July 2002

Parenting and Adult Development

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Parenting and Adult Development:
Contexts, Processes and Products of Intergenerational Relationships

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For the past 50 years parenthood has been discussed in social science literature as a context of adult development. Theories, anecdotes, and layperson opinion are nearly unanimous: people who become parents and are involved in the raising of children are transformed and follow a different developmental trajectory than people who do not engage in parenting roles. Erikson (1950) suggested that positive adult development reflects care for the next generation, "generativity"; and that parenthood is "the first, and for many, the prime generative encounter" (Erikson, 1964, p 130). More recently, parenthood has been described as a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the achievement of generativity (Snarey, Son, Kuehene, Hauser & Vaillant, 1987). Sociologists and psychologists have recently considered how children provide years of training "opportunities" for parents (Frankel, 1991) and profoundly impact the lives of parents (Ambert, 2001; Palkovitz, 1996, 2002). Daniels & Weingarten (1986, p. 36) have described parenting as a "powerful generator of adult development." Newman & Newman (1988, p. 313) labeled parenting as a "prime candidate" for stimulating adults' openness to new learning and coping strategies, and Cowan (1988, p. 14) suggested that fatherhood presents numerous opportunities for men to experience "increased integration and differentiation, a qualitative developmental change… [indicating] maturity."

It is evident that the influence of children upon parents entails more than an inadvertent impact upon the environment of parents. "Parenthood represents a context, a set of environmental conditions which, if engaged in, will affect the development of involved adults" (Palkovitz, 1996, p. 572). Newman and Newman (1988, p. 313) state that parenthood "affects those who become engaged in it in profound and particular ways." It is likely that the more

engaged a parent is, the more his or her adult development will be affected.   Because there is a direct relationship between the degree of investment a person places in any developmental context and the outcome that the context exerts, it has been hypothesized that the developmental impact of parenting is directly related to its cumulative salience in relation to other contexts of development (Palkovitz, 1996).

Parenting as a context for adult development represents more than a bi-directional relationship between the parental-child dyad. Parenting involves bi-directional relationships between members of two or more generations, can extend through all or major parts of the respective life spans of these groups, may engage a wide variety of institutions (educational, economic, political, and social) within a culture, is embedded in personal, family and social history (Hareven, 2000); and develops within the natural and designed settings within which the group lives (Lerner, Castellino, Terry, Villarruel, & McKinney, 1995).   As such, engaged parenting represents a pervasive context and set of ongoing interactions that have the potential to effect both life span developmental outcomes and changes in life course transitions and trajectories experienced by involved parents. Moreover, children exert active agency through deliberate interventions into their parent's behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes (Kuczynski, Harach, & Bernadini, 1999; Palkovitz, 2002).

Though there have been considerable advancements in conceptual frameworks for understanding the effects of parenting on adult development (e.g., Ambert, 2001, Kuczynski, Harach & Bernadini, 1999; Palkovitz, 1996), little empirical work has been generated in a manner that reflects our current level of conceptual sophistication. This chapter represents an

attempt to summarize pertinent empirical findings, to further refine conceptual constructs, to

elaborate upon their interactions and to facilitate understanding of the effects of parenting on

adult development.

Sameroff (1975) elaborated a transactional model of development that suggests that

parents exert a developmental influence on children that changes over time and the history of the

relationship. Such models have been applied to explain parents' effects on child development.

In this chapter we will review conceptual and empirical literature to demonstrate that there are

interdependent, changing, and complex relationships between the *contexts*, *processes*, and

products of parenting as they pertain to adult development (see Figure 1). In particular, the

varied contexts of parenting will be shown to exert influence on processes of family interaction

(see line B, fig. 1), which in turn, are related to developmental outcome effects for parents (line

C). As the processes of parent-child interaction continue to operate across time, they become

part of the context of development (line D). As processes influence products of development, the

products exert influences on the processes (line E) and become part of the contexts of

development (line F).

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Insert Figure 1 about here

Developmentalists, sociologists, and family scientists measure developmental outcomes

at a particular time in an attempt to capture *products* of the developing *context-process* interface.

A majority of the existing empirical literature examines correlations between contexts and

products of parenting and adult development. Interestingly, this pattern of empirical

investigation of child effects on adult development parallels the historical development of

unidirectional socialization research in early parent-child relations, generating long lists of

correlations between assumed antecedents and consequences while ignoring intervening

processes (Schaffer, 1984). If any given context were highly and consistently correlated with a

particular product, then the processes of parenting and adult development would not be as

consequential. Because variability in products is observed within similar contexts, the

importance of intervening processes is highlighted. Furthermore, contexts do not create products

without intervening processes; there are no direct paths from contexts to products without

processes mediating the relationship. Adding a further layer of complexity, the interactions

among these elements are continually shifting and unpredictable, partly because of human

agency. Specifically, humans make conscious choices about ways to direct their energies and

behavior. In doing so, they change the relationships between contexts, processes and products of

development. Social scientists typically discuss contexts of development from the perspective of

demographic summary data (e.g., the subjects were middle-class, married couples with children

in their teen years). Although these summary data do not capture elaborate differences in the

quality of contexts, they do reflect some qualitative aspects. For instance, middle class families

have a different set of resources to draw upon than do working class families, thereby creating

qualitatively different contexts for their development. From the perspective of both parents and

children, however, the quality of interactions (process variables) more directly captures the

texture of life in the family.

One theoretical perspective that focuses on qualitative context, including historical,

individual, family, cohort, and generational factors is the life course approach. Life course

approaches to understanding development emerged from foundations in family sociology to

include interdisciplinary integrations considering individuals in families in historical and

demographic contexts (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Hareven, 1996). Life course theorists have

focused attention on developmental changes that can be viewed as transitions in roles and family

careers or trajectories, while life span developmentalists, with roots most directly tied to

individual psychology, have focused more attention on products of development that are, in

essence, traits or states (Baltes, 1979). As such, developmentalists from the different traditions

employ different theoretical constructs, different levels of analysis, distinct conceptualizations of

marker variables, and varied methods of assessing and conceptualizing developmental outcomes

across disciplines. Both approaches to development offer useful lenses for viewing the effects of

children on adult development.

Despite having multiple disciplinary approaches representing rich theoretical , conceptual

and empirical traditions, we know little about the *processes* of development (Parke, in press).

However, we know much more about contexts of development and products of development.

The differences in our knowledge base between these categories is grounded in current levels of

conceptualization, the nature of what is being studied, and ways to operationalize and measure

them. Simply stated, many contextual components of development are conceptualized and

operationalized as relatively straightforward quantitative variables (often linked to demography).

 Similarly, because of the developmental histories of our disciplines and the efforts invested in

advancing our understanding of products of development and ways to measure them, we have a

fair number of "outcome" variables that are well operationalized and capable of being tapped

through tried and trued psychometrics.

Contexts of Development

Recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of contexts of development for both

children (Garcia-Coll et al., 1996) and parents (Palkovitz, 2002). A few examples make it clear

that the context of a parent-child relationship makes a great deal of difference for adult

developmental outcomes. In the life-course tradition, it has been well documented that early vs.

late timing of parenting creates distinctly different life course experiences for mothers (Burton,

1990) and fathers (Cooney, Pedersen, Indelicato & Palkovitz, 1993). Specifically, early child

bearing has been associated with lower educational attainment and lower income for both early-

timing mothers and fathers. These findings suggest that adult development exerts a reciprocal

effect on parenting as well. From a life span perspective we know that parenting a difficult baby

is associated with significantly greater stress than raising a child with an easy temperament

(Thomas & Chess, 1977). In extreme cases, chronically difficult babies are thought to elicit

abusive behavior from parents (Sameroff, 1975). Thus, there is individual variability in the

developmental outcome effects for parents who are early timing and late timing, for those who

parent easy vs. difficult children, and for parents who experience ongoing interaction with their

children in many other contexts of development.

The critical point is that contexts of interaction contribute to the meanings that family

members create and the cognitive, emotional and behavioral components (Palkovitz, 1997),

outcomes, or sequences that follow any given interaction. These sequences, in turn, contribute to

the processes that influence developmental outcomes, or products. The processes of parent-child

interaction become part of the relationship's historical context and contribute meaning

(cognitively and affectively) to subsequent interactions.

Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998) suggest that five broad categories of factors

interact in influencing responsible fathering. These are: father factors, coparental factors, mother

factors, child factors, and [general] contextual factors?. These factors, if applied to the parenting

relationship as a whole, are useful in looking at the context of the parent-child relationship.   To

adequately depict the adult development effects of parent-child interaction is extremely difficult,

considering the complexity of these interactions. Yet, if scholarship does not cope with this

complexity, then, given the diversity of parent-child relationships that are both products and

producers of multilevel person-context relations, neither research nor application will be

adequate (Lerner et al., 1995).

FATHER FACTORS

What father factors are part of the context of parent-child interaction? We know that men

show marked individual (Belsky, Steinberg, & Draper, 1991) and cultural variation in the

expression of paternal care (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000).

How men see themselves as potential and factual fathers influences father involvement

(Palkovitz, 1980, 1997). The father identity is often powerfully influenced by beliefs that are tied

to the way the men's current and previous romantic partners have responded to them – and

indirectly by their children (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000). Fathers come to see themselves, at least

in part, based on how they believe others see them; these reflected appraisals being drawn from

existing social and/or cultural beliefs and expectations (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000). This self-perception and a perceived self-competence in interacting with children is also associated with a father's involvement with his children (Baruch & Barnett, 1986; McHale & Huston, 1984, Palkovitz, 1980, 1984) and his success as a father (Cowan, 1988).

Father role identification, competency, and commitment are also important influences on fathering (Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Inhinger-Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1995). These factors, working in conjunction with other interpersonal and contextual factors such as mothers' expectations (Palkovitz, 1984), father's residential status with his children (Marsiglio, 1995; Inhinger-Tallman et al., 1995), gender role (Radin & Harold-Goldsmith, 1989), father and mother's relationships with their own parents (Radin, 1994; Snarey, 1993), and father's time availability as it relates to hours of employment (Gottfried, Bathurst, & Gottfried, 1994; Palkovitz, Christiansen & Dunn, 1998), influence paternal engagement in the parenting process that, in turn, influences adult development.

CHILD FACTORS

Temperamentally easy children have been characterized by regularity, the tendency to approach novel stimuli, high adaptability, and a generally positive, mild mood. Children who have been described as temperamentally difficult tend to be irregular in terms of their biological functions, frequently withdraw in response to new stimuli, are slow to adapt to change, and often express intense, negative mood (Meyer, 1999). Thomas and Chess (1977) emphasized that child temperament affects parents' confidence, management styles, and level of involvement. Children's developmental status (Parke & Beitel, 1988), gender (Maccoby, 1998), age (Ambert,

2001; Belsky, 1984), and attachment styles (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978) each

influence parental interaction. In addition, child factors are influenced by social and physical

components such as the family context and the psychosocial and physical climates promoted by

the parents.

MOTHER FACTORS

Several factors have been found to influence a mother's involvement in the parenting

process and her engagement with the family. Maternal age and maturity level (Burton, 1990),

family structure (Aquilino, 1994; Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990; Rossi & Rossi, 1990) and timing

and transition to parenthood (Burton, 1990; Cowan & Cowan, 1992) create different contexts for

mothering processes and developmental outcomes.   Maternal employment status and work

patterns (Daly, 1996a; Hochschild, 1989; Pleck, 1997), maternal role satisfaction (Rogers &

White, 1998), perceived social support (Coltrane, 1996), mothers' sensitivity and responsiveness

to child signals (Ainsworth et al., 1978) and mothers' attachment to children (Ainsworth et al.,

1978) each influence patterns of mother-child interaction as well.

Mothers' overall affect and distress (Goldsteen & Ross,1989) play a significant role as

well. Mothers who are depressed generally appear more irritable, less emotionally available, and

express less warmth when interacting with their children when compared to non-depressed

mothers (Downey & Coyne, 1990). They have also been found to exhibit relatively higher levels

of negative affect, vocalize less often, and respond in a slower manner in parent-child

interactions (Radke-Yarrow, Nottelman, Belmont, & Welsh, 1993). Furthermore, they are more

likely to ignore their young children, become mentally disengaged, and be less aware of their

children's cues during play (Cox, Puckering, Pound, & Mills, 1987).

COPARENTAL FACTORS

Most empirical data on the relation between marital functioning and parenting behavior

originate from studies on the effects of divorce (e.g. Hetherington, 1993), but a smaller number

of investigations have been assessments of intact families. This literature, however, has been

difficult to interpret because of inconsistent findings (Meyer, 1999). Several studies have found

statistically significant positive relationships between marital satisfaction and parents' behavior

toward infants and young children. Cox, Owen, Lewis, and Henderson (1989) reported that

mothers who described their relationship with the husbands as close and open also displayed

sensitivity and warmth toward their infants during play interactions. Similarly, Jouriles, Pfiffner,

and O'Leary (1988) reported that mothers' level of marital discord was positively correlated with

their use of disapproval statements directed toward their young sons, and with inattentiveness to

their young daughters' disruptive behavior. However, other studies of marital satisfaction and

maternal behavior have failed to find statistically significant relations or have reported

significant, negative correlations between marital satisfaction and maternal sensitivity. Some

researchers have suggested that mothers may become more involved with their young children to

compensate for a less-than-satisfactory marriage. For example, Brody, Pillegrini, and Sigel

(1986) reported that martially distressed mothers were generally more engaged with their school-

aged children during teaching interactions than were mothers who reported relatively higher

levels of marital satisfaction (Meyer, 1999).

The quality of father-child relationships, both inside and outside marriage is more strongly correlated with the quality of the coparental relationship than is the mother-child relationship (Belsky & Volling, 1987; Cox, Owen, Lewis, & Henderson, 1989). Men's attachments to their children appear to be facilitated by their attachment to their wives (Doherty, 1997; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). When a man's connection to his wife is severed or dramatically altered, the family often fragments and diversifies. Mothers mediate men's relationships with their children by monitoring, supervising, and delegating certain tasks to fathers (Backett, 1987). Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, and Zill (1983) concluded: "It is apparent that a divorce (or a permanent separation) not only severs the marital bonds, but, often permanently ruptures the parent-child relationship, especially if the child is living apart from the father" (pp. 663-664).

There is evidence, that even within a satisfactory marital relationship, a father's relationships with his children, particularly young children, are often contingent on the mother's attitudes toward, expectations of (Palkovitz, 1984), and support for fathers, as well as by the extent of her involvement in the labor force (Doherty et al., 1998; DeLuccie, 1995; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Melby, 1990). Marsiglio (1991) found that fathers' involvement with children was more strongly correlated with mothers' characteristics than fathers' characteristics.

Other evidence suggests that the quality of the martial relationship is related to father-infant interaction patterns (Amato & Keith, 1991). In addition, some hold that the father-child relationship is altered more than mother-child relationship by the quality of the marriage (Belsky

& Volling, 1987). Factors such as affective changes in the quality of the parent-child

relationship, lack of emotional availability, and less optimal parenting styles have been suggested

as potential mechanisms through which marital disruption impacts the parenting processes and

subsequently, adult development (Parke, in press).

Parke's (in press) comprehensive review of fathers and families concludes that successful

fathering is more dependent on a supportive marital relationship than mothering is. He attributes

this to three factors. First, fathers' level of participation is, in part, influenced by the extent

which the mother permits and encourages participation (Bietel & Parke, 1998; Allen & Hawkins,

1999). Second, because the father role is less well articulated and defined than the mother role,

spousal support may serve to help crystallize the boundaries of appropriate role behavior. Third,

males typically have fewer opportunities to acquire and practice skills that are central to

caregiving activities during socialization and therefore may benefit more than mothers from

informational support (Parke & Brott, 1999).

A seven-year longitudinal study by Cowan and Cowan (1997) examining effects of

children on marriage found that childless couples "showed remarkable stability" across time

while parents experienced "significant and often disturbing or unexpected shifts" (p. 24). In

short, children have a dynamic influence on marriage. They are "unpredictable factors" in both

positive and negative ways (Ambert, 2001, p. 66). Purrington's (1980) finding that parents

experienced a more expansive range of emotions than non-parents sheds light on the "significant

shifts" reported by parents (above). This range of parental emotions, according to Ambert (2001),

runs the gambit, "from intense rage" to profound "joy" (p. 59), introducing a pull on adult

emotional development.

Parents are also sensitive to social support. A meta-analysis of studies examining the relationship between social support and maternal behavior revealed that perceived emotional and maternal support and maternal sensitivity are significantly correlated (Andreson & Telleen, 1992). Earlier research conceptualized social support as a buffer that insulates mothers against the influence of stressors that may threaten optimal parenting. Simons, Lorenz, Wu, and Conger (1993) reported that social support not only had a direct effect on supportive parenting, but also an indirect effect through its influence on levels of parental support. Inadequate social support was associated with higher rates of depression and hostility, which in turn was related to mothers' use of ineffective parenting practices. Several studies also suggest that the degree of emotional and social support that fathers provide mothers is related to indices of maternal caregiving competence as well as measures of the quality of infant-parent attachment (Dickie & Matheson, 1984; Pedersen, 1975).

GENERAL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Parental involvement is likely to vary across time, developmental periods of both parents and children, and in relation to other components of the social ecology and life circumstances. Palkovitz (1997) has documented that the specific context is important in moderating involvement patterns. It is also the case that different types and levels of involvement are appropriate in different settings or contexts. Furthermore, it must be taken into consideration that there are significant differences between individuals. These interindividual differences may make an appropriate way of expressing involvement with one child to be inappropriate with

another child or in a different context (Palkovitz, 1997).

The variability in contexts of parent involvement is extensive. Persons engaging in parenting roles vary by marital status (Amato, 2000; Aquilino, 1994; Cherlin, 1992; Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1990; Rossi & Rossi, 1990), marital quality (Cowan & Cowan, 1992), type of parenting relationship to child (Castro & Bumpass, 1989), legality of parental status (Marsiglio, 1995), residential status (Glick, 1989; Petersen & Zill, 1986), educational level (Pleck, 1997), and employment status (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001). Other dimensions of contextual difference include variables such as income, parents' relationship with their own parents (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Snarey, 1993), supports and hindrances toward involvement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999), personality, health, range and types of involvement engaged in (Pleck, 1997), predominant parenting style (Baumrind, 1971), cultural background, individual skill levels, and motivation (Parke, in press). While this list is not exhaustive, it does represent variables that are frequently reported in various studies of parent involvement. Table 1 depicts some of the characteristics which affect parents' involvement across time. Thus, when answering the question, "What does it mean when we say that a parent is more or less involved in child rearing?," the answer to the question partially depends on the current status of an individual parent at the time that we are assessing their involvement in an interdependent and dynamic array of relationships to the child and others in the family and community context.

Insert Table 1 about here

Processes of Development

In the professional developmental literature, processes of development are often contested ground-- they are more complex, organic, interpersonal, fluid, and controversial than many of the variables that fall into the context and product categories. Though we may have some general agreement concerning some of the process variables, they are often difficult to describe in detail or to measure in quantifiable metrics. For example, we know that good fathering is desirable for children, mothers, communities, and fathers themselves (Palkovitz, in press), but it is challenging to describe the processes of good fathering. As such, we are much better able to discuss correlations between contextual variables and developmental outcomes (products) than we are able to elucidate the processes that yield the developmental products in the contexts.

Processes can exert both direct and indirect effects on products of development. According to Barnard and Martell (1995), mothering itself "is learned in the *process* of interaction with the individual parented" (p. 1194, emphasis added). In this section we review a variety of parent-child processes and the biological, behavioral, psychological, moral, and social influences of these processes on parents. Palkovitz's (1997) work indicates that processes of parental involvement would have behavioral, cognitive and affective components.

BEHAVIORAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO PROCESS

In connection with behavior, it is important to note that parental behavior has been typically studied only one domain at a time. Rarely have studies focused on multiple dimensions of behavior simultaneously (Barnard & Martell, 1995; Radke-Yarrow, 1991). Thus, while research regarding different domains of behavior [e.g., (a) *monitoring*, (b) *caregiving*, and (c) *playing* as discussed below] is available, extant work tells us little about potential interactions and correlations across these domains.

Monitoring

With regard to *monitoring* behaviors, new mothers have been reported to "visually check [on their] infant's well-being about every 20 seconds" (Barnard & Martell, 1995, p. 13). Mothers typically monitor children's well-being consistently even before children are fully ambulatory. Although less is known about later child-monitoring patterns of mothers, child characteristics such as temperament, activity level, recreational preferences, and a child's propensity to engage in risk-taking behavior influence maternal monitoring behaviors well beyond infancy.

Caregiving

Caregiving behaviors and their origins and meanings are prevalent topics in the parenting literature. While the most basic temporal needs of children are universal, in our culture caregiving tasks are performed disproportionately by women generally and mothers specifically (Coltrane, 1996; Hochschild, 1989; Pleck, 1997). Most interpretive scholarship on parenting argues that a primary reason for this gender imbalance is the North American dominant ideal of *intensive mothering* where "the good mother" is "self-sacrificing" and "devoted to the care of

others" (Arendell, 2000, p. 1194; see also Hays, 1996; Thurer, 1993). Ideals of intensive

mothering, coupled with strong prescriptions for the working father (Christiansen & Palkovitz,

2001) help to explain some of the observed discrepancies in gendered divisions of caregiving.

The implications and effects of the paragon of the intensive mother extend into issues of child

care, maternal employment, gendered division of labor, role expectations, and beyond. Heated

debate surrounding this ideal will continue to animate scholarship for years to come (Glenn,

Chang, & Forcey, 1994; Hoffnung, 1997)

Although father involvement is more likely to be limited relative to mother involvement,

recent scholarship indicates that there are no significant gender differences in parenting

competency, (Parke, in press), affirmatively answering Snitow's (1992) hypothetical query, "Can

men really nurture?" (p. 42). Male nurturance and positive father-child interaction certainly

exist, although the need is far from met (Popenoe, 1996). However, while many fathers do

nurture, it is vital to note that there are gender differences in style of parent-child interaction.

Playing

There is perhaps no behavioral domain where gendered differences are more pronounced

in the empirical literature than parent-child play. Parke (in press), reviews approximately a dozen

studies that collectively identify mother-father differences both in terms of relative quantity and

quality of play, including "more bouncing and lifting games" and more "physical play" by

fathers. Parke concludes:

> In all studies reviewed, a reasonably consistent pattern emerges: Fathers are tactile and
> physical, and mothers tend to be verbal, didactic, and toy-mediated in their play. Clearly,
> infants and young children experience not only more stimulation from their fathers, but a
> qualitatively different stimulatory pattern.

On a related note, Maccoby (1998, p. 271) has posited that fathers "may be more susceptible to being aroused into states of positive excitement" than mothers – a hypothesis that Parke identifies as consistent with other documented gender differences.

The monitoring, caregiving, and playing behaviors reviewed above are significant in that what one does with vested time, interest, and energy influences the sense of who one *is.* In this sense, even the most ordinary parental tasks may influence and shape adult identity and development across time.

Psychological Contributions to Process and Identity Formation

The most salient factor in identity formation for women with children is mothering even when compared with marital status or occupation (Rogers & White, 1998). The potency of mothering over career in identity formation persists despite a tripling of the American maternal employment rate over the last three decades (Spain & Bianchi, 1996), and the powerful pull of North American consumerism on parents (Dienhart & Daly, 1997). An illuminating reason for this salience may be that mothering is "the main vehicle through which [children] first form their own identities" (Forcey, 1994, p. 357). It is probable that many women find mothering most significant because it is the through mothering that they most profoundly impact (and indeed give life to) the next generation. The related theme of Eriksonian generativity has received recent attention in fathering scholarship as well (e.g., Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; Palkovitz, 2002; Snarey, 1993) and similar identity patterns have been found in some fathers (Marks & Dollahite, 2001). In fact, Palkovitz (2002) found that involved fathers viewed fathering to be the primary

shaper of their lives.

Turning to the themes of context, processes, and products, Barnard and Martell (1995) have noted, "The constructs of mother role attainment and maternal identity are closely linked and are difficult to describe separately" (p. 7). The key distinction may lie in the definition of role attainment as a *process* (Mercer, 1985, p. 98); while identity may be viewed as a *product* of this process. More specifically, "Identity means that a woman has a sense of comfort in the role of mother. She sees herself *as* a mother rather than being 'like' a mother" (Barnard & Martell, 1995, p. 7, emphasis added). The processes of role attainment represent the journey; a positive identity as a parent is the destination.

Biological Contributions to Process

All mothers experience biological changes during pregnancy but these changes do not necessarily influence mothers in uniform ways. Although there are many unavoidable physiological changes following conception, some mothers choose to make additional health-related adjustments during pregnancy. Rubin's (1984) qualitative work indicates that in the first trimester many expectant mothers become more concerned with healthy eating habits and stop or curtail the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other deleterious substances. Thus, both direct and indirect child effects on mothers' adult development may emerge months before the actual birth.

Palkovitz's (2002) qualitative study of fathers found that the birth, presence, and actions of children frequently influence health-related changes in fathers as well (e.g., the reduction or cessation of alcohol, tobacco, and/or illegal drug use) as well as social changes such as decreases in "the party lifestyle" or gang activity. It is significant that the fathers made changes for the sake

of their children that they did not previously make for their partners or for themselves. Actively

engaged fathers also discussed the need to stay in shape so that they could participate in

physically demanding activities with their children as they grow (and the fathers age).

Child Contributions to Process in Parental Values and Beliefs

Research consistently indicates that many values and beliefs are transmitted by parents to

their children through example, instruction, and correction (Grusec, Goodnow, & Kuczynski,

2000), and Wilson's *The Moral Sense* (1996) presents evidence that children's sense of moral

development is significantly influenced by parents as well. Less attention has been given the to

the influence of children on parental values and beliefs. Ta, Kuczynski, Bernadini, and Harach

(1999) report from their review that parents' values and beliefs may be selectively influenced by

their children. Although some studies indicate that parents are least likely to be influenced by

adolescents in areas such as politics and religion, even in these areas child influence on parents

emerges in some studies (Marks & Dollahite, 2001; Palkovitz, 2002). It is interesting to note, for

example, that parents attend church more regularly than adults without children, particularly in

light of the finding that 90% of American parents want their children to have a religious

education of some sort (Nock, 1998). Therefore, while adolescents may have little direct,

intentional influence on their parents' beliefs, parents with young children may become

increasingly or newly active in a faith community because of their desire for their child to be

involved (e.g., Palkovitz & Palm, 1998). Child-influenced religious involvement can lead to

more in-depth religious commitment on the part of the parent, and this involvement has

numerous documented implications for adult development in the areas of physical and

psychological health, and social relationships (Marks, 2001).

Children's Contributions to Processes of Socialization

For many parents, expectancy marks the beginning of a social transition. Barnard and

Martell (1995) emphasize that for mothers-to-be, pregnancy related "changes in…relationships

[and] lifestyle…represent both loss and change" (p. 6). First-time mothers often seek to form or

intensify friendships with women who are already mothers in an effort to find psychological and

social support as well as practical advice. Mothers may also weaken relationships with those they

perceive to be potentially detrimental to their child, and may seek to promote their child's

acceptance into the family and kin network even before delivering (Arendell, 2000).

Following delivery, mothers face additional social changes that may include the

abandonment or curtailment of employment, along with the loss of work-related networks. Other

personal activities may fall by the wayside due to decreases in recreational time, money, and

energy. Although fathers' activities are affected, "mothers' activities are even more affected than

fathers'" (Ambert, 2001, p. 52).

As children develop and seek out personally appealing peers and activities, they influence

their parents (again, mothers more than fathers) by providing contact with the parents of their

peers (Muller & Kerbow, 1993). This contact allows parents to remain better informed of extra-

family socialization influences and provides additional opportunities for cooperation and

collaboration (Ambert, 2001), and community involvement (Palkovitz, 2002).   Because

children's activities can change after relatively brief periods of time (e.g., a youth league soccer

season), and because relationships among adults at children's events tend to be activity centered,

though parents may experience a broader social network by interacting with the parents of other

children, the friendships developed tend to be more transient and less intimate than adult

relationships that are not forged around child activities (Palkovitz, 2002).

Cognitive Processes

Pridham, Denney, Pascoe, Chiu, and Creasey (1995) have stated that "The problem-

solving *processes* a mother uses and the solutions she generates in response to a childrearing

problem can be viewed as components of parenting style. These processes and solutions structure

the child's learning and ultimately shape how the child problem solves intergenerational

problems" (p. 786, emphasis added). Other cognitive processes of parent-child relationships

include engagement in more probabilistic thinking (Newman & Newman, 1988), dialectical

thinking (Hoffman & Mannis, 1978), more anticipation of the future (Newman & Newman,

1988), greater allocentrism (Hooker & Fiese, 1993) and disequilibrium and reorganization of

thinking (Cowan, 1988). Parents also engage in direct learning of new content as they engage

with their children in pursuiing children's hobbies or interests (Palkovitz, 2002).

Qualitative Contributions to Understand Process

Daly (1992) notes that qualitative research is particularly well suited for exploring

processes within families. Although there is still a relative dearth of qualitative data, a recent and

growing body of qualitative literature explores the relationships between parenting contexts,

processes and products (Daly, 1992; Dienhart, 1998; Deinhart & Daly, 1997; Dollahite, Marks &

Olson, 1998; Holmes, 2001; Latshaw, 1998; Marks & Dollahite, 2001; Palkovitz, 2002;

Palkovitz & Palm, 1998). These studies represent a new breed of scholarship that is particularly

targeted at exploring and describing intergenerational relationships and development and

showing potential to bring greater conceptualization and understanding to the processes of family

life.

Palkovitz's (2002) qualitative analysis of detailed structured interviews with 40 involved

fathers suggests various processes that facilitate adult development through parental

involvement. Those processes include, but are not limited to acceptance of parental

responsibility; regular, active engagement with children; recognizing the asymmetry of parent-

child relationships in regard to responsibility for caregiving; frequent evaluation of parental role

enactment in relation to children's developmental status and needs; planning; monitoring;

formation of close affective ties to children; involvement in community roles and social

relationships that are initiated and maintained by parental status and roles; and parents' sense of

personal growth and satisfaction as a result of actively engaging in parenting behaviors and roles.

Such processes elude quantification and study through traditional "ticks and clicks" means of

assessing parent child interaction (Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999).

Holmes (2001) investigated relationships between marital and parental roles and how

relationships mediate interactions between the contexts and products of parenting and adult

development. Holmes found that processes interact in a manner that is not strictly additive;

moods and emotions in relationships are affected by the moods and emotions of oth4ers in their

interactions. Despite one's immediate mood, through the actions and emotions of others, moods,

perceptions and behaviors can change. Holmes has labeled the interactive quality of such

interpersonal relationships "synergy." This synergy can be both positive and negative, and

dependent on family members' emotions and actions. For example, fathers perceived (a) the relationships between maternal expectations and the paternal role, (b) maternal appreciation for the paternal role, (c) maternal authority, (d) instruction and guidance, (e) negative aspects of the co-parental relationship, (f) positive aspects of the co-parental relationship, and (g) fathers' perceptions of the paternal role as related to the co-parental relationship as interacting with and molding the synergy of families. Succinctly stated, family synergy is a process which effects both contexts and products of parent-child interactions, and ultimately, parents' adult development.

<div align="center">

Products of Development

</div>

As Kuczynski notes in the introductory chapter of this volume, although there has been great progress made in the conceptualization of bi-directionality, "this has not been reflected in empirical research." While bi-directionality is now a mainstream concept, Kuczynski, Harach, and Bernadini (1999) note that many studies do little more than pay lip service to bidirectionality as a causal concept in their research questions and issues, referring to it primarily in discussions concerning the limitations of findings. A review of the empirical literature looking at the effects of children on adult's development leaves major questions regarding the extent to which adult development is shaped by parenting. The most recent reviews (Ambert, 2001; Palkovitz, 1996) have little direct evidence to offer. Theoretical and anecdotal approaches are more abundant than empirical evidence.

Although certain contexts significantly correlate with certain outcomes (products), these correlations are only well-established in connection with child outcomes; adult/parent

developmental outcomes remain a frontier for empirical investigation. An interesting

observation is that this trend parallels the development of the "child outcome" literature

(Schaffer, 1984). Though there are not data capable of demonstrating causal effects of parenting

on adult development (Palkovitz, 1996), there are a few correlations between the contextual

variables of parenting and adult development outcomes (represented by line A in figure 1).

Hoffman and Mannis (1978) found greater levels of dialectical thinking in parents. Heath (1978,

1991) and Hooker and Fiese (1993) reported greater allocentrism and perspective taking ability in

parents, and Heath observed greater levels of self-awareness (1991) in parents compared to non-

parents. Several investigators have noted increased self-competence in parents (Heath, 1978;

Hoffman & Mannis, 1978; Palkovitz, 1994). Parents have been reported to manifest differences

in identity development (Cowan, 1988; Heath, 1978; Hoffman & Mannis, 1978), generativity

(Hooker & Fiese, 1993; Palkovitz, 1994; Snarey, 1993), and sex-typing (Cowan, 1988; Palkovitz,

1984, Palkovitz & Copes, 1988). Parents have also been reported to exhibit greater levels of

responsibility than non-parents (Daniels & Weingarten, 1988; Hooker & Fiese, 1993; Palkovitz,

1994). For additional reviews, see Ambert (2001) and Palkovitz (1996, 2002).

While mothering has long been viewed as central to adult development in women

(Arendell, 2000), newly emerging qualitative work indicates that men also perceive that direct

engagement in parenting roles, behaviors and interaction with children motivates developmental

change in men as adults and that men see fathering as a foundational force in shaping their own

development (Palkovitz, 2002). Parenting defines much of men's identity (Minton & Pasley,

1996), takes much of their time and energy (Dienhart & Daly, 1997), and shapes their daily

schedules (Daly, 1996a, 1996b). In summary, parenting influences adult developmental

outcomes for women and men (Ambert, 2001; Palkovitz, 1996). Further, though the story cannot

be elaborated here, involved fathers perceive that active engagement in parenting anchored their

mental, physical, and relational life. Children changed men's foci, their lifestyles, their family

relationships, their work lives, their community involvement, their health habits, their morals and

values, their emotional lives, and their marriages (Palkovitz, 2002).

The transformations perceived to be brought about by actively engaging in parenting

children represent many positive demand characteristics as well as some significant challenges,

hassles, energy demands, resource drains, unmet needs, and associated fears. Engaged parents

are drawn into greater levels of integration and differentiation than they have experienced

previously. In essence, they mature (Allport, 1961). Some maturation is manifested in virtually

every realm of development. This is not to suggest that all changes associated with parenting

children are perceived by parents to be pleasant or positive. However, in the overall balance,

many view parenting to be a valuable shaper of their lives for the better (Ambert, 2001;

Palkovitz, 2002).

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that contexts, processes and products of parent-child

relationships interact in complex and changing configurations to affect the adult development of

parents. What should be clear from this review is that it is not just that "children affect parents"

in a way that simply reverses the more traditional social mold perspective that parents socialize

children (Peterson & Rollins, 1987). Qualitative data and meta-analyses of existing quantitative

data paint the picture that active engagement in parenting roles and behaviors creates a varied,

multi-layered context of relationships, interactions, roles, social supports and challenges that

span significant periods of time in parents' lives. Further, parenting matters – parents are

motivated to provide for, protect, nurture, instruct, and facilitate the development of their

children. Because active engagement in parenting roles is often highly motivated and can span a

period of decades, it creates contexts, processes and products that are multidimensional, plastic,

relationally embedded, socially constructed, and life transforming. Much of parent engagement

takes place during the eras of young adulthood and middle age, both of which are relative

frontiers in developmental scholarship.

A particularly promising trend in conceptualization and empirical investigation is the

employment of purposive qualitative research. These investigations have the potential to further

our understanding of parent-child processes, to bring more refined conceptualization and

specificity that will generate measures and empirical work focused on the process-product

interface. This is the area of parenting and adult development most in need of advancement.

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Table 1
A Partial Listing of Sources of Variability in
Parent Involvement Contexts

Child Characteristics
- Gender
- Age
- Personality
- Developmental Status
- Health

Parent's Demographic Factors
- Age
- Education
- Income
- Marital Status
    - Single
    - Cohabiting
    - Engaged
    - Married
    - Separated
    - Divorced
    - Re-cohabiting
    - Remarried
- Relationship to Child(ren)
    - Biological Parent
    - Social Parent
- Residential Status
    - Co-residential
    - Non-resident, but nearby
    - Non-resident and distant
- Timing of Transition to Parenthood
    - Early
    - On-Time
    - Late
- Employment Status
    - Voluntarily Unemployed
    - Involuntarily Unemployed
    - Part-Time Employed
    - Full-Time Employed
    - Multiple Jobs
- Cultural Identity
- Religiosity

Parent's Personal Factors
- Functionality
- Preparation for Parenthood
    - Experience in Caregiving
    - Knowledge of Child Development
- Relational Style
- Motivation
- Personality
- Skills/Abilities
- View of Parenting Role
- Parenting Identity
- Cultural Background

Competing or Complementary Role Demands
- Family
    - Husband/Wife
    - Son/Daughter
    - Brother/Sister
    - Uncle/Aunt
- Work
    - Hours Working
    - Job Related Stress
- Community
    - Involvement in Organizations

Relational Factors
- Partner/Significant Other
    - Marital Status
    - Relational Quality
    - Degree of Gatekeeping
- Relationship with own Parents
    - Primacy of Modeling vs. Reworking
    - Degree of Warmth vs. Emotional
    - Level of Conflict
- Siblings/Extended Family
- Social Supports

Parent Involvement
- Frequencies
- Range of Behaviors
- Quality of Interactions
- Meaning of Involvement