, the maternal line consists in relieving emotional tensions and preserving the child's self-assessment and inner comfort, while the paternal, in channeling the emotional energy and its constructive utilization to achieve a set goal. The complementary nature of the mother—father dyad makes for the development of an independently thinking personality capable of using parental experience in the course of its independent decision-making. If the balance inside a family is tipped in favor of the maternal line, this leads to a higher level of frustration and a buildup of overcompensation reactions; its shift towards the paternal line, however, serves to relax emotional control.

The third criterion—"parental communicative strategies"—was chosen for the purpose of answering the main question in this study, one about the parental influence on child development, particularly the shaping of the gender identity. Our analysis of TAT accounts made it possible to single out several communicative strategies characterizing masculine behavior.

1. The strategy of communicating a ready-made decision directly to the son/daughter ("Father talks with his son; the father believes the son must

also do some thinking; the father is more experienced and he conveys this thought to his son; he loves him, they are a single whole"—Table 7BM).

2. An aggressive strategy ("The father is one of the mafia, he is not one to be trifled with, he will kill the daughter because she has disobeyed; the father will be put in jail"—Table 6GF).
3. An estrangement strategy ("Dad is not here, he's left for the war"—Table 5; "The son comes to his parents with a request, but they are watching TV and paying no attention to him" Table 1).
4. A strategy of indirect translation of knowledge and skill ("The father is a field doctor, and he is doing surgery on the mother, while the son is watching his father work"—Table 8BM; "Two persons are dealing with a matter; the elderly man is laughing a little, but ironically, not with an evil intent—in order for the young man to find the mistake on his own"—Table 7BM).
5. The mediation strategy of dyadic relations ("The father interferes in the quarrel...; the daughter is displeased and gives her father a talking-down, but the father can convince his daughter; he is a tactful but firm person"—Table 6GF).
6. The role differentiation strategy ("The father tells his son how a man should behave; he must not be weak"—Table 7BM).

The above strategies can be encountered in both age periods, but the first three strategies occur more often during the puberty period, and the latter ones in the late preadult period.

Unlike the father, the mother would accept her child entirely; her worries on its behalf only state the existence of a problem, but she does not always solve it. The typical maternal strategies are the following:

1. Unconditional acceptance of her child ("The son has a problem, his mom is reassuring him; she says everything will be OK"—Table 6BM).
2. Helping to establish good relations between her son/daughter and other persons ("Mom is trying to reconcile her elder son with his brother and sister"—Table 7GF).
3. Controlling her son's/daughter's behavior ("The mother looks strictly after her child; she checks out whether or not the child is doing its home exercises; but she will not scold it, she is kind"—Table 5).

On the whole, our analysis of TAT results made it possible to confirm the MFT data indicating that the feminine (maternal) position consisted in exercising an integrative and synthesizing function, and the masculine (paternal) one in differentiating and matching the specific features of a situation with a particular child's capabilities, as well as in implementing analytical strategies.

Let us discuss the results and in so doing address the three hypotheses we have formulated; let us correlate them with each other.

According to the first hypothesis, a decline is observed in adolescence in masculinity-femininity differentiation, caused by the emergence of a negative attitude to the new corporeality. The most obvious gender differences between boys and girls will appear later, i.e., at the start of preadult age (the second hypothesis).

Indeed, our results indicate that adolescents differ from the elder age groups in that they are unable to assess themselves on the basis of masculinity-femininity criteria, because half of boys and girls (as compared with one-third of young men/women) have a nondifferentiated gender identity. A considerable number of boys in that group point to the heterochronicity in the development of adolescents of different sex. We linked the weak gender identity differentiation with puberty and its peculiarities; in so doing we took into consideration our TAT results: while describing personages with whom they identified, the testees were either ironical on the matter of their corporeality or withheld the information altogether. This means that the diffuseness of identity is largely explained by the negative attitude that girls/boys conceive of their physique.

Preadult-age individuals finally accept their gender identity (young women, feminine; young men, masculine) that either corresponds or does not correspond to the biological sex. In the latter case, the feminine young men are the biggest problem. One-third of the young men/women sample usually remains nondifferentiated with regard to masculinity-femininity, which, to my mind, may be due to two reasons. The first reason is that being unable to categorize oneself in gender terms is caused by some traumatic disruption in the gender-identity-building process. Another reason has much to do with the specifics of adolescent development, particularly the dynamics of physical and sex maturation, as well as with incapacity for reflection, self-knowledge and self-understanding.

Adolescents would stably conceive of man (father) as a masculine subject and of woman (mother) as a feminine personality. But the solution of their own diffusive identity problems cannot be explained by the fact that a child's sex polarity representations that it can fix with the help of a list of gender traits bring direct influence to bear on its Ego. In itself, growing older (acquiring life experience, knowledge) is a necessary, albeit insufficient, factor explaining the metamorphoses taking place in a child. We must name the specific paternal influence on the inner world of adolescents as a significant determining factor in their final acceptance of masculine, feminine or androgynous gender identity.

In our third hypothesis we assumed that men, as conceived by boys/girls, young men/young women, tend to a more differentiated assessment of their identity in terms of masculinity-femininity than women. Our results enabled us to confirm our earlier hypothesis and to single out the mechanisms for paternal influence on children of different sex and age.

Our study showed that girls/young women established a mediated relationship with both father and mother. Given participation of a third female object (grandmother, sister, etc.), their dyadic relations with the mother are transformed into triadic. The triadic relations with the father are increasingly of a more involved and progressive nature, including a male object (brother, husband, or

others). The mother is not inclined to assess her daughter in masculinity-femininity terms, and her strictly protective, saving behavior is compensated by an open position of the father. As seen by a 13-14-year-old girl, it is her father that emphasizes her feminine traits, enhancing them in relations with partners of the opposite sex. By 18-19 years of age, the differences between father and mother, in the eyes of their daughter, are preserved only in part and have to do with the nondifferentiated gender identity. This bears witness to the existence of mothers who remain insensitive to their daughters' gender identity differentiation problem. In all evidence, there are several reasons for that. One is maternal indifference to the daughter; another is the feeling of jealousy, envy and rivalry.

In boys/young men, relations with both parents are direct and of a dyadic nature. During puberty, differences in their father-mother assessments are only observed in the nondifferentiated gender identity. This can be explained by the fact that boys' development rates are slower than those of girls. It is for this reason that they might be as yet in no need of their masculine traits being accentuated. Nevertheless, the definiteness of the father's position is in that he does not tend to see his 13-14-year-old son as nondifferentiated in masculinity-femininity terms, while at the same time refusing to assess him as clearly masculine. Rather, the case is opposite. Unlike the mother, the father would foster the manly traits in his son, though possibly having no real proof of there being present. In early puberty, boys' self-perception is extremely diffusive; thus, the potency of paternal influence consists in discerning the rudiments of masculine traits and elements of male behavior and in reinforcing them. By the start of the preadult age, the differences in paternal and maternal assessments become utterly pronounced. What distinguishes the paternal assessments is that, unlike the mother, who finds many feminine traits in her adult son, the father perceives him as unequivocally masculine.

In generalizing our results, we must single out the mechanisms for paternal influence on adolescent and preadult gender identity.

There exists a view that the paternal role in the girl's development consists in reinforcing her relationship with the mother.¹¹ From my point of view, the father's influence on the shaping of his daughter's gender identity is displayed in triggering a reverse process. This mechanism is about her de-identification with her mother that becomes necessary where there is a growing close symbiotic relationship between mother and daughter that involves a third alternative female object. This triad (for example, "daughter—mother—grandmother") can considerably restrict an inflow of new experience and fix the age hierarchy of relations, while failing to accentuate elements of femininity. The father is a conduit for information that the girl was previously unable to access; he actively backs his daughter as she builds new relationships, primarily with persons of the opposite sex. The emotions of a jealous and at the same time proud parent emphasize the ambivalence of his role directed at expanding the girl's scope and protecting her sovereignty.

As years go by, the differences in paternal and maternal assessments of the young woman would gradually fade. This unity of views seems to be a great

achievement of the father, who continues to support the feminine line in her development. The mechanism for femininity support is about the father leveling the mother's propensity to see her daughter as just a child; he would convert the diffusive roles translated by the mother to the gender roles.

The father—son relationships are based on some fundamentally different principles. The father does not obstruct the mother—son relations, but he considerably restructures them. In a less obvious form these actions are present in adolescence, when the father simulates situations where his son's success will depend on how masculine he is, i.e., on something that actually is yet to appear. The mechanism for developing adolescent masculinity is about projecting the manly traits upon a boy, and the father is the subject of this projection. The differentiation of masculine and feminine gender identity intensifies at the onset of early adulthood because the father's projective behavior is replaced by joint father—son actions. The buildup of masculine experience takes place in a dialogue with the mother restructured by the father. The father is not disrupting the mother's relationship with the son; he is transforming it into new relations, a dialogue between the mother and her grown-up manly son. Simultaneously he supervises and supports his actions as he tests his problem-solving manly behavior. Later the experience accumulated by the young man will be applied to his own family and professional relations.

Importantly, the results we obtained make no mention of any negative paternal role. Some isolated and incomparably small (in comparison with the large amount of data) shades of man's destructive behavior could not have altered the generally favorable impression that the picture of emergent family relations helped to create. This means that the father's role in the child's mental development is indeed very significant. At the same time, it is so delicate, flexible and occasionally imperceptible that neither the observation methods, nor questionnaires, nor interviews are sensitive enough to detect the intensity of paternal influence upon the child. Moreover, the stereotypes existing in society respecting the male parent often distort and level out his role in child upbringing. Of course, the negative aspect of child—parent relations is considerable; it transpires from a large number of parental visits to psychologists but, existing as a problem, it once again proves the viability of the opposite assumption—that the father and the mother have a positive impact on the life of the child.

Conclusion

This study is based on a large body of empirical evidence demonstrating that the mother—child relationship deficit is the priority theme in modern developmental psychology. The chronic nature of this problem is explained by its complexity, on the one hand, and its inadequate consideration, on the other. D. Vinicot once said that "there is no such thing as a baby." What he meant was that a child should be considered in its interaction with an adult, primarily its mother. Let me add that this interaction implies paternal participation as well. The medi-

ating influence of the father is expressed in differentiating the communicative, mental and behavioral strategies of the object of influence, primarily filial strategies.

This work's general theoretical premises found an expression in a specific gender identity problem. It also formulated hypotheses on the differentiation and dynamics of adolescent and preadult gender characteristics and on their assessment by father and mother. These hypotheses were confirmed with the help of projective and semi-projective investigation methods. Our results show that only a weak differentiation of gender characteristics is observed in adolescence. In the preadult period, the accentuation of masculine and feminine identity characteristics grows considerably and becomes specific of persons of different sex. The father plays a significant role in this process. The mechanisms for paternal influence on children of different age and sex are not the same. In relations with girls/young women, the father implements daughter—mother de-identification strategies and a mechanism that supports femininity. In communications with the boy/young man, the paternal influence is displayed as projecting manly traits upon the son and as restructuring the son—mother relations. The mother—son dyad is seen by the father as an adequate psychological space where the primary accumulation of masculine experience is possible.

The diversity and specifics of emotional relations between the son/daughter and the mother/father create an affectively demanded background that favors the implementation of maternal and paternal functions. The lack of parental resources needed for child development restricts functional capabilities of each participant in this process—the child itself, the father and the mother.

NOTES

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