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Factors related to satisfaction with and adjustment to fatherhood at mid-life

Ulrich, Deborah L., Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1988
FACTORS RELATED TO SATISFACTION WITH AND
ADJUSTMENT TO FATHERHOOD AT MID-LIFE

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Deborah L. Ulrich, BSN, M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1988

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1988
DEDICATION

To Tom, Ted, Molly, and Andy
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Patrick McKenry for his guidance, insight, support, and friendship throughout my doctoral studies.

I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Shirley O’Bryant and Dr. Edna Menke for their suggestions and assistance.

Most of all I would like to thank my husband, Tom and my children, Ted, Molly, and Andy for their continued love, patience, and understanding throughout my educational experience at the Ohio State University.
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Major Area: Family Relations and Human Development

Minor Area: Sociology
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Trends in fertility patterns reveal an increase in delayed childbearing for American couples today. Not only are people marrying later, but they are delaying the birth of their first child after marriage. Between 1960 and 1964, couples had their first child approximately 14 months after marriage. Data from 1975 to 1978 showed that this interval had increased to 24 months (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980). Between 1975 and 1978, there was a 37% increase in the rate of first births to women between the ages of 30 and 34, a 22.2% increase among women age 35 to 39, and a 4.8% increase in women between 40 and 44 (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1980). Between 1978 and 1982, the first births to women 30-34 increased another 55%. Although there are no available data for the ages of first-time fathers, one would expect that their age is also increasing as a result of this trend, as husbands are typically two to three years older than their wives (Eshleman, 1981). Likewise, one would expect the age of men becoming fathers for a second and subsequent times to also be increasing, as it is for women. In the state of Ohio in 1986, 3.57% of all births were to fathers between the ages of 40 and 55. In addition, as a result of the divorce-marriage ratio
of approximately 1:2 or 50%, many men are marrying a younger woman and having second families. Because women have biological limits on their childbearing years and men can father children well into old age, men are more likely to be older parents than are women. Consequently, one would assume that there is presumably a relatively new and growing group of men in our society having children in their middle years or between the ages of 40 and 55 (Neugarten, 1977).

With the advent of effective and relatively safe birth control measures and legalized abortion, men and women today have the chance to rationally plan parenthood. They can readily decide whether or not to have children, how many children to have, and when to have them. With the increase in life expectancy and the trend toward smaller family size, childrearing takes up a much smaller percentage of one's adult life than it has in the past. Also, the number of dual-career couples has increased 267% between 1960 and 1983 (Conference Board, 1985). This figure is likely to continue to increase as women prepare themselves for professional careers in increasing numbers (Sekaran, 1986). Many couples are now choosing to delay childbearing until their careers are established. Hence, men and women can choose this experience early in their adulthood, or near the end of their reproductive years. The majority of American women do want children at some point in their lives. Only 11.2% of women age 18 to 34 surveyed in 1978 expected to remain childless permanently (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1978). There are no figures available for men, as neither the Bureau of Census nor any other government agency survey men on this issue.
State of the Research

Historically, there has been a lack of systematic study of men and male sex roles. It was thought that the concept of male was equal to the concept of human, and therefore there was no need to study men per se. In addition, for many years most of the social science research had been carried out by men who saw the male role as the norm and therefore not a priority for study. It was not until the 1960's and the women's movement that men's studies emerged as a research interest. Since that time, men's roles have increasingly been studied, yet much of the information we have about men and their development is descriptive and inconclusive in nature (Lewis & Pleck, 1979).

Fatherhood and the effects of birth on the father has historically been an area of little research attention. Fein (1978) has characterized the study of fathers in the last five decades according to three different research paradigms. In the 1940's and 1950's the father was looked at in "traditional" terms. The psychoanalytic view predominated this era. The mother was seen as the hub of the child's world, and the father was a secondary figure. He was seen as a mere "helper" in child care (Benedek, 1978). Mothers were the focus of parenthood studies, and the only data about fathers came from the mother's reports. The 1960's brought a new wave of so-called "modern" studies. Father absence studies dominated the research literature. Father absence was examined in relation to such child outcomes as academic achievement, delinquency, and adoption of appropriate sex-role identity. Research of the 1970's and 1980's has
dealt with fathers in an androgynous paradigm. Traditionally a good father was synonymous with a good provider. Only recently have researchers looked at the multifaceted role and the intrinsic satisfactions of that role. Fathers are now seen as having a sensitive, expressive, and nurturant side to their personality. They are able to bond with and care for children just as mothers do. With the woman's movement, the idea that fathers had limited responsibility in child care was challenged.

Numerous studies have suggested that fathers have begun to participate more in pregnancy and childbirth (Daniels & Weingarten, 1982; Entwisle & Doering, 1980). The advent of "natural" childbirth and family-centered maternity care has encouraged and supported father participation in childbearing and childrearing, an arena from which they have historically been excluded. With the increase in cesarean deliveries and the increased survival rate of premature babies, fathers have been forced to become involved in early parenting behaviors as their wives were physically unable to assume a primary caretaker role immediately post-delivery (Bottoms, Rosen, & Sokal, 1980; Hawthorne, Richards, & Callon, 1978; Yogman, 1983).

Women returning to the work force because economic or personal fulfillment reasons has also affected father participation in child care. As research began on the effects of maternal employment, an increase in research on child-caretaker bonds in general evolved rather than just mother-child bonds. Today more men expect to participate in their children's lives than ever before in our history. Changing sex roles in general has meant a more nurturant...
father role contrary to the traditional role of merely being an economic provider. Today's research gives mothers and fathers equal importance in relation to their effects and influences on children (Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Lamb, 1977, 1981; Pedersen, Rubenstein, & Yarrow, 1979).

Since the early 1970's, there have been some empirical studies done on both expectant and early postpartum fathers. Research has moved beyond the notion of establishing whether or not the father could adequately care for the children today and meet their developmental needs. Recent research deals with father-child interaction and the differences and similarities between mothering and fathering. Despite the fact that men have been found to be definitely more involved with their children than before and that men are as physically and emotionally capable of providing care to children as women, research consistently shows that women still have the primary responsibility for child rearing in our society (Bohen & Viverus-Long, 1981; Robinson, 1977).

Much research has focused on the transition of men to the father role. Research on the transition to parenthood has moved from a crisis orientation to a developmental transition perspective in which parenthood is viewed as a normal event in the life cycle that requires a period of adjustment. The relationship between children and the marital relationship has been studied by many researchers. There seems to be a decline in marital satisfaction with the arrival of children, however causality is not totally clear. Studies looking longitudinally at couples before and after childbirth have found that
couples adjust with less difficulty if their relationship was healthy prior to the birth (Dyer, 1963; Hobbs, 1968). Feldman (1971) found that couples with the most companionate relationship prior to the birth of the baby had the most decline in satisfaction. Ryder (1973) found no support for parenthood decreasing marital happiness. Two recent studies found a decline in marital satisfaction over a three-year period after marriage but found it unrelated to parenthood (McHale & Huston, 1985; White & Booth, 1985).

A few studies have looked at differences in men and women as they adapt to parenthood. Consistently, women seem to experience more stress than men (Belsky, et. al., 1983; Hobbs, 1965, 1968; Miller & Sollie, 1980; Rossi, 1968; Russell, 1974). Parenthood appears to be positive for men who have happy marriages (Belsky, 1979; Feldman, Nash, & Ashenbrenner, 1983; Goldberg, Michaels, & Lamb, 1985).

Although the area of delayed childbearing is beginning to receive some attention by researchers, most of the work done thus far has focused on the mother and her reasons for delaying first birth. Career fulfillment and education seem to be the major reasons given for the delay. Men are also delaying marriage as are women. In 1972, 54.7% of first marriages were to men between the ages of 20 and 24, 17.1% to men 25-29 years of age, and 8% to men 30-44 years old. In 1981, the percentage of first marriages to men 20-24 years old dropped to 48.7% but increased to 26.9% in the 25-29 year old range and to 11.3% in men 30-44 years old (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1984). Delayed age at marriage is related to a later age for first birth, resulting in a new and growing group of older parents.
Little data, however, exist on men who delay fatherhood or who have children later in life. Daniels & Weingarten (1982) looked at three cohorts of parents and compared them, but women were the only unit of analysis. Groups of early-timing, late-timing, and mid-life parents were categorized according to the mothers' age at the time of birth. Late-timing fathers had three times as much child care responsibility as early-timing fathers. In the mid-life group, parents felt very positive about the experience and felt it was the "most rewarding experience in the world." Lack of energy was the only negative comment in regard to the experience. This study is considered a seminal work, yet it lacks quantitative analysis, is totally descriptive in nature, and is based on a very small sample (N=14).

The majority of research on mid-life men deals with the controversy as to whether they go through a crisis or a developmental transition. Some researchers feel there is a universal crisis around the age of 40 or so (Erikson, 1951; Gould, 1978; Levinson, 1968), whereas others view it as a normal transition within the life course of the individual (Brim, 1976; Farrell & Rosenberg, 1981; Neugarten, 1968; Rossi, 1972). Most of the research on men at midlife has been descriptive in nature and has addressed the issues that men must face as they become middle-aged. These issues include bodily decline, career stagnation, reassessment of goals and aspirations, confrontation with the reality of death, independence of his wife and children, and role gains and losses. Generally, mid-life research suggests that children are not especially important to the well-being
of men as they cope with this developmental transition. Yet, one recent study indicates that the father role may be an important factor related to well being of men at this stage of development (McKenry, Arnold, Julian, & Kuo, 1987). Neugarten (1968) feels that the way men perceive the changes and the role losses and gains determine the way they will react during the transition to mid-life. Changes that are expected or "on time" are less likely to cause stress than events which are not expected or "off time" (Neugarten, 1970). Having children at mid-life is not expected or is "off time," thus is likely to be a stress for the father experiencing this new or expanded role.

**Theoretical Orientation**

Role theory has been used by numerous researchers to examine role satisfaction and marital adjustment. This framework attributes a person's behavior to the roles he/she enacts. Role conflict, role strain, and role overload are possible outcomes when new roles are added to one's life. Fatherhood is a new or expanded role for fathers having a child at mid-life. The idea of maladjustment to the parent or father role and disruption of other competing roles (e.g., spouse, worker) are logical variables to be examined according to this framework. In addition, role satisfaction and the variables associated with its occurrence are also of interest.

Role transition is defined as the process of entering or leaving a social role (Cottrell, 1942). Certain factors have been shown to influence the ease of making these transitions (Burr, 1973). One of these factors is anticipatory socialization (Merton, 1968). Anticipatory socialization is defined as learning the norms of a role
before being put into that role in a social situation. Cottrell (1942) suggests that the amount of anticipatory socialization influences the ease of role transitions in a positive monotonic curvilinear relationship in which the influence decreases as the amount of the variable increases. Some examples of anticipatory socialization for mid-life fathers would be previous children, caring for younger siblings, and parenting education. Based on Cottrell’s (1942) proposition, one could expect fathers who had some form of anticipatory socialization to adjust to parenthood with greater ease than those who had no anticipatory socialization.

Dyer’s (1963) study of transition to parenthood used this proposition of anticipatory socialization to explain why parents who had a marriage preparation course experienced less stress with new parenthood than those who did not. Deutscher (1959) used the concept of anticipatory socialization to explain his finding that the postparental parenting transition was one that was relatively easy and without severe stress. In addition, Davis’ (1940, 1947) study of isolated children and Ellis and Lane’s (1967) study of upwardly mobile and less mobile male college students supported the proposition regarding anticipatory socialization and role transition ease.

Developmental theory was also used as a theoretical basis for understanding the effects of parenthood at mid-life. This theoretical orientation emphasizes the context of parenthood within the man’s individual life cycle. Minuchin (1985) feels that the specific point at which the individual’s life cycle and family life cycle interact is important. Theories of adult development designate the period of
mid-life as a time of self assessment of one's life thus far (Brim, 1976; Buhler, 1935, 1968). Erik Erikson's (1978) life span theory suggests that individuals must resolve conflicts at each stage of development in order to continue to grow and develop. The conflict of the individual at mid-life is generativity versus stagnation or the need to have contributed to the establishment and nurturance of the next generation.

Neugarten (1977) feels that researchers need to consider the internalization of age norms and age-group identification that influence individual development. Social and cultural norms assign certain expectations and tasks within certain periods of development (e.g. graduation, marriage, parenthood). Neugarten (1977) refers to this time clock as the "social clock." Changes that are anticipated according to societal norms at specific times in the life cycle are considered to be normative transitions (Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga, 1975). Neugarten (1968) states that these normative events are part of the social timetable and serve as the primary timing mechanisms of adult development. Events which are "on time" or expected cause less disruption and stress than "off time" events (Neugarten, 1970). Parenthood at mid-life could be characterized as an "off time" event, as the usual or normative time to become a parent is during young adulthood according to the "social clock." Hence, one would expect parenthood at mid-life to be more stressful than parenthood during young adulthood.
In a father-child relationship, each individual has specific developmental needs that must be met. The children of the men in this study are toddlers who are experiencing the conflict of autonomy versus shame and doubt (Erikson, 1978), while the fathers are trying to find meaning in their lives as they assess their past in relation to their goals and dreams (Levinson, 1978). In addition, bodily decline, confrontation with the reality of their own death, and role losses and gains are issues they must face.

The concept of role adjustment and satisfaction, as well as involvement with the child, job importance, and the importance of the father role are logical variables to examine in relation to developmental theory. In addition, specific characteristics of the child and his or her personality (i.e., age, sex, and temperament of the child) should be assessed in relation to the child's stage of growth and development.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to provide a descriptive profile of those men who become fathers at mid-life, as well as to determine what variables or factors correlate with and are predictive of adjustment to parenthood and paternal role satisfaction.

Research on men who become fathers at midlife is lacking in the literature; this is an area that needs to be explored if we are to truly understand family functioning. Role theory suggests that men who have had anticipatory socialization will adjust to parenthood better than those men who have had no prior experience or socialization to the father role. Developmental theory suggests that
men at midlife undergo a transition. At this time, it is not known how this transitional phase will be affected by coupling it with new fatherhood. The proposed research will survey this special group of men to gather preliminary information about the father role.

Research Questions

1. Is the sex of the child related to adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction?

Sex of the child has been shown to be unrelated to crisis or gratification in transition to parenthood (Entwistle & Doering, 1981; Russell, 1974). However, research has also shown that men prefer sons (Hoffman, 1977) and interact with them more than with daughters (Lamb, 1977; Parke & Sawin, 1975; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Because interaction with infants promotes positive bonding and attachment, one would assume that men might adjust more positively and be more satisfied with sons than with daughters.

2. Is the age of the child related to adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction?

Age of the child was shown to be unrelated to crisis or gratification post parenthood in some studies (Hobbs, 1968; Russell, 1974; Wente & Crockenberg, 1976). Yet, studies using a broader age span of infants have shown higher crisis scores (Beauchamp, 1969; Dyer, 1963; & LeMasters, 1957). Perhaps the different stages of child development present different challenges and/or satisfactions for the father. As a child develops, he/she becomes more complex and requires more cognitive as well as physical attention. This complexity may be either intellectually satisfying or frustrating for the father
depending on his life circumstances and how he is coping with his own mid-life transition.

3. **Is prenatal parenting education related to adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction?**

   Although anticipatory socialization theory suggests that parental education should decrease adjustment difficulty (Cottrell, 1942; Merton, 1968) prenatal parenting education has not been a significant variable in predicting adjustment difficulty in some studies (Goldberg, Michaels, & Lamb, 1985; Wente & Crockenberg, 1976). However, Russell (1974) found a positive relationship between parental preparation and gratification or role satisfaction. In addition, one would expect that older fathers who have had previous children in the "traditional fashion" in the past would be more satisfied and adjust more positively because of the "family" focus of childbirth today.

**Hypotheses**

1. **Previous experience with children, both actual and perceived, is negatively related to adjustment difficulty and positively related to paternal role satisfaction.**

   The idea of anticipatory socialization suggests that prior experience with the norms of a future role influences the ease of role transition (Cottrell, 1942; Merton, 1968). Therefore, the more experience in babysitting, caring for younger siblings, or caring for other children a man has prior to the birth of his child, the better he should adjust to and be satisfied with the father role. Wente and Crockenberg (1976) found that men who felt they had little knowledge of parenting had greater adjustment difficulty than those who felt more experienced.
2. A child who is perceived as having an "easy" temperament is negatively related to adjustment difficulty and positively related to paternal role satisfaction.

Child temperament has been shown to be related to adjustment to fatherhood in Russell's (1974) study. The Berkley longitudinal growth study (Schaefer & Bayley, 1963) reported that calm infants are seen as more loving and less of a burden by their mothers than are active infants. Adjustment to a baby termed as "easy" would require much less change of routine for the father than would adjustment to a baby termed difficult. Positive bonding and attachment occurs with greater ease when babies are quiet, healthy, sleep for long periods of time, eat well, easily adapt to routine, etc.; these factors are descriptive of babies termed to be of easy temperament (Kennell & Klaus, 1982; Shaefer & Bayley, 1963). One would predict a positive relationship between positive bonding and attachment and role satisfaction.

3. A planned child is negatively related to adjustment difficulty and positively related to paternal role satisfaction.

One would expect that a baby who is wanted and planned for would be easier to adjust to and be satisfied with than one that was unplanned. Some studies have confirmed this relationship in respect to fathers (Feldman, 1987; Russell, 1974). The fact that events that are expected are less stressful than those that are unexpected supports the relationship of planning to adjustment and satisfaction (Burr, 1970; Hill, 1949; Neugarten, 1970).

4. Perception of importance of the father role is negatively related to adjustment difficulty and positively to paternal
role satisfaction.

Russell (1974) reported a negative relationship between the importance of the father role and the father's adjustment difficulty. Stryker (1968) found that the position of "parent" in the hierarchy of identities or significant roles was not significant in predicting adjustment for women, but he did not test the hypothesis on men. Role theory suggests that people spend more time with roles that are salient to them personally. Palkovitz (1984) found that men who believed the father role was important were more involved with their children. Hence, one would expect that a man who values the father role would better adjust to and be more satisfied with the role than a man who does not see the role as important.

5. Length of marriage is negatively related to adjustment difficulty and positively related to paternal role satisfaction.

Russell (1974) reported a negative relationship between adjustment difficulty and length of marriage for women post birth. The relationship was not significant for men, but it was in a negative direction. Role theory suggests that adjustment would be easier if the couple had already adjusted to the transition to marriage, thus not having the compound effect of dealing with two transitions at once.

6. Feeling that one's career is at its height and not seeing work as the most important aspect of life is negatively related to adjustment difficulty and positively related to paternal role satisfaction.
Traditionally, men have seen the breadwinner role as primary to their self esteem and well being (Brannon, 1976; Cohen, 1979; Pleck, 1976). Sex role convergence (Gutmann, 1969) suggests that as a man ages he becomes more androgynous and begins to see family relationships as more important. As well, at midlife one would expect men to be at the peak of their careers and perhaps have more time to spend with children rather than their careers. Therefore, one would expect a more positive adjustment and greater role satisfaction for men who did not see their breadwinner role as the major force in their lives.

7. Marital adjustment is related negatively to adjustment difficulty and positively to paternal role satisfaction.

Marital adjustment has consistently been seen as a major factor in predicting adjustment to and satisfaction with parenthood (Hobbs, 1968; Russell, 1974; Wente & Crockenberg, 1976). This relationship has been shown to be especially strong for new fathers (Belsky, 1979; Feldman, Nash, & Aschenbrenner, 1983; Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1984). Thus, men who are happily married tend to have positive parenting experiences. Consistently, research has shown a stronger correlation between measures of mother-father interaction and fathering than between mother-father interaction and mothering in both adolescent and young adult fathers (Belsky & Velling, 1987; Lamb & Elster, 1985). Perhaps positive marital communication that is focused on the child facilitates the father's interest in and involvement with the child. In close emotionally expressive relationships, the father may follow the cues of the mother to imitate or model her role with the child.
Role theory would suggest that involvement in a role and a feeling of success in executing the role increases one's self concept and well being.

8. There is a positive curvilinear relationship between involvement with baby and paternal role satisfaction and a negative curvilinear relationship between involvement with baby and adjustment difficulty.

Role theory suggests that experience with and involvement in role tasks increases the feeling of competency in that role enactment. Competency increases one's self concept; therefore, one would assume that competency should increase one's satisfaction and decrease adjustment difficulty. However, mothers, who usually do the majority of the baby care tasks and play, consistently evidence more problems than men do with the transition to parenthood (Duncan, 1984; Hobbs & Wimbisk, 1977; Russell, 1974). In addition, Goldberg, Michaels, and Lamb (1985) found that high baby involvement produced positive adjustment to parenthood, but these men did no more than 25% of the child care. Thus research suggests that involvement in child care and play has a positive effect on role satisfaction and a negative effect on adjustment difficulty to a point, then the trend reverses; therefore a curvilinear relationship is predicted.

9. Socioeconomic status is positively related to adjustment difficulty and negatively to paternal role satisfaction.

Studies that used middle-class subjects (Beauchamp, 1969; Dyer, 1963; LeMasters, 1957) showed higher crisis scores with parenthood transition than those studies that used a more representative sample
(Hobbs, 1968; Russell, 1974). Russell (1974) found that middle class parents had lower satisfaction scores than lower class parents.

People of higher socioeconomic status have had more experiences in life with which to compare their present situation. In addition, they may have discovered other involvements (e.g., careers) that are more self fulfilling to them than parenthood. Role theory suggests that people tend to identify with the roles that are most fulfilling to them personally, thus one would expect this relationship of socioeconomic status with adjustment and satisfaction.

10. There is an inverse relationship between the two dependent measures of adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction.

Adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction seem to be inversely related. In other words, if one adjusts well he will most likely be satisfied or visa versa. On the other hand, if adjustment to parenthood is stressful and difficult, satisfaction would not be as prevalent. There appears to be a definite inverse relationship between the two variables, although causality is not implied.

However, perhaps the two variables are unrelated. It is conceivable that they measure two very different concepts much the same as marital satisfaction, happiness, and adjustment have been shown to measure. It is important that research substantiate their relatedness so they can be accurately defined and assessed in future studies.

11. There is a combination of variables that will be predictive of a state of paternal role satisfaction and positive adjustment.
Definition of Terms

Mid-life father - A man who has a child when he is between the ages 40 and 55 years (Neugarten, 1977; Sheehy, 1976).

Marital adjustment - A combination of one's marital satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, and affection as measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976).

Paternal role satisfaction - The positive orientation a man experiences toward his role as father as measured by the Gratification of Parenthood Checklist (Russell, 1974).

Adjustment difficulty - The adaptation of one's life to the changes of routine and impact on one's personal life style that is created by a new baby in the family as measured by the Change in Routine Measure (Wente & Crockenberg, 1976).

Involvement with baby - The degree to which the father spends time with his baby in either caretaking or play as measured by a checklist created by Goldberg, Michaels, and Lamb (1985).

Socioeconomic status - One's position in society as measured by Hallingshead's (1965) "Two Factor Index of Social Position."

Actual experience with children - The total number of types of experiences a man has prior to the birth of the 1986 child, as measured by a checklist listing: (a) previous children, (b) parenting education, (c) babysitting, (d) caring for younger children in the family, and (e) work experience with children.

Perceived experience with children - The amount of experience a man feels he has with children prior to the birth of the 1986 child (i.e., none, little, fair amount, or much).
Child temperament - The father's perception of his child's temperament (i.e., easy, difficult, or mixed).

Importance of father role - The reported importance of the position of "father" as a personally significant role as measured by degree of agreement to four statements developed by the investigator.

Present job importance - The reported importance of the job one has (i.e., extremely important-extremely unimportant).

Comparative job importance - The reported importance of one's job when compared with when he began working (i.e., more important, the same, less important).

Prenatal parenting education - Attendance at any childbirth or parenting classes prior to the birth of the 1986 child.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Although men as subjects in social science investigation has been very common, the study of men in family context is a recent phenomenon—an offshoot from scholarly interest in female gender roles since the 1960’s. The male mid-life transition or crises has been of particular interest to researchers in the last decade; in that time a significant amount of research has been conducted on men and their adaptation to this life transition. Also, in the last few years, a few studies have been conducted looking at the trend of delayed childbearing, primarily focusing on women. Fatherhood as a chosen adult role is a relatively recent area of interest and research. However, these 3 areas have not been collectively studied. Thus, no studies at present have systematically investigated the lives of this new emerging group, i.e., those men fathering infants at the same time they are experiencing mid-life transition. The purpose of this review is to summarize and to some extent integrate research previously done on (a) transition to parenthood, (b) fatherhood, (c) delayed parenthood, and (d) men at mid-life.

Transition to Parenthood

Early research on the transition to parenthood concluded that parenthood was an inherently crisis producing experience. This
research reasoned that a family is a social system and that the addition or removal of members will cause a major reorganization of that system that is crisis producing. Role theory suggests that with the shift from dyad to triad, there will be some major role changes and perhaps a disruption of the intimacy and affection of the dyad. Parenthood studies were not conducted to test role theory, but the results of the studies did lend support to the theory. Ruben Hill (1949) and his discussion of crisis inspired the first transition to parenthood study.

The first transition to parenthood study was done by LeMasters (1957). He interviewed 46 middle-class couples after the birth of their first child. Eighty-three percent of the couples reported "extensive" or "severe" crisis in adjusting to the child. Data from this study supported the notion that the crisis was not due to the couple not wanting the child, having poor marriages, or being mentally disabled. Many of the couples attributed the problem of adjusting to the fact that they "knew where babies came from, but not what they were like."

Dyer (1963) also found the transition to parenthood a stressful time in his investigation of new parents. He used a Likert-type questionnaire to assess crisis in 32 middle-class couples following the birth of their first child. Fifty-three percent of the couples experienced a "severe" or "extensive" crisis. In addition, marital adjustment, marriage preparation courses, number of years married, planning, age of the child, and education of the husband were negatively related to crisis. Changes in routines and schedules with
subsequent reorganization of roles and relationships were paramount issues in these early studies.

In 1965, Hobbs investigated 53 couples after the birth of their first baby; this was the first study that failed to find a crisis situation. His sample consisted of couples with a wide range of social classes, ages, and educational levels. He felt that the positive aspects of parenthood had not been studied and questioned the use of the term "crisis" to label the arrival of the first child. Others later agreed with Hobbs (Meyerowitz & Feldman, 1966; Rossi, 1968; Jacoby, 1969). Rapoport (1963) suggested the term "normal crisis" but that was also seen as a negative connotation by many. The focus of research on transition to parenthood continued to debate the issue of "crisis" for nearly 30 years. In 1969, Rossi suggested dropping the crisis orientation and instead focusing on the "transition to and impact of parenthood." Meyerowitz and Feldman (1966) suggested the focus be on the transition "to a more mature and rewarding triadic system."

From this beginning, the body of parenthood literature has followed a more normative developmental model. The arrival of the first child is now seen as a normal developmental event that requires a transition period during which adjustment occurs. This transition period has both stressful and rewarding aspects (Jacoby, 1969; Meyerowitz & Feldman, 1966; Rossi, 1968; Russell, 1974).

Research related to the effect of a child on the marital relationship is plentiful and has long been a major question of researchers. Many cross-sectional studies have demonstrated a
negative correlation between the presence of children and marital satisfaction (Feldman, 1971; Figley, 1973; Glenn & McLanahan, 1982; Miller, 1976; Renne, 1970). Longitudinal studies have also demonstrated a decline in marital satisfaction with the arrival of children (Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983; Cowan, et. al., 1985; Miller & Sollie, 1980). However, causality and the impact of intervening variables are not totally clear. Perhaps the decline is not directly the result of children. Houseknecht (1979) feels that the nonparents, a group that often compared to the parents, are also those people who are better educated and have higher incomes; thus, they would score higher on marital satisfaction despite children. Also, it is known that marital satisfaction sharply drops in the first few years of marriage (Rollins & Feldman, 1970; Rollins & Cannon, 1974). Perhaps the decline in satisfaction is a result of the end of the "honeymoon phase," not the presence of children.

Dyer (1963) and Hobbs (1968) found that the healthier a couple's marriage prior to the presence of children, the less difficulty they have in adjusting to parenthood. Hoffman and Manis (1978) claim that the marital relationship after children changes rather than deteriorates. Feldman (1971) compared marital satisfaction of couples at 5-months pregnancy and at 5-months post partum. He reported a decline in marital satisfaction, especially among those who had the most companionate relationship prior to the birth of the baby. Perhaps it is the decrease in husband-wife interaction and communication that results in the decline of satisfaction. Miller (1976) and White (1983) also found negative correlations between
having children and companionship and between having children and marital satisfaction.

Ryder (1973) in a longitudinal study of 112 couples found no support for the idea that transition to parenthood changes marital happiness. He interviewed initially childless couples and then reinterviewed them 1 to 2 years later. Two-thirds had had a child in the interim. His results showed that marital dissatisfaction had increased for both husband and wife in all categories. However, for those with children, the increases were not significantly greater.

White and Booth (1985), in a longitudinal study of 220 individuals looking at the presence of children and marital quality, found a general decline in marital quality over the 3-year period, but this decline was unrelated to the transition to parenthood. Transition to parenthood did not seem to affect changes in marital happiness, interaction, disagreements, division of labor, satisfaction with division of labor, or number of marital problems. McHale and Huston (1985) showed similar results.

In summary, there appears to be a general decline in satisfaction in the early years of marriage, but the cause of it is uncertain. No longer can we assume that this decline is solely related to the presence of children. More research is needed to find causality and to analyze the complex interpersonal relationships of the new family.

Differences in Mothers and Fathers

Some studies have looked at the differences in men and women adapting to new parenthood. In general, there seems to be several differences. Women seem to be more affected than men by parenthood
and react to it with more stress. Perhaps this is related to societal views on the proper roles of men and women. Fathers have usually assumed the breadwinner role in the family, whereas the mother has taken on the tasks of childrearing. Fathers who deviate from the norm and show nurturant and tender behavior towards their children may be accused of being feminine and showing inappropriate behavior in our Western industrialized society (Josselyn, 1956). The newborn period seems to be the period when the father is assigned the fewest caregiving roles for his children. Because of their exclusion, fathers have perceived themselves to be ignorant and incompetent in caring for infants and have deferred their parenting responsibilities to the mother (Swain & Parke, 1979). Hence, it is the mother who feels responsible for the added tasks as well as stressed with the transition to parenthood. In addition, Cutmann (1975) suggests that parenthood triggers an increase in the differentiation of sex roles. Women and men revert to their traditional sex roles even in previously role sharing marriages. Hence, women take the majority of responsibility for the child. Rossi (1968) concluded that women are more negatively affected than men by parenthood. Women consistently have shown higher crisis scores than men as a result of parenthood (Hobbs, 1965; Russell, 1974).

In regard to marital stress, women also show higher scores. Miller and Sollie (1980) studied 120 couples at 6 months of pregnancy and again at 1 through 8 months post partum. Personal stress increased for both, although more so for the mothers. Marital stress for women increased after birth of the baby and even more so by 8
months, while fathers' marital stress remained stable throughout the 1-year period. Belsky, Spanier, and Rovine (1983) also showed a greater decrease in marital satisfaction for women from pregnancy to 3-months post partum.

Two studies have looked specifically at fathers in relation to transition to parenthood. Fein's (1976) study of 30 men interviewed before and after the birth of their first child showed that anxiety decreased after the birth of their child. Although they were still moderately anxious about their role as father at 6-weeks post partum, they had adapted. Wente and Crockenberg (1976) looked at 46 men experiencing transition to fatherhood in relation to Lamaze preparation, adjustment difficulty, and the husband-wife relationship. Results showed a positive correlation between problems in the husband-wife relationship and adjustment difficulty. Lamaze preparation and the age of the infant did not relate to the father's adjustment. No causality between adjustment difficulty and marital stress is stated.

Fatherhood

Until relatively recently, researchers seldom studied father-child interactions or paternal roles. It was assumed that the father was a secondary figure to the mother in interacting with children. Today, researchers are focusing more on whole family interactions that would, of course, include the father-child dyad. Recent research has shown that fathers are just as competent as mothers in providing affection, stimulation, and necessary care giving skills to newborns (Swain & Parke, 1979), and derive much satisfaction
from the role (McKenry, Arnold, Julian, & Kuo, 1987).

Generally speaking, most studies have supported the idea that from birth on, mothers provide more physical care than fathers (Lamb, 1981; Parke, 1979; Parke & Tinsley, 1981). Despite movements toward equity, women still have primary responsibility for the children and home in American society. An early study (Pedersen & Robson, 1969) showed that only 10% of fathers were doing 2 or more childcare tasks per day. Another home observation study of fathers of 6-12 month olds showed that they were involved with their infants 36% of their available time, but direct caretaking accounted for only 3.8% of that time (Rendina & Dickersheid, 1976). Katsch (1981) showed that fathers did increase their involvement as their children aged from 3 weeks to 3 months old. However, their involvement was in non-care activities, not direct care giving. Thus, most fathers are at least involved with their children in some way; however the nature of their involvement tends to be different from that of mothers. Kotelchuck (1976) found that fathers devote 40% of their time with infants to play, whereas mothers spend only 25% of their time in play. Also, Lamb (1977), in home observations of family interactions at 7 to 8 months, and again at 12 to 13 months infant age, found fathers usually pick up and hold babies in order to play with them. Mothers, on the other hand, usually pick them up in order to care for them. Fathers play is also more physical, whereas mothers is more verbal and didactic (Parke, 1979; Parke & Tinsley, 1981; Power & Parke, 1982). Thus, infants do form as strong an attachment to their fathers as they do to their mothers (Lamb, 1976).
Changes in society have affected fathering behaviors and norms. For example, fathers' participation in pregnancy and childbirth has greatly increased since the 1970s. It was 1974 before the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists endorsed the father's presence during labor and delivery. Today, most American hospitals admit fathers to labor and delivery rooms. There has been an increase in couples attending childbirth classes. In a survey of 269 mothers in the late 1960's (Entwislee & Doering, 1975), it was hard to find couples enrolled in childbirth classes. In 1973 (Entwisle & Doering, 1981), it was hard to find couples who were not taking classes. This was true for blue-collar as well as white-collar families. Father participation has resulted in more positive feelings about the birth for both the mothers and fathers (Entwisle & Doering, 1981; Henneborn & Cogan, 1975).

Since 1970, the percentage of cesarean-section deliveries has greatly increased. This is partially because of new technological advances with fetal monitoring devices which alert medical caregivers to potential fetal compromise during labor. In 1970, 5.5% of all infants were delivered by cesarean-section; in 1980, this figure had risen to 18% (Bottoms, Rosen, & Sokal, 1980). Research suggests that cesarean childbirth can alter the level of father participation in infant caregiving. The most probable explanation of these findings is that fathers are forced to take an active role in caregiving as the mother is physically unable to do so after surgery. These early patterns are then continued, even after the mother has recovered. However, by the end of the first year, differences between the two types of deliveries have been eliminated.
Prematurity has also affected father participation in caregiving. Because of technological advances, more premature babies are surviving. Fathers of prematures are often forced into early contact and care as the baby is often taken to a high-risk nursery for intensive care. The mother remains hospitalized, and it is the father that must remain with the infant. Research has shown that fathers of premature infants are more involved in feeding, diapering, and bathing than fathers of term babies (Hawthorne, Richards, & Callon, 1978; Yogman, 1983). Perhaps this is due to the increased care involved with a premature infant. These babies are more difficult to feed and need to be fed more often than term babies. Perhaps these fathers do more caregiving in order to relieve the mother.

Also, changes in women's employment as well as the women's movement has affected fathering behaviors. In general, fathers increase the proportion of time they spend doing "family work" (including children) when the mother is employed outside the home. However, this increase is primarily the result of a decrease in the time the mother spends in family work, not a significant increase in male participation (Walker & Woods, 1976). Robinson (1977) found an increase of 16.5% in total child contact time for men whose wives were employed outside the home. Hoffman (1984) found that child contact is more likely to increase than housework when wives are employed. Thus, in fact, with mothers' employment, fathers are spending more time with their children, even if they are not doing more housework per se.

A man's own work schedule is a good predictor of how much time he spends caring for children and doing family work. The less he works,
the more involved he is with his children (Cowan & Cowan, 1987). Clarke-Stewart (1982) found that men who work 40 hours per week spend about 2 hours per day doing family work, and men who work 50 hours per week spend about 1 hour per day. Even when flexible scheduling of working parents allows 1 parent to be home most of the working day, no fundamental changes in male-female roles evolved. Child care appears to still be the mother's primary responsibility, and work outside the home, the primary role for the father (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981). A more recent study of 55,000 households using 1982 census data showed that 15% of the husbands of full-time working women were the principle care givers to children under 5-years old. If the woman worked evenings or nights, this number increased to 39% (Presser, 1985). A more recent study by Jump and Haas (1987) found similar results.

Although society is changing and some men are becoming more equalitarian, wives and mothers still have the primary responsibility for the children and the home, despite whether or not they are employed outside the home (Jump & Haas, 1987; Robinson, 1977; Sanik, 1981; Walker & Woods; 1976). Studies have shown that couples often turn to traditional male-female roles after the birth of a baby (Cowan, Cowan, Coie, & Coie, 1978; Hoffman, 1978; LaRossa & LaRossa, 1981). In one study (Kellerman & Katz, 1978) parents were asked to respond to 89 childrearing responsibilities as to who should do them and who does them best. Most parents felt over one-half of the tasks were best done by mothers. These included all of the physical caregiving tasks. One third of the tasks were thought to be a joint-responsibility and had to do with discipline and education.
Only 8 items or less that 10% were seen as the father-role. These tasks included teaching assertiveness, mechanical skills, and sports. Because prior research has shown that when a person does not see a task as his or her responsibility, it becomes optional (Schooler, Miller, Miller, & Richtand, 1984), it is not surprising that women still do the majority of child care and home tasks. Hence, data generally support the idea that men are more involved in their children's lives than ever before. However, the major responsibility for home and children still lies with the wife and mother.

It is generally accepted that there is a positive correlation between marital quality and parental involvement and satisfaction (Belsky, 1979; Feldman, Nash, & Ashenbrenner, 1983; Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1984; Wandersman, Wandersman, & Kahn, 1980). Also, this correlation seems to be exceptionally strong for new fathers (Feldman, Nash, & Ashenbrenner, 1983; Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1984; Goldberg, Michaels, & Lamb, 1985). In one survey (Chilman & Elbaum, 1976) of more fathers than mothers felt parenthood strengthened their marriage. New fathers seem to have more positive feelings about parenthood after birth and report less problems than new mothers (Duncan, 1984; Hobbs & Wimbish, 1977; Russell, 1974). Explanations for this difference are that women do most of the caretaking, undergo more role changes, and spend more time with the new baby. In a study by Daniels and Weingarten (1982) all of the women had to accommodate their work life to the demands of parenthood. However, only 1 of the 72 men was compelled to make an adjustment in education, career ambition, or employment goals. Active participation in daily child
care has been optional for men and mandatory for women; fathers participation appears to be more playing than actual caring for the baby (Clarke-Stewart, 1980; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Lamb, 1980; Parke, 1979).

Fathers who report an increased identity with the parent role report greater satisfaction (Dickie et al., 1981) and higher self esteem and happiness with themselves (Cowan & Cowan, 1983). McKenry, Arnold, Julian, and Kuo (1987) found that the importance of the father role was highly related to well-being at mid-life, contrary to some other studies (Brim, 1976; Thurner, 1976). All of the studies showed correlations not causality.

In general, parenthood seems to be a positive experience for men who have happy marriages. Men who highly value parenthood are involved to some extent with childcare and find parenthood more rewarding than those who do not value it.

Delayed Parenthood

There has been a recent trend for women to delay first births. Census data has shown that women are marrying later, and also delaying birth for a longer period after marriage. According to the U.S. Center for Health Statistics (1980), one-third of all first births are to women over 25 years old. First births to women aged 30-34 years old has steadily increased and has nearly tripled from 1970 to 1982. These women are better educated, more career oriented, and better off financially than younger mothers (Wilkie, 1981). Research looking at this emerging trend is mainly descriptive and is focused on women, not their mates. Little data exist on fathers who delay parenthood.
In 1982, Daniels and Weingarten looked at 82 couples retrospectively in regard to their timing of parenthood. A group of late-timing parents (average age of wife at time of birth was 30.5) were compared to a group of early-timing parents (average age of wife at birth was 21.5). A third group of mid-life parents (women 37 or older at time of birth) was added later in the research, when calling an age of 30.5 "late" was questioned by the researchers, as women were tending to have children later and later in life. Extensive unstructured interviews were undertaken to collect data on the different timing groups. Much interesting data resulted from this study. For example, two-thirds of the late-timing fathers had regular responsibility for their children. This was 3 times as many as did in the early timing group. This was attributed to the fact that in the late-timing group, most of the wives worked outside the home, and there was an increase in so called "co-parenting." Also, the late-timing fathers were more experienced workers, made more money, and were more firmly established in their careers. These factors allowed them more freedom and flexibility to spend time with their families and children.

In the mid-life parent group, 14 couples were represented. Reasons stated for delaying birth included infertility, career concerns, unresolved identity issues, and not finding the right mate. Generally, the women felt the experience of parenthood had more impact on them than did the men. Generally, parents were positive about the experience. They felt they had seen enough of life to know and appreciate loving a child. Most felt parenting was "more rewarding
than most of the other experiences out there in the world." The one drawback mentioned was a decreased energy level; although the parents also stated a sense of renewal and rejuvenation. This study added much to our understanding of this trend, yet it lacked statistically based data analysis and was a totally retrospective study.

Another study, looking at mothers, found a positive correlation between maternal age and maternal role satisfaction (Ragozin, Basham, Cenic, Greensberg, & Robinson, 1982). Coady (1982) looked at 70 women who delayed childbearing in relation to maternal satisfaction. She found a significant correlation between maternal satisfaction and 3 other variables—maternal competence, father-support, and infant temperament.

May (1982) studied fathers readiness to become a parent and identified 3 factors that seemed important before men want children: (a) stability in the couple relationship, (b) relative financial security, and (c) a sense of closure to the childless period of their lives. Barber and Dreyer (1985) looked at 34 men who were either expecting a first child or were voluntarily childless. All men were in their mid-thirties. Despite the fact that the childless men met the first 2 criteria set by May (1982), they were ambivalent in their decisions to have children. Women seemed to be much more ready to make a decision. Perhaps men who are not ready to commit themselves to parenthood, and yet find themselves parents, are the ones who are not satisfied and involved in the role. More research is needed related to readiness and subsequent role satisfaction.
In summary, although an increasing number of couples are delaying childbirth we have limited information on couples who have children later in life than is the normal in our culture, and even less is known about fathers per se who delay childbearing.

**Men at Mid-life**

Much controversy exists as to whether the middle years are extremely satisfying and fulfilling, or if they are depressing and even crisis-producing. Some feel that these years are generally happy because income is usually at its peak, childrearing responsibilities are over, and more leisure time exists. Others claim bodily decline, unfulfilled dreams, and pressure to meet self-demands before death make it a period of depression and stress. Hence, much research of the 1970s dealt with this very issue. Generally, researchers concluded that men and women handled this period in a somewhat different manner. Research on women tended to focus on how women dealt with the loss of mother role (i.e., empty nest period), whereas research on men tended to look at the mid-life transition or crisis.

Jung (1933) contended that the middle years were a time of gradual personality changes. He noted that certain characteristics emerged after being dormant for many years, whereas others became less important and were replaced by different or even opposite traits (Kimmel, 1980). This personality change assists individuals to search for meaning and wholeness in life, as well as allow them to eventually accept their own mortality. According to this theory of sex-role convergence, mid-life men move toward expressiveness, sensuality, and passivity previously repressed in their instrumental good provider
role (Jung, 1933). They become more humanistic and emotionally expressive. Meaningful relationships become more important than success and achievement. They turn toward their families and friends for more intimate and close relationships.

Sex role convergence is now seen as an important developmental task of middle age (Cohen, 1979; Levinson, 1978; Lowenthal, 1975; Neugarten, 1965; Vaillant, 1977). Several researchers have confirmed the occurrence of a sex-role conversion (Gutmann, 1969; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Neugarten, 1968; Tamir, 1982). Neugarten and Gutmann's (1958) Kansas City study of adult life indicated that men at mid-life became more sensitive, less aggressive, and coped with situations more cognitively. Lowenthal, Thurnheer, and Chiriboga's (1975) study of upper-working-class men demonstrated a need for nurturance and dependency and a decrease in material values at mid-life. Livson's (1975) research supports a greater life satisfaction for mid-life men who have incorporated emotional expressiveness in their behavior. Gutmann's (1969) cross-cultural research also supports this theory of sex-role convergence. This convergence seems to help individuals develop a clear understanding between themself and the external world.

Men have rarely been studied in regard to their parental role loss after the children leave home, as it was generally assumed that men had an alternative provider role that had always been their basis of identity and self esteem. However, parenting for men at mid-life is generally characterized by great change. Children are usually adolescent and seeking independence, at the same time wives are
becoming more aggressive and seeking rewarding activities outside the home. To the mid-life man who is turning to his family for closeness and intimacy, these changes can be most distressing. Some researchers have characterized relationships between mid-life fathers and their children as tense or strained (Borland, 1978; Brim, 1976; Levinson, 1978). Thurner (1976) found that the father-child relationship did not effect the man's well-being at mid-life. However, McKenry et. al. (1987) found a strong correlation between closeness to children and well-being. Perhaps societal changes over the years help explain this recent cohort of men. Nurturant behavior in father-child relationships is more acceptable today, as is increased participation in child rearing activities. Fathers need to find new and more satisfying, but less dependent relationships, with their adolescent children (Colarusso & Nemiroff, 1982).

The majority of research on mid-life men has focused on male mid-life "crisis" or "transition." Again, there is controversy as to whether it is a crisis or just a developmental transition phase. Farrell and Rosenberg (1981) found no evidence to support a universal mid-life crisis. Levinson (1978) feels there is a universal transition at age 40 or so, and depending on other life events, it may go smoothly or may develop into a "full blown" crisis. Jaques (1965) analyzed the life histories of 310 artists and suggested that a "mid-life crisis" occurs around the specific age of 37. Many feel that the male sex-role socialization is the cause of this crisis at mid-life. Men are socialized to be strong, aggressive, and unemotional, and in mid-life all of these things are questioned as his
body declines, his career stagnates, and his children and wife become more independent (Cohen, 1979).

Brim (1976) sums up the male mid-life transition in listing 7 issues that men must deal with in middle age. He feels that these 7 issues are the cause of personality changes that accompany the male mid-life transition.

1. **Endocrine changes.** Testosterone and androgen levels gradually decrease in the male after the age of 30. At present, there is no conclusive evidence as to how, or if, these hormonal changes contribute to stress and self evaluation of mid-life. There is a need for more research in this area of biological changes that occur with the aging process.

2. **Aspirations and achievements.** Men must reevaluate and adjust their career aspirations to the reality of the time they have left to achieve. Often, there is a gap between their aspirations and their level of actual achievement. Gutmann (1969) states there is a decline in competition and risk as a man ages. He tends to want to hold on to what he has, not really achieve more. Some men handle this self-assessment well, and others become depressed at facing the reality of their achievements.

3. **Resurgence of "the dream".** Levinson (1978) uses the term "dream" as what one wishes for in his youth as to his future. Even men who accomplish this so called "dream" may have problems in middle age as they feel they should have had higher ideals or should have pursued different careers. Again, mid-life males must deal with their feelings positively in order to restructure their middle years.
4. **Stagnation vs. generativity.** One must shift one's concerns to the development of the younger generation and feel a responsibility to do this for society. Erikson (1950) states that this is a psychosocial developmental task of the middle aged adult. One must do this if he is to move on to the next stage of development successfully.

5. **Confrontation with death.** One must deal with his own mortality. Men look at the time they have left and realize they may not do and experience all they had wished. One must accept the inevitable and deal with it in order to fully accept oneself.

6. **Relationships within the family.** Children are leaving home and becoming independent, parents are aging and becoming dependent, and wife is becoming more aggressive, assertive, and independent. At the same time this is happening, the man is becoming more sensitive, nurturant, and expressive. This cross over of the sex-roles in the second half of life (Gutmann, 1969) sets up the "normal unisex of later life." However, as it is occurring, the man often has much trouble adapting to his role losses and gains, and often power losses.

7. **Social status and role change.** With age there are changes in social position. There are role losses and gains. Perception of these losses and gains determines how one is affected (Neugarten, 1968). Situations that are "on time" and expected are less likely to cause disruption and trauma than events which are "off time" or not expected (Neugarten, 1970).
We have no conclusive evidence as to whether or not a male mid-life crisis exists or even a distinct crisis. However, it is apparent that men are individuals with unique histories, and although they may go through some of the same experiences, they may perceive them and react to them quite differently. More research is needed in this area before we can make any generalizations or recommendations.

Summary

It is generally accepted that parenthood is a normative transition in the lives of most individuals. It can be a time of crisis and stress, or one of smooth adjustment depending on a variety of circumstances in the lives of the mother, father, and child. Although historically fatherhood has been an area of little research, today it is becoming a well researched topic. It has been firmly established that men can nurture and care for children just as women do, and that fathers provide a unique contribution to the overall development of the infant. Although fathers are involved more now with their children than ever before in our history, it is the mother that still is the primary caregiver.

Little research has been focused on delayed fatherhood and how the meshing of 2 transitional periods affect and influence one another--parenthood and mid-life transition. This study was designed to supply some preliminary data on adjustment to and satisfaction with fatherhood at mid-life. Because societal trends suggest an increase in the number of men experiencing fatherhood at mid-life, it is imperative that researchers learn as much as possible about this special group of men to help them better understand the factors
affecting adjustment to and satisfaction with the role of fatherhood during the middle years. Such information would add much to the further development and expansion of role theory, as well as developmental theory.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The study "Factors Related to Satisfaction with and Adjustment to Fatherhood at Mid-life" is an extension of a larger study, "Family and Job Factors Related to the Male Mid-life Transition", directed by Dr. Patrick C. McKenry of The Ohio State University and funded by the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (H-783). The project was approved by The Ohio State University Behavioral and Social Sciences Human Subjects Review Committee (Appendix A).

This is an exploratory, descriptive study which provides information about a selective group of fathers--those who have fathered infants during mid-life (ages 40-55). More specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine what variables are correlated with the dependent measures of adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction. The independent variables are age of the child, sex of the child, parenting education, actual and perceived experience with children, temperament of the child, planning of the child, importance of father role, length of marriage, job importance, marital adjustment, involvement with baby, and socioeconomic status.
Sample Selection

The sample utilized in this study consisted of 206 middle-aged (40-55) men who became fathers in 1986. Names of prospective participants were obtained from Ohio birth certificates for the year 1986. All potential subjects were identified and a random sample of 500 men were selected to participate. It was impossible to determine if the fathers were first time fathers from the birth certificate information. Inclusion in this sample required that the men were: (a) white; (b) married to the mother of the child born in 1986; and (c) living with the child and the child's mother. These criteria were used to ensure a group of mid-life fathers who were somewhat homogeneous and fairly representative of the total group of men in this category. Fathers selected were between 40 and 55 years of age to ensure a mid-life sample. Because women are delaying childbearing well into their thirties, it is expected that a growing number of men, who are generally older than their wives, will be in their late thirties or older when they become fathers. Daniels and Weingarten's (1982) study used an age of 37 or older for women in their mid-life parent group. Thus, fathers, averaging 2 to 3 years older, would be approximately 40 or older. Although the exact age span constituting middle-aged is debated, the age range of 40-55 is a commonly used span to term mid-life (Farrell & Rosenberg, 1981; Levinson, 1978; Sheehy, 1976).

Age of the child at the time of selection was between 14 months and 26 months; there were 2 reasons for choosing this age range. First, by 14 months post-baby fathers have had time to integrate this
new or expanded role into their lives and be over the so called "baby
honeymoon" phase of parenting (Hobbs, 1965). Secondly, by using this
twelve-month interval, data for one calendar year could be used,
thereby making data collection more efficient. Data were collected on
42% of those selected to participate or 210 subjects; however, 4
subjects were excluded from the analysis. In one case, the child had
died at 3 months of age, and in another case, the father had died when
the child was 4 months old. In the other two cases, the fathers were
not married to nor living with the child's mother and the child. Thus
the total sample used to test the hypotheses consisted of 206 men.

Salient demographic descriptors of the sample are presented in
Table 1. The mean age of the men was 43.1 years. Approximately 71%
of the men had attended college or were college graduates. The
majority (61%) had total family incomes between $20,000 and $50,000
per year. Occupational status ranged from higher executives to
unskilled laborers. The mean number of years married was 10.3 (S.D. -
6.6) years, and 53% of the men were not in their first marriages. The
total number children prior to the 1986 birth ranged from 0-12 with a
mean of 2.48. Only 12% (N = 24) of the men had their first child in
1986. There was wide geographic variability within the state with the
major concentrations of respondents in the highly populated
metropolitan areas of the state (i.e., Cleveland, Akron, & Canton
(36%); Columbus (12%); and Dayton & Cincinnati (21%).
Table 1
Demographic information (N-206)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>X = 43.1 (SD=3.2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>100% white Caucasian (N=206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 7 years</td>
<td>2% (N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 years</td>
<td>5% (N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11 years</td>
<td>4% (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>17% (N=36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial college</td>
<td>26% (N=53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>22% (N=45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>23% (N=46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Family Income</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $5,000</td>
<td>2% (N=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000-9,999</td>
<td>6% (N=12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-19,999</td>
<td>4% (N=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-29,999</td>
<td>19% (N=38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-39,999</td>
<td>22% (N=46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-49,999</td>
<td>20% (N=41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-74,999</td>
<td>12% (N=25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000-99,999</td>
<td>5% (N=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td>9% (N=9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years Married</th>
<th>x = 10.3 (SD=6.59)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range = 1-28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>x = 2.48 (SD=1.9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(prior to 1986 birth)</td>
<td>range = 0-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collection of the Data

All potential participants randomly selected from Ohio 1986 birth certificate information were sent a letter inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix B). More specifically, the study was explained to the potential participants as having the purpose of helping the investigator gain a better understanding of the way mid-life men adapt to fatherhood. The questionnaire was designed to be answered within 30-45 minutes. In addition, a drawing for a free educational toy for every 20 questionnaires returned was offered as an incentive. By returning the questionnaire respondents indicated informed consent to participate. Postcard reminders were sent out 10 days after the initial mailing.

Instrumentation

The participants were asked to respond to a paper and pencil questionnaire composed of various standardized instruments: Gratification of Parenthood Checklist (Russell, 1974); Change in Routine Measure (Wente & Crockenberg, 1976); Dyadic Marital Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976); and Involvement with Baby Scale (Goldberg, Michaels, & Lamb, 1985). In addition, various questions, both forced choice and open ended, were asked to assess their feelings, attitudes, and behaviors in relation to becoming a father at mid-life. Also, general demographic information was obtained.

Paternal Role Satisfaction

The "Gratification of Parenthood Checklist" (Russell, 1974) was designed to measure the relationship between parenthood and 12 aspects of the parents' lives. Russell used this checklist in her study of
511 working and middle-class couples. She reported the reliability of the checklist as computed by the split-half method was .93. Its validity is limited to face validity. Russell reported that the more highly educated respondents tended to choose fewer "gratification" items. She suggested that perhaps the checklist measures sophistication rather than gratification.

Russell used 3 response categories in her research: (a) not at all, (b) somewhat, and (c) very much. In this study the instrument was changed to include a fourth response, as suggested by Coady’s (1982) research. This allows more variability and gives a more detailed description of the father’s satisfaction with the father role. The range of scores possible for this measure was 12-48. Reliability of this checklist from this sample was .87 as computed by Cronbach’s alpha.

**Adjustment Difficulty**

A "Change in Routine" measure, developed by Wente and Crockenberg (1976) was used to measure adjustment difficulty. It consists of 17 items, 13 of which related to impact on personal lifestyle and 4 which relate to impact on marital relationship. Each item is rated on a scale from 1 to 7 (1 - not bothered and 7 - extremely bothered). Two subscales are created by combining the 4 marital item scores and the 13 lifestyle item scores. The Cronbach’s alpha reported for the marital subscale is .82, and for the lifestyle subscore, .72. A general question is also included in this measure in which fathers were asked to estimate the degree of change in their routines since the birth of the baby using a scale of 1 to 7 (1 - no change, and 7 -
severe change). For the purposes of this study the total score for adjustment difficulty was used. The range of possible scores is 18-126 for this measure. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .81 for this sample.

**Marital Adjustment**

Spanier's (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale was used to measure marital adjustment. It is a 32 item scale. Scores between 0-151 are possible. Spanier's 1976 data showed a mean of 114.8 for happily married individuals. Four distinct subscales measuring satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, and affection make up this adjustment scale. This scale has been demonstrated to have concurrent validity. When correlated with another frequently used marital adjustment scale (i.e., Locke & Wallace, 1959), a correlation of .87 was achieved. Using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, the scale reliability was computed to be .96. Reliability of this scale was .93 for the present sample.

**Involvement with Baby**

Participation in caretaking and playing with the baby was measured by means of a checklist created by Goldberg, Michaels, and Lamb (1985). It consists of 7 items. Fathers were asked to indicate the percentage of time they complete the task, the percentage of time their spouses do it, and the percentage of time another caretaker completes the task. Means of each item, as well as of the total care scale were computed. The alpha coefficient for this baby involvement scale is reported to be .93 by Goldberg, Michaels, and Lamb (1985). The last item on the checklist is play and is looked at separately, making 2 subscales—one for care and one for play. The reliability
for this scale was .87 for this sample using Cronbach’s alpha.

**Socioeconomic Status (SES)**

Hollingshead (1965) "Two Factor Index of Social Position" was used to measure SES. It combines occupation and education to determine social position. The range of possible scores is 11-77 and divides society into 5 social classes from upper-class to lower-lower class.

**Importance of Father Role**

Four statements related to the importance of the role of father were designed by the investigator. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statement using a Likert scale. Possible scores on this measure were 5-20. Using Cronbach’s coefficient alpha, the scale reliability was computed to be .65 for this sample.

**Data Analyses**

Correlation analyses, including Pearson’s $r$ and stepwise multiple regression, were the primary means of data analyses to determine whether and to what degree a relationship exists between the 12 independent variables and the dependent variables of paternal role satisfaction and adjustment difficulty. Measures of central tendency and frequency were also obtained.

Stepwise multiple regression was used to test for the relationship and degree of relationship of the independent variables and the dependent variables. Stepwise multiple regression was performed in order to determine the best model of predictors of positive adjustment and role satisfaction for midlife fathers. The
probability level for significance in this study was set at $p = .05$. The Statistical Analyses System (SAS, 1979), and SPSSX (SPSS, 1986) were used to analyze all data.

**Limitations**

1. The sample was selected from a restricted population of men and is, thus, homogeneous by design. The sample was white and generally well-educated (71% having at least a partial college education). The ability to generalize the findings is limited to a similar population group.

2. This study was based entirely on the fathers' perception of his own situation. If mothers were surveyed or if family interactions were observed, different conclusions may be reached. Since men tend to reveal their feelings much less than women do, results may differ from those of other studies using other methodologies.

3. This study was survey in nature and is a result of paper and pencil questionnaire data. Interviews may have generated more descriptive in-depth data.

4. Because of the use of mailed questionnaires, there is a self-report bias. Problems of memory, the desire of subjects to present themselves in a positive light, language ambiguity, and the use of verbal reports as an ego defense (Lazarus, 1982) are common disadvantages of self-report questionnaires.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this investigation was to determine what variables were significantly related to adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction as mid-life men adapted to fatherhood. The following independent or predictor variables were examined as possible influences on adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction: (a) sex of the child; (b) age of the child; (c) prenatal parenting education; (d) actual and perceived experience with children; (e) child temperament; (f) planning of the child; (g) importance of the father role; (h) length of marriage; (i) present and comparative job importance; (j) marital adjustment; (k) involvement with baby (care and play), and (l) socioeconomic status. Correlational analysis and stepwise multiple regression were used to determine significant predictors of adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction. The mean of the study variables are presented in Table 2.

Data Analyses

Correlational Analyses

Univariate correlation analysis was one method used to determine the relationship between variables. The correlation coefficient Pearson's $r$ expresses the degree of relationship and strength between
Table 2
Means and/or Frequencies of Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Frequencies/Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment difficulty</td>
<td>41.67 (S.D. = 15.8)</td>
<td>17-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal role satisfaction</td>
<td>32.42 (S.D. = 5.1)</td>
<td>21-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the child</td>
<td>20.31 months (S.D. = 3.8)</td>
<td>14-26 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of the child</td>
<td></td>
<td>51% Male 49% Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual experience with children</td>
<td>8.33 (S.D. = .38)</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived experience with children</td>
<td></td>
<td>53% Much 33% Fair amount 13% None or little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperament of the child</td>
<td></td>
<td>65% Easy 33% Mixed 2% Difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of father role</td>
<td>14.7 (S.D. = 4.2)</td>
<td>5-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of marriage</td>
<td>10.3 years (S.D. = 6.6)</td>
<td>1-28 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job importance</td>
<td></td>
<td>84% Extremely important or important 14% Ambivalent 2% Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative job importance</td>
<td></td>
<td>44% More important 31% Same 19% Less important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital adjustment</td>
<td>124.3 (S.D. = 10.6)</td>
<td>90-150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement with baby care</td>
<td>22.72%</td>
<td>0-99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement with baby play</td>
<td>38.60%</td>
<td>0-99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic status</td>
<td>35.57 (S.D. = 17.3)</td>
<td>11-77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the predictor variables and adjustment to and satisfaction with mid-life fatherhood.

Pearson's $r$ correlation analyses between the predictor variables and the dependent measures ranged from .00 to .29. (See Table 3 for the correlation matrix of the study variables.) There was a statistically significant relationship between temperament of the child ($r = -.22, p < .001$) and the dependent measure of adjustment difficulty. Socioeconomic status was also related to adjustment difficulty ($r = .14, p < .05$). Marital adjustment was significantly related to the dependent measure of paternal role satisfaction ($r = -.29, p < .001$), as was length of marriage ($r = -.14, p < .05$).

Pearson's $r$ correlation analyses was also used to examine relationships between independent variables. The independent variable of parenting education was significantly related to other independent variables of actual experience with children ($r = .71, p < .001$), perceived experience with children ($r = .24, p < .001$), planning of the child ($r = .16, p < .05$), comparative job importance ($r = -.16, p < .05$), marital adjustment ($r = .14, p < .05$), and socioeconomic status ($r = .16, p < .05$). There were statistically significant relationships between the independent measure of actual experience with children and perceived experience with children ($r = .36, p < .001$), as well as planning of the child ($r = .17, p < .01$). Planning of the child was significantly related to length of marriage ($r = -.33, p < .001$), and socioeconomic status ($r = .20, p < .01$). There were statistically significant relationships between the independent measures of importance of the father role and involvement
Table 3
Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sex of child</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Age of child</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Parenting education</td>
<td>-.145*</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Actual experience with children</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.710***</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Perceived experience with children</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-.150*</td>
<td>.260***</td>
<td>.358***</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Temperament of child</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Planning of child</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>-.162*</td>
<td>.175*</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Importance of father role</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>-.097</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Length of marriage</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td>-.328***</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Job importance</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Comparative job importance</td>
<td>-.077</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>-.164*</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.513***</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Marital adjustment</td>
<td>-.077</td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>.142*</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Involvement with baby (care)</td>
<td>-.126</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.438***</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>-.028</td>
<td>.211**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Involvement with baby (play)</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>-.027</td>
<td>-.103</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>.199***</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>-.108</td>
<td>-.142*</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.360***</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Adjustment difficulty</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>-.095</td>
<td>-.068</td>
<td>-.217**</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>-.119</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>-.104</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Paternal role satisfaction</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>-.142*</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.286***</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td>SES (Hollingshead)</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>.156*</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.197**</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>-.095</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>.144*</td>
<td>.037</td>
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*p < .05
**p < .01
***p < .001
with baby care ($r = .44$, $p < .001$) and involvement with baby play ($r = .20$, $p < .01$). Comparative job importance and present job importance were significantly related ($r = .51$, $p < .001$). Comparative job importance was also related to involvement with baby play ($r = -.14$, $p < .05$). Marital adjustment and involvement with baby care were significantly related ($r = .21$, $p < .01$). There was also a statistically significant relationship between involvement with baby care and involvement with baby play ($r = .36$, $p < .001$).

The relationship between the 2 dependent measure of adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction were examined by using Pearson $r$ correlational analyses. The relationship was not significant ($r = .06$, $p = .36$).

**Multiple Regression Analysis**

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was the statistical method used to assess the predictive ability of the independent variables as a group, in regard to the dependent variables. Regression coefficients and beta weights for the predictors are presented in Table 6. Questionnaires with missing data were eliminated from the regression analysis resulting in an N of 195.

Temperament of the baby explained 5.5% of the variance in adjustment difficulty, followed by socioeconomic status (1.9%). The multiple regression analysis indicated that temperament of the baby and socioeconomic status were the only significant predictors of adjustment difficulty. Together temperament and socioeconomic status explained 7.7% of the variance and were significant predictors in the multiple regression equation ($F = 7.99$, $p < .001$).
None of the variables in the regression equation were significant predictors of paternal role satisfaction. Since marital adjustment was significantly related to paternal role satisfaction in the Pearson r correlation analyses, one would expect it to be significant in the multiple regression equation. However, the mean marital adjustment was quite high for the group. This may have suppressed the effect of marital adjustment in the multiple regression equation.

Because of the inability to generate substantial predictor variables, the significance level of the equation was altered to force variables to be generated by the regression. Even when all study variables were combined, only 13.6% of the variance of paternal role satisfaction was explained and only 13.9% of the variance of adjustment difficulty was accounted for.

**Additional Analyses**

First time fathers were analyzed separately using Pearson's r correlation. Planning of the child was the only independent variable significant to the dependent variable of adjustment difficulty (r = -.40, p < .05). The dependent variable paternal role satisfaction had significant relationships with 2 independent variables: prenatal parenting education (r = .56, p < .01) and actual experience with children (r = .52, p < .01). In addition, the independent variable of importance of father role was significantly related to marital adjustment (r = .46, p < .05); involvement with baby care (r = .63, p < .001); and involvement with baby play (r = .42, p < .05).
Table 4
Stepwise Multiple Regression
of
Adjustment Difficulty on Predictor Variables

<table>
<thead>
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<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
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<td>194</td>
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<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>63.1581</td>
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Multiple R = .2349
R² = .055
p = .0009

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<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
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<td>193</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>69.0568</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Multiple R = .2772
R² = .077
p = .0005

***p < .001
Stepwise multiple regression was used to analyze the predictive ability of the independent variables as group, in regard to the dependent variables for the 2 subgroups of (a) men in their first marriage (N=92) and (b) men in a second or subsequent marriage (N=103). Together temperament of the baby and socioeconomic status explained 27.7% of the variance of adjustment difficulty in the first marriage subgroup; while importance of the father role explained 4.7% of the variance of paternal role satisfaction in this subgroup. For men in a second or subsequent marriage, the multiple regression equation was significant for adjustment difficulty, but not for paternal role satisfaction. Perceived experience with children explained 8.5% of the variance of adjustment difficulty.

Testing of Research Questions and Hypotheses

The aforementioned correlational analyses provide findings related to the following research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One: Is the sex of the child related to (a) adjustment difficulty and (b) paternal role satisfaction?

The correlation between sex of the child and adjustment difficulty was $r = - .07 \ (p = .31)$. Sex of the child is not related to adjustment difficulty.

The correlation between sex of the child and paternal role satisfaction was $r = - .03 \ (p = .63)$. Thus, sex of the child is not related to paternal role satisfaction.

Research Question Two: Is the age of the child related to adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction?
The correlation between age of the child and adjustment difficulty was $r = -.01 (p = .93)$. Age of the child is not related to adjustment difficulty.

The correlation between age of the child and paternal role satisfaction was $r = .02 (p = .76)$. Thus, age of the child is not related to paternal role satisfaction.

Research Question Three: Is prenatal parenting education related to (a) adjustment difficulty and (b) paternal role satisfaction?

The correlation between prenatal parenting education and adjustment difficulty was $r = .11 (p = .11)$. Prenatal parenting education and adjustment difficulty were not related but approached significance.

The correlation between prenatal parenting education and paternal role satisfaction was $r = .10 (p = .17)$. Thus, prenatal parenting education was not related to paternal role satisfaction.

Hypothesis One: Previous experience with children, both actual and perceived, is negatively related to (a) adjustment difficulty and (b) positively related to paternal role satisfaction.

The correlation between actual experience with children and adjustment difficulty was $r = -.09 (p = .18)$. The correlation between perceived experience with children and adjustment difficulty was $r = -.07 (p = .34)$. Thus, this hypothesis was rejected.

The correlation between actual experience with children and paternal role satisfaction was $r = .12 (p = .08)$. The correlation between perceived experience with children and paternal role
satisfaction was $r = .05$ ($p = .49$). The relationship between actual experience with children and paternal role satisfaction approached significance, but the relationship between perceived experience with children and paternal role satisfaction was not significant. Thus the hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis Two**: A child who is perceived as having an easy temperament is negatively related to (a) adjustment difficulty and (b) positively related to paternal role satisfaction.

The correlation between temperament of the child and adjustment difficulty was $r = -.22$ ($p < .001$). Thus there was a negative relationship between temperament and adjustment difficulty and the hypothesis was supported.

The correlation between temperament of the child and paternal role satisfaction was $r = .12$ ($p = .09$). The relationship between temperament of the child and paternal role satisfaction only approached significance; thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis Three**: A planned child is negatively related to (a) adjustment difficulty and (b) positively related to paternal role satisfaction.

The correlation coefficient was $r = -.02$ ($p = .72$) for the relationship between planning of the child and adjustment difficulty. There is not a statistically significant relationship between planning of the child and adjustment difficulty; thus, the hypothesis was rejected.
The correlation between planning of the child and paternal role satisfaction was \( r = .12 \) (\( p = .10 \)). The relationship between planning of the child and paternal role satisfaction only approached significance, and thus the hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis Four:** Perception of importance of the father role is negatively related to (a) adjustment difficulty and (b) positively to paternal role satisfaction.

The correlation of importance of the father role and adjustment difficulty was \( r = .00 \) (\( p = .96 \)). There is no relationship between importance of the father role and adjustment difficulty; thus the hypothesis was rejected.

The correlation between importance of the father role and paternal role satisfaction was \( r = .07 \) (\( p = .34 \)). There is no relationship between the importance of the father role and paternal role satisfaction; thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis Five:** Length of marriage is (a) negatively related to adjustment difficulty and (b) positively related to paternal role satisfaction.

The correlation between length of marriage and adjustment difficulty was \( r = -.01 \) (\( p = .86 \)). There is not a statistically significant relationship between length of marriage and adjustment difficulty; thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

The correlation between length of marriage and paternal role satisfaction was \( r = -.14 \) (\( p < .05 \)). There was not a positive relationship between length of marriage and paternal role satisfaction; thus, the hypothesis was rejected.
Hypothesis Six: Feeling that one's career is at its height and not seeing work as the most important aspect of life is (a) negatively related to adjustment difficulty and (b) positively related to paternal role satisfaction.

The correlation between job importance and adjustment difficulty was $r = -0.06$ ($p = .43$). The correlation between comparative job importance and adjustment difficulty was $r = -0.06$ ($p = .41$). There is not a significant relationship between job importance and adjustment difficulty; thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

The correlation coefficient of job importance and paternal role satisfaction was $r = -0.08$ ($p = .25$). The correlation of comparative job importance and paternal role satisfaction was $r = -0.05$ ($p = .50$). There is not a significant relationship between job importance and paternal role satisfaction; thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Seven: Marital adjustment is related (a) negatively to adjustment difficulty and (b) positively to paternal role satisfaction.

The correlation between marital adjustment and adjustment difficulty was $r = -0.12$ ($p = .09$). The relationship between marital adjustment and adjustment difficulty only approached significance, thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

The correlation between marital adjustment and paternal role satisfaction was $r = 0.29$ ($p < .001$). There is a significant positive relationship between marital adjustment and paternal role satisfaction; thus, the hypothesis was supported.
Hypothesis Eight: There are positive curvilinear relationships between involvement with baby care and paternal role satisfaction and between involvement with baby play and paternal role satisfaction. There are negative curvilinear relationships between involvement with baby care and adjustment difficulty and involvement with baby play and adjustment difficulty.

Four separate scatter diagrams of scores were done first to assess the curvilinear relationships. Then, 4 general linear models procedures were conducted to analyze the relationship between involvement with baby (play and care) and the 2 dependent measures of adjustment difficulty and role satisfaction.

There is not a positive curvilinear relationship between involvement with baby care and paternal role satisfaction ($p=.48$) or involvement with baby play and paternal role satisfaction ($p=.78$). The hypothesis was rejected.

There is not a negative curvilinear relationship between involvement with baby care and adjustment difficulty ($p=.35$) or involvement with baby play and adjustment difficulty ($p=.32$). The hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Nine: Socioeconomic status is (a) positively related to adjustment difficulty and (b) negatively to paternal role satisfaction.

The correlation between socioeconomic status and adjustment difficulty was $r=.14$ ($p < .05$). There is a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and adjustment difficulty; thus, the hypothesis was supported.
The correlation between socioeconomic status and paternal role satisfaction was $r = .04$ ($p = .60$). There is no relationship between socioeconomic status and paternal role satisfaction; thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis Ten:** There is an inverse relationship between the 2 dependent measures—adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction.

The correlation between adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction was $r = .06$ ($p = .36$). There is not relationship between the 2 dependent measures of adjustment difficult and paternal role satisfaction. The hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis Eleven:** There is a combination of variables that will be predictive of a (a) state of paternal role satisfaction and (b) positive adjustment.

Two predictor variables were selected and entered into a regression analysis of paternal role satisfaction. The regression equation for paternal role satisfaction showed no significant predictor variables. The hypothesis was rejected.

Two predictor variables were selected and entered into a regression analysis of adjustment difficulty. Two variables, temperament of the baby and socioeconomic status of the respondent accounted for 7.7% of the variance in adjustment difficulty ($F = 7.99$, $df = 193$, $p < .001$). Temperament of the baby was negatively related to adjustment difficulty, and socioeconomic status was positively related. The hypothesis was supported.
Summary

Correlational analyses (Pearson's r) and stepwise multiple regression were used to determine predictors of adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction in mid-life fathers. The correlational analyses revealed that temperament of the child was significantly and negatively related to adjustment difficulty, whereas socioeconomic status was significantly and positively related to adjustment difficulty. Marital adjustment was significantly and positively related to paternal role satisfaction, whereas length of marriage was significantly and negatively related to paternal role satisfaction. A 2-factor multiple regression equation for adjustment difficulty was significant. Temperament of the baby and socioeconomic status explained only 7.7% of the variance of adjustment difficulty. No predictors for paternal role satisfaction were generated by the multiple regression analysis.

Pearson's r correlational analyses were conducted on the subgroup of first time fathers using all of the study variables. Planning of the child was significantly and negatively related to adjustment difficulty in this subgroup. Both prenatal parenting education and actual experience with children were significantly and positively related to paternal role satisfaction in the first time father group.

Pearson's r analyses revealed that none of the 3 research questions had results which were statistically significant. Age and sex of the child as well as the presence or absence of prenatal parenting education were not related to either of the dependent measures—adjustment difficulty or paternal role satisfaction.
However, the relationship between prenatal parenting education and adjustment difficulty did approach significance. The majority of hypotheses were rejected by Pearson's $r$ correlational analyses. It was concluded that (a) a child that is perceived as having an easy temperament is negatively and significantly related to adjustment difficulty; (b) length of marriage is negatively and significantly related to paternal role satisfaction; (c) marital satisfaction is positively related to paternal role satisfaction; and (d) socioeconomic status is positively related to adjustment difficulty.

The multiple regression analysis indicated that the temperament of the child and socioeconomic status were the best predictors of adjustment difficulty. Multiple regression showed no significant predictors of paternal role satisfaction.

Men in their first marriage (N=92) and men in a second or subsequent marriage (N=103) were analyzed separately using stepwise multiple regression. Together temperament of the baby and socioeconomic status explained 27.7% of the variance of adjustment difficulty in the first marriage subgroup, while importance of the father role accounted for 4.7% of the variance in paternal role satisfaction. Perceived experience with children accounted for 8.5% of the variance in adjustment difficulty for the second and subsequent marriage subgroup, while no predictor variables were significant for paternal role satisfaction in this subgroup.

When first time fathers were analyzed as a subgroup (N=24), the results differed from the total sample. Pearson's $r$ correlation analyses indicated that planning of the child was negatively and
significantly related to adjustment difficulty. Both prenatal parenting education and actual experience with children were positively and significantly related to paternal role satisfaction.
Summary of Findings

Men (N=206) aged 40 to 55 who became fathers in 1986 were surveyed to determine factors related to adjustment to and satisfaction with fatherhood. It was hypothesized according to role theory and developmental theory that specific variables [(i.e., sex of the child, age of the child, presence or absence of prenatal parenting education, actual and perceived experience with children, temperament of the child, planning of the child, the importance of the father role, length of marriage, present and comparative job importance, marital adjustment, involvement with baby (care), involvement with baby (play), and socioeconomic status)] would be significantly correlated with dependent measures of adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction. Information was gathered via a questionnaire which included demographic and psychological and sociological instrumentation.

The Pearson's r correlation indicated that temperament of the child and socioeconomic status were significantly related to adjustment difficulty. The multiple regression analysis demonstrated that temperament of the child and socioeconomic status explained 7.7% of the variability in adjustment difficulty. Marital
adjustment and length of marriage were both significantly related to paternal role satisfaction using Pearson's \( r \) correlation analyses. However, the multiple regression analysis failed to find any significant predictors of paternal role satisfaction. The 2 dependent measures of adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction were not significantly related, which was contrary to the proposed hypothesis of an inverse relationship.

Stepwise multiple regression was used to analyze men in their first marriage and men in a second or subsequent marriage separately. Together temperament of the baby and socioeconomic status explained 27.7% of the variance in adjustment difficulty in the first marriage subgroup, while importance of the father role accounted for 4.7% of the variance in paternal role satisfaction. Perceived experience with children explained 8.5% of the variance in adjustment difficulty in the second or subsequent marriage subgroup, while no predictor variables were significant for paternal role satisfaction for this subgroup.

First-time fathers, when analyzed as a subgroup of the sample population using Pearson's \( r \) correlation, showed differences from the total mid-life group. Planning of the child was the only significant variable related to adjustment difficulty, whereas both prenatal parenting education and actual experience with children were significantly related to paternal role satisfaction.

Discussion

The multiple regression analyses indicated that the temperament of the child and socioeconomic status were the most important
variables in predicting adjustment difficulty. However, temperament of the child and socioeconomic status explained only 7.7% of the variation in adjustment difficulty; thus, predicting adjustment difficulty only to a limited extent.

This relationship between temperament of the child and socioeconomic status with adjustment difficulty is easily understood. If a child has an easy temperament, the father will experience less stress in adapting to the new or expanded role of father. A child who is quiet and easy to please makes the role transition much smoother and enjoyable. Because it is a well documented fact the mothers do most of the caregiving (Clarke-Stewart, 1980; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Lamb, 1980; Parke, 1979), the father may have very little to adjust to with an easy dispositioned child. One would expect an easy role transition in this kind of situation. Russell (1974) found similar results in relation to the effect of child temperament on crises scores during transition to parenthood. The men in this study reported low to moderate adjustment difficulty with the addition of a child at mid-life. Approximately 65% felt that their children were of easy temperament, and only 2% termed their child difficult. In addition, only 12% were experiencing fatherhood for the first time. This may explain the somewhat lower than expected adjustment difficulty scores. Also, men turn towards their families at mid-life for more fulfillment as they become more sensitive, expressive, and nurturant (Brim, 1976; Cohen, 1979; Gutmann, 1969). Perhaps a child who is dependent on their care helps meet some of their needs for close intimate familial relationships. Because the child meets their
need, they may view him or her in a more positive light, thus positively adjusting to this new or expanded role.

Socioeconomic status (occupation and education) has been related positively to adjustment difficulty in other studies. Studies using middle-class participants (Beauchamp, 1969; Dyer, 1963; Goldberg, Michaels, & Lamb, 1985; LeMasters, 1957) have shown higher crisis scores with transition to parenthood than those that used more representative samples (Hobbs, 1968; Russell, 1974). It is not surprising that men of higher socioeconomic status, who are known to be more goal oriented and in control of their life situations, would have a more difficult time adjusting to the demands of an additional role. Of the men in this study, 71% had at least a partial college education, with 23% having graduate degrees. Occupational statuses covered a wide range, but 50% were either of a semiprofessional or higher occupational status. This study supports the view that men of higher social class have a more difficult time adjusting to fatherhood at mid-life. Perhaps this is due to their multiple roles and the high expectations they often place upon themselves as well as job demands being greater. Russell (1974) found that men of higher socioeconomic status chose fewer gratification items related to parenthood than men of lower social status. She attributed this to the fact that they had experienced many pleasures in life and were able to compare parenthood to other alternative routes to self fulfillment. Perhaps these men hold traditional sex role values and still see their primary role as breadwinner, thus experiencing more stress in adjusting to the secondary role of father.
Pearson's $r$ correlational analysis showed a positive relationship between marital adjustment and paternal role satisfaction, and a negative relationship between length of marriage and paternal role satisfaction. However, the multiple regression equation failed to find any significant predictors of paternal role satisfaction. Perhaps the fact that the marital adjustment scores were very high and had little variance explains the inability of the multiple regression equation to show marital adjustment as a significant predictor of paternal role satisfaction. One would expect a positive relationship between marital adjustment and paternal role satisfaction. Marriage is typically the strongest and most intimate relationship experienced by men (McKenry & Arnold, 1986; Tamir, 1982). Also, much research has indicated that marital satisfaction is highly related to life satisfaction among middle-aged men (Levinson, 1977; Tamir, 1982). Several previous studies have documented an association of good marital quality and early parenting satisfactions, and poor marital adjustment with parenting difficulties (Belsky, 1979; Duncan, 1984; Feldman, Nash, & Aschenbrenner, 1983; Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1984; Pedersen, 1975; Wandersman, Wandersman, & Kahn, 1980). In addition, a few studies have found this association particularly strong for fathers (Feldman, Nash, & Aschenbrenner, 1983; Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1984). Increased communication and the ability to delegate tasks helps one view the child positively. The men in this study were generally very happily married. A majority, 90%, termed their relationship somewhere between happy and perfect, and only 10% stated they were even slightly unhappy. When asked how their
satisfaction with marriage changed after the birth of the baby, only 3% said it decreased. With respect to satisfaction, 49% stated an increase and 48% reported no significant change. Perhaps the men were happy because their wives were good mothers and supported them in their interactions with the child. Men often communicate with their children through their wives (Lewis & Weinraub, 1976), hence good husband-wife communication and support would strengthen the bond with their child. Divorce research suggests that loss of the husband-wife bond explains the reason that so many men reduce the amount of contact with their children post divorce (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Length of marriage was negatively related to paternal role satisfaction. This fact, too, can be explained by previous research. Marital satisfaction has consistently been found to follow a U-shaped curve in relation to length of marriage (Anderson, Russell, & Schumm, 1983; Burr, 1970; Menaghan, 1983; Rollins & Cannon, 1974; Rollins & Feldman, 1970). Marital satisfaction begins high at the time marriage, drops as the family raises their children, and then rises again in the post-parental years. Hence, in the first half of the marital relationship, the shorter time the couple is married the higher marital adjustment they have; perhaps the greater paternal role satisfaction is generally related to the high level of marital satisfaction. Also, men who have been married for only a few years are typically those in second marriages, often to much younger women. Of this sample, 53% of the men were in a second or subsequent marriage. The mean age of the wife was 34.3 with 23% between 19 and 30, and 65% between 31 and 40. Perhaps the higher paternal role
satisfaction scores are a result of the men's need to convince themselves, their wives, and everyone else that they are satisfied and are still young enough to handle this role with ease. Mid-life has been characterized as a time when men question their physical capacities and yearn for their youth (Cohen, 1979), thus this affirmation of satisfaction may be in response to mid-life transition.

Sex of the child was not related to either adjustment difficulty or paternal role satisfaction. However, other research supports the notion that men prefer sons, interact with them more, and respond to them more than they do daughters (Hoffman, 1977; Parke & O'Leary, 1975; Parke & Swain, 1975). If the couple is divorced, fathers visit more frequently and consistently if there is a male child present (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). The children of the men in this study were 51% males and 49% female. Most of the men had other children (88%), so it may have been difficult for them to compare boy and girl children accurately. Also, importance of the sex of the child in subsequent births is very likely based on the sex of the older children. In the first-time father group, the relationship between sex of the child and involvement with baby care approached significance which lends some support of the fact that at least first-time fathers care for sons more than daughters. However, sex failed to relate to the first-time father's adjustment or satisfaction. Other studies have failed to find a relationship between sex and adjustment or sex and satisfaction (Hobbs, 1968; Russell, 1974).
Age of the child was not significantly related to either adjustment difficulty or paternal role satisfaction. Hobbs (1965) was the first to suggest the "baby honeymoon" concept to explain the correlation he found between age of the child and adjustment difficulty in new fathers. However, in subsequent research (Hobbs, 1968; Russell, 1974; Wente & Crockenberg, 1976), statistically significant relationships between age of the child and adjustment difficulty were not shown. Perhaps this difference can be explained as a function of the age range of the children in the study. It has been suggested that there is a curvilinear relationship between age and adjustment difficulty during the first year of life (Wente & Crockenberg, 1976). In other words, the older the child gets the harder adjustment becomes, perhaps due to the child having more power in the relationship (Cowan & Cowan, 1987). The children in this study were older than in previous studies (between 14 and 26 months) with a mean age of 20 months. Of the children, 99% were healthy and 65% were termed as having an easy temperament. One might assume that there would be a decrease in satisfaction and an increase in adjustment difficulty with toddlerhood, a known stage of high activity and negativism (Cowan & Cowan, 1987). Cowan and Cowan (1987) demonstrated an increase in father stress as the children aged from 6 to 18 months in their study. Perhaps the narrow age range, temperament, and health of the children account for the lack of a significant relationship between age and adjustment difficulty or age and satisfaction. In addition, there may be another so-called "baby honeymoon" stage for men who are remarried, having second families, and having children.
late in life. A baby at this stage of their life cycle may be perceived as somewhat of a novelty. New fatherhood may compensate for some of the feelings of bodily decline and loss of youth that characterize mid-life transition, thus enhancing a psychological well being and/or self-esteem at least for a period of time.

Prenatal parenting education was not significantly related to adjustment difficulty or paternal role satisfaction. Men generally receive little preparation for parenthood. They are not socialized for the role of the father, with the exception of the provider role. In the last 10 to 15 years, childbirth education has become very popular. The concept of family centered birthing centers, rather than mother centered centers, has come into being. Today, almost all couples have some type of prenatal parenting classes. It is consistent with role theory, specifically anticipatory socialization (Merton, 1968), that prenatal parenting classes should ease the transition to parenthood. Russell (1974) found that prenatal preparation (classes, books, etc.) related positively to gratification with new fatherhood. Although there was no significant relationship in this sample, when first-time fathers were looked at as a subgroup, prenatal parenting education was significantly related to paternal role satisfaction. So this study does lend some limited support to the notion that prenatal education increases role satisfaction for first-time fathers.

Wente and Crockenberg (1976) found no significant relationship between prenatal parenting classes and adjustment difficulty. This study supports that finding. Neither the larger sample nor the
first-time father subgroup showed a significant relationship. Apparently, education alone does not help one to adjust to the new role of father.

There may have been a problem with participants of this study perceiving the question related to prenatal parenting education correctly. Although the word "Lamaze" was used as an example of prenatal classes, only 39% reported having had prenatal preparation. It is not consistent with current obstetrical practice that this small a percentage would have had classes. Because 88% of the men had had other children, it is conceivable that they may have had classes with previous children and did not consider that as preparation for the present child. In any event, the number reporting prenatal preparation was much lower than expected. Perhaps the fact that 3% of the fathers witnessed the birth suppressed the effect of prenatal education as a significant correlate. Witnessing the birth and participating in the emotional experience of birth may be a type of preparation different from, but equal to, formal education.

There was no significant relationship between actual and perceived experience with children and adjustment difficulty or paternal role satisfaction. Anticipatory socialization (Merton, 1968) suggests that any activity that prepares a person for a future role will ease the transition to that role. Hence, one would assume that previous experience with children (babysitting, caring for siblings, caring for previous children, et.) would ease the adjustment to fatherhood. In addition, Wente and Crockenberg (1976) found a highly significant relationship between men stating a lack of knowledge of
parenting and adjustment difficulty; thus perception of one's ability seems to be a factor in transition also. When first-time fathers were looked at as a subgroup of the sample in this study, actual experience with children was highly correlated with paternal role satisfaction. Russell (1979) found a similar correlation with first-time fathers. Hence, this study can lend limited support to the theory of anticipatory socialization in regard to role satisfaction for first-time fathers. Also, perceived experience with children accounted for 8.5% of the variance in adjustment difficulty for men in a second or subsequent marriage. So anticipatory socialization is a factor in determining adjustment difficulty for men in their second or subsequent marriage. Perhaps the failure of finding a significant relationship in the general sample is a result having inadequate information about the respondent's previous experiences with children. Their actual involvement with other children, the intensity of the relationship, and the responsibilities assumed in the experience are all unknown.

There were no significant relationships between planning of the child and adjustment difficulty or planning of the child and paternal role satisfaction. One would expect that a child who is planned and wanted would decrease a father's adjustment difficulty and increase his role satisfaction. Russell (1974) found a significant relationship between planning of the child and adjustment to fatherhood, but not to role satisfaction. When first-time fathers were looked at as a subgroup of the sample population, planning was related significantly to adjustment, but not to role satisfaction as
it was in Russell's (1974) study. Perhaps planning is not as important once the couple has at least 1 child. This is really different than the initial transition to parenthood and may not be as significant in determining adjustment and role satisfaction. These men, for the most part, are experiencing a familiar transition but at a different point in their life cycle. In this study, 57% of the births were planned and 43% were unplanned. Many of the men stated that the births were planned, but when asked why they chose to have a child at that time, they responded "My wife wanted a family" or "My wife is younger and she wants a child of her own." Perhaps planning is not a good indicator of the father's true feelings about wanting another child. He may have agreed just to please his wife, thus his adjustment to and satisfaction with the experience would be unrelated to his statement regarding planning.

Perception of the importance of the father role was not significantly related to adjustment difficulty or paternal role satisfaction in the general sample; however it accounted for 4.7% of the variance in adjustment difficulty for those men in their first marriage. One would assume that a man who sees the father role as more important would adjust better and be more satisfied with the role. People put more time and energy into roles that they see as important. Russell (1974) found a significant relationship between saliency of the father role and both adjustment to and satisfaction with the father role. She found this relationship even stronger in men who reported low marital adjustment scores. Because the level of marital adjustment was very high for this sample, with 90% stating
their relationship was somewhere between happy and perfect, the effect of the importance of father role may have been suppressed. Also respondents were self-selected. Those who failed to return the questionnaire may have been the less happy ones. However, a more plausible explanation may be that these men are only paying lip service to the importance of the role. They claim it is important to them, but because of the fact that they are an older cohort with more traditional values than younger fathers, they may be more inclined to see the breadwinner role as more descriptive of a good father. Although they were not asked directly to prioritize the roles they enact, 84% stated their jobs or careers were extremely important or important, while only 2% stated them to be unimportant. When asked to compare their job or career importance with when they began working, 49% stated their job or career was more important now, and only 19% stated it was less important. Most likely the scores on importance of the role were inflated or biased in a positive way. It is socially accepted and expected that a father will feel his role is important, so perhaps these fathers answered as they felt they were expected to. There is limited, but suggestive evidence that the influences of conventionality and social desirability increase with age (Ahammer, 1970; Ahammer & Bales, 1972).

Job importance, both present and comparative, was not related to either adjustment difficulty or paternal role satisfaction. Developmental theory suggests that as one's career becomes less important, he turns towards his family and children for satisfaction, spends more time with them, and hence adjusts more positively and is
more satisfied with fatherhood. At mid-life, men developmentally move towards passivity, sensuality, and expressiveness previously repressed in their instrumental role (Gutmann, 1969; Jung, 1933; Neugarten, 1968). However, the men in this study saw their jobs or careers as very important, with 84% saying it was extremely important or important. Only 19% felt their jobs or careers were less important than when they began working. This group of men are obviously very traditional in their view on the importance of the provider role, and although there was no direct question asking how job importance changed after they baby was born, it is apparent that the birth had little effect on their feelings of job importance. Most likely this group of men hold to the traditional male sex role model and derive their primary satisfaction from their work. The fact that they do an average of only 22.7% of the baby care might further substantiate this explanation.

There was no significant relationship between involvement with baby (care or play) and adjustment difficulty or paternal role satisfaction. One would expect a curvilinear relationship between involvement with baby and adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction. Previous research has shown an increase in stress and a decrease in satisfaction and adjustment for mothers who consistently do the majority of the baby care (Duncan, 1984; Hobbs & Wimkesh, 1977; Russell, 1974). Conversely, fathers seem to adjust better and report fewer problems as a result of their usual "playmate" role rather than caregiver role with their children (Clarke-Stewart, 1980; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Lamb, 1980; Parke, 1979.) Goldberg, Michaels, and
Lamb (1985) found a correlation between greater father involvement in play and care and decreased adjustment difficulty. However, the men in their study were involved in only approximately 25% of the child care and play. Consequently, one would predict a positive adjustment and satisfaction level associated with child care and play to a certain level then a decrease. However, this study failed to show that relationship at all. Perhaps this is due to the fact that most of these men (88%) have other children, so this is not a totally new role for them. Also, the range of involvement was wide (0-99%). The men in this study were involved in an average of 22.7% of the child care; the highest participation was in putting the child to bed (31.8%) and the lowest participation was with bathing and taking the child to the doctor (18.5%). They participated in 38.6% of the play. Jump and Hass (1987) would term these fathers as "transitional" rather than "equalitarian" or "traditional." There was a significant relationship between father's age and involvement with baby (care and play), with the older father doing less. This is probably due to socialization that termed baby care as a feminine task. Also, supporting the study of Jump and Hass (1987), fathers who had working wives carried out more child care than those who did not. Approximately 46% of the wives of the men in this study were employed.

Perhaps the most surprising and interesting fact found in this study was that there was not a significant relationship between the 2 dependent measures adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction. It has been assumed that the relationship is an inverse one, as one increases, the other decreases. However, it is apparent
that adjustment and satisfaction are very different concepts that appear to be unrelated. Life satisfaction and adjustment to marriage literature have consistently had the problem of a lack of consensus on definitions of terms such as adjustment, happiness, success, and satisfaction. Some use the terms interchangeably, whereas others delineate clear cut differences. Cuber and Haroff (1965) found that marital adjustment was not related to marital happiness. They suggest that there are many stable and well-adjusted marriages that are not particularly happy ones. This appears to be true in regard to fatherhood as well. One can adjust well to a new situation, yet not be satisfied with it at all. Conversely, one can be satisfied with a role and yet have much difficulty adjusting to it. Consistently, in both the large sample and the subgroup of first-time fathers, the 2 dependent measures were unrelated.

Generally speaking, the men in this study stated they were satisfied with the experience. A majority, 96%, stated they were more satisfied with the role than they thought they would be. Also, 79% stated they were very satisfied, 13% somewhat satisfied, 6% ambivalent, and only 1% somewhat dissatisfied. No one reported total dissatisfaction. Perhaps this is somewhat positively biased, and the men gave socially accepted answers rather than their true feelings. When asked to list the most enjoyable aspects of parenting, 57% mentioned teaching and watching the child develop, followed by playing with the child (48%). Least enjoyable activities were changing diapers (25%) and missing sleep (17%). When asked to list advantages of being a father at mid-life, being more mature and responsible (56%)}
tipped the list, followed by greater appreciation of the child (45%). Topping the list of disadvantages of mid-life fatherhood was the fear of not seeing their children grow up (33%), followed by physical exhaustion (30%). Many men commented on the relationship and experience in very positive ways: "It's the best thing that ever happened to me." "I enjoy her so much more then I did my other children." "I really appreciate being a father for the first time, and I have 3 other kids!" "I wouldn't trade this for the world." The fathers in this study seem to feel the experience is a positive and rewarding one. In 11% of the cases the couple was expecting another child!

Recommendations for Further Research

In general, this study distinguishes itself from other studies by looking at fatherhood at a different time in the life cycle. It is unique in that it is the first large-scale study to look at how men adapt to fatherhood at mid-life. The finding from this preliminary investigation suggest the following with regard to further research in this area:

1. Because men tend to suppress their feelings more than women and give more conventional responses, it would be beneficial to include an interview with the father, as well as interviewing the spouse in the study design. An interesting comparison may exist with respect to the father's and mother's perception of the family relationships, i.e., "his and her marriage" (Bernard, 1974). The interview process could clarify feelings regarding the importance of career and importance of the father role. Child-father
interactions as well as marital quality could better be assessed. Other variables, not addressed in this study, might surface as potential predictors of adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction.

2. Male mid-life transition has been characterized as a phenomenon describing only white, middle-class professionals (Kimmel, 1980). Replication of the study using men of other races and nationalities would increase the generalizability of the findings and lead to further theoretical development. In addition, it would be of value to isolate and study men who have been identified as suffering from mid-life crisis to see the effect this phenomenon has on the adjustment to and satisfaction with fatherhood at mid-life.

3. Because so few first-time fathers were surveyed (N=24), the study should be replicated using a large group of first-time fathers. The transition to parenthood is most applicable to this group. It appears as though there are some definite differences between the general mid-life father and the father experiencing fatherhood for the first time at mid-life. A more elaborate comparison with first-time fathers needs to be done. Also, comparing first-time fathers at different ages and under different circumstances would lead to further theoretical development.

4. Studying mid-life fathers who have children of different temperaments or other different characteristics is an area that needs further investigation. It is increasingly evident that the child's personality has an effect on the parent-child
relationship, just as much the father's personality characteristics affect the relationship.

5. Other variables should be included in any replication. None of the variables used explained a large percentage of the variability in either adjustment difficulty or paternal role satisfaction. Drawing on developmental and role theory, the inclusion of such variables as androgyny, religion, ages and sexes of other children, siblings, socialization, relationship with parents, relationship with other children, presence or absence of mid-life crisis, etc. might be better predictors of the dependent variables of adjustment difficulty and paternal role satisfaction.

6. It is important to utilize more cross-sequential research designs in studying mid-life fathers. Adaptation and coping behaviors may differ from one cohort to another, as well as from one stage of child development to another. The cross-sequential design will enable information to be gathered over longer periods of time and across cohort groups. This may help researchers understand the father-child relationship from birth, through childhood, adolescence, and during the launching phase of the adolescent from home. Such a design would provide information on how the father-child relationship changes over time.

7. Measuring variables accurately is a common problem in survey research. Replication may lead to the development of stronger instrumentation. A more reliable and valid instrument to measure paternal role satisfaction needs to be developed. The "gratification checklist" (Russell, 1974) seems to come closer to
measuring affluence than it does to measuring actual satisfaction. Clear-cut definitions of the pertinent concepts are needed in order to develop valid and reliable tools to test them. Perhaps a consensus of definitions is the first step in solving the measurement problem.

*Implications for Family Practitioners*

The following implications may be derived from this study for those who provide medical, social, and psychological services to men and their families.

1. Education in regard to fatherhood is essential for mid-life men. Increasing numbers of mid-life men are becoming fathers again, and to a lesser degree, fathers for the first time. Practitioners can provide much needed anticipatory socialization in regard to the new roles, stresses, and coping techniques needed in order for them to adjust positively. Explaining predictors of adjustment difficulty and role satisfaction will increase their awareness of potential problems and hopefully allow them work through the problems with the confidence that they are not alone.

2. Marital satisfaction is an important aspect of a men's adjustment to and satisfaction with parenthood. Marriage is very important for men, especially at mid-life when they tend to turn toward these more intimate relationships. Practitioners need to stress the importance of the marital relationship in their teaching by taking more of a systems approach (i.e., men's ties to their family are often through the wife, thus quality of the marital relationship is of utmost importance). If the couple is able to
effectively communicate, parenting problems appear to be more easily solved. Often this dyadic relationship is neglected in prenatal parenting classes in exchange for an emphasis on the parent-child relationship. Although both are important, a strong marital base makes for a more satisfied father.

3. Practitioners and therapists should continue to promote social skills and competence among clients who are dealing with transitional periods in their lives. By communicating their needs, resources can be made available to them. Perhaps the formation of a support group for mid-life fathers might be appropriate. Talking with others who are in a similar situation and giving advice to others promotes a positive self-image and well being.

4. Society in general needs to provide men with experience with babies and children early in their lives in order to socialize them into the father role. Too often schools, hospitals, and other social services exclude the father as a legitimate parent. Men are not generally encouraged to show interest or be involved with children. Dealing with children needs to be seen as an activity appropriate and necessary for both mothers and fathers. In general, educating the public as well as the fathers themselves is important. Mid-life fatherhood is becoming more prevalent. Providing information concerning this transition at mid-life will increase awareness, as well as allow the new fathers to experience this transition to its fullest extent.
Summary

Transitional periods occur throughout the life cycle, however some evidence suggests that these transitional points are more acute at mid-life. In the life of a mid-life father, 2 transitions are occurring at once--mid-life transition and transition to parenthood. The effect of these 2 transitions on one another are not yet fully understood. However, those men that are being affected by this are growing in number. It is essential that the effects of these transitions are understood so that both transitions can become smoother and more enjoyable for the individuals experiencing them.

This study provided some preliminary data on the experience of fatherhood at mid-life. Generally, men experiencing this transition find it rewarding and fulfilling. Socioeconomic status and temperament of the child seem to be somewhat predictive of adjustment difficulty, whereas of the study variables were significant predictors of paternal role satisfaction. There appear to be some interesting differences between men experiencing fatherhood for the first time at mid-life and those experiencing it again during middle-age. Further comparisons between the 2 groups are warranted. This preliminary exploration of mid-life fathers has begun to answer some of the questions about "off time" experience and its relationship to development at mid-life. Enactment of the father role at various points in the life cycle and with children at various stages of development needs more intense investigation. Looking at the effects of meshing the father's developmental stage, the child's developmental stage, and the marital life cycle will further knowledge of both developmental and role theory.
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL
BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Research Involving Human Subjects

ACTION OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

With regard to the employment of human subjects in the proposed research protocol:

RBB0024 MEN AT MIDLIFE: ADAPTATION TO FATHERHOOD, Patrick C. McKenry, Deborah L. Ulrich, Family Relations and Human Development

THE BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES REVIEW COMMITTEE HAS TAKEN THE FOLLOWING ACTION:

X APPROVED

(approved with conditions*) WAIVER OF WRITTEN CONSENT GRANTED

* Conditions stated by the Committee have been met by the Investigator and, therefore, the protocol is APPROVED.

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to retain a copy of each signed consent form for at least four (4) years beyond the termination of the subject's participation in the proposed activity. Should the principal investigator leave the University, signed consent forms are to be transferred to the Human Subjects Review Committee for the required retention period. This application has been approved for the period of one year. You are reminded that you must promptly report any problems to the Review Committee, and that no procedural changes may be made without prior review and approval. You are also reminded that the identity of the research participants must be kept confidential.

Date: February 24, 1986

Signed:  
(Chairperson)

HS-025B (Rev. 3/85)
APPENDIX B

LETTER SENT TO PARTICIPANTS
Dear Sir,

Your name has been randomly selected from Ohio birth certificate information as a man between the ages of 40 and 55 who became a father in 1986. I hope that you and your child are enjoying a happy and healthy relationship and that you have had a pleasant parenting experience thus far. We are conducting a study of midlife fathers at The Ohio State University and would appreciate your participation in our project. Our purpose is to learn about how midlife men adapt to fatherhood. The findings from the study will help fill many information gaps and serve as a basis for program development in the area of family life and human development.

If you choose to participate, you will be responding to the paper and pencil questionnaire enclosed. Once this is returned, you and your child will be eligible to receive an educational toy. Five toys will be awarded for every 100 questionnaires returned. So, as you can see, your chances of being a winner are good.

The information obtained from this study is completely confidential. Your name will not be associated with any of the information you submit. Your answers will be computer analyzed with other data obtained from other people in the study. If you choose to participate, please complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed envelope.

If you wish to be eligible for the educational toys to be awarded, please return the pink card enclosed. If you would like the results of the study, return the blue card.

Thank you for your time and interest in this study.

Sincerely yours,

Patrick C. McKenry, Ph.D.
Professor and Project Director

Deborah L. Ulrich, R.N., M.A.
Research Assistant
REFERENCES


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