

## Object Relations Paper

Assessment: During my senior year of high school, I was faced with the decision to stay home for college by accepting admission to a university in New York City that I could commute to via public transportation, or to move away from home by accepting admission to Boston University. I started to experience what some may label as “senioritis,” staying up late watching television dramas and neglecting my schoolwork, signing in for attendance only to skip class. My poor grades reflected by negligent attitude and behavior. Concerned by my uncharacteristic performance that could cause colleges to revoke my admissions, my guidance counselor scheduled a meeting with my parents and me. At the meeting, my parents sat tensely as they listened and their responses to her prompts were terse. As soon as we returned home, an intense argument between my parents erupted as was standard. My mother berated my father for his militant, distant approach to parenting as the cause of my diminishing performance, while my father blamed my mother for her overprotective, “helicopter mom” approach. While I never met my maternal grandfather due to his passing before I was born, my aunts and uncles described him as a reserved and reticent man that only spoke to rebuke them for misbehaving. My maternal grandmother suffered a number of miscarriages after the birth of her first three daughters, so the survival of the first son, my father, was significant. My father described his mom as attentive and loving but found her to be smothering when tried to be more independent. Resenting these attributes of their respective parent, my mother split off reticence and my father split off overbearance. A common pattern in their marital relationship formed where my mother monitored my father’s whereabouts, which would make him feel controlled. He, in turn, would withdraw by taking on more overtime at work or fellowshipping at church and giving her the cold shoulder at home. By projecting the split-off attributes of themselves into each other, my father and mother embodied the parts of each other that they repressed.

Goals: To increase my father and mother’s awareness of aspects of themselves that were split and repressed to decrease interactional pattern based on projective identifications.

Interventions: In the first stage of object relations therapy, I would inquire and listen to my mother and father’s story and empathize with them both respectively. Demonstrating empathy can open up each person to hear my revelation and interpretation of his/her unconscious defenses linked to split off parts. For my mother and father to address their marital conflict, each partner must recognize and acknowledge that it is not each other’s parenting approach that they’re averse to, but their own repressed, split off impulses that they project onto each other. The objective is to make what is unconscious in both partners conscious by making a connection between their current experiences of each other to their own child-parent experience. As an object relations therapist, I would present my interpretation in a safe holding environment (i.e. “When you feel controlled by your wife, you act independently to avoid being smothered like your mother made you feel as a child. It seems to me like your withdrawal serves to exert power over your wife.”).