Fathers' Nurturance of Children over the Life Course

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According to an extensive review of five prominent child development and family journals covering the 1930–2006 period, social science scholars increasingly have focused attention on fathers (Goldberg, Tan, & Thorsen, 2009). Other scholars have also produced summary articles and edited volumes showcasing the breadth of research on fathering (Lamb, 2004, 2010; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; Peters, Peterson, Steinmetz, & Day, 2000; Pleck, 2010; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002).

We streamline our assessment of recent scholarship on fathering in the United States by accentuating how the concepts of *nurturance*, *intimacy*, and *responsivity* shape fathering across the life course. Dowd's (2000) recommendation that the definition of fatherhood be linked more directly to nurturance of father–child relationships in families guides our approach. She attempts to change expectations about who fathers are and what they do. In her words:

> Nurture means care—physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual—gauged by one's conduct and the consequences for children's positive development. It is responsive to the different needs of children at different ages. Thus nurture is not a static conception. It means more than simply doing; it also means the manner in which things are done, and their results for children (p. 176).

Promoting a more nurturing style of fathering is consistent with recent cultural discourses and fathers' everyday lives because fathers increasingly are providing direct care, and more of it, for their sons and daughters of all ages (Doucet, 2006).

In a related vein, notions of intimacy bring to the fore life experiences connected to familiarity, trust, self-disclosure, emotional vulnerability, and physical affection. Thus, we underscore how fathers interpret, negotiate, and express verbal and physical intimacy with children in different contexts over time. Fathers' intimacy displays imply that they share some type of affinity and sense of "we-ness" with their children.

Finally, nurturing fathers, presumably, must recognize some of their children's specific needs. Responsivity—the degree to which men recognize and respond to their child's and the mother's needs—varies and can have implications for the child and family (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006). Even though gender norms, power and partner influences, work schedules, emotional tradeoffs, and physiological conditions can affect fathers' responsivity, we suspect that social initiatives could help men develop this interpersonal skill set as well. More attuned and responsive fathers are likely to express nurturance in timely, developmentally appropriate, and effective ways.

Scholars in various fields have introduced similar and sometimes overlapping concepts into the

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literature on father–child relationships (Lamb & Lewis, 2010). Similar to attachment theory, we are interested in the basic trust that fathers create with their young children, and the process of attachment has been measured as nurturance, closeness, and responsivity. Psychological studies of paternal nurturance have utilized items such as showing love for children, understanding children's worries, hugging and kissing children, caring for and paying attention to children, and making children feel better (Belsky, 1984; Reuter & Biller, 1973). More recent sociological studies of nurturing paternal involvement emphasize the importance of closeness as a measure of a bond between fathers and children (Amato, 1994; Coltrane, 1988). Other studies note reciprocal interaction between fathers and children and the intimacy that emerges as a result of that interaction (Brown, McBride, Shin, & Bost, 2007; Habib & Lancaster, 2006; Rane & McBride, 2000). However, Pleck (2010) argues that the application of attachment theory to paternal involvement is primarily limited to infancy and early childhood. We need to integrate other theoretical frameworks to find the conceptual tools required to study men's nurturance of children over the life course.

Integrating Symbolic Interactionist and Life Course Perspectives

To focus on nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity we turn to theoretical frameworks that assess meaning and dynamic processes. According to symbolic interactionists, various identity and social processes are implicated when a father nurtures, is intimate with, or responds to his child's needs. These processes are often influenced by gendered perceptions of parenting and include efforts to either construct and manage identities or define and navigate familial situations. Consistent with Cooley's (1964) looking-glass self concept, others inside and outside the family can influence both how a man sees his real or projected life as a father as well as his actual fathering behavior. Thus, a man's disposition toward being a nurturing father can be inspired, reinforced, or restricted by mothers, childcare workers, teachers, therapists, and the like who support or impinge upon his efforts to be a nurturing, engaged father. Others' reactions may be critical in helping a man develop and sustain his nurturing disposition when he is removed from a child's everyday life because of incarceration, work, nonresidency status, or other circumstances.

We frame our analysis by emphasizing how men/fathers perceive their lives and negotiate meanings associated with fathering. Moreover, we discuss relationship dynamics, including gatekeeping and alliance formation activities relevant to father–child, father–mother, and father–stepfather pairs. Although a fair amount has been written about father identities (Henley & Pasley, 2005; Marsiglio, 1995; Minton & Pasley, 1996; Rane & McBride, 2000) and fathering trajectories that include a man's self-perceptions as a father (Marsiglio, 2004, 2007), little theoretical work has addressed fathering in terms of nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity. Whether it be constructing a father identity separate from relations with a specific child, or a self-image forged out of interactions with a focal child, the emotional and caregiving dimensions to fathering can contribute to how a father sees himself.

Because men have the capacity to engage in varied forms of nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity prior to having children and for decades thereafter, we prioritize a "long view onto fathering." Our approach provides us more leverage to synthesize interactionist and life course themes in novel ways. We consider how motivations and meanings of fathering change over time, and emerge as a trajectory of nurturance in father–child relationships. This long view allows us to link findings from previously unrelated periods of fathering such as the transition to fatherhood alongside middle age and older men's fathering.

With an interactionist eye toward transitional and developmental processes, we stress insights related to four main tenants of the life course perspective (Giele & Elder, 1998). First, we emphasize the theme of *human agency* in fathering by noting how fathers develop and modify their own style of nurturing their children. This life course concept complements the interactionist perspective

because fathers not only construct a style of nurturing but an identity that goes along with it. The link between self-reflection and behavior is consistent with many theoretical approaches, including a life course perspective, and accentuates men's efforts to create identities in families (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Pellegrini & Sarbin, 2002). For instance, recent studies show that becoming a father provides a turning point in a man's narrative identity and subsequent behavior (Edin, Nelson, & Paranal, 2004; Sampson & Laub, 1993). When a father works at being an engaged and reflective parent (Palkovitz, 2002), the father identity then emerges and reflects an authentic biographic self over time (Gubrium, Holstein, & Buckholdt, 1994).

Men actively craft a father identity and regularly assign meaning to it. Moreover, this work takes place throughout the life course; father identities require monitoring and tailoring. Giddens (1991, p. 54) notes that identities require "keeping a particular narrative going" over time. Viewed as a process, identities encompass a sequence of events and meanings that guide future behavior and integrate goals, motivations, and feelings (Maruna, 2001; McAdams, 1985). In the reciprocal process of give and take with their children, fathers build identities that are lifelong projects, repeatedly shaped by new experiences (McAdams, 1993).

The concept of human agency illustrates how fathers respond as nurturers to their children, but guided as well by cultural discourses about and interpersonal processes involving mothers, children, stepfathers, biological fathers, and others. Public discourses about fathering shift over time (Griswold, 1993; Lupton & Barclay, 1997). The vision of "new fathers," or men who can blend providing and caregiving as priorities in their lives, reflects a shift in mainstream cultural discourses. The degree to which men embrace identities as nurturing fathers can be contrasted to how often men actually nurture their children.

This potential gap between the culture and conduct of fathering (LaRossa, 1997) suggests that men accept, resist, as well as contribute to social changes. A life course perspective on human agency highlights how fathers craft new identities in social relations that lack clear definition. Contemporary fathers must confront what it will be like to be an engaged father of a 21-year-old son, and how to nurture or remain intimate (as a parent) with a 55-year-old daughter. There are few prescriptions for what nurturance means, or how one acts in these relationships. That individuals in recent decades are living longer, on average, means that more and more fathers and their adult children remake their relationships at different points in the life course.

Second, we highlight the notion of *linked lives* in that experiences and changes in one person's life ripple through others' lives. Many studies have examined how fathers respond to their young children, when the need for nurturance and intimacy has immediate and often clear consequences for children's development and well-being (Lamb, 2004; Paquette, 2004; see also Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Opportunities to be nurturing in this developmental stage can also be plentiful and clearly marked, as young children require guidance, support, love, and attention as they establish themselves and their physical, emotional, cognitive, and social capacities. However, adolescent children also have clear needs for nurturance that may call for a different style of responsivity or intimacy (Amato, 1994; Hawkins, Amato, & King, 2006, 2007; Larson & Richards, 1995). For example, youth who struggle with obesity and eating disorders, substance abuse, or early pregnancy need fathers to attend to their needs with a different type of maturity, honesty, strength, and confidence. Farther along the life course, scholars have rarely explored the complexities of intergenerational parenting, and specifically the demands of grandfathering youth alongside fathering adult children (Diamond, 2007). Again, it seems that later in life the opportunities for men's expressions of nurturance may increase, when older fathers may be called on to express a rich and diverse range of intimacy in their distinct relationships.

The notion of linked lives reflects how fathers' role transitions in work and family domains shape their children's role transitions in the same domains. For example, the duration, consistency, and quality of father involvement due to divorce

or job loss may shape children's identities, their entry into the workforce, or their family formation patterns (Elder, 1998; Kost, 2001; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). However, the concept of linked lives also implies that children can respond to and nurture their fathers as well. Reciprocal nurturance becomes more salient when the life course approach is used to chart trajectories of nurturance as men and their children age (Diamond, 2007; Snarey, 1993). How do youth and adult children support their fathers' cognitive or social development in the later years of life? How do fathers respond to their children's attempts to nurture them? Fathers and children may develop closer relationships over time if they share in reciprocal communication, physical contact, and even social or cognitive stimulation. Some suggest that narratives linking these generations may not be simple biographies, but emergent cobiographies, or linked identities of being fathered and being a father (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985; Plath, 1980).

Father and child relationships are embedded in an extensive network of kin relationships and expectations as well (Hansen, 2005; Nelson, 2005; Roy & Burton, 2007). As these dyadic relationships change so does the need or capacity for nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity. After a divorce, kin networks shift to refocus on children's needs in the midst of possible parental conflict and separation. The sudden change in parents' intimate relationship ripples through children's lives, and the configurations that would allow for fathers' nurturance of children change as well. Although fathers may be challenged to be close to their children after divorce, the need for intimacy remains, and perhaps becomes more urgent. A life course perspective on linked lives underscores the varied implications of divorce on children of different ages. Divorced fathers with young school-age children are likely to express intimacy differently than fathers with young adult children (Cooney, 1994; Emery & Dillon, 1994). The entry of stepparents into children's lives also provides men with new opportunities to nurture children not biologically related to them (Marsiglio, 2004). Further, increasing numbers of single fathers confront distinct concerns that they could be isolated and need assistance in nurturing their children as they grow (Hamer & Marchioro, 2002).

Third, we *locate fathers in context* by recognizing that they are embedded in social, historical, and physical circumstances (see Hofferth, Pleck, Stueve, Bianchi, & Sayer, 2002). These circumstances can inspire men to step up to nurture children in new ways, but they can also serve to constrain fathers' choices for caregiving as well. A life course perspective emphasizes that some men are afforded resources that foster generative behavior (Gerson, 1995), including employment, education, income, and age/maturity. In this way, social class differences may lead to different styles of nurturance over time. They may also frustrate men who face constrained choices as they aspire to greater levels of intimacy or closeness with their children, but cannot attain them. Obviously, relationship circumstances (e.g., marriage, cohabitation, single parent households) may inhibit nurturance. Likewise, children's attributes (e.g., health problems, temperament, gender, age) may constrain or encourage fathers' nurturing behavior.

Community values, norms, and interactions shaped by race/ethnicity, religion, politics, and language help inform messages about how fathers should or could nurture children. The life course lens highlights that fathers in recent decades have secured new opportunities to express their emotions physically and verbally with children. It seems more acceptable and expected, for example, that fathers hug their children, tell their adult sons and daughters "I love you," or engage in personal and intimate discussions with their children, regardless of age. In other words, sociocultural contexts in recent years have opened up spaces for fathers to be more nurturing than previous generations of men.

Nurturance is also shaped by how it is situated physically in family worlds (Marsiglio, Roy, & Fox, 2005). Men's shared residence with children is a key indicator of how nurturance is played out in families. We recognize that daily contact and interaction, over many years and across different developmental periods, bring new opportunities to express nurturance. In this way, marriage or

cohabitation in a shared family household may be fertile ground for fathers to become more nurturing. However, as the number of never-married, nonresident fathers has increased, new barriers to close father–child relationships have arisen. So too, men who experience separation from children after divorce continue to encounter difficulties in sustaining relationships with their children. How does nonresidence constrain intimate interaction between fathers and children? How do fathers and children interpret and express physical intimacy when they do not see each other daily? In particular, if children only see their fathers outside the household, in public settings such as malls, restaurants, movie theaters, or churches, are reciprocal gestures of closeness discouraged? A life course focus on physical sites might suggest that fathers and children try to cope with barriers to intimacy resulting from nonresidence. Research might also discover strategies that fathers and children forge to develop a sense of closeness despite separation.

Fourth, because the form, quantity, and quality of men's nurturance of children can change throughout the life course, we attend to *multiple perspectives on time*. With a focus on time, a life course perspective weaves together the three previously described concepts (agency, linked lives, and location/context) by considering the interplay of different levels of change—within the individual, across generations and cohorts, and over historical time. This view parallels Eggebeen's (2002, p. 205) suggestion that "we need data that is sensitive not only to the diverse settings of fatherhood, but also to its dynamic and constantly changing nature." So too, fathering studies are no longer frozen in assumptions about presence or absence; in fact, as men's fathering perspectives and behavior have diversified in recent decades, the scholarly focus has shifted to understanding the meaning of presence and the transitions between presence and absence across contexts and over time (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004).

Researchers have investigated how father involvement changes *within* the lives of individual fathers (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1996). Building on Hogan's (1981) research on early work transitions in men's lives, Palkovitz (2002) discerned specific stages of men's involvement as they aged, and the impact that such involvement had on men as individuals. Nurturant fathering is related to a broader expression of men's generativity, and both processes likely benefit men's personal development by enhancing their sense of self and enriching interpersonal ties (Snarey, 1993). There are also typical patterns in nurturant fathering that cut across the *lives* of individual fathers. For example, some men's residential status changes in marked ways over time. A common pattern of involvement for middle- and low-income African American fathers is "flux" (Mott, 1990). In effect, snapshot measures of residence illustrate how a majority of these men move in and out of children's households. Perceptions of and motivation behind men's nurturing behavior shifts as well. Bowman and Sanders (1998) demonstrate how older African American fathers were preoccupied with their sense of generative commitment to younger generations, whereas younger fathers were concerned with fulfilling normative provider role expectations.

Men's style and degree of nurturance is tied to intergenerational processes in families. Researchers have been interested in how men are socialized to fatherhood, and they have examined intergenerational influences of fathers on their sons (Goldscheider, Hofferth, Spearin, & Curtin, 2009). Roy (2006) finds that a father's experience with his own father—whether as a stable presence, a transitory figure, or even a complete absence—is a strong motivator for paternal involvement. Low-income African American men related their own fathering to the barriers and dynamics that they experienced with their fathers. By examining men's nurturance within broad intergenerational networks of kin, we can trace patterns of transmission: how fathers' withholding or sharing intimate expressions influences subsequent generations to also value nurturant parenting.

Finally, to examine change, we must consider historical transitions in how the key motifs of fatherhood, such as, moral guide, breadwinner, model for gendered behavior, and nurturance are culturally represented and influence fathering (Lamb, 2000, 2002). Demographic patterns are

noteworthy too. Eggebeen and Uhlenberg (1985) identified an ironic cohort pattern: men of child-rearing age (20–50 years old) spent 40% less time in families with children in 1980 than they did in 1960. In 1980, fewer young adult men lived in environments with children present, which the authors speculated could lead to less political attention and less funding directed toward programs and facilities for children. Despite these cohort trends, however, relative ratios of fathers' to mothers' routine activity time with children have actually increased, in part due to the decreased amount of time that working mothers spend with children (Pleck, 2010). By examining how trajectories of men's nurturance emerge across families, and are clustered by birth cohorts, we identify developments in the social expectations of men as "new" fathers in contemporary society.

Although the burgeoning literature on fathers encompasses numerous topics beyond our coverage here, we address a matrix of timely issues most relevant to our focus on nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity. These overlapping conceptual and substantive topics include gendered and embodied fathering, metaparenting, transitions to and within fathering, situated fathering, complex social contexts for fathering (two-parent, social/step, single, nonresident, migrant, gay, multiple partner, fragile families), racial and ethnic diversity in fathering, father nurturance and social capital, and reciprocal influences between fathers and their children.

Gendered and Embodied Fathering

With an eye on gender and body themes, scholars in recent decades have begun to conceptualize fathering more broadly by focusing on when it begins, what it entails, and how coparents negotiate it. Marsiglio and Pleck (2005) use a critical gender lens to review the burgeoning literature on how fathering is connected to the production of masculinities and various structures on social inequality. Another noteworthy development has been the increasing attention given to the cognitive and emotional dimensions to fathering (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Marsiglio & Hutchinson, 2002; Nicholson, Howard, & Borkowski, 2008; Palkovitz, 1997; Walzer, 1998). Each of these literatures acknowledges that socially constructed perceptions of and responses to the male body shape fathering throughout the life course.

For some men, the energies that define fathering begin to surface prior to paternity. Although men cannot technically nurture children who are not yet born—or at least conceived—they can nurture their pregnant partners and engage in activities, including youth work, that refine their nurturing dispositions. Fathers who witness an ultrasound of their unborn child or who communicate through touch and talk with this emerging life engage in an early form of fatherly intimacy. Thus, even though men's transition to parenthood during the prenatal period is "disembodied" compared to what happens with mothers, men can experience "proxy" embodiment through "body-mediated-moments" fostered by their partner (Draper, 2003). In addition, those who care for their pregnant partners or support their partners' healthy habits related to prenatal visits, smoking, drinking, drugs, exercise, and diet may be seen as indirectly displaying nurturance or a type of responsivity because, ultimately, children tend to benefit if their mothers seek prenatal care early and regularly, stay fit, and avoid risky substance behaviors (Martin, McNamara, Milot, Halle, & Hair, 2007). Children's health is likely to be enhanced as well if their fathers are supportive of the mother breast-feeding (Sharma & Petosa, 1997). Likewise, those who make calculated decisions about their own health prior to conception are being responsive to their future children's needs. Fathers with better health habits are more likely to produce healthy sperm thereby lowering their children's chances of having pre- or postnatal health complications (Daniels, 2006). Granted, these activities typically have not been conceptualized as father involvement, but they are relevant to an expanded view of fathering (Marsiglio, 2009). Unfortunately, it is difficult to disentangle what men do during the prenatal period that stems from their desire to connect with or respond to their children's needs vs. their intent to respect their romantic partnerships—especially given the current limited measures of men's prenatal involvement (Marsiglio, 2008a).

Aside from the health-related advantages young children can reap from having nurturing men/fathers, supportive dispositions fostered or reinforced in the early period may influence fathers' involvement in subsequent years. Although early father–child connections may be tied to fathers' maturity and empathy skills, the warmth and attentiveness fathers display as new fathers sets the tone for how they might interact with their children later on. Compared to their older counterparts, teenage and young men who make the transition to fatherhood may be less likely to have the disposition, patience, and maturity to nurture children, even though some are impressive fathers (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997). Life experience, coupled with a sense of being ready for fatherhood, can prime men to be more sensitive to children's behavior and needs.

Fathers of any age can experience intimacy with their children in nonphysical as well as physical ways. Situated in male bodies, fathers often navigate settings where others perceive and treat them in gendered ways. Thus, some expressions are uniquely tied to how male bodies are perceived and used. In her insightful analysis, Doucet (2006, 2009) underscores the value of understanding the embodied elements of how men experience fathering. As Doucet shows, stay-at-home fathers and those who have significant childcare responsibilities, often feel unwelcome by small children's mothers who mingle in play-date networks.

Fathers' bodies come into play more directly during infant care and play activities with young children. The literature clearly shows that fathers are more likely than mothers to engage in tactile, rough-and-tumble horseplay (Coltrane, 1996; Lamb & Lewis, 2010; Parke, 1996). How does playful touching in this way influence the bonds fathers and children forge? Intimacy shared in this physical modality can open doors to and be mixed with more tender forms of affection. Encouraging young children to take supervised risks that might lead to falls, scraps, bruises, and the like can provide fathers with other intimacy opportunities that include consoling.

Fathers' opportunities to be intimate with their children and to respond thoughtfully to them in other ways are sometimes linked to what coparents do. Unfortunately, most studies of father involvement have not controlled for mother involvement (Pleck & Hofferth, 2008). Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson's (1998) model of father involvement prominently featured women as contributors to men's involvement with children, sparking a debate over "who is responsible for responsible fatherhood—mothers or men themselves?" Over the past three decades, fathers are doing slightly more child care and more work in the household, although this is likely due to a shift in the proportion of work that women do with children and at home, as women's work hours have increased (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). Cooperative coparenting may lead to better child outcomes through more responsive parenting behaviors, higher quality relationships, and more frequent contact (Sobolewski & King, 2005). Couples' marital expectations and changes in relationship status are the most important predictors of men's involvement with children in low-income families (Carlson & McLanahan, 2004; Waller & McLanahan, 2005), though it is unclear how these conditions influence lower income men's nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity in particular.

Cognitive Map of Parenting

At a broader social level, all parents engage in cognitive reflection that encompass individual parent's thoughts as well as cultural scripts for parenting (LaRossa, Simonds, & Reitzes, 2005). Holden and Hawk (2003, p. 191) refer to a specific type of cognitive reflection as "metaparenting," defined as "a class of evaluative parental thought concerning the child-rearing domain that typically occurs before or after parent–child interactions" (see also Hawk & Holden, 2006). Building on this initial conceptualization, Nicholson et al. (2008) identified five areas (RPM3) that comprise a parenting cognitive map: (1) responding appropriately to children's needs, (2) preventing adverse situations, (3) monitoring influences on development, (4) mentoring child development, and (5) modeling appropriate behavior. Efforts to

examine "metaparenting" can push the field of fathering research in fresh directions relevant to our focus. Fathers' reflections on their own fathering sometimes implicate matters related to nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity.

Exploring how fathers engage in metaparenting in these areas can expand understanding about father involvement. For instance, Marsiglio (2004) illustrated how stepfathers privately contemplate and sometimes discuss with others their options for being nurturing and intimate with their stepchildren. In these situations, stepfathers may reflect on whether their children would benefit from receiving safe hugs and caresses for support, acceptance, and comfort. They may wrestle with the prospects of being more reserved because they do not want others to misinterpret their behavior. Some fathers may reason too that showing affection—to stepchildren or the children's mother—enables them to model healthy interpersonal behavior.

How do fathers' life course experiences influence their metaparenting? As Walzer (1998) notes in her study of new parents, compared to their partners, new fathers tend to spend less time thinking about their children. But what conditions, if any, shrink this gap between fathers and mothers at various points during their coparenting, or encourage some fathers more than others to undertake reflective fathering? Perhaps metaparenting is fostered or discouraged by what parents, sons, and grandparents share directly and indirectly with one another in the course of their family interactions. Presumably, as men and fathers gain more life experience in- and outside a family context, they will acquire a more worldly perspective, experience, and practical insights that enable them to invoke a more active form of metaparenting. So too, as children's needs change as a result of their transitioning into new phases of their lives in which education planning, work, and major consumer purchases become more salient, some fathers may become more adept at nurturing them through critical decision-making. Finally, other circumstances like men's gendered style of friendship, having multiple children, previous youth work experience in the community, or more sibling caretaking growing up may influence the scope and style of fathers' metaparenting.

Transitions to and Within Fathering

By definition, the life course perspective assumes that a key dimension to understanding fathers' lives is to make sense of their transitions to fatherhood and their transitions within fathering (Cowan, 1988; Cowan et al., 1985). In summarizing the varied ways scholars have defined parental transitions, Palkovitz and Palm (2009) attempt to shed new light on the conditions that shape fathering careers. They extract four common themes from the different models of transitions:

- Growth is reflected by a higher level of integration and differentiation.
- Change in parents can be both progressive and regressive, representing developmental gains and losses.
- Integration occurs across different parenting domains: cognitive, behavioral, and affective.
- Transitions begin when a certain level of disequilibrium is reached and end when a new, more integrated level of equilibrium is reached (p. 6).

The themes earmark general changes fathers undergo when faced with either challenging or empowering circumstances, but they also hint at more specific ways fathers may alter their desire and options to be nurturing, intimate, and responsive.

Informed by these themes, we suggest five different ways to consider transitions in fathering that reflect a life course perspective. First, some transitions are anchored to a particular status (e.g., stepfather, nonresident father, gay father). A status as a father may shift in relation to a changing relationship status, such as getting married, divorced, or remarried. Many stepfathers learn to see themselves as having fatherlike identities in relation to stepchildren despite not having a genetic tie. Of course, biological fathers as well as stepfathers of daughters may feel awkward navigating their daughter's journey through puberty, but stepfathers are likely to face unique difficulties because of their nonbiological status. The embodied identity work they do often involves closely monitoring and curtailing their physical contact. In addition, while we know that some fathers spend less time with their children once they become nonresident (Cheadle, Amato,

& King, 2010; Manning & Smock, 1999), these fathers may also experience shifts in the extent to which and how they engage in the physical and emotional expressions of fathering. They typically have fewer occasions to bathe and tell good night stories to young children and more limited chances to have spontaneous, personal talks and casual at-home interactions with older children. So too, fathers who transition from resident to nonresident and pay child support may feel their breadwinning responsibilities overshadow their attempts to be nurturing. Among attentive fathers, the less affluent may feel particularly challenged to create opportunities that allow them the time and place to emphasize the emotional aspects of fathering.

Second, a linked life transition involves a shift that is induced by someone else's status change. Grandfatherhood represents the primary example of this transition though situations like becoming an uncle or an ex-in-law raise similar issues. Becoming a grandfather provides a man an expanded set of opportunities to express nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity towards his adult children (and grandchildren) while sharing special memories and life lessons from his own early fathering experiences.

Third, another type of transition is rooted in historical shifts reflected in cohort experiences. For example, as mothers moved into the workforce in record numbers during the early 1980s, men increasingly were pushed to alter, at least in some small measure, how they behaved as fathers. To the extent fathers on average began to spend a bit more time in direct caregiving, they had more chances to be nurturing fathers.

Fourth, local, state, and federal policies can occasionally foster a transition in fathering practices. The most notable effects in this regard can be seen in how paternity leave policies in Sweden and Norway appear to have made a difference in fathers' willingness to take some leave from their jobs, though the increased pattern of leave taking has been less than ideal. In the United States, the Family Medical Leave Act of 1992 has offered fathers the most notable policy option, to take additional time off from work to manage a health transition in their families, usually around the birth or adoption of a child.

Fifth, other transitions reflect fathers' dispositions toward fathering. Some men, for instance, at various points in their lives as fathers become more nurturing and responsive in how they monitor their children's health, sex life, education, and so forth. Some may also begin to define coparenting differently; consequently, they respond to their children with a more or less palpable form of nurturance. On the other hand, specific work and community-related transitions can also shape men's dispositions toward fathering. Low-income men who cycle in and out of poor employment options, environmental risks, and fragile family relationships may jeopardize initial commitments to being nurturant parents. Their attention may turn from relationships with their children toward more urgent concerns, such as providing resources and finances to their families during an economic downturn.

Situated Fathering

The proximal and immediate contexts for men's nurturance of children are the physical spaces in which men "do" fathering, including local neighborhoods, family households, and even institutions. In a recent edited volume entitled *Situated Fathering*, Marsiglio et al. (2005) delineated five primary properties (physical conditions, temporal dynamics, symbolic/perceptual aspects, social structural, and public/private) and related secondary properties (institutional and cultural conditions, transitional elements, personal power and control, gender attributes, and fatherhood discourse) of physical and social space. Each of these properties can help researchers to understand how nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity between fathers and children unfold in real places and over time.

A focus on physical contexts for fathering allows us to examine critically places for nurturance. Shared residence is a status that many studies indicate is a critical factor in father–child interaction. However, what does it mean that a father is residential—or not—and how does this actually shape his close relationship with his child? A residential household, or even more specifically, a living room couch, a dining room

table, a child's bed, may be places for the emergence of intimacy, such as sharing ideas, stories, hopes, and dreams. Close interaction may also be threatened in such residential environments, with the intervention of spouses, partners, and other kin in father/child relationships. For example, Marsiglio (2005) interviewed stepfathers to examine how parenting inside a physical place, which is not "my own," complicated their disciplinary behavior. He also finds that these sites are places where stepfathers and biological fathers can both "do" parenting and establish "alliances" whereby children benefit from an array of fathers with common goals and approaches. Moreover, from a life course perspective, residential sites change over time. The same house may promote quiet and deep discussion between fathers of younger children, but may present barriers to interaction with older adolescents and young adults, who value independence in their own private rooms.

Even when fathers and children share residences, they may need to strategize to have "quality time" in the face of overstuffed family schedules (Daly, 1996). Fathers and youth may find ways to bond over television shows or online media that introduce sensitive topics that are salient in their own relationships, such as eating disorders or drug use. The traditional place for fathers to share their own stories of growing up with their children may be playing catch with a ball or going on vacation (LaRossa, 2005). Or, it may be that the preferred place for close interaction is in a family car, in transition between school and sports practice. These preferred areas for intimate interaction shift as fathers and children age, although they may continue to hold special resonance. Increasingly, fathers and children live apart in different residences at some point during childhood and adolescence. This separation may be due to the demands of work travel (for truckers or sales personnel) (see Sayers & Fox, 2005; Zvonkovic, Solomon, Humble, & Manoogian, 2005) or family disruptions (for nonresident and divorced fathers). Although these men may be "off the radar screen" in terms of living away from children's home residence, families find strategies to encourage nurturance "at a distance." For the half million fathers in active military service (accounting for less than 1% of all fathers in the United States) (United States Department of Health and Human Services,2007), a new cohort of children and youth has ushered their parents into intimate spaces and innovative solutions that technology offers to nonresident parents. Fathers and children may communicate about sensitive topics via email, cell phones, and text messages, each of which can accommodate mobile lifestyles (see McDermid et al., 2005). These communication techniques may become more commonplace during the transition to adulthood, as fathers and their children no longer live in close proximity, and seek to retain or even develop closer ties.

Finally, policies and social institutions shape men's nurturance in specific physical locations. Almost 750,000 fathers, or 1% of all fathers in the United States, were incarcerated in prisons or jails in 2007 (Schirmer, Nellis, & Mauer, 2009). Their nighttime discussions and sporadic visits with their children are often monitored and regulated in correctional facilities (Roy, 2005). Fathers and children who lack a place they call home—homeless families—receive very little support from agencies and programs that purportedly support disadvantaged families. Hamer's work (2005) on men's strategies to protect their children in dangerous neighborhoods is the latest in a string of studies of men's monitoring behavior as a core aspect of their fathering behavior (see also Letiecq & Koblinsky, 2004; Roy, 2004). Fathers' efforts to protect and nurture their fragile relationships in stressful places suggest a different level of intimacy, in which man share aspects of challenging realities with their children.

Complex Family Configurations

As Eggebeen (2002) notes, snapshot measures of family structure "obscure more than illuminate" the role men play in children's lives. In particular, our focus on coresident, biological fathers has taught us less about the nurturing style of parenting of cohabiting partners, stepfathers, nonresident fathers, and grandfathers. Studies over the past few decades have carefully revealed how fathers are embedded in complex family

configurations that shape their opportunities to respond to their children's needs and development through close interaction.

Linkages between paternal involvement and child outcomes draw almost exclusively on studies with resident fathers in two-parent families. Paternal engagement and accessibility in two-parent families has increased in recent decades, and nurturing, intimacy, and responsivity between fathers and children have also increased in the same period. Whereas children's achievement is influenced primarily through demographic background and economic status of their fathers (Hofferth, 2003; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994), children's behavior seems more directly related to having a father residing in the household—and more directly shaped by close interaction on a daily basis.

Because many families face physical separation between fathers and children when these two-parent households dissolve, researchers have begun to examine the effects of nonresident father involvement on children (Coley, 2001). In a meta-review of the literature, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) show that frequency of visitation and contact between nonresident fathers and children does not directly benefit children. Instead, they argue that children's well-being is enhanced by positive relationships and "active parenting." In effect, the quality of nonresident fathers' nurturance of their children—even at a distance—is perhaps more critical than the amount of time they spend together.

The ways in which mothers are involved with their children also set a context for fathering in families (Pleck & Hofferth, 2008). Previous studies have identified how mothers mediate men's involvement, through encouragement as well as discouragement of fathers' nurturance of children. Researchers of middle-class, White families indicate that mothers' perspectives and beliefs about men's involvement with children, defined as maternal gatekeeping, can be associated with declining paternal involvement (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; DeLuccie, 2001). Such negative gatekeeping may be particularly relevant in postdivorce families (Braver & O'Connell, 1998). However, mothers also manage the emotions of fathers and children in an effort to promote more interaction (Seery & Crowley, 2000). Even when incarcerated, some fathers rely on their partners to facilitate close relationships with their children during visits and over phone calls (Roy & Dyson, 2005). Roy and Burton (2007) describe the process of low-income mothers' recruitment of fathers and father figures for the purpose of kin care of children. Ultimately, mothers have their children's safety as the highest priority and often seek social fathers and other kin as fathers if biological fathers present too many risks to their families. However, these mothers welcome responsive fathering, consistent contact, and men's attention to children's needs and well-being, which is often in short supply in their stressed kin networks.

Similarly, sequential parenthood with different partners (or multipartnered fertility) is a prevalent status for both fathers and mothers, and it is associated with poor outcomes for children in low-income families. Nearly 8% of American men aged 15–44 report having had children with more than one partner, with sharp differences by age, race/ethnicity, and income—over one-third of poor black men aged 35–44 report having had children with two or more mothers, and 16% report children with three or more mothers (Guzzo & Furstenberg, 2007). If men have multiple children with different mothers, they are likely to see their children less frequently and to contribute less financially (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006). However, multipartner parenting is a complex process that unfolds over time across multiple family systems. To the extent that men are responsible for their own nurturing behavior, there is potential for fathers to develop uniquely close relationships with children in these families. Children may express concerns about being connected to or valued by fathers, due to direct comparisons with their step siblings, and fathers must learn to manage such concerns.

Moreover, fathers in multiple family systems must develop sensitivity to their relationships with children's mothers in order to receive information about their children from these mothers. In effect, mothers can interpret fathers' involvement with children across multiple families, and

a capacity for nurturance may depend on strong and trusting relations between coparents (Roy & Burton, 2007). The first few years of multipartner parenting is especially challenging and limiting for fathers with young children. Over time, however, these father–child relationships, if they survive, may become close and reciprocal, as children become young adults and achieve a more independent relationship with their fathers.

Quality of nurturance becomes more significant when we recognize that fathers' ties to children and family households become increasingly complex over time, as blended families emerge after marital dissolution, or as unmarried parents try to transition into stable coparenting arrangements (Mott, 1990). Do these new family structures allow fathers and children to develop close relationships? In part, what may distinguish these complex family configurations is the necessity for fathers to manage relationships with their children. If mothers are not facilitating father involvement, men may need to become more assertive, especially if they desire to develop a nurturing and responsive relationship with their children. Again, the need for fathers to take responsibility to find opportunities for intimacy and responsive interaction in complex families may be different from the experiences of biological, married, and resident fathers whose involvement is in part managed by their partners. Given the increasing number of blended families and nonresident fathers in the United States in recent decades, there may be more fathers who have chosen to pursue nurturing relationships on their own with their children.

Another timely and contested context for fathering involves gay men. Historically, most gay men became fathers in the context of a heterosexual marriage and then either lived sexually closeted lives as married men or divorced and, in many instances, subsequently came out to their children (Patterson, 2004). However gay men today increasingly skip heterosexual marriage and pursue fatherhood in the context of a committed gay relationship through adoption or surrogacy, and this pattern is likely to become more common (Berkowitz, 2007; Lewin, 2009; Stacey, 2006). Although researchers have not demonstrated that gay fathers are more nurturing, intimate, or responsive than heterosexuals to their children's needs, cultural stereotypes that depict gay men as presenting a more feminine self when relating to others suggest that gay fathers, on average, may relate to children differently in some of the ways central to our review. We do know that gay men who adopt are often directed toward children who are perceived by other prospective parents as less desirable (children with special needs, abused children, older kids, and minority youth) (Lewin, 2006). Thus, many gay adoptive fathers not only have to figure out ways to bond with children without the benefit of experiencing the children's infant and toddler years, but they must also navigate new relationships potentially strained by other challenging circumstances. In other words, they will have ample opportunities to respond to children's needs. In a homophobic society, gay fathers' everyday realities and parental decision-making are likely to be more complicated and scrutinized. The extent to which gay men draw upon their own marginalized identities to help children manage their own trials and tribulations is an open question. Gay fathers must also grapple with unique circumstances as they attempt to integrate coparents, surrogate mothers, grandparents, and other relatives into familial networks that are not conventionally defined. As American culture slowly grows more tolerant of gays and lesbians, gay fathers are likely to feel more at ease crafting and expressing their identities as nurturing fathers.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Cultural Contexts

A life course perspective is critically situated to provide insight into the important conditions and historical experiences that shape individual development, and most importantly, father and child relationships in diverse racial and ethnic contexts (Dilworth Anderson, Burton, & Boulin Johnson, 1993). However, the "form and meaning of [father involvement] are culturally dependent and have not been explored widely" (Cabrera & Garcia Coll, 2004). For example, men without steady family-supportive jobs have not historically been

defined in public or by policymakers as responsible fathers. Reviews of research with African American fathers (Allen & Conner, 1995; Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002; Roopnarine, 2004) suggest that providing is only one aspect of valued fathering. Perhaps more important is the contextually defined prospect of "being there" for one's children, by nurturing their development, fulfilling care obligations, and linking them to family members. "Being there" is a motivator mentioned by fathers across race and class, and Toth and Xu (1999) find that American fathers are almost equally likely to be expressive, affectionate, and encouraging with 5–18-year olds. White, Black, and Latino youth are similar in their likelihood of simultaneously having close bonds to stepfathers and nonresident fathers (King, 2006).

Cultural contexts differ in how they encourage or discourage fathers to be nurturing. Toth and Xu (1999) showed that African American and Latino fathers were more likely to monitor and supervise their children, and that Latinos spend more time with their children than White or Black fathers. Similarly, Hofferth (2003) found that Black and Latino fathers take more responsibility for child rearing: Black fathers use a less warm and more controlling approach and Latinos are less controlling but just as warm as White fathers. She suggests that these differences are related to economic and neighborhood factors, as well as cultural expectations related to engagement. Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, and Roggman (2007) find that Black and Latino nonresident fathers are more involved than nonresident White fathers, a pattern explained in large part by the quality of their relationships with children's mothers. Fathers' close relations and nurturing ties with children reflect considerable intra-cultural diversity in studies of racial and ethnic contexts as well. Roopnarine (2004) contrasted subtle differences between African American and African Caribbean fathers, and argued that less emphasis on family structure would redirect attention to factors such as fathers' involvement at different stages of the life course with children of different ages.

Even within the same cultural context, many fathers are caught between traditional masculine expectations as patriarchs and providers, and more contemporary expectations of fathers who can nurture their children and maintain close relations as friends, contributors, and coparents. As men negotiate the dramatic economic shifts in global and local job markets, they redefine themselves as fathers within a cultural context, such as White working-class men struggling with downward mobility (Weis, 2006) or Black working-class men finding a space for themselves between dominant and street masculinities (Roy & Dyson, 2010). Recent studies of Asian and Asian American fathers (Kwon & Roy, 2007; Shwalb, Nakawaza, Yamamoto, & Hyun, 2004) and Native American fathers indicate that cultural conflicts and acculturation processes may be at the very core of relationships between fathers and children. Often, these cultural shifts occur across physical contexts. For example, researchers have identified how structural factors that force mobility have altered father–child relationships. The demands of immigration and work policy have altered the roles of Mexican fathers in their families (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992), and African American fathers (similar to fathers in South Africa) have coped over many decades with residential mobility due to job searches and incarceration, both of which place them far away from their children's daily lives (Roy, 2008). In these environments, men's abilities to be responsive and intimate with their children are challenged by their nonresident status, stressful jobs, poor education, and social policies that govern physical mobility.

Many low-income and minority families have adapted to challenging circumstances by expanding opportunities for men to offer nurturance to children in families, through creating of a range of flexible roles for fathers and father figures. In African American families, ethnographic studies have identified the importance of biological fathers, boyfriends and godfathers, uncles, brothers, cousins, and "ol' heads" (community elders) as significant male parents in communities and kin networks with flexible expectations for men's participation as caregivers with a higher goal of nurturing children in extended families (Jarrett et al., 2002; see also Waller, 2002). Although men's place as caregivers in kin networks is better established in research with African American

families, recent studies (Hansen, 2005; Nelson, 2005) indicate that men across racial, ethnic, and class boundaries prioritize nurturance as critical family care providers for children.

Fathers' Nurturance and Social Capital

Although scholars continue to debate how to conceptualize and measure social capital, Furstenberg (2005, p. 810) defines it as, "the stock of social goodwill created through shared social norms and a sense of common membership from which individuals may draw in their efforts to achieve collective or personal objectives." Over the course of a child's life, fathers can forge family-based and community-based social capital that affects their child's well-being. The former results from a father sustaining a relationship with the mother (and kin) based on trust, mutual respect, reciprocity, and a sense of loyalty. The later implicates the father's set of nonfamily relations with the individuals and organizations directly involved with the child. Fathers' contribution to generating social capital appears to vary based on social class, family demography, and religious involvement (Furstenberg, 2005; Reynolds, 2009). In addition, if the family system is characterized by mistrust and a lack of shared values, many fathers' efforts to build community-based social capital may be compromised. Finally, children's sentiments and interpersonal connections can either foster or hinder social capital development.

Researchers for some time have accentuated how children can benefit in varied ways from the social capital their fathers (parents) construct (Amato, 1998; Coleman, 1990; Furstenberg, 2005; Furstenberg & Kaplan, 2004; Marsiglio, 2004; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000, Reynolds, 2009). While children reap advantages related to cultural values, discipline/monitoring, education, employment, and health, among others, we selectively highlight social capital issues as they relate to fathers' motivation and ability to nurture, be intimate with, and responsive to children's developmentally appropriate needs.

In children's early years, engaged fathers can provide and acquire insights about them through discussions with daycare workers, teachers, and other health-related professionals. Ideally, these talks enhance fathers' sensitivity to their children's moods and behaviors, thereby enabling them to be more responsive to their emotional and other needs? They can, for example, cultivate "insider" information about the circumstances surrounding their children being bullied at school. Unfortunately, compared to mothers, fathers are significantly less likely to take on tasks associated with what Doucet (2006) labels, "community responsibility." Consequently, because fathers are less apt to develop effective lines of communication with those who monitor their young children, fathers may limit their ability to respond effectively to some of their children's needs.

Questions about what and how much parents and youth workers (e.g., coaches, teachers, childcare professionals, youth ministers) should disclose about a child helps to circumscribe the sharing adults do on behalf of the child (Marsiglio, 2008b). Alone, or in combination with another parental figure, fathers implicitly or explicitly decide how much private information to reveal to others. For example, do they discuss how a child might be coping in response to previous physical family abuse, a family crisis such as divorce or a parent in prison, an ADHD diagnosis, a physical disability or illness, and the like? Youth workers also face the conundrum about how much if anything they should tell parents that might be construed as "secrets" about a child. To our knowledge researchers have not systematically explored this issue, but we suspect that the rapport fathers build with youth workers will shape the extent to which and how certain matters are discussed. Furthermore, fathers equipped with certain types of human capital may be better positioned and more motivated to develop connections with youth workers that generate social capital.

As children age and begin to contemplate alcohol, drugs, smoking, body image, sex, contraception, and pregnancies, as well as other serious matters, they and their fathers may at times benefit if the fathers have built family- and community-based social capital. From a life course perspective, fathers who have an established pattern of developing connections with those adults

in the community who interact with the fathers' children may be more apt to continue this pattern. Of course, nonresident fathers' tendency to hinge their involvement with their children on whether they are romantically involved with the mother may discourage fathers from sustaining their involvement with youth workers. Some fathers, though, may feel more inclined and equipped to reach out on behalf of their children to youth workers if certain types of behavioral problems arise (e.g., fighting, carrying a weapon).

Reciprocity Between Fathers and Children

When a "long view" is applied to the life course, researchers recognize that nurturance in father and child relationships stretches many decades. Father involvement is typically framed as a one-way street; fathers influence their children by their behavior or values. But reciprocity emerges early as children also shape men's behavior. During adolescence this reciprocity becomes more apparent. In fact, Hawkins et al. (2007) found that while fathers seem to have little influence on their adolescent children, the adolescents influenced men's behavior as fathers. As we move further out into the life course, we find that fewer studies have been conducted on relations between aging fathers and adult children. This section, therefore, is in large part speculative, as we indicate potentially promising directions for understanding how men's nurturance of children shifts over many decades.

As children mature into adults, they find that they share experiences with their fathers in interactions at the workplace, struggles through education, or changes in families, such as marriage and even divorce or remarriage. These shared experiences generate intimacy between fathers and children. For example, as children become parents themselves, the birth of a child transforms fathers into grandfathers. Fathers and their children who are first-time parents may grow more distant (Aquilino, 1997), but others may develop closeness by supporting each other during family births or tough economic times (Roy, Vesely, Fitzgerald, & Buckmiller Jones, 2010). As adult children ask for and fathers offer up life advice, there may be reciprocity as well, with fathers increasingly valuing their children's insights into the fathers' own lives.

If fathers and children take a "long view" on their relationships, there are opportunities for men who were sporadically involved in their children's lives to reenter and reestablish ties with them (Roy & Lucas, 2006). This reclaiming of a father–child relationship may happen in early adulthood, as adult sons and daughters become independent and seek nurturing relationships that are not negotiated through their mothers. Fathers and their children may reach new levels of responsive interaction during the transition to adulthood, but relationships can become more complicated as well (Snarey, 1993). As children build their own families, the dyadic nurturance is negotiated through a complex web of kin relationships, including children's spouses and in-laws, grandchildren, and possibly stepmothers and stepsiblings. Moreover, when fathers and adult children move apart from shared residences, they will likely find it difficult to be as responsive on a daily basis without the opportunity to sit down to dinner or to watch TV together.

Fathers can find novel ways of nurturing their adult children as they age. They may provide support for their children's marital relationships. Through active and engaged grandfathering, men can also support their children as parents (Bates, 2009; Bullock, 2005; McWright, 2002). Adult children, in turn, can learn new strategies to nurture their fathers, especially if their parents require more care due to declining health (Campbell & Carroll, 2007). If a trusting relationship has emerged over decades, fathers may welcome their children's emotional and financial support, as well as physical and daily care. This might involve transporting fathers to buy food, to attend church, to exercise, or to visit friends and family.

However, if relations between fathers and children have become strained or have dissolved over time, fathers may pay a high price (Calasanti, 2004). Compared to previous cohorts of older men, they may be isolated without social support (Klinenberg, 2002). The numbers of men living

alone in late old age may climb as the Baby Boomers reach their final decades, in part because of the high rate of divorce among that cohort. Even fathers and children who maintain a workable but not necessarily close relationship may be challenged as they grow older. Their communication may be marked by ambivalence and conflict, with limited chances for either to nurture the other.

The potential benefits of increased longevity may outweigh possible disadvantages. As aging fathers enter into relationships with their adult children, families have few firm expectations about how these relationships should unfold. There is room for improvisation, for creativity, and for crafting new expectations based on nurturance, respect, attentiveness, and intimacy (Thompson, 1994). Fathers and their children may encounter a real test of reciprocity when they work together to secure intergenerational family legacies. By supporting their own and each other's generative urges, fathers and their children can share responsibility for caring for future generations, by cooperatively saving for college, building vacation homes or planning family reunions, or exchanging family pictures, videos, letters, or stories.

Methodological Issues and Future Research

Having articulated a more refined conceptualization of how fathers interpret, negotiate, and express verbal and physical intimacy with children in different contexts over time, we now selectively discuss the methodological implications of our vision. Over the past 15 years or so researchers have launched more expansive data projects that include more varied measures of fathering dimensions. These efforts take seriously the call to broaden the definition of fathering (Marsiglio et al., 2000). However, the pursuit of operational and methodological precision may have cost researchers greater attention to processes and dynamics of fathering over time (Palkovitz, 2009).

A number of prominent large-scale surveys have recently expanded their foci on fathering by including new measures of men's parenting. Several include longitudinal data: Fragile Families and Child Well-Being, Welfare Children and Families: A Three Year Study, Early Head Start Evaluation (Father Involvement with Toddlers Component, FITS), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 97 and 79 (NLSY97 and NLSY79), Panel Survey of Income Dynamics, and the National Survey on Families and Health (Hofferth et al., 2007). From a life course perspective, the surveys are notable because they reflect a growing commitment to foster longitudinal research. This longitudinal focus is limited though because few surveys follow fathers into middle or later life. In addition, the availability of new fathering data has outpaced the development of methods to analyze fathering over time (Mayer, 2009).

Unfortunately, even the new survey measures of fathering have significant shortcomings that affect the quality of research on fathers (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998). Specifically, most data collection efforts focus on conventional measures of father involvement while providing little on nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity between fathers and children. Perhaps most promising has been the inclusion of measures of closeness between fathers and children. These measures may tap the existence of a father–child bond and a level of emotional investment from both fathers and children. Children's reports on close relationships with their resident and nonresident fathers foster comparisons between the quality of fathering while controlling for residence. Scholarly review panels have strongly encouraged family researchers to measure quality, commitment, and strength of family relationships in future projects (Morgan et al., 2008).

Although scholars have made inroads in conceptualizing and assessing ways of measuring parental attachment and closeness, far less has been achieved in terms of the three domains of fathering we address. As we have argued in this chapter, our understanding of the processes of fathering over time can be enhanced by theoretical development and refined measurement of these domains. How is closeness related to nurturance, if at all? Intimacy has been measured in

dating and marital relationships, but is it expressed uniquely between parents and children? Can we adapt these measures, or must we develop new measures of intimacy? Likewise, researchers attempt to gauge couples' levels of responsivity—but measuring dyadic interaction is a challenge with a single source of information. To capture effectively how responsive they are to each other, do we need to observe fathers and children, and elicit their responses to each other's behavior?

A multidimensional approach is needed to measure these aspects of father–child relationships. Each is part of active family processes, infused with meaning and embedded in rich contexts (Palkovitz, 2009). Morgan et al.'s (2008) recommendations for research on family change suggest that conflict, positive connection, trust, commitment, problem-solving, decision-making, and cooperation help shape the processes of crafting nurturing bonds.

Unlike surveys, qualitative approaches are well-designed to capture process, context, and meaning in families (Roy & Kwon, 2007). For instance, collecting men's narratives about their experiences as fathers over the life course offers researchers the chance to explore men's feelings about the changing bonds with their children (Handel, 2000; Pratt & Fiese, 2004). Ethnographic techniques in particular can capture the emergence and maintenance of local and family-specific cultural contexts, which may support or inhibit nurturance in ways that are difficult to replicate in large-scale surveys (Hamer, 2001; Lareau, 2003; Roy, 2004, 2005; Waller, 2002).

Perhaps most importantly, we need methods that help delimit what nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity between fathers and children looks like or how these expressions change over time. Researchers turn to grounded theory approaches to tackle new questions, discover hidden processes, and construct interview opportunities for participants to build narratives. Projects could encourage men to develop their own cognitive maps of nurturance. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews is one viable approach (Marsiglio, 2007). Additionally, a photo elicitation technique would place cameras in fathers' hands, so they could locate, document, and then talk about how nurturance emerges in their everyday interactions with their children. Each of these qualitative approaches contribute to a broader range of multiple and/or mixed method strategies that "may play a crucial role in developing a rich understanding of cultural context and interpersonal processes associated with…how fathers are directly or indirectly involved in their children's lives [in a nurturing way]" (Marsiglio et al., 2000, p. 1179).

As measures of nurturance are developed, other methodological issues will become more urgent. Can we rely on a single source of information for men's nurturance, or do we need multiple sources? Mothers and fathers reports may be similar in some aspects, but many studies show that mothers report lower levels of father involvement (Coley & Morris, 2002). Also, how do we measure fathers' nurturance over time? Life course researchers have worked on new methods to analyze patterns of events and transitions with event history analyses, longitudinal ethnographies (Burton, Purvin, & Garrett-Peters, 2009), cumulative processes (O'Rand, 2009), and patterned trajectories, including recent developments in latent growth curve analyses and latent class analyses (George, 2009). These new methods could be adapted to identify trajectories of fathers' nurturance toward each of their children. They show promise for conceptualizing how economic and social institutions shape family processes like nurturance over time as well. For example, how are fathers' levels of nurturance with their children affected by paternal job loss during an economic recession? Are there cohort differences such that men at different ages struggle to maintain close bonds with their children during tough times?

Finally, there are specific subsamples of fathers about whom we have limited understanding of the contexts of nurturance. Fathers in prison and in the military have been particularly under-represented in family research. Although incarcerated fathers are restricted in their opportunities to be involved with their children, especially in ways that might resemble nurturance and intimacy, some opportunities do exist. Just as importantly, research has not systematically explored the process by which incarcerated men

and deployed soldiers transition back into family rhythms in which they have more direct opportunities to nurture their children, share intimate time, and respond to their needs. Preparing children for their fathers' imprisonment or deployment can tap into all three fathering expressions central to our analysis, especially for those fathers who were involved in their children's lives prior to their changing circumstances. Although their conditions complicate matters, prisoners and soldiers may still have occasions to express their nurturing self, but the physical and social psychological conditions associated with these forms of situated fathering make it difficult (Marsiglio et al., 2005).

Similarly, we know little about father–adult child interaction in later life. Do these special bonds become intimate as fathers move into later life? Do adult children become more nurturing and responsive to their aging fathers? Few datasets collect information on older fathers, but Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) and the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) are two exceptions because they are designed for intergenerational analyses of fathering in later life.

Conclusion

Public discourses on fathering have increasingly embraced the notion that fathers should be far more than breadwinners; they can and should be key nurturing forces in their children's lives. At the aggregate level fundamental changes in fathers' behavior are occurring, though they are relatively slow and uneven, and the data are limited that speak directly to matters of nurturance, intimacy, and responsivity. Much more needs to be done to explore these issues over the entire duration of the father–child relationship.

As we look to the future**,** several trends should encourage researchers to study and promote a more expansive vision of fathering along the lines we highlighted in our review. First, demographic shifts in family configurations mean that fathers increasingly face a more complex set of conditions that influence their opportunities to nurture their children. Second, because of recent advances in life expectancies, fathers and children today are more likely to share a greater number of years in some form of a father–child relationship. Even though men, on average, are having their first child at later ages, more fathers and children will experience multiple, overlapping transitions of becoming fathers and grandfathers. Third, the shifts in cultural expectations are creating more supportive environments for fathers to be far more than breadwinners. And in some circles, those expectations have considerable bite.

Drawing largely from life course and symbolic interactionist perspectives, we selectively highlighted what we know and should explore in terms of the three understudied, interrelated themes of fathering that anchor our discussion. Furthermore, we framed our analysis by emphasizing the dual and overlapping aspects of social process and context that underlie a life course perspective. More specifically, we illustrated: options fathers have to make choices in how they nurture and respond to their children, how their lives as fathers connect them to others, some of the ways fathers' experiences are embedded in a larger sociocultural landscape, and how using multiple perspectives on time sheds light on specific types of fathering.

Broadly speaking, our framing of the father–child relationship draws attention to how nurturing processes are related to healthy relationship development and personal well-being over the life course. The socially constructed gender and embodied dimensions to fathering point to important opportunities to explore how men perceive and manage their options to be nurturing, intimate, and responsive fathers. In some instances, these dimensions operate to constrain fathers' inclinations or opportunities to be more nurturing with their children and stepchildren. Aspects of situated fathering, cultural conditions, and complex family configurations can also discourage fathers from being nurturing and attentive.

Ultimately, though, fathers have considerable freedom to adopt a more heightened style of metaparenting that accentuates their children's needs. Becoming more mindful of the joys and struggles that certain life transitions (e.g., unemployment, migration, military deployment, incarceration,

nonresident fathering) can bring to fathering can help men adapt and be more thoughtful, nurturing fathers. Researchers should explore more fully how father's changing lives affect their orientation toward their children so that policies and programs can be tailored to account for fathers' everyday realities. Some of those initiatives may increase fathers' chances to develop social capital on their children's behalf that will benefit the father–child relationship more generally.

Because researchers have not used longitudinal designs to examine systematically how fathers' navigate the world of nurturance, the potential for new research avenues is considerable. More detailed descriptions of what fathers think, feel, and do are clearly needed that enhance understanding about fathers' attempts to nurture, be intimate with, or responsive to their children of all ages. More extensive and nuanced data need to be collected through multiple methods and, ideally, using multiple family members. As we've argued here, new data collection should be informed by the life course and symbolic interactionist perspectives. Refining analytic approaches to reap the full benefits of longitudinal data should also be a high priority.

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