Introjection, Mentalization, Ego Functioning, and Lacan's "Name of the Father"

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Abstract

Psychoanalytic literature has traditionally focused on the theoretical explanations of psychological phenomena rather than empirical research to support those ideas. One such theory is Lacan's "Name of the Father" (NOF), which recast Freud's Oedipal situation, positing its representation in language use and situating it even earlier in psychological development. Lacan suggested that the NOF construct (establishing psychological structure and preventing psychosis) was best represented by metaphor use and linguistic structure. The current study attempted to measure the NOF construct (1955) through linguistic structure and metaphor use. We examined the relationship between an indirect measure of NOF functioning and overall personality functioning via Freud's concept of the "original introject" and mentalization capacity in a double-mediational model. In a sample of 50 young adults, we hypothesized that linguistic indicators of Lacan's Name of the Father construct would predict stronger paternal introjection, which in turn would predict higher mentalization capacity. We further predicted that mentalization capacity would lead to healthier and more integrated personality functioning. Results indicated that NOF was identified by verbal immediacy elicited via metaphor. Additionally, NOF predicted ego impairment measured by the Rorschach and certainty in mentalization. Implications for future research and clinical interventions are discussed.

Keywords: Name of the Father, mentalization, original introject, personality functioning

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

For decades, psychoanalytic theorists have presented ideas about how we develop psychological structures and how those structures influence the development of the self (e.g., Freud, 1922; Hartmann, 1950; Klein, 1930; Kohut, 1971). Many of these theories have revolved around the introjection, or incorporation and identification with aspects of parental figures into the self, early in life (e.g., Freud, 1900). These internalized representations of relationships include the subject's feelings about the other, their feelings about themselves in relation to the other, and their understanding of the relationship itself through the lens of their psychological understanding (e.g., Klein, 1935).

One prominent psychoanalytic model of the family structure and its influences on psychological development is Freud's Oedipal Complex, wherein the child's enmeshed relationship with the mother is challenged and, in healthy development, limited by the father's presence (Freud, 1900). The Oedipal conflict looks different between children of different genders: young boys desire to possess their mothers while viewing their fathers as competitors for their mother's affections. While girls initially desire their mothers as boys do, they begin to differentiate, switching the focus of their desire to their fathers as they realize their father has something their mother wants. The resolution of this conflict occurs when the child, supported and loved by both parents, overcomes their strong emotions toward both parental figures and begins to identify with their same-sex parent as a role model. Freudian theory holds that the Oedipal stage influences the formation of identity, sexuality, and morality (Freud, 1900).

The Name of the Father

As Freud's Oedipal theory gained prominence, other psychoanalytic thinkers began proposing ideas for phenomena that may resolve the Oedipal conflict and move the developing

child toward psychological health. Jacques Lacan reinterpreted Freud's Oedipal theory not just as an essential step in healthy psychological development but also as a symbolic transition. He posited that a special unconscious symbol is installed during the Oedipus complex: the paternal signifier of "Name of the Father" (NOF). The paternal signifier challenges the desire of the maternal figure with which the child is confronted initially, introducing the dimension of the law (i.e., what is right and wrong; what is socially acceptable and what is "taboo"), thereby creating the initial intrapsychic structure. This structure allows individuals to understand themselves and others as important links in a symbolic chain of rules and standards intrinsic in society.

Put more simply, NOF involves the child's awareness of the difference between the self and the other. The father's intervention in the infant's initially enmeshed relationship with its mother imposes structure into their relationship and, by extension, imposes order into the infant's view of the world. The Name of the Father function prohibits psychic enmeshment with the maternal figure, organizing the child's world and instilling structure. In this way, NOF serves as the basis upon which individuals establish psychological boundaries, allowing them to differentiate between what is internal and what is external.

The Name of the Father function also facilitates an initial separation between mother-figure and infant, which, according to Lacan, moves the infant away from confusion between internal and external processes (commonly understood as psychotic thinking). Indeed, by instilling order, restriction, and law into the child's psychological world, the NOF allows the child to structure experience in a symbolic order – a function missing in psychotic individuals (Vanheule, 2017). Lacan viewed NOF as a developmental entity insofar as those lacking proper NOF functioning will never gain it, and will always experience psychosis, whether mild or florid (Fink, 1999).

Central to Lacan's theory is a triadic model of psychological existence, composed of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic (Sullivan, 1978). The Real is experienced at its height in early infancy and cases of acute psychosis. It is experience-near, with no separation between the self and the external world. The Real is devoid of imagination or symbolism; that which resides in the Real is that which resists symbolization (Fink, 1999; Sullivan, 1978). Our connection to the Real ends with the introduction of language, which in Lacan's understanding is inherently symbolic.

The Imaginary, conversely, refers to the fundamental, healthy narcissism through which the individual creates a fantasied understanding of themselves and their desired object(s). Through the Imaginary, the infant recognizes themselves as an "I" and subsequently forms a coherent sense of self – it is in the Imaginary order that the ego begins to take shape and serve as a mediator between the internal and external world; the child is, therefore, able to take what they see externally and begin to create mental images and representations of those objects internally (Sullivan, 1978).

Finally, all representational, metaphorical, and language-based functioning occurs in the Symbolic (Fink, 1999). The Symbolic encapsulates all that the self and others represent to the individual, rather than what they are in external reality (as encapsulated in the Real or the Imaginary domains). Through Symbolic functioning, language begins to build a semantic web of signifiers and associations that allow us to organize and understand the world and ourselves.

Lacan posited that a lack of the Name of the Father functioning creates a "hole" in the Symbolic, leading to the foreclosure of representational and associated understandings. In psychosis and pre-NOF infancy, individuals must face the world without the organizational help of the Symbolic order, relying on the immediate and often chaotic experiences provided by the

Real and the Imaginary orders (Fink, 1999; Ribolsi et al., 2015; Sullivan, 1978; Vanheule, 2017).

It is important to note that NOF's protection from "psychotic" thinking does not necessarily refer to the popular understanding of psychosis typified by active hallucinations or delusions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Instead of focusing on florid psychosis, Lacan emphasized an "ordinary psychosis" in which individuals appear functional from the outside (Schwartz, 2009). Still, even on a typical day, these individuals may have difficulty putting themselves in the minds of others, understanding common metaphors, and may experience a diffuse sense of self, making it difficult for others to get to know them or feel close to them (Schwartz, 2009). In this ordinary psychosis, Lacan referred to a foreclosure of symbolic thinking that keeps the subject from metabolizing real-world experiences and translating them into semantic understanding (a process that typically involves using signifiers or metaphors; Lacan, 1955).

Successful separation of self from other through NOF is how the mind moves toward reality-based thinking and away from psychotic thinking. Along with this shift comes more realistic representations of self and other (Fink, 1999; Schwartz, 2009). Without successful NOF functioning, a lack of adequate symbolization begins to affect even our most basic unconscious functions, such as our ability to differentiate ourselves from others, our sense of identity, and our desires. For Lacan, this was seen most clearly in language structure, organization, and abstraction.

NOF and Language Use

An essential aspect of Lacan's theory was his assertion that the unconscious is "structured like a language" (Lacan, Miller, & Griggs, 1993). Lacan believed that language

structure provided a window into the deepest level of the human psyche. As such, it could reveal truths about underlying pathology that could not be gleaned from the content of speech alone (Schwartz, 2009). This foundational tenet of Lacan's theories was especially true of NOF. Even the original French term for NOF, *le nom du père*, is a play on words for its similarity to *le non du père*, or the "no" of the father, emphasizing both the structure and the prohibition inherent in the role of the father figure (Fink, 2009). Further, the Name of the Father function is a symbolic function. The term "father" is a metaphor for any entity that interrupts the infant's sense of oneness with the external world. A father does not necessarily fulfill the Name of the Father function, nor does the absence of a father necessarily signal the nonexistence of the Name of the Father function (Fink, 1999; Silverman, 1983). This role could be filled by any man, woman, societal construct, or other entity that interrupts the child's experience of enmeshment with the external world.[1]

For Lacan, linguistic structure and organization, grammar, and the use of abstraction and metaphor indicated the successful development of the Name of the Father function. Specifically, individuals with successful Name of the Father function will use and comprehend metaphors correctly, and the words they use will align with formal conventions rather than made-up definitions. These individuals would hear the metaphor, "You're the apple of my eye," and understand it to represent an expression of fondness. Conversely, those missing this Name of the Father function struggle to differentiate what exists inside their minds from what is outside, instead relying on concrete language devoid of metaphor and correct grammatical structure.

[1] This idea has been explored in feminist critiques of Lacan's works, which have explored and debated his (often problematic) phallocentric themes (e.g., Berg, 1991; Irigaray, 1985; Ragland-Sullivan, 1982).

Individuals without the Name of the Father function would hear, "You're the apple of my eye," and become confused, looking for a piece of fruit somehow present inside the speaker's eye.

Those without the NOF function also rely on *neologisms,* or made-up words, to describe experiences (Ribolsi, Feyaerts, & Vanheule, 2015). The use of concrete language indicates more severe psychopathology. Psychotic individuals experience imaginary (rather than symbolic) relations associated with psychotic thinking (Fink, 1999; Ribolsi et al., 2015; Vanheule, 2017). Along with a poor grasp of symbolic language and impoverished linguistic structure comes an equally weak grasp of self-concept and identity (Schwartz, 2009; Vaneule, 2017). This can have severe consequences for functioning across numerous psychological and interpersonal domains. Those who demonstrate poor symbolic functioning may demonstrate a global inability to make sense of the world around them, resulting in an incoherent and unintegrated sense of self. Further, individuals' abilities to effectively communicate with others may be significantly impaired, negatively affecting the establishment and maintenance of healthy relationships.

The Paternal Introject

Because the NOF function allows for meaningful separation of self from other, it lays the groundwork for the creation of internal representations of others. Internal representations of others, incorporated into the subject's understanding of themselves, are termed *introjections*. For Lacan, introjection is rooted in Symbolic functioning. Identifying with another requires prerequisite knowledge that there is an other outside of the self.

Many psychoanalytic theorists, Freud included, asserted that the primary introject in a child's internal world is the father figure (Freud, 1975; Hinshelwood, 1995). Freud noted that children's understanding of social standards, laws, and restrictions is absorbed from their father figures. External commands given to help children understand order and meaning (e.g., "No, you

must not touch the stove") become internal prohibitions that children carry with them as part of their sense of self (Hinshelwood, 1995). The introjection of the father figure allows for the establishment of empathically connected relationships. The subject, able to recognize and identify with others' experiences and feelings, is better able to understand their own psychological states and can use this ability to picture the minds of others. Successful primary introjection leads to a more nuanced and accurate understanding of what oneself and others are feeling and how those mental and emotional states affect behavior (aka *mentalization;* Fonagy, 1989).

Mentalization

Over time, different psychoanalytic theorists have attempted to uncover the process by which we develop the capacity to understand the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of others. Unlike other animals, humans consistently and innately attempt to understand their own and others' minds. This psychological capacity for comprehending mental states is a critical step in emotional development (Bateman & Fonagy, 2010). The cognitive components of this phenomenon have been studied as *metacognition* (Flavell, 1976) and *theory of mind* (Baron-Cohen, Leslie, & Frith, 1985). More recently, Fonagy and colleagues offered a socio-emotional account under the heading of *mentalization* (Fonagy et al., 1991).

Mentalization is the capacity to understand the underlying mental states and intentions of both oneself and others (Fonagy et al., 1991). It is a crucial human capacity intrinsic to intrapsychic mood regulation as well as the formation of healthy social relationships (Slade et al., 2005). Since its emergence in psychoanalytic theory, mentalization has become a cornerstone of attachment literature (e.g., Fonagy et al., 1998; Slade, 2005) and the understanding and treatment of borderline pathology (Bateman & Fonagy, 2010).

For individuals to develop the ability to mentalize, there must first be a primary differentiation between what is occurring inside versus outside of the self and a capacity for relational introjection. In healthy development, caregivers mirror and affectively mark infants' internal experiences in a fashion that shows the infant what is happening inside them while demonstrating a fundamental difference between the caregiver's experience and the infant's experience (Weinberg, 2006). For example, mothers who see their infants crying may make a "sad face" and verbalize their child is "feeling sad" to teach the infant the name for that experience. Ideally, however, the mother does not start crying or demonstrate a level of distress equivalent to her infant's; instead, she "marks" the infant's expression by expressing a level of sadness that is less than that of her child. In so doing, the mother differentiates her mind from her infant's (Fonagy et al., 2003). As the mother mirrors the infant's internal world, the infant learns to perform this function for themselves and imagine this process in the minds of others, setting the scene for appropriate self- and other-focused mentalization (Weinberg, 2006).

Appropriate certainty and uncertainty about others' mental states is an essential aspect of mentalization that reinforces the self/other boundary. Mentalization of other's minds and intentions must always involve an element of uncertainty. Despite our best attempts at understanding other's mental states, it is impossible to know exactly what is going on in someone else's mind unequivocally. Insisting that we know what others are experiencing implies a degree of psychopathology (i.e., "reading others' thoughts," which is common in psychotic phenomena and individuals with severe personality pathology), just as finding others impossible to understand or approach also indicates pathological experiences (i.e., individuals on the autism spectrum). Fonagy and colleagues (1995) found that both too much and too little certainty are associated with higher levels of psychopathology. The current study, therefore, utilizes a

mentalization measure that focuses specifically on certainty and uncertainty (Fonagy et al., 2016).

Despite its importance in human psychology, mentalization capacity is often lacking in those with poorer levels of personality functioning (e.g., Debbane et al., 2016). Mentalization cannot be established without a stable sense of the difference between others and the self (primarily established through NOF presence; Fonagy & Target, 1996). This requires sophisticated psychological faculties. The cognitive, relational, and emotional processes necessary to understand and correctly attribute others' behaviors to corresponding mental states represent significant developmental achievements. Thus, greater mentalization abilities correlate with higher levels of psychological functioning.

Personality Functioning

Since the 1970s, personality functioning has been defined by Kernberg's (1984; 1996; 2004) levels of personality organization. Kernberg's model consists of three categories: Neurotic, Borderline, and Psychotic. In Neurotic level functioning (the healthiest category), individuals demonstrate appropriate understandings of psychological boundaries between self and other. In the Borderline level of personality functioning, individuals struggle to recognize psychological boundaries and often confuse the emotions and cognitive processes of others for their own and vice versa. In psychotic personality organization, boundaries between self and others are virtually nonexistent. While boundary difficulties are present to varying degrees in all levels of organization, individuals in the Borderline and Psychotic levels demonstrate the most difficulty establishing and maintaining psychological boundaries between themselves and others (Fonagy & Target, 1996; Fonagy & Bateman, 2006; Kernberg, 1984; Kernberg, 2004).

Another common psychoanalytic term for this boundary is “ego strength” (Gutmann, 1965). Freud developed the concept of the ego over several years, arriving at a definition of ego as the organization of mental processes which ultimately comprise the “self” (1926). This sense of self constantly mediates between an individual’s animalistic and often selfish desires (id) and their understanding of others’/society’s demands of them (superego; Freud, 1926). Stronger abilities to mediate between the desires of the id and the superego indicate ego strength, resulting in greater psychological resilience and lower levels of psychopathology. By contrast, more fragile, disorganized self-experiences indicate ego weakness and signal impaired psychological health.

Individuals with high levels of ego strength are typically classified at the neurotic level functioning. They demonstrate facility with self-other boundaries. Individuals at borderline or psychotic levels tend to demonstrate ego impairment, precipitating personality-based psychological difficulties. Ego strength allows for thinking that maintains the psychological boundary between self and other (Schafer, 1954). Various scales and instruments have been developed to measure ego strength. Ego impairment, or the disruption in the ability to differentiate between self and other, is associated with poorer overall functioning, such that individuals with high levels of ego impairment also demonstrate lower levels of personality functioning (Weissman & Ritter, 1970).

One instrument used to measure ego impairment is the Ego Impairment Index (EII-3) of the Rorschach Inkblot Test. This scale measures the ability to accurately perceive others, the presence of cognitive processing mistakes, problematic vs. adaptive representations of others, and tendencies to perceive problematic imagery in the world (poor form quality, WSum6, Human representation variables, critical content of human representations, respectively; Viglione

et al., 2011). We aim to use the Rorschach Inkblot Test to reveal unconscious personality organization and pathology indices related to NOF functioning, introjection, and mentalization.

The Rorschach is particularly useful in measuring unconscious processes because it is not a self-report measure; rather, it is a projective psychological test. The Rorschach test utilizes purposefully vague stimuli onto which participants must "project" and locate aspects of their internal experience onto the cards, helping assessors to understand their psychological worlds (Wagner, 1999). For example, an individual who sees the inkblots as threatening or aggressive is likely to experience the world and other people as persecutory, whereas someone who sees comforting and loving interactions between individuals in the same blots may have a much more trusting and psychologically healthy worldview. While the Rorschach has demonstrated validity, reliability, norms, and standardization comparable to objective personality measures (Weiner, 2001), we believe its projective nature and low face validity offer unique insight into unconscious personality structures. Further, the quality of the Name of the Father construct holds implications for interpersonal relationships, representations of others, reactivity to stress, and perceptual or thinking problems—constructs that are easily measured using the Rorschach.

Proposed Model

The current study examines the role of the self/other boundary in facilitating psychological organization and protecting against psychopathology. Few psychoanalytic theories have detailed the importance of father representations in early development, and fewer have focused on the self/other distinction as indicated by the Name of the Father construct. We aim to establish an empirical methodology for measuring Name of the Father (NOF) construct. Due to NOF's abstract nature, it is impossible to observe directly. Because of this, we have

approximated the NOF function using a group of variables that we believe serve as appropriate measures of its function; this method is known in statistics as a *latent construct*.

To our knowledge, this would be the first study to introduce empirical and statistically testable methodology in examining Lacanian theoretical constructs. Our study is also one of the first to utilize virtual administration of the Rorschach Inkblot Test. Results would establish a novel connection among Lacan's, Freud's, and Fonagy's theories and determine how they relate to ego functioning.

We hope to determine whether the Name of the Father construct, understood as the way an individual uses language in response to metaphorical and existential questions, is related to ego functioning. We believe that the relationship between NOF and ego functioning will be explained through a double mediational model through paternal introjection and mentalization. In plainer language, mental representations of the other (paternal introjection) and the understanding of others' states of mind (mentalization) will explain a significant amount of variance in the relationship between NOF and ego functioning. Understanding how language use may reflect both internalized relational models and overall psychological functioning may provide accessible and practical explanations of commonly observed clinical phenomena.

Study Aims and Hypotheses

Although Lacan asserted that the unconscious is structured by and expressed through language (and specific linguistic signifiers), no studies to date have attempted to operationally define and measure the Name of the Father construct through language use, nor have any studies sought to link the Name of the Father construct to adult ego functioning. We aimed to demonstrate that NOF functioning indirectly predicts ego functioning via the capacity for object introjection and mentalization.

We hypothesized that Name of the Father functioning would be identifiable in natural language use as a latent construct comprised of verbal immediacy in response to metaphorical and existential questions (Hypothesis 1). We predicted that NOF would not be directly observable, as this construct is complex and operates at the level of the unconscious. Instead, we can infer its presence by approximation via linguistic indicators. We also predicted that the latent NOF construct would predict the capacity to introject relationships with others (the paternal introject) as measured by the Father Presence Questionnaire (FPQ). In response to contextual interpretations of NOF, the current study conceptualized "fathers" as any intervening presence in the subject's early enmeshed relationships, regardless of gender identity or expression. We therefore hypothesized that individuals with higher NOF functioning would demonstrate higher scores on the FPQ (Hypothesis 2). After examining the link between NOF functioning and introjection, we further hypothesized that the paternal introject (FPQ) would predict mentalization abilities as measured by the Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ), such that individuals with greater capacity for introjection would also demonstrate a greater capacity to mentalize (Hypothesis 3). Finally, we asserted that mentalization (RFQ) would predict Rorschach Performance Assessment System (R-PAS) scores reflecting stronger ego functioning, such that individuals with greater capacities to mentalize would score lower on measures of ego impairment, indicating more robust psychological health (Hypothesis 4).

CHAPTER 2 – METHOD

Participants

We recruited 54 participants from psychology courses at a large public university in the Southeastern United States. Individuals were eligible to participate if they were at least 18 years of age and fluent in English. Data were excluded from four participants due to severe problems with internet connectivity that may have influenced responses and instances of noncompliance with study protocols, leaving a total of $N = 50$ for the current study. Participants demonstrated a mean age of $M_{age} = 19.18$, $SD_{age} = 2.396$; 86% ($n = 43$) of study participants identified as Caucasian, 8% ($n = 4$) identified as African American, 8% ($n = 4$) identified as Asian American, and 4% ($n = 2$) identified as Hispanic. Regarding gender identity, 76% ($n = 38$) of participants identified as Female, 22% ($n = 11$) identified as Male, and 2% ($n = 1$) identified as gender non-binary. In observance of social distancing recommendations and COVID-19 restrictions, all data was collected via HIPAA-compliant Zoom and online questionnaires. The university's Institutional Review Board approved all study procedures.

Measures

Name of the Father

The Name of the Father Linguistic Questionnaire (NOFQ) is a four-item measure designed for the current study to examine verbal-linguistic ability. Researchers selected two existential questions (i.e., "Who are you?" and "What do you want?") in line with ideas posited by Ribolsi, Feyaerts, and Vanheule (2015), who suggested that individuals who lack the NOF function become psychotically disorganized upon the presentation of these questions due to an overall inability to symbolize the self. This disorganization is reflected in verbal indices such as

the use of neologisms, using words or phrases outside of commonly acknowledged definitions, and other "autonymic" speech patterns.

The second two questions ("What comes to mind when someone says things are looking up for them?" and "What comes to mind when someone says they are down in the dumps?") were informed by Downing's (2018), Fink's (2009), Ribolsi, Feyaerts, and Vanheule's (2015), and Voruz's (2000) work, which proposed that NOF function, or a symbolic understanding of reality, may be tested via understanding and proper use of metaphor in speech. As noted above, decreased understanding of and facility with metaphor indicates increased psychotic and non-reality-based internal experiences.

Participants' responses to the NOFQ were transcribed and analyzed using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996, 1999) software. LIWC allows for the examination of language use in samples of spoken and written text by counting words in different structural and content-based categories (e.g., first-person pronouns, adverbs, negative/positive emotion words, etc.). Studies utilizing LIWC have demonstrated links between the use of emotion and insight words and physiological health after traumatic experiences (e.g., Pennebaker, 1993; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996), while others have shown that overall word count and negating words were predictive of adult attachment representations (Cassidy, Sherman, & Jones, 2012). The present study examined *verbal immediacy*, a linguistic metric connected to stress responses, attachment, and psychological health, as an indicator of NOF functioning (Lee et al., 2011). Verbal immediacy is a composite variable consisting of frequency counts of first-person singular pronouns (I, me, my), discrepancy words (e.g., would, could, should), and present tense verbs, as well as inversed frequencies for articles (a, the), and words with more than six letters (Pennebaker & King, 1999).

Paternal Introjection

The Father Presence Questionnaire (FPQ; Krampe, 2003) is a 134-item self-report scale designed to measure individuals' perceptions of relationships with father figures, rated on a five-point Likert scale from "never" to "always." The items in this questionnaire are grouped into ten subscales (Feelings about the Father, Mother's Support for Relationship with Father, Perception of the Father's Involvement, Physical Relationship with the Father, Father-Mother Relationship, Conceptions of God as Father, Conceptions of Father's Influence, Mother's Relationship with Her Father (positively slanted items), Mother's Relationship with Her Father (negatively slanted items), and Father's Relationship with His Father). These ten subscales are then combined into three higher-order variables: Relationship with the Father (Feelings about the Father, Mother's Support for Relationship with Father, Perception of Father's Involvement, Physical Relationship with Father, and Father-Mother Relationship), Beliefs About the Father (Conceptions of God as Father and Conceptions of Father's Influence), and Intergenerational Family Influences (Mother's Relationship with Her Father [positive and negative scales] and Father's Relationship with His Father).

The present study utilized the Feelings about the Father, Perceptions of Father's Involvement, and Conceptions of Father's Influence subscales, as these represent the highest loading factors in the FPQ (loadings at $\lambda = .92$, .98, and .82, respectively) and because the items of these scales most accurately represent individuals' feelings about a dyadic and symbolic relationship with a father figure. The Feelings about the Father subscale includes items like "I feel/felt close to my father" and "I want to be like my father." The Perceptions of Father's Involvement subscale includes items such as "My father helped me learn new things" and "My father taught me right from wrong." The Conceptions of Father subscale includes items like

"Girls/boys need their father" and "Fathers affect their sons' and daughters' moral values or behavior." With these three subscales, the revised questionnaire is a 14-item scale. All subscales demonstrate excellent reliability (all $\lambda > .90$).

Mentalization

The Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (RFQ; Fonagy et al., 2016) is a 46-item questionnaire designed to indicate individuals' capacities for understanding their emotional states and those of others (known as reflective functioning or mentalization). Items are rated on a six-point Likert scale from 0, "Strongly disagree," to 5, "Strongly agree." Items on this scale include, "I realize that I can sometimes misunderstand my best friends' reactions" and "I usually know exactly what other people are thinking." This scale demonstrates acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .75$). The RFQ yields scores on two different subscales of mentalization: certainty and uncertainty. High scores on the certainty subscale indicate that an individual is excessively thinking about their own or others' mental states such that they may feel overly certain without supporting evidence. In contrast, high scores on the uncertainty subscale suggest an incapacity to understand the complexity of the mental states of self and other (Fonagy et al., 2016).

Personality Functioning

The Rorschach Inkblot Test (Rorschach, 1921; Beck, 1944; R-PAS; Meyer et al., 2011) is a projective assessment instrument designed to examine an individual's affective, cognitive, and interpersonal functioning. The assessment consists of two phases. In the first phase, the assessor presents the participant with ten ambiguous inkblots, one at a time, asking the participant to give two to three responses to the question, "What might this be?" In the second phase, responses are reviewed with the participant for the assessor to understand where they saw their response and what about the inkblot that made it look this way to them. The assessor transcribes the

participant's responses verbatim as they speak and then codes each transcription using the Rorschach Performance Assessment System (R-PAS). The Rorschach is especially useful in measuring Engagement and Cognitive Processing, Perception and Thinking Problems, Stress and Distress, and Self and Other Representations.

The present study focused on one R-PAS variable, the Ego Impairment Index (EII-3; Viglione et al., 2003a), as the dependent variable. Stokes and colleagues (2003) demonstrated that this subscale of the RPAS has considerable validity in adults and children. It is considered a representation of thought disturbances or perception and thinking problems, and it contains five Rorschach constructs that load onto the same item (Perry & Viglione, 1991; Perry, Viglione, & Braff, 1992): distortions in perception (FQ-), cognitive processing errors (WSum6), tendencies toward maladaptive representations of others (Good and Poor Human Representation variables: HRV), problematic imagery (e.g., aggressive movement, anatomy, blood, fire, morbid content), and distorted understandings of human action (M-). Since the EII-3 scale considers five different elements of ego functioning, we believe this may be the best representation of the Rorschach's Perception and Thinking Problems section.

Study Procedures

Participants completed all study procedures via a HIPAA-compliant Zoom room/platform. To obtain an accurate speech sample for linguistic analysis, we voice-recorded participants as they responded to prompts related to the differentiation between self and other. Language samples were transcribed and analyzed for verbal immediacy using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007). Researchers then provided a link through the Zoom "chat" function to the study questionnaires via a HIPAA-compliant survey

platform (Qualtrics). Participants completed the Father Presence Questionnaire (FPQ) and answered questions about demographic information online.

Participants then completed the Rorschach Performance Assessment System to measure personality functioning. Participants completed the Rorschach face-to-face over Zoom with the researcher, following R-PAS remote administration guidelines (Meyer et al., 2020). We asked each participant to describe what they saw in each of 10 inkblot images and explain what aspects of the inkblots made up the image they perceived. Participants' interpretations of these images allowed researchers to understand how they view themselves and their relationships, which the current study examines as an outcome variable. Preliminary data suggested no differences in participant engagement and scoring outcomes when comparing in-person and remote R-PAS administration (Ales et al., 2022). Rorschach protocols were double-coded by an author certified in R-PAS administration, coding, and interpretation to ensure the validity of study results.

Data Analytic Strategy

Data were cleaned to ensure that all participants were over 18 and fluent in English and that any cases with major methodological discrepancies (e.g., researchers not following protocol or poor internet connection) were excluded from final data analyses. In addition, we evaluated correlational matrices between key study variables using SPSS. After data collection, we transcribed NOF responses from Zoom recordings and analyzed the transcriptions using Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007). We utilized LIWC to examine speech samples for verbal immediacy (percentage of simple sentences, frequency of first-person singular pronoun use, discrepancy words like should or could, article use, and inverse scores of words with more than six letters). Recent research has demonstrated that more

frequent use of these aspects of speech is associated with higher severity of psychopathology (Biber, 1988; Lee et al., 2011; Hitczenko, Mittal, and Goldrick, 2021).

Initial data analyses on each of the four speech samples (per participant) produced frequency counts for each question; we performed Cronbach's alpha tests for each linguistic category among questions of the NOFQ to determine whether the NOFQ items were internally valid and therefore constituted a concise scale. We also conducted between-samples t-tests to determine whether there were differences in LIWC frequencies between questions. Our estimation of the effect of NOF functioning was then identified in Mplus as a latent construct by verbal immediacy. The paternal introject, constituted of three subscales, and mentalization, which is constituted of two subscales, were each identified in Mplus as latent constructs within the double mediational model.

We conducted the first analysis of the study in Mplus; it consisted of a one-way ANOVA, utilizing the Name of the Father concept as the independent variable and ego impairment (as measured by the Rorschach) as the dependent variable. We tested for mediations between NOF and ego impairment by the paternal introject and mentalization (see Figure 1). We hypothesized that there would be a partial mediation effect of the paternal introject and mentalization in the relation between NOF and ego impairment.

CHAPTER 3 – RESULTS

We analyzed responses from 50 individuals to test the proposed hypotheses. Readers can find average scores and standard deviations in Table 1. All variables fell within acceptable ranges for skewness and kurtosis. Table 1 reflects the means and standard deviations of key study variables. We used Pearson correlations to assess associations between key study variables and to identify relevant covariates. Significant correlations are noted in Table 2.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that Name of the Father as a latent construct would be identified in verbal immediacy in the four questions posed to participants. We conducted Cronbach's alpha tests to examine the reliability of each NOFQ question's verbal immediacy scores. The reliability for all four NOF questions together was poor (Cronbach's α = .396). However, the measure demonstrated acceptable reliability between the two metaphor questions by themselves (Cronbach's α = .667) and the two existential questions by themselves (Cronbach's α = .666).

Next, we examined latent constructs in key study variables, including the Name of the Father (metaphor and existential verbal immediacy scores), the paternal introject (defined by three subscales of the Father Presence Questionnaire), and mentalization (defined by certainty and uncertainty subscales of the Reflective Functioning Questionnaire). As a latent construct, only the metaphor questions loaded onto NOF (λ_{Q1} = .128, SE_{Q1} = .293, p > .05; λ_{Q2} = .189, SE_{Q2} = 0.248, p > .05; λ_{Q3} = 0.776, SE_{Q3} = 0.328, p < .05; λ_{Q4} = 0.427, SE_{Q4} = 0.208, p < .05). When examining the paternal introject latent construct, the Feelings about the Father subscale and the Perceptions of the Father's Involvement subscale loaded significantly onto the Father Presence Questionnaire (λ_{FAF} = 1.587, SE_{FAF} = 0.434 p < .01; λ_{POF} = .563 SE_{POF} = 0.197, p < .01). The Conceptions of Father's Influence subscale did not load significantly onto the Father Presence Questionnaire (λ_{COF} = -0.068, SE_{COF} = 0.139, p > .05). Concerning the mentalization construct,

both the Certainty (λ_{RFc} = 1.025, SE_{RFc} = 0.429, $p < .05$) and Uncertainty subscales loaded significantly onto mentalization as a latent variable (λ_{RFu} = -0.724, SE_{RFu} = 0.210, $p < .01$). See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the proposed model.

To test the proposed double mediation, we constructed the model via Mplus (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2011). We utilized a bootstrapping technique at this stage to generate a 10,000 resample estimation. Hayes and Preacher (2010) have demonstrated this bootstrapping method as an appropriate measure of mediation effects. We utilized family income as a covariate due to its high correlation with all key variables. Results did not indicate a significant mediation between verbal immediacy scores for metaphor questions, latent paternal introject, mentalization as a latent construct, and the Ego Impairment Scale of the Rorschach. Specifically, verbal immediacy was not related to the paternal introject as a latent construct (*a* path; ß = -0.164, *SE* = 0.184, $p > .05$). The paternal introject was not significantly associated with the mentalization latent variable (*d* path; ß = 0.016, *SE* = 0.190, $p > .05$), and mentalization as a latent construct was not associated with the Ego Impairment Index of the Rorschach (*b* path; ß = -0.203, *SE* = 0.683, $p > .05$). Results also did not indicate a significant direct association between Name of the Father as a latent construct and Ego Impairment Index (*c'* path; ß = 0.496, *SE* = 0.812, $p > .05$). Findings are detailed in Table 3.

Exploratory Analyses

Because the existential questions did not load onto NOF and Father Presence was not supported by the model, we ran a simple mediation analysis using the Process (Hayes & Little, 2018) macro for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS; IBM Corp, 2017). Verbal immediacy for the metaphor questions served as the independent variable; we entered the certainty and uncertainty constructs of the mentalization measure as mediator variables in the

model and the Ego Impairment Index as the dependent variable. See Figure 2 for a visual representation of this model.

Due to its high correlation with all key study variables, we used family income as a covariate. While results did not indicate a mediation between the variables for certainty (*ab* path; *ß* = -0.012, *SE* = 0.012, *p* > .05) or uncertainty (*ab* path; *ß* = -0.007, SE = 0.018, *p* > .05) results did indicate that verbal immediacy, elicited through understanding of metaphor, predicted certainty (*a* path; *ß* = 0.864, *SE* = 0.259, *p* = .0018) and Ego Impairment (*c'* path; *ß* = 0.046, *SE* = 0.022, p = .045). Tables 4 and 5 detail these findings, and a visual representation can be found in Figure 3.

CHAPTER 4 – DISCUSSION

Generations of psychoanalytic psychologists have attempted to explain the processes by which human beings develop psychological structures. However, many theories remain abstract without any attempts at empirical validation. The present study attempted to measure one such theory, Jacques Lacan's "Name of the Father" function, through the lens of linguistic analysis. We then sought to determine its relation to psychological introjection, mentalization, and ego functioning in a double mediational model. Results supported the linguistic definition of NOF through responses to metaphor. We also found a direct effect between NOF and certainty about the mental states of self and other (mentalization) and a direct effect between NOF and ego impairment.

Our primary finding was that the Name of the Father function can be identified by verbal immediacy in response to metaphorical questions. Existential questions, however, did not explain a significant amount of the variance; that is, participants' verbal immediacy scores across the existential questions were not similar enough to create a coherent variable. Verbal immediacy in response to metaphorical questions, however, did. Theorists have asserted that existential questions may bring linguistic indications of psychotic functioning to the fore because of poor Name of the Father functioning (e.g., Ribolsi et al., 2015). The current findings, however, suggest that may not be the case. We believe this finding establishes metaphor as a more robust indicator of Lacan's Name of the Father theory.

Lacan oriented NOF as the function that allows individuals to engage with all symbolic material. Fink (1999) noted that even the idea of the "father" in the NOF function is a symbol for the entity which impedes the child's sense of complete enmeshment with the external world. This separation of self and other allows us to understand the world symbolically rather than

literally (Fink, 1999). It is, therefore, likely that participants' verbal responses to metaphorical questions indicate their level of NOF functioning. We believe the current study captured one potential empirical method to assess NOF.

We hypothesized that the paternal introject and mentalization would mediate the path between NOF and ego functioning. However, our results did not support this hypothesis. In addition, participants' responses across the three subscales of the Father Presence Questionnaire did not produce a valid scale for the paternal introject construct. Because of this poor factor loading, we were unable to use the paternal introject variable in the hypothesized model. Still, we must consider whether our methodological approach aptly captured the paternal introject in the first place.

It is well-documented that the Name of the Father is not related to literal fathers but rather their symbolic stance within the infant's internal world (Sullivan, 1978). Perhaps our assessment of participants' conceptions, feelings, and understandings of father figures did not contribute significantly to the model because our assessments of the paternal introject were still too literal. In contrast, mentalization and ego functioning represent better sequelae of NOF functioning; both constructs require the primary establishment of a self/other boundary to facilitate their functioning later in development. It may be that this mediating step of the paternal introject is unnecessary in understanding the effect of NOF functioning on mentalization and ego strength.

The next finding of note is that the certainty subscale of the Reflective Functioning Questionnaire better-defined mentalization than the uncertainty subscale. This aligns with the view that certainty about others' minds is related to misunderstandings of reality (Fink, 1999). For example, Cook and colleagues (2010) found that greater self-certainty, an indicator of poorer

psychological insight, predicted poorer executive functioning among individuals with psychotic disorders. A later meta-analysis found that those with at risk for psychosis demonstrated markedly higher self-certainty scores than nonclinical comparison groups (Dondé, 2021).

While the Reflective Functioning Questionnaire often relies on both certainty and uncertainty subscales to measure mentalization capacity, it may be that our results tell a story of psychotic phenomena in which poor Name of the Father functioning leads to a heightened and unrealistic certainty about others' minds. Still, further research with larger participant pools is needed to confirm this finding.

The current study is the first to our knowledge to relate linguistic indicators of psychological functioning to the Rorschach. In line with our original hypotheses, we found a significant main effect between Name of the Father functioning and the ego impairment index of the R-PAS scoring system for the Rorschach, such that individuals with greater verbal immediacy in response to metaphor demonstrated higher scores on the Ego Impairment Index. This finding supports the assertion that individuals with weak boundaries between self and other demonstrate fragile psychological organization, which in extreme cases can manifest clinically as symptoms of psychosis (Schafer, 1954; Weissman & Ritter, 1970).

Still, we did not find a significant main effect of mentalization on ego functioning nor a significant mediation between NOF and ego functioning through mentalization. Given the strong theoretical support for this association as well as the demonstrated direct effects between these variables, it may be that our sample size was too small to support the increased variance inherent in mediational tests. It will be important to address this and other methodological limitations in future iterations of the current study design.

Study Limitations

While the present study constitutes a meaningful contribution to the operationalization and understanding of Lacan's Name of the Father and its relation to other psychological constructs, it is not without its limitations. First, the abstract nature of the Name of the Father made it difficult to conceptualize as an empirical construct. As such, our measurement of NOF approximates its function rather than directly operationalizing it. Our linguistic measure of experiential connectedness in response to metaphor captures NOF functioning as it is understood by modern theorists (Vanheule, 2017). Considering that our study is the first to operationalize the Name of the Father in any empirical context, our methodological approach may be further refined in future studies. Doing so may allow us to pinpoint NOF's function more accurately.

To our knowledge, our study is also the first to investigate mentalization as a mediator between verbal immediacy and ego functioning. However, theories other than NOF may account for verbal immediacy's tie to mentalization. While no studies have explicitly linked verbal immediacy with mentalization, previous research has found connections between verbal immediacy and secure attachment among children (Borelli et al., 2011). Given the existing literature relating secure attachment to mentalization capacity (e.g., Slade, 2005), it is possible that attachment theory could explain the link between verbal immediacy and mentalization. However, this does not account for the unique contribution of metaphor in participants' verbal immediacy responses. It may be beneficial for future investigations to include attachment security as a covariate in statistical analyses to isolate the theoretical underpinnings of the relationship between immediacy and mentalization.

In addition, previous clinical studies have demonstrated a link between mentalization and ego strength among individuals with borderline personality disorder (Einy, 2019). This study stands among those positing the same link (Fonagy et al., 2018). Still, these studies have not

provided a strong theoretical explanation of the link between mentalization and ego strength. While the current study did not find a significant link between mentalization and ego impairment, we believe Lacan's Name of the Father offers a unique explanation of the development of psychological structure, which sets a foundation for mentalization capacity and subsequent ego strength.

The current study was limited by its small sample size and demographic makeup. Because the intensive nature of the data collection limited the number of individuals in our participant pool, the power of our statistical analyses was limited. Also, our participant pool was recruited through undergraduate psychology classes. This convenience sampling method may have limited our results' external validity. Future replications of the current study may benefit from recruiting larger and more diverse samples to maximize the statistical power and generalizability of results.

Finally, due to COVID-19, investigators were forced to complete all study procedures via HIPAA-compliant virtual platforms. Because of this, participant interactions were sometimes affected by poor internet connections or distractions in participants' surrounding environments. Subsequent replications of this study would be strengthened by in-person data collection to negate these complicating factors.

Research and Clinical Implications

Despite its limitations, this study constitutes a promising contribution to the psychoanalytic research literature. The Name of the Father is a theory that had previously never been studied empirically. As such, these findings may help to establish a line of investigation of NOF as an empirical construct. We hope that this definition of Lacan's theory, which had

previously been abstract, may help to make it more accessible to researchers and clinicians alike.

From a research perspective, the current study opens the door to future investigations using Lacanian concepts to explain psychological phenomena. While Lacanian theorists often argue that these theories do not have a place in empirical study (Schwartz, 2009), we believe that they offer unique perspectives on the development and maintenance of psychopathology, which adds to the psychoanalytic knowledge base. Results also support the use of linguistic analysis to study Lacan's theories, aligning with Lacan's deceptively simple maxim that "the unconscious is structured like a language" (Gasperoni, 1996). We hope to continue this line of research to explore the linguistic nuances of Lacanian theory further, adding to the psychoanalytic literature while also working to introduce a new empirical perspective to these concepts.

Further, we believe that our operationalization of NOF through metaphor and language will further contribute to its utility. The Oedipal conflict and its clinical sequelae are well-documented from myriad psychoanalytic perspectives (Britton, Feldman, & O'Shaughnessy, 1989; Klein, 1932). We are unaware of studies highlighting the importance of specific and unconscious language use relating to the Oedipal conflict. Focusing on patients' language use, specifically their linguistic reactions to metaphor, may help clinicians conceptualize their capacities for relationships and overall psychological health. Metaphor is a frequently employed and often critical component of psychotherapy that allows the clinician and the patient to understand the emotional dynamics, or *transference,* of the therapeutic relationship (Cohen, 1980). Symbolization allows that which is held within the unconscious to come under the light of conscious examination through therapeutic interpretations. Therefore, focusing on patients' reactions to metaphor in clinical contexts may signal the quality of their internal worlds, and by

extension, their overall personality functioning. The ability to tolerate and use metaphor may indicate greater psychological health (Cohen, 1980).

Although we did not find a significant mediation between NOF and ego impairment through the paternal introject and mentalization, we believe that this model introduces a novel perspective to the understanding of psychological development and the primary introduction of psychological structure. If future replications of this study with more robust sampling do reach statistical significance, results will support a developmental link between the establishment of proper psychological boundaries, which may allow individuals to establish meaningful relationships, leading to better understandings of the self and other, and finally, better overall psychological health.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Key Study Variables

Variable	*M*	SD
Age	19.18	2.40
Name of the Father		
Verbal Immediacy-Existential	206.10	7.71
Verbal Immediacy-Metaphor	196.73	3.72
Verbal Immediacy-Question 1	202.18	11.23
Verbal Immediacy-Question 2	208.47	7.83
Verbal Immediacy-Question 3	195.66	4.80
Verbal Immediacy-Question 4	197.79	4.40
Verbal Immediacy-All Questions	201.18	3.44
Rorschach		
Ego Impairment Index-3	1.73	1.46
Reflective Functioning Questionnaire		
Reflective Functioning-Certainty	10.98	7.38
Reflective Functioning-Uncertainty	8.19	5.00
Father Presence Questionnaire		
Concepts of the Father	3.98	0.58
Feelings About the Father	3.75	1.15
Perceptions of the Father	3.76	1.05

Table 2

Correlations Between Key Study Variables

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Family Income	-.128	-.018	-.108	-.019	-.082	-.044	-.141	.016	-.338*	-.322*	-.329*	-.300*	.083
2. Total NOF Immediacy	-	.761**	.507**	.745**	.644**	.462**	.330*	-.224	-.182	-.182	.153	-.149	.134
3. NOF Existential Immediacy	-	-	-.110	.805**	.908**	-.025	-.196	.110	.049	.054	-.068	-.005	-.048
4. NOF Metaphor Immediacy	-	-	-	.092	-.170	.835**	.787**	-.191	-.234	-.195	.388**	-.232	.319*
5. NOFQ1 Immediacy	-	-	-	-	.531**	.228	-.121	-.134	-.043	-.041	.078	-.015	.041
6. NOFQ2 Immediacy	-	-	-	-	-	-.118	-.198	-.136	.031	.035	-.159	-.013	-.119
7. NOFQ3 Immediacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	.324*	-.255	-.203	-.109	.412**	-.327*	.259
8. NOFQ4 Immediacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.033	-.193	-.229	.227	-.050	.258
9. Conceptions of the Father	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.004	.077	-.069	.036	-.113
10. Feelings About the Father	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.894**	-.016	.132	.054
11. Perceptions of the Father	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.078	.033	-.026
12. Reflective Functioning Certainty	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.741**	.029
13. Reflective Functioning Uncertainty	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.003
14. Ego Impairment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 3

Estimated Model Effects of Name of the Father, Father Presence, Reflective Functioning, and Ego Impairment

Predictor	*ß*	*SE*	Bootstrap 95% confidence interval
Effect of Name of the Father on Father Presence (path a_1)	-.164**	.183	[-0.410, 0.209]
Effect of Father Presence on Reflective Functioning (path d)	.016	.190	[-0.372, 0.219]
Effect of Reflective Functioning on Ego Impairment (path b)	-.203	.708	[-0.880, 0.458]
Direct Effect of Name of the Father on Ego Impairment (path c')	.496	.593	[-0.112, 1.524]
Mediation via Father Presence (path a1b1)	-.019	.402	[-0.168, 0.103]
Mediation via Reflective Functioning (path a2b2)	-.158	.939	[-1.212, 0.165]
Mediation via Father Presence and Reflective Functioning (path a1d1b2)	.001	.293	[-0.054, 0.062]
Total Mediation (path a1b1 + a2b2 + a1d1b2)	-.176	1.01	[-0.868, 0.274]
Total effect of Ego Impairment on Name of the Father (path a1b1 + a2b2 + a1d1b2 path + c')	.541	.288	[0.067, 0.946]

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4

Mediation of Reflective Functioning Certainty between Name of the Father and Ego Impairment

Predictor	*ß*	*SE*	Bootstrap 95% confidence interval
Effect of Name of the Father on Reflective Functioning Certainty (path a)	0.807**	0.257	[0.290, 1.32]
Effect of Reflective Functioning Certainty on Ego Impairment (path b)	-0.037	0.033	[-0.102, 0.029]
Direct Effect of Name of the Father on Ego Impairment (path c')	0.143*	0.062	[0.019, 0.247]
Mediation via Reflective Functioning Certainty (path ab)	-0.030	0.034	[-0.09, 0.045]

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

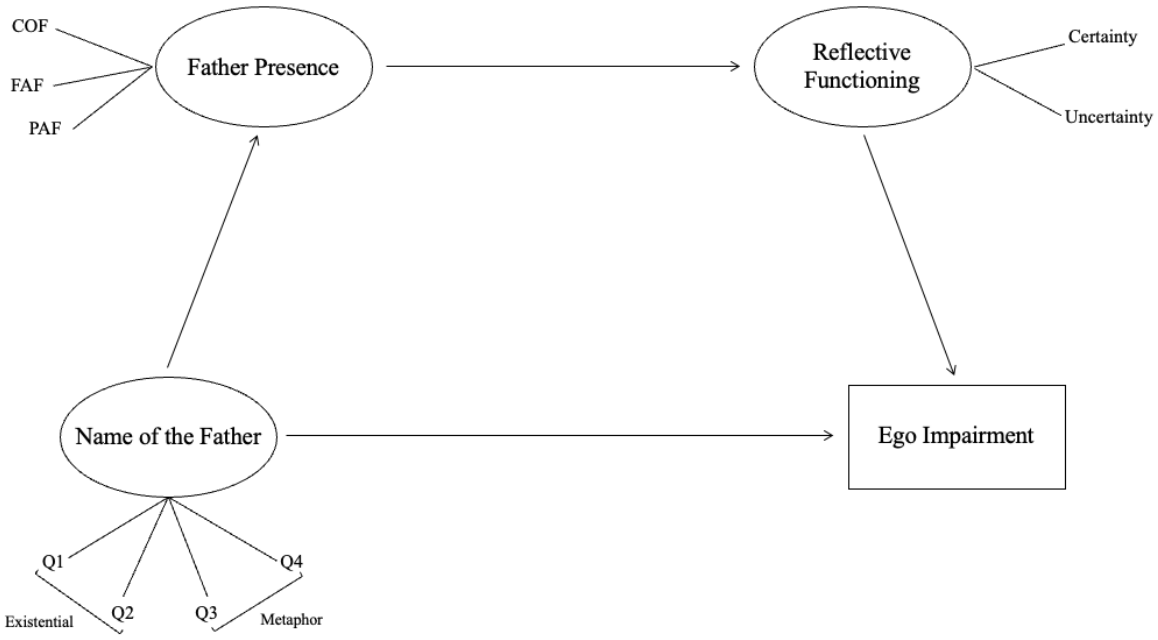

Figure 1.

Proposed Double Mediational Model with Latent Construct

Note. A double-mediational model testing indirect effects leading from latent Name of the Father to ego impairment via latent father presence and latent reflective functioning.

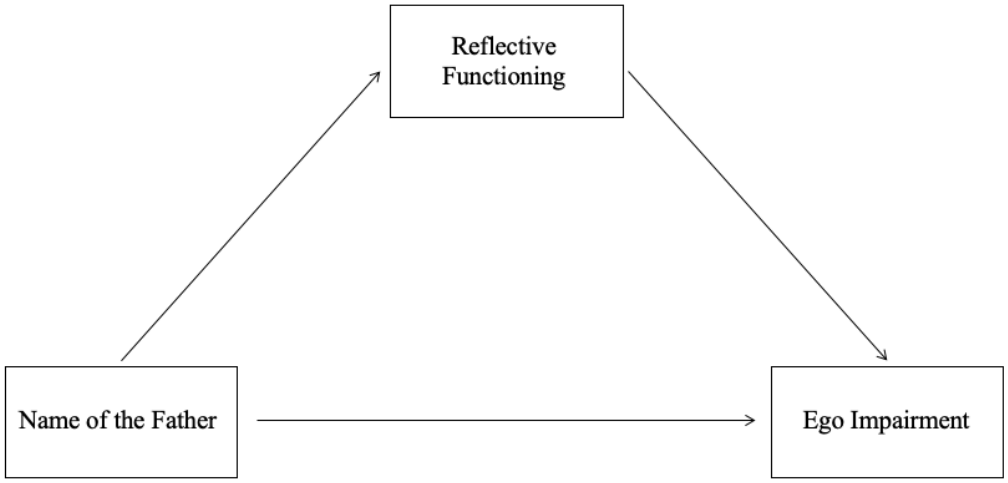

Figure 2.

Proposed Mediational Model

Note. A mediational model testing the indirect of Name of the Father to ego impairment via reflective functioning.

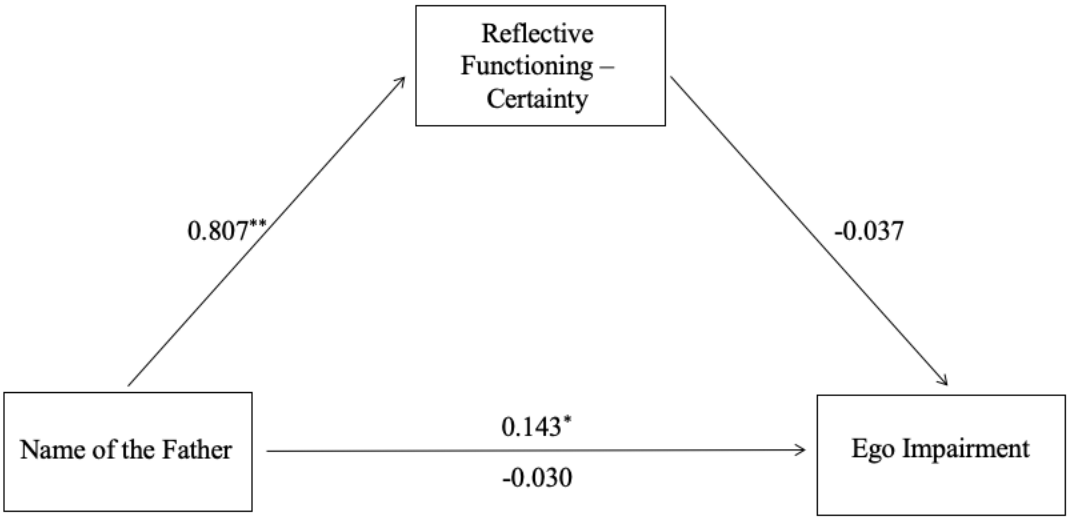

Figure 3

The Indirect Effect of NOF to Ego Impairment via Reflective Functioning Certainty

Note. Name of the Father has significant direct effects on reflective functioning certainty and ego impairment.

VITA

Chloe Tess Cohen is a Clinical Psychology doctoral candidate at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She graduated from Pitzer College in 2017 where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, with a minor in Biology. Chloe was admitted to the doctoral program at the University of Tennessee in 2019 and earned her Master of Arts Degree in Clinical Psychology from UT in 2020. Her research interests include metaphor use, understandings of the self/other boundary, projective measurement, and clinical indicators of ego strength and defensive functioning.