Mourning the Loss of "Self as Father": A Longitudinal Study of Fatherhood Among the Druze

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IT is within the context of the parent–child relationship—through the processes of attachment, loss, separation and individuation—that we grow and develop interpersonally and intrapsychically (Bowlby 1969, 1980; Mahler et al. 1975; Pollock, 1989). Most developmentalists agree that changes in the parent–child relationship continue to influence both parents and children throughout the life cycle (Cohen et al. 1984; Colarusso and Nemiroff 1982). While there is a vast body of literature devoted to discussing changes that occur in the parent–child relationship during the "formative years," little has been written about what happens to that relationship after the children leave home to start families of their own. Moreover, most researchers investigate the processes of attachment, loss, separation and individuation in terms of the child's development. Little is known about how the child's quest for independence affects the psychological development of his/her parents. Those writers who have addressed the issue of individuation in later life tend to focus on the adult child's continuing struggle to separate and individuate from his/her real or imagined parents (Levinson, 1978).

In this study, rather than focus on the psychological impact of separation and loss on the adult child, who moves away from the parent in his/her quest for independence, we have chosen to study the impact of the adult child's independence on the aging father, whose adult life has been largely devoted to providing for his children. This paper describes changes in how Druze men experience the father–son relationship as they move from the "prelaunch" to the "postlaunch" stage of parenthood. We identify and analyze developmentally based changes in how Druze men remember their own fathers and discuss their sons. We present research results that suggest that as Druze men enter "postparenthood," they pass through a transitional phase in which they mourn the loss of the "self as father." We discuss the significance of this finding in terms of the succession of losses endured as part of the normal developmental process.

This paper is divided into four sections. Section one reviews the literature on changes in parent–child relatedness

across the adult life cycle; section two describes our subjects and methods; section three outlines our hypotheses and empirical findings; section four addresses the theoretical relevance of the findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Parental Imperative

Gutmann (1985) has argued that the major developmental shifts that occur throughout the adult life cycle are largely related to the experience of parenthood. The transformations of adulthood are best understood in terms of what happens when children arrive, what happens as they grow up, and what happens when they leave to start families of their own. Gutmann (1975) writes:

. . . parenthood, as a vital species activity, and as a period of chronic emergency, exercises a pivotal and controlling role over the entire life span, shaping the events that precede the onset of parenthood, as well as the later periods of life that follow it. In this view, the child is not only the father to the man, rather the child is already, through his intense relations with his own parents, brought into mutual regulation with the father he will one day be. (p. 170)

The centrality of "parenthood" in the development of the adult is related to the fact that children tend to be regarded as extensions of oneself. They serve as vehicles for self-fulfillment, into which parents channel their personal hopes and aspirations. The experience of parenthood as a milestone in adult development is described by Grunes (1984), who writes: "Children are always seen, in part, as extensions of the parental self . . . parents are apt to use their children as self objects." Grunes argues that children are "transitional objects" for their parents, in the sense that they can have a soothing and reparative effect on the aging self. In this respect, on an experiential level, children are not totally self and not totally other, but somewhere in between.

The parent's narcissistic investment in the child is a key factor in mobilizing the adult toward the task of parenting and is a fundamental prerequisite to the psychological well-being of the child (Freud, 1914). The parents' capacity to become narcissistically invested in the growth of their child, coupled with the child's capacity to be receptive to the parents' love and care, helps to explain the symbiotic bond that develops between parent and child. Gutmann (1980) writes:

. . . following the onset of parenthood, both parents routinely give up the claim to omnipotentiality and concede it to the child. In effect the child's sense of basic trust, vital to healthy psychological development, pivots on the fact that parents have idealized the child and that they are ready to surrender their personal claim to centrality, to omnipotentiality, and often to life, in the child's favor. The transformations of narcissism that are mediated by culture guarantee the viability of social life; and the transformations of narcissism that are mediated by parenthood guarantee the viability of children. (p. 501)

Sex-Role Differentiation in Parenthood

Gutmann claims that in response to the chronic emergency of parenthood, men become more characteristically masculine and women become more characteristically feminine. The bond created between a man and woman, through the birth of a child, necessitates and allows each to deposit aspects of themselves in the other. The man lives out the feminine aspects of his personality vicariously through his wife and daughters, while the woman lives out her repressed masculine tendencies through her husband and sons. During the parental phase of adulthood, there is a division of labor between husband and wife, tending to polarize their personality structures. Gutmann (1980) explains that for young fathers,

. . . there takes place a kind of instrumentalizing of the self. They tame the extremes of their nature, deploying aggression toward production, curbing passive tendencies, and generally accepting, even with good humor, the responsibilities and sacrifices that come with the productive stance. During the period

of early parenthood, younger men strive toward creating and controlling the sources of security for themselves and particularly for their dependents. . . . they do not indulge the "softer" yearnings toward comfort and pleasure that would interfere with their effectiveness in these security giving parental roles. In effect, they keep out of their behavior those passive dependent promptings which could prove lethal to their children. These dangerous yearnings are further handled by conceding them to the objects of their own nurturance, to their wives and children. Through them, they live out, vicariously, the pleasure in being nurtured. The wife and children become external representations of the passive yearnings that father must give up in order to provide physical security to others. (p. 499)

The parental imperative, as it has been defined by Gutmann, raises important questions about the link between biology and culture. Gutmann argues that the cultural manifestations of sex-role assignment are secondary to the biological necessity of parenthood. For Gutmann, survival of the species is based on culturally mediated modes of behavior that serve a biological function. The fact that culture is to some extent a function of biological necessity does not mean that it lacks a relevance of its own. Culture provides "the meanings" that protect adequate parenting and ensure survival of the species. Men and women are willing to give up a great deal of personal freedom and become parents partly because, within the context of culture, becoming a father or mother is a legitimization of self. Raising children demonstrates that one is willing to make personal sacrifices for the sake of cultural and biological prosperity.

Postlaunch Parenting: Stepping Down from the Parental Emergency

Once the children have left home, the "parental imperative" becomes less compelling. The division of labor is less of a necessity and both husband and wife are free to reclaim aspects of themselves that they had previously forgone. According to Neugarten (1979), the changes that come with middle age lead to increased

"interiority" demonstrated in an increased preoccupation with inner life, a decreased investment in social relations, and a loss of interest in taking on new challenges. Gutmann has found that in a variety of cultures, middle-aged men become increasingly passive and more preoccupied with sensual longings. In a related fashion, middle-aged woman "reclaim from their husbands the aggressive qualities that men are abandoning . . . and become more intrusive, more domineering, more political and less sentimental" (Gutmann 1980, pg. 502).

Across several cultural groups, Gutmann (1975) found that young men and old men demonstrate qualitative differences in their interpersonal relations and their intrapsychic orientation. In contrast with younger men,

. . . older men are on the whole less aggressive: They are more affiliative, more interested in love than in conquest or power, more interested in community than in agency. The younger men see energy *within* themselves, as a potential threat that has to be contained and deployed to productive purposes. But the old men see energy outside of themselves, lodged in capricious secular or supernatural authorities. For older men, then, power must be manipulated and controlled in its external form through postures of prayer and other forms of supplication and accommodation. (p. 171)

Older men show greater concern for the softer, more traditionally "feminine" aspects of life. They become more engaged by "warm, supportive human contacts. . . . and pregenital versions of pleasure: good food, pretty sights, and the incidental esthetics of daily life" (Gutmann 1980, p. 502).

This shift in the aging male from the active to the passive position and in the female from the passive to the active position has been referred to as role reversal (Gutmann 1980; Grunes 1984).There are two forms of "role reversal" in the later states of life: husband–wife role reversal and parent–child role reversal. Husband–wife role reversal is when the aging wife takes on a more active, dominant and au-

thoritarian stance within the family, while the husband becomes more passive and inwardly directed (Gutmann 1980).

Parent–child role reversal is "when adult children take on parental prerogatives for their aged parents who become the children of their children" (Grunes 1984). A shift occurs late in life, wherein the father expects his son to assume the role of caretaker and authority figure. The quality of the aging father's dependency on his son will to some extent be reflective of the unfulfilled wishes and longings of his childhood. Grunes argues that what seems to occur is that past conflicts and themes, which have been dormant for many years, are revived and to some extent reworked in the later years of development. Neither of these role reversals is complete, in the sense that the husband truly swaps places with his wife or the parent regresses to the point of becoming a child to his children.

Drawing upon the concepts that have been discussed, such as the "parental imperative" and later-life "role reversal," this paper presents empirical data that further elaborate on the psychological changes consonant with the shift from active to passive parenthood.

METHOD

Subjects

As already discussed, in his early investigations into the developmental processes of later life among White middle-class men in the United States, Gutmann found that as men age, they undergo a shift from active to passive mastery. Gutmann reasoned that these changes were part of the normal developmental process, associated with biopsychosocial changes that occur in later life. To test the universality of these findings and the plausibility of this developmental theory, Gutmann studied aging in several cultures around the world, in which old people play an important role in maintaining the social structure and determining the direction of social change. Gutmann reasoned that if such changes were found in traditional gerontocracies—where older men have the social leverage to arrange things according to their own priorities—then one could argue that this shift was part of the normal developmental process.

One of the gerontocracies Gutmann studied was that of the Druze of the Golan Heights and Galilee, in Israel and Syria. The Druze are defined by their religion, which was born out of a rebellion against mainstream Muslim Orthodoxy in the 11th century and contains strains of Islam, Hellenism, and Zoroastrianism. Originally there was a strong messianic flavor to the Druze religion, attracting large numbers of converts. Not surprisingly, the Druze were condemned as heretics by the Muslim establishment and were forced to go underground. Until relatively recently, the Druze practiced their religion in secrecy, hiding their identity as Druze from their hostile Muslim neighbors. In order to survive, the Druze kept their religion a secret from their own children, until they were old enough to be trusted. This history of secrecy explains, in part, why Druze society is led by a group of elders, who are privy to the religious writings and rituals and who maintain the community's relationship with Allah.

The Druze are known throughout the Middle East for the intensity of their religious faith, the cohesiveness of their society, and their fierceness in battle. The Druze have managed to survive, in part, because of their skill as warriors. Traditionally they have offered their military services to the current ruling majority in exchange for security and religious tolerance. Throughout their history, while they often allied themselves with the ruling majority, they remained a proud and staunchly independent people. It is said that the Druze people are like a brass plate: strike one corner and the entire plate will resound. For example, it is said that in the early 1900s the entire Druze population declared war on the Turkish

Empire when a Turkish nobleman compromised the honor of a Druze woman.

The 40 subjects in this study are Druze men between the ages of 35 and 90. Each subject was interviewed twice, with an interval of 5 to 6 years between the first and second interview. Subjects were divided into three distinct groups. The first group includes those subjects who are "prelaunch" fathers at both time one and time two, which means that there is some clear indication in both interviews that the subject is still actively involved in supporting one or more of his children. At time one the mean age for this group is 45.8 years, and at time two the mean age is 52.6 years. The second group includes those subjects who are "prelaunch" at time one and "postlaunch" at time two, which means that in the 5- to 6-year interval, the sons went from a state of being somewhat dependent on the subject to having established their autonomy. This change usually involved the son marrying and starting a family of his own, joining the army, or finding some means of supporting himself independent of his father. At time one, the mean age for this group is 52.3 years, and at time two the mean age is 59. The third group includes those subjects who are "postlaunch" at both time one and time two, which means that there is some clear indication in both interviews that the subject's sons have already established their autonomy. For this group, the mean age at time one is 67 years, and the mean age for time two is 73.9 years. The stated ages of many of the subjects must be regarded as approximations rather than certainties, given the inaccuracy of official records in the region.

Data Collection

The data upon which this study is based—early memories of father and discussion of father–son relationship—were excerpted from interviews conducted by Gutmann and his co-workers. In keeping with Gutmann's naturalistic methodology (Gutmann 1967, 1987) the interviews were largely unstructured. However, specific inquiries were made about dreams and early memories, with the hope that this would help to gain access to unconscious aspects of the subject's personality.

The interviews were conducted with the aid of a translator, the son of a prominent Galilean Druze family, who received a degree in psychiatric social work from an American university. The translator is fluent in both English and Arabic. Interviews were audiotaped and the English translations were transcribed verbatim.

Early Memories

One of the assumptions upon which this study is based is that our experience of the present both informs and is informed by our construction of the past. As such, we looked for systematic changes in the thematic content of early memories between the first and second interviews, hoping that the thematic content of our subject's early memories of their fathers would accurately reflect their current "stage of life" concerns.

Early memories are used both in clinical work (Peskin and Livson 1981) and in research as a means of identifying prominent psychological concerns of the individual and salient developmental issues. A number of psychoanalytically oriented developmental researchers (Adler 1937; M. G. Lieberman 1957; Mosak 1958; Langs et al 1960; M. A. Lieberman and Falk 1971) have found the analysis of early memories useful in appraising personality structure and interpersonal orientation. The idea behind the use of early memories is that intrapsychic and interpersonal changes that occur across the life cycle are accompanied by a reorganization of one's early memories.

Cohler (1980) and Adler (1937) argue that how a person constructs and reconstructs his or her experience is reflected in the person's early memories. As the individual navigates his or her way across the major developmental milestones, he/she reappraises and restructures his/her

memory and understanding of the past to fit with his or her experience of the present (Cohler 1980). From this perspective, early memories are as much a projection of current issues onto the past as they are a true reflection of the past.

The differences in how we remember our past at various points in the life cycle serve as indicators of developmental shifts in perspective. There is some evidence that suggests that as our experience and concerns change over time, so does the thematic content of our early memories (Tobin and Etigson 1968; M. A. Lieberman and Falk 1971). For example, the extent to which our early memories of our parents become more or less forgiving, idealized, or obscured may reflect our changing perspective on the world.

Approach to Data Analysis

Our primary goal was to further develop our understanding of psychological changes associated with aging in men. The specific focus of the study was arrived at through a combination of inductive and deductive methods of inquiry (Strauss 1987). Our coding schemes and hypotheses were determined in part by the work of Gutmann (1987), Cohler (1980) and others (discussed previously), and in part by the concerns articulated by the subjects themselves.

The process of coding the data and formulating hypotheses was guided by the principles of grounded theory, which advocates an integrative approach to data collection, data analysis, and theory building (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987). Grounded theory involves formulating hypotheses that are directly relevant to the thematic content of the data. Proponents of grounded theory suggest that the complexity of reality is best captured through a detailed, intensive and microscopic examination of data. Developing a coding scheme and hypotheses that are grounded in the data enhances the complexity and depth of one's theoretical assertions. Glaser and Strauss write: "generating theory from data means that

most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research" (1967, p. 6).

The decision to study the father–son relationship evolved out of our familiarity with the data. As we read through the interviews, certain themes and concerns seemed more salient than others. We were struck by how often these men discussed their lives in terms of fathers and sons. Many of these Druze men seemed to be strongly identified with both their own fathers and their sons. Furthermore, there seemed to be parallels between how these men remembered their fathers and how they described their relations with their sons.

The four dimensions of relatedness that form the basis of our coding scheme evolved out of our familiarity with the data and our knowledge of previous studies of interpersonal relations (Leary 1957; Benjamin 1974). Consistent with the "constant comparative method" described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), we carefully read through a select sample of interviews, generated a rather large set of possible categories, and then gradually refined the coding scheme by eliminating some categories and combining others. The final version of the coding scheme — which includes the four dimensions described in the next section and a set of decision rules — was used to code the entire set of data.

THE CODING SCHEME

Dimension One: Responsibility/ Mentorship

Early Memory of Father. Some Druze men emphasize the traditional role of the father as provider, focusing on issues of responsibility and competence. They remember how their fathers helped them to become responsible, respectable men. Father provided learning, land, understanding, guidance, discipline, and in many

cases, a wife. For many of these men, fathers (or father substitutes) are often remembered as mentors. They remember their fathers as strong, respectable men.

Relatedness to Sons. Some Druze fathers think in terms of what they must provide for their sons. These men identify themselves as the directors of their sons and emphasize the fact that they are living up to their responsibilities as fathers. They allow their sons to go to school, they make sure their children are not in need of anything, they teach their children to behave properly. Implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, part of the father's intention is to raise the kind of son that will take care of him in his old age.

Dimension Two: Struggle for Autonomy/Struggle for Control

Early Memory of Father. Some early memories of father are colored by conflict and rebelliousness. Some men discuss the struggles they got into with their fathers, whom they describe as harsh disciplinarians or opponents. For example, one man remembered that his father sent him to the store, but instead he went to play, and when he returned, his father hit him.

Relatedness to Son. Some of the Druze fathers describe a conflictual relationship with their sons, in which their sons are not willing to abide by the rules or live up to father's expectations. These fathers express disappointment in their sons, who refuse to cooperate and/or help out with the family business. Some complain about the insubordination of their unappreciative, ill-mannered sons, who care nothing for the traditional way of life and fail to respect authority.

Dimension Three: Isolation/Loss

Early Memory of Father. Some men remember their fathers as distant and peripheral to their development. These men tend to focus on feelings of depletion, vulnerability, loneliness, and loss. In some cases this was because father was emotionally unavailable; in other cases he was physically absent. When asked to recall their early memories of their fathers, some Druze men remember their father as absent, focusing on how they felt cut off from their father, how they missed him or felt abandoned by him. In a number of cases, fathers went off to fight a distant enemy or to seek a fortune in America, leaving their families behind to endure incredible hardship. Sons who were left behind often felt deprived and resentful. For example, Mr. F, who was interviewed at the age of 45, discussed his feelings of resentment toward his father, who left his family and traveled to Argentina: "My father left when I was five. This affected me a lot. I missed the sympathy of father. One feels that his father is the strongest and so we missed this feeling. One without a father is weak, other kids can attack him easily without finding any help. I had this experience and I felt weak and deprived . . . parents are like a shield for a child."

Relatedness to Son. Some Druze men complain about missing sons who are far away from home or simply unavailable. Some feel very isolated and alone without the support of their sons and long for their sons to return home. Several men report that they have trouble sleeping because they miss their sons and worry that something bad will happen to them.

Dimension Four: Dependency/Intimacy

Early Memory. While some men remember their fathers sending them to school or teaching them how to behave, others remember the period of their life in which there were no expectations, when they could do as they pleased and their needs were taken care of by others. These men focus on memories of being protected from danger, being fed, or of feeling as though they had not a worry in the world. Some early memories are dominated by feelings of being loved, cherished, and coddled by father. In these memories father served as a cushion, protecting them from the harshness of adult reality.

Relatedness to Son. Some men talk about what their sons provide for them, such as good food, leisure time, security, a home, etc. Others dwell on the wish/expectation that they will be taken care of and that their basic needs will be provided for by their sons. Those who are satisfied praise their sons as helpful and nurturing, while those who are dissatisfied express in no uncertain terms that they feel disappointed, uncared for by their sons. Often these feelings of frustrated dependency needs are mixed with feelings of isolation and deprivation or feelings of hostile resentment.

Coding Procedures

These four dimensions – responsibility/mentorship, struggle for autonomy/control, isolation/loss, and dependency/intimacy – serve as the basis of the coding system used in this study. Each subject was assigned a score of either 0, 1, or 2 for each dimension. A 0 score was given if there was no suggestion of the dimension in the interview. A 1 was given if the presence of the dimension was implicit, and a 2 was given if the dimension was explicitly present. Coding was done by the principal investigator, who was blind to the "parental status" of the subjects.

A sample of 18 randomly selected subjects were coded by another rater, who was blind to the "parental status" of the subjects and was unaware of the hypotheses being tested. Interrater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa coefficient. This procedure yielded a mean estimated kappa of .67, which is within the acceptable range (Hartmann 1977). The results of the statistical analyses reported here are based on the principal investigator's codes.

HYPOTHESES AND RESULTS

Hypothesis One: Correlation between "Early Memory of Father" and "Relatedness with Son"

It was hypothesized that there would be a significant degree of thematic consistency between a subject's early memory

of his father and his current relationship with his son. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that as men moved through the life cycle, shifts in how they remember their fathers would coincide with similar shifts in how they talk about their sons. A Pearson correlation was run on each of the four dimensions matching subject's "early memory of father" score against his "relationship with son" score. The results are reported in Tables 1 and 2.

At a 95% level of confidence (one-tailed t- test), seven of the eight correlations coefficients predicted to be statistically significant are significant. These results seem to confirm hypothesis one: There is a measurable degree of thematic confluence between the Druze father's memory of the past and his experience of the present. As evident in Tables 1 and 2, no other significant correlations were found, which strengthens the theoretical meaning of the positive findings and adds support to the construct validity of the measure. Furthermore, the thematic consistency between early memories of father and relationship to son lends some support to the idea that a person's early memories are reflective of his/her stage of life concerns.[1]

Hypothesis Two: Longitudinal Effects on "Early Memories of Father" and "Relatedness with Son"

It was hypothesized that while groups one and three would remain relatively sta-

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[1] Although "early memories of father" and "relationship with sons" were coded independently, it seemed plausible that the strength of the thematic consistency between "early memories" and "relationship" was due to coder bias. Because the primary coder was very familiar with the data set, he was not entirely unaware of what the Druze men remembered about their fathers when coding what they had to say about their sons. To test for the presence of coder bias, a second set of correlations was run using the reliability coder's codes. The reliability coder was unaware of the hypothesized connection between early memories and relationship with son. Results indicated that out of six significant correlations between "early memories" and "relationship with son," five replicated the pattern of the primary coder. This finding supports the claim that subjects' early memories of father are thematically consistent with how they talk about their sons. However, the fact that the overall pattern was less clearly defined in this second set of codes casts some doubt on the validity of the results reported in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

CORRELATIONS

Early Memories of Father: Time One

Relatedness with Son: Time One	Responsibility	Struggle for autonomy	Isolation/ Loss	Dependency
Responsibility	.414*	−.223	−.274	−.152
Struggle for Control	−.165	−.305*	.141	.218
Isolation/Loss	−.206	.129	.395*	−.203
Dependency	−.278	−.089	.147	−.414*

*Significant (.05) by one-tailed t test.

Table 2

CORRELATIONS

Early Memories of Father: Time Two

Relatedness with Son: Time Two	Responsibility	Struggle for autonomy	Isolation/ Loss	Dependency
Responsibility	.483*	−.243	−.199	−.114
Struggle for Control	−.108	.224	.017	−.094
Isolation/Loss	−.202	.013	.480*	−.032
Dependency	−.389	−.053	.035	.448*

*Significant (.05) by one-tailed t test.

ble from time one to time two, a significant shift would occur in group two, concordant with the change in parental status. Testing each group separately, a repeated measures t- test was run on each dimension to determine the presence of any thematic shift from time one to time two. For group one, no changes occur from time one to time two (see Figures 1 and 2). For group three, one significant shift occurs from time one to time two. In the subject's early memories of their fathers there was a drop in the "struggle for autonomy" dimension from time one to time two, $F(2, 37) = 7.020$, $p < .027$. Apart from this single change—in early memories only—the overall picture for group three fathers is relatively stable (see Figures 3 and 4).

For group two, there are two significant shifts in both the subjects' early memories of father and in how they discuss their sons. In their early memories, there is a significant drop in the "responsibility/mentorship" dimension from time one to time two, $F(2, 37) = 27.2$; $p < $

.001, and a significant increase in the "isolation/loss" dimension, $F(2, 37) = 10.204$; $p < .01$. With respect to how they talked about their sons, these fathers show a significant drop in the "responsibility" dimension from time one to time two, $F(2, 37) = 18.947$; $p < .001$, and a significant increase in the "isolation/loss" dimension from time one to time two, $F(2, 37) = 13.750$; $p < .004$ (see Figures 5 and 6).

As predicted, the changes that occur in those fathers whose parental status remains the same between time one and time two are far less dramatic than those of fathers who move from "prelaunch" status to "postlaunch" status. The results suggest that the shift from active to passive parenthood has a powerful psychological impact.

Hypothesis Three: Developmentally Based Differences in "Early Memories of Father" and "Relatedness with Son"
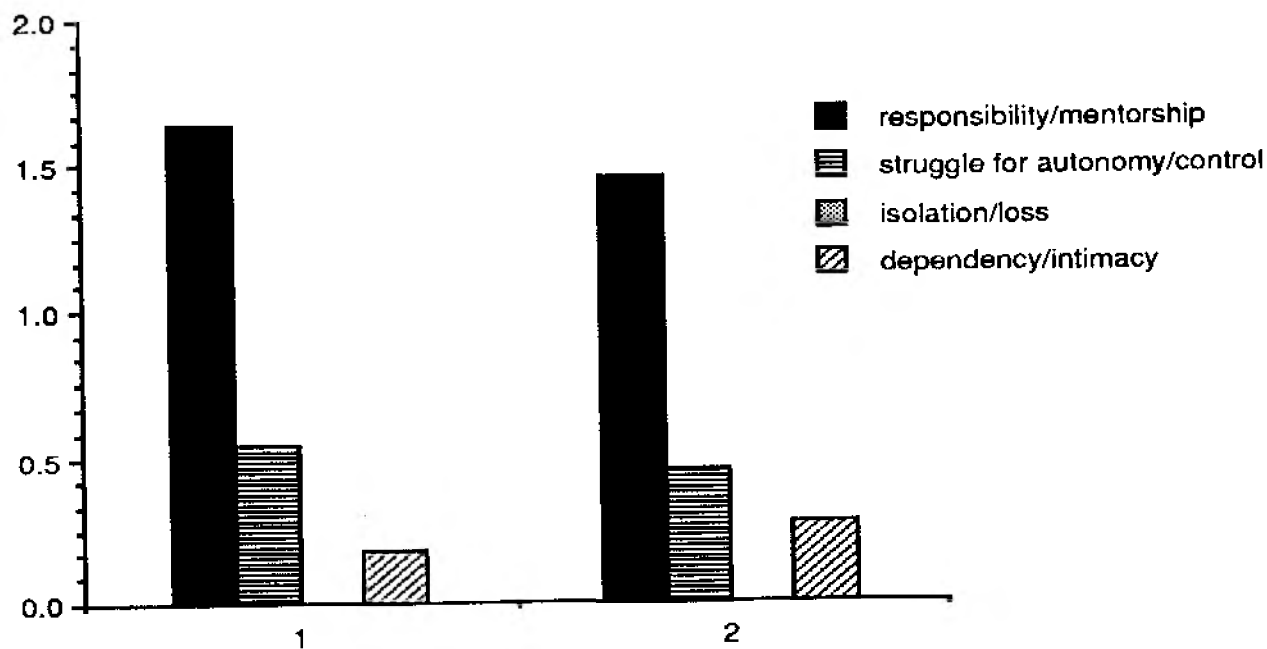
It was hypothesized that the thematic content of "prelaunch" fathers and "post-
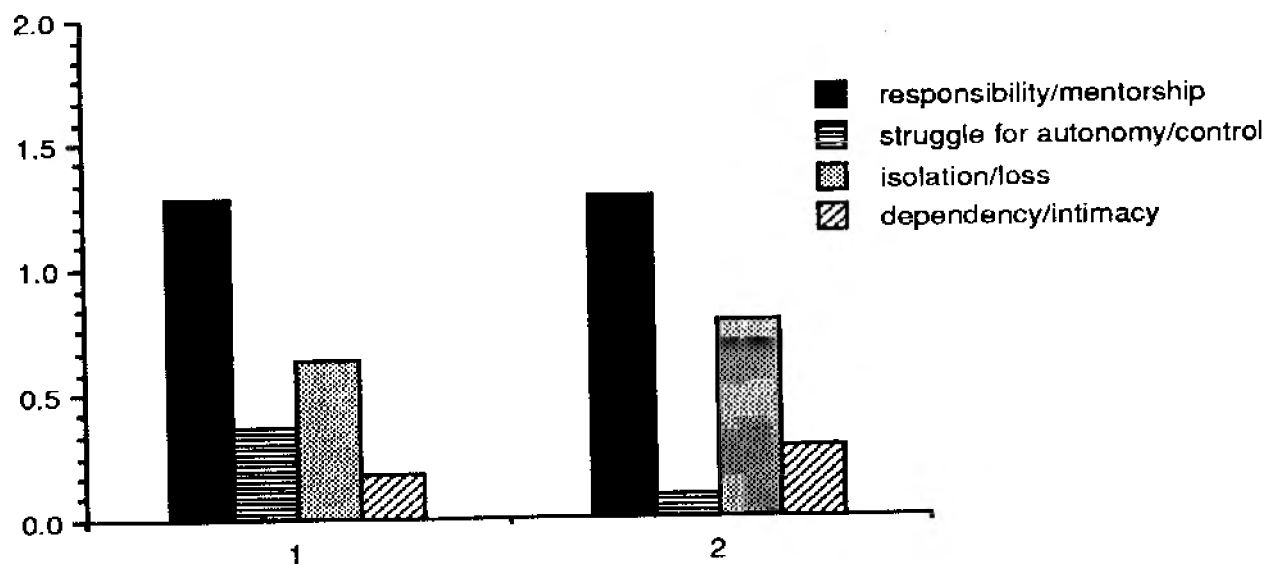
Figure 1.
Prelaunch/prelaunch group: early memory of fathers ($n = 11$).

Figure 2.
Prelaunch/prelaunch group: relation with sons ($n = 11$).

Early Memory of Fathers : Time 1 and Time 2

Figure 3.
Prelaunch/postlaunch group: early memory of fathers ($n = 11$).

Relation with Sons : Time 1 and Time 2
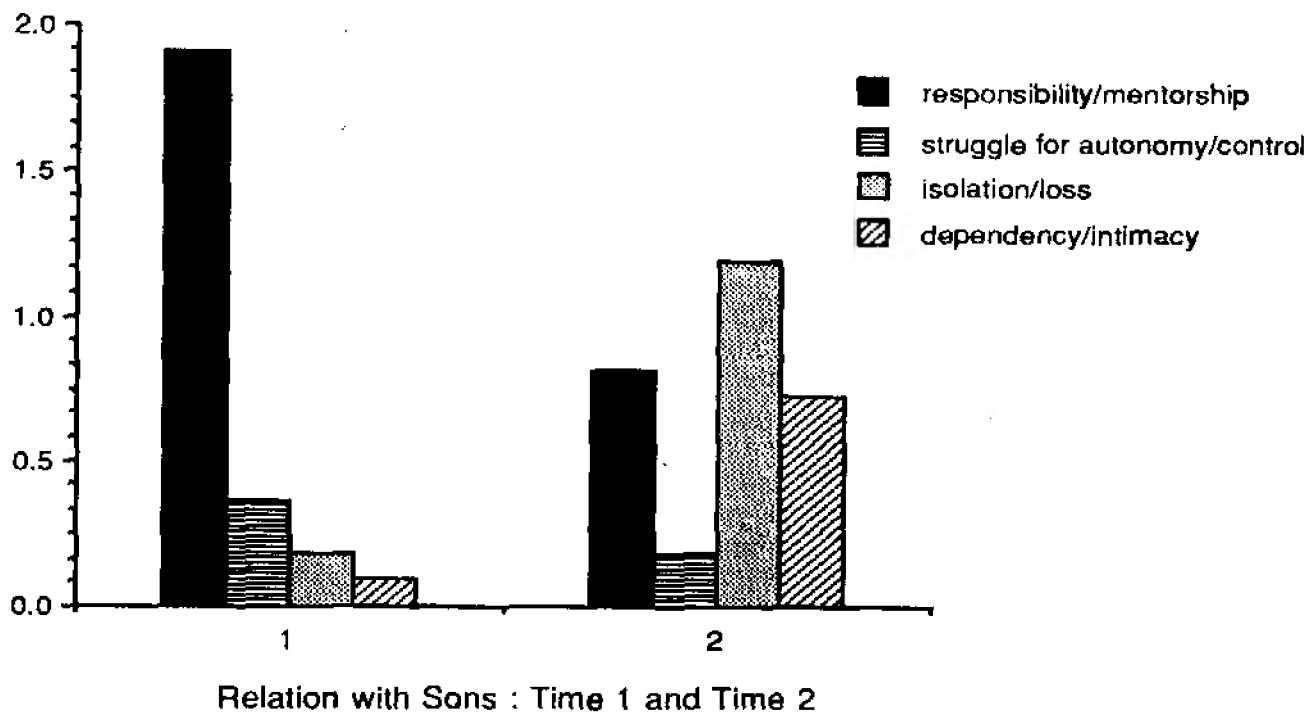
Figure 4.
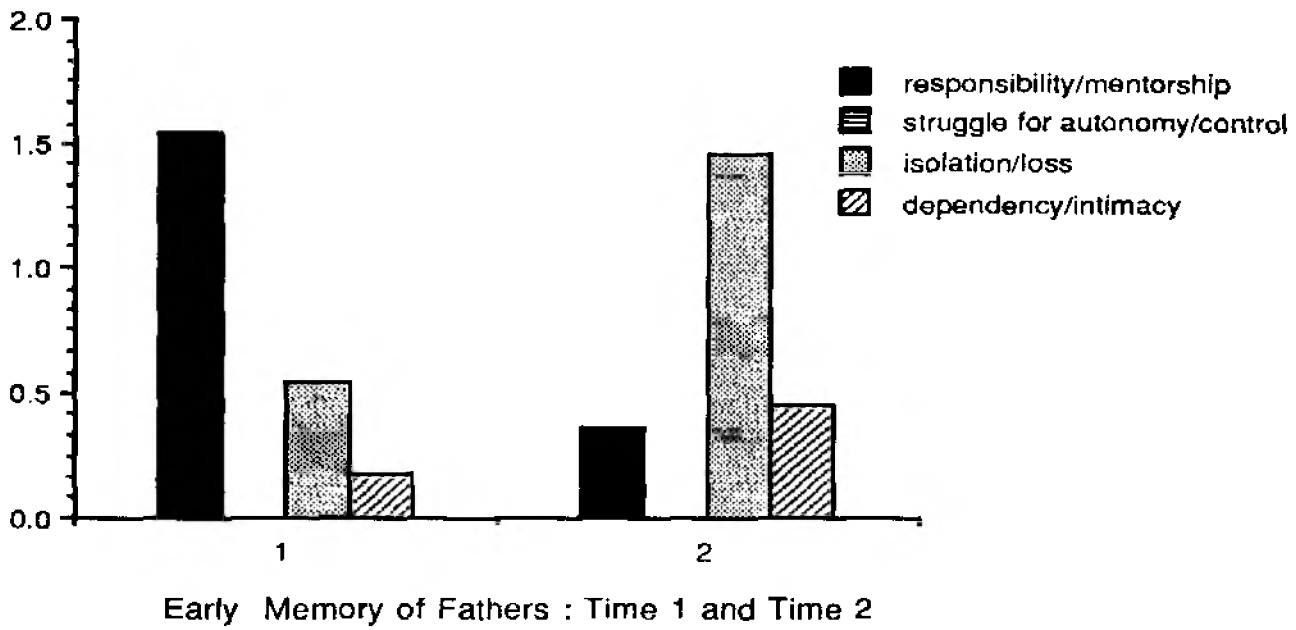Prelaunch/postlaunch group: relation with sons ($n = 11$).

Early Memory of Fathers : Time 1 and Time 2
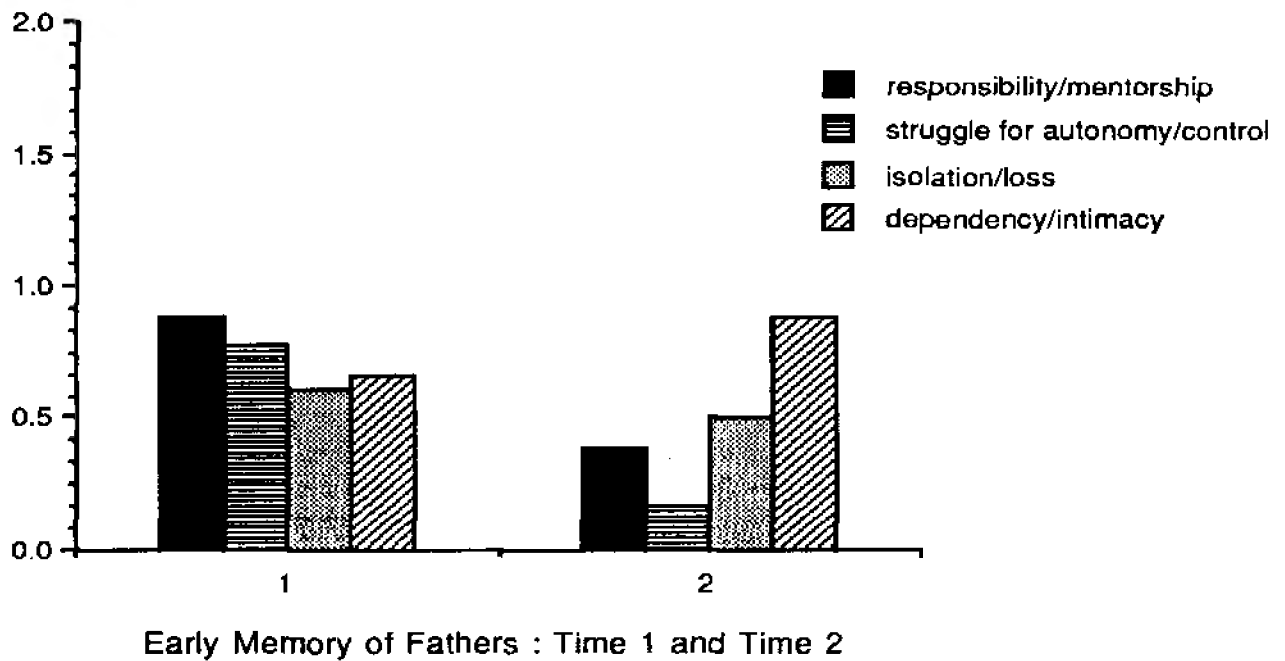
Figure 5.
Postlaunch/postlaunch group: early memory of fathers (n = 18).

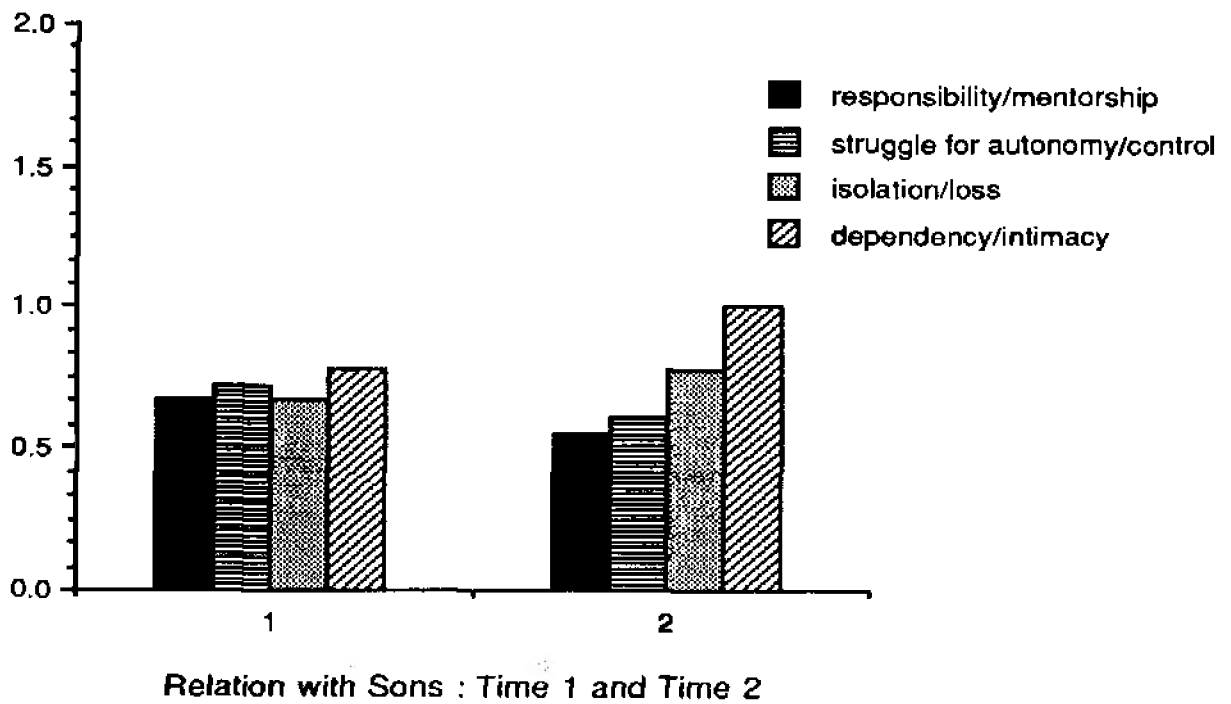Relation with Sons : Time 1 and Time 2

Figure 6.
Postlaunch/postlaunch group: relation with sons (n = 18).

launch" fathers would reflect differences in developmentally based concerns. More specifically, based on Gutmann's theory of role reversal, it was predicted that: (1)"prelaunch" fathers would score higher on the "responsibility/mentorship" dimension than "postlaunch" fathers and (2) "postlaunch" fathers would score higher on the "dependency/intimacy" dimension.

A repeated measures MANOVA was run to determine between-group differences, using time as the dependent variable. Significant group differences were found along the "responsibility/mentorship" dimension for both "early memories of father," $F(2, 37) = 11.75; p < .001$, and "relationship with son," $F(2, 37) = 8.08; p < .001$. Significant group differences were found along the "isolation/loss" dimension for both "early memory of father," $F(2, 37) = 4.58; p < .017$, and "relationship with son," $F(2, 37) = 6.37; p < .004$. Also, a significant group difference was found along the "dependency/intimacy" dimension for "relationship with son," $F(2, 37) = 5.5; p < .01$.

Based on these findings, hypothesis three received partial confirmation. Among the "prelaunch" fathers, themes of "responsibility/mentorship" (active mastery) are most salient, which is consistent with Gutmann's concept of the "parental imperative." A Duncan's multiple range post hoc analysis revealed that at time one, group three differed from groups one and two along on the "dependency/intimacy" dimension. At time two, groups two and three differed from group one along this dimension. This finding indicates that "postlaunch" fathers focus on themes of "dependency/intimacy" in their relationships with their sons significantly more than "prelaunch" fathers. Contrary to expectation, group two "postlaunch" fathers are more concerned with themes of "isolation/loss" than with themes of "dependency/intimacy." Furthermore, as Figures 5 and 6 illustrate, "postlaunch" fathers are not significantly more concerned with themes of 'dependency/intimacy" than they are with other themes.

We considered the possibility that some of these group differences might be explained on the basis of age rather than parental status (two variables that are obviously related). Testing for the effect of age on group differences, we found that age does not explain group differences along the "responsibility/mentorship" dimension or the "isolation/loss" dimension. However, age does affect group differences along the 'dependency/intimacy" dimension. This finding is not inconsistent with our prediction, since the "postlaunch/postlaunch" group, which is most likely to be concerned with themes of "dependency/intimacy," is uniformly older than the other two groups. Generally speaking, the significant group differences lend support to the hypothesis that as men "step down" from the role of active parent, they shift from a position of "active mastery" to a position of "passive mastery."

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Developmentalists tend to divide the life cycle into periods of relative stability and periods of change, or "points of transition" (Mahler et al. 1975; Blos 1967; Pine 1989; Cohler 1980; Gutmann 1987; Neugarten 1979). From a psychoanalytic perspective, these points of transition mark a reorganization of the psychic structure; one's view of the past is revised to better fit one's understanding of the present, one's interpersonal relationships are renegotiated, important figures are imbued with new significance, one's priorities and concerns are reevaluated. The purpose of this study has been to identify psychological changes in Druze men as they make the transition from active "prelaunch" to passive "postlaunch" parenthood.

Consistent with hypothesis two, we identified a rather dramatic psychological shift that occurs as these Druze men make the transition from "prelaunch" to "postlaunch" status. However, contrary to expectation, newcomers to "postlaunch" parenthood appear to be more

preoccupied with themes of "isolation/loss" than with "dependency/intimacy." Furthermore, we identified unexpected differences between group two "post-launch" fathers (time two) and group three "postlaunch" fathers. In contrast to group two "postlaunch" fathers, group three "postlaunch" fathers do not appear to be preoccupied with themes of isolation and loss. This discrepancy between groups two and three "postlaunch" fathers could be due to a cohort effect. It's plausible that for unknown reasons, group two subjects react to "postlaunch" parenthood differently than group three subjects. However, we shall argue that: (1) this difference is due to the psychological effects of having recently stepped down from the parental emergency and (2) for most Druze men, these feelings of isolation and loss are temporary. The differences between group two and three suggest that, with time, most men pass through this phase of isolation/loss.

The Role of Loss in the Normal Developmental Process

Several psychoanalytically oriented developmentalists have written that the experience of loss is an integral part of the normal developmental process (Mahler et al. 1975; Blos 1967; Pine 1989; Pollock 1980). In the course of normal development, we are forced to give up aspects of the self that are no longer useful or adaptive. In order to successfully negotiate these transitions, we must let go of old ways of being. Important developmental gains are predicated on the experience of loss and the ability to mourn that loss. As we make our way across the life cycle we are required to take on new roles, meet new challenges, invest ourselves in new enterprises. Old object ties are broken or renegotiated; once deeply held ideals are abandoned or modified. Mourning enables us to disengage from former ego ideals and previous object ties in order to clear the ground for new ways of experiencing the self and relating to others.

Pine (1989) describes the experience of loss that accompanies childhood and adolescence as universal, intense, and specific to a particular developmental phase. The earliest of these losses is the loss of the mother as the primary love object. The child is not born with a well-differentiated concept of self. From birth until the second year of life, mother and child exist in a state of psychological symbiosis (Mahler at al. 1975). From the child's unindividuated perspective, mother is an extension of the self. Insofar as she/he is unaware of his/her own boundaries or limitations, the child exists in a state of narcissistic bliss and experiences himself/herself as omnipotent. A child's capacity to see himself/herself as separate from mother – to see herself/himself as a person in her/his own right – is learned through experience. Slowly, as the child becomes less physically dependent, more cognitively adept, and more socially aware, she/he begins to develop a differentiated sense of self.

This process is made possible by the internalization of the maternal love object, from which the child draws comfort in the absence of mother. What the child stands to gain from this developmental achievement is a greater sense of independence, which enables the child to explore his/her environment (Mahler et al. 1975). Yet, these developmental gains come at a great expense. In exchange for the differentiated self, he/she must endure the loss of the primary love object and the omnipotent self. The child must come to terms with the fact that he/she and his/her mother are separate beings. It is not atypical for a child in the midst of the "separation–individuation" process to appear moody and quite sad (Mahler 1966; Mahler et al. 1975).

Blos (1967) defines adolescence as a second individuation process, through which the child develops a more durable and independent identity of his/her own. The second individuation process involves the disengagement from internalized parental objects, opening the way for the adolescent to form new object ties. Pine (1989) and Blos (1967) believe that as pa-

rental figures are decathected, the adolescent experiences a profound sense of loss. If the adolescent is to leave the familial nest and develop nonincestuous object ties, he/she must mourn the loss of "his childhood parents": He must give up the "inner possibilities of using the later parents in the same way that they were used earlier" (Pine, p. 160). Mourning the loss of "one's childhood parents" engenders the adolescent with the ego strength to make new attachments and to cope with future losses. "To call this process one of mourning is to indicate the work of detachment that goes on, the emotional pain of that work, and the ultimate substantial freeing of the tie, as in mourning a death, so that new ties can be made and life can go on" (Pine, p. 161).

Pine (1989) has written that as we traverse the various phases of adulthood, we must come to terms with four losses, all of which serve as grim reminders of the finitude of life. Unlike the losses of childhood, which are stage specific and intense, the losses of adulthood are more gradual. Pine writes that these four losses "come in no particular sequence, being spread throughout adulthood" (p. 168).

The first two losses are "the loss of omnipotentiality" and "the loss of optimal body function." Each of these losses involves a loss of "self as object," rather than the loss of an object. The loss of omnipotentiality follows the realization that many of our dreams will never come true. This realization leads to a reappraisal of one's goals and a "final modification of the ego ideal" (Pine, p. 169). Pine writes that for most adults, the narcissistic injury of confronting one's limitations is mitigated by the experience of fulfillment and accomplishment in some areas of life. The second loss—the loss of optimal body function—is a psychological response to physical changes that occur in adulthood. The biological losses of adulthood are particularly significant for women, whose childbearing years end at midlife. Changes in sexual functioning, physical appearance and strength, and increased susceptibility to illness and ailment have a potentially powerful impact on a person's self-concept. Confronted with the lost vigor of his/her youth, the aging adult is forced to seek new sources of sensual pleasure.

The third and fourth losses of adulthood involve both "loss of object" and "loss of self." The third is the loss of one's children as they gradually separate themselves from their parents and develop identities of their own. Most parents are pleased to see their children move forward in their own lives and are usually relieved to be less burdened by the chore of caring for youngsters. However, insofar as the parent sees the children as an extension of himself/herself, in whom the parent invests many of his/her own unmet desires and ambitions, a child's quest for independence is often experienced as a loss. As children make new attachments to others and pursue their own interests, parents are forced to come to terms with their own sense of separateness. The fourth loss is related to the death of one's parents and, eventually, the death of one's peers, which forces the aging adult to confront his/her own mortality and lays the foundation upon which he/she begins to prepare for his/her own death (Pine 1989; Levinson 1978; Jaques 1980).

Mourning the Loss of "Self as Father"

The research findings reported here contribute to the further development of the theory of loss and mourning in the normal developmental process. We believe that the aging father experiences a loss of the "self as father," which occurs as his children reach adulthood and no longer need parenting. Unlike the losses discussed by Pine, which are gradual and ongoing, this loss appears to be specific to a particular phase of adult development. Our findings suggest that among Druze men, the loss of "self as father" is felt most keenly as they abdicate responsibility for the welfare and education of their sons.

For many Druze men, who identify themselves as active, independent au-

thority figures, the transition to a more passive role — described by Gutmann — is preceded by an intermediary phase, characterized by feelings of loss and isolation. Their sons have become established men in the community, with families of their own, who no longer depend on them as they once did. The fact that these fathers are no longer physically able or emotionally willing to maintain their former position of command and authority, requires some intrapsychic and interpersonal adaptation. As development takes its toll, the aging father begins to worry about loss of control over body and mind. He must give up ways of thinking and being that have become habitual, and must develop new styles and modes of relating. It is no longer necessary for the aging father to play the role of the provider. As he is no longer as strong as he once was, it is more difficult to deny his own dependency needs.

Like the toddler who suddenly becomes aware of the fact that he/she is not really as omnipotent as he/she had once supposed, and like the adolescent whose search for his/her own identity leaves him/her feeling split off and isolated from his/her parents, the aging father, who is no longer responsible for or in control of his children, is forced to undergo a process of self-redefinition. For 30 years or more, he has defined himself as being responsible for the safety and development of his children. Once his sons have grown and have sons of their own, this identity begins to lose its validity and becomes less emotionally compelling. This shift from active to passive parenthood necessitates that he exchange his old sense of identity for a new one. These "postlaunch" fathers, who exhibit strong feelings of isolation and loss, are not reacting to an actual "object loss." Unlike the toddler and the adolescent whose loss is object related, the loss of the aging father is more self-related. Pollock (1980) suggests that mourning lost aspects of the self is adaptive and a necessary prerequisite to the normal aging process: "In order to age successfully, the individual should be capable of mourning past states of self organiza-

tion, of reorganizing the reality of what is no more, and of successfully accepting present and future realities" (p. 582).

As men enter the later phase of life, the ego ideals from which they have drawn inspiration and support begin to lose their relevance. In stepping down from the parental emergency, the postlaunch father's priorities, concerns, and pleasures undergo a radical reorientation. As they mourn the loss of "self as father" to their sons, these men also mourn the loss of "self as son" to their own fathers. Through the mourning process most men are able to redefine themselves, restructure their interpersonal relations, and adapt to the inevitable changes associated with aging. In Druze society, as men abdicate their responsibility as fathers, they enter into the community of elders, devoted to religious study. This increased religiosity — manifested in a preoccupation with the all powerful Allah — may serve as compensation for the loss of "self as father."

Based on the findings presented here, we have argued that as Druze men adjust to "postlaunch" fatherhood they often pass through a phase dominated by feelings of loss and isolation, in which they mourn the loss of "self as father." These findings are the result of a small study of an isolated cultural group. The patterns of change described in this paper may be specific to this particular group of Druze men. As such, the prior discussion is intended to be speculative rather than conclusive. Nevertheless, these findings are quite suggestive and raise a number of questions: For example: (1) Do men in other societies go through a similar phase of "isolation–loss" as they adjust to "postlaunch" fatherhood? (2) How are changes in parental status expressed vis-à-vis early memories of mother and current relations with female figures, such as wife and daughter? (3) Do woman experience similar feelings of isolation and loss as they step down from the parental emergency? It is our hope that further exploration of these issues will end greater clarity to the developmental changes of later life.

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