Demographic changes and parent-child relationships

Gisela Trommsdorff

Bernhard Nauck

in: Parenting: Science and Practice, 6(4), 343-360. (2006)

Demographic Changes and Parent – Child Relationships

Gisela Trommsdorff and Bernhard Nauck

SYNOPSIS

This tutorial describes demographic changes and their implications for parenting and parent – child relationships. First, we discuss 2 major sociodemographic changes — declining fertility and increasing longevity — from the point of view of social demography. Second, we elaborate on implications of demographic changes for parenting and intergenerational relationships from sociological and psychological perspectives. This discussion of parenting and parent – child relationships addresses changes from a life-span perspective, taking into account contextual factors. Finally, we present examples of empirical investigations of relations among sociodemographic changes, parenting, and parent – child relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Most developmental analyses of parent – child relationships focus on interactions and conditions within the immediate family. The predominant view in the field, however, is that social changes, such as changes in family size and in individuals' life-spans, uniquely impact family life. These social changes offer a means by which to describe those historical shifts that result in cultural differences. However, the nature of these changes, including the ways in which they have been approached by social demographers and how these changes may affect parenting and parent – child relationships, has not yet been adequately delineated. At issue are the ways in which parent – child relationships may be affected, the kinds of research that should be undertaken, and which theoretical models might be used to guide research. This tutorial is a step toward filling these gaps. It begins with a description of what demographers refer to as "the demographic transition" and then proceeds to consider implications of the demographic transition for the nature of parenting and parent – child relationships in various cultural contexts.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION

The demographic transition is a process that is observed worldwide and has been described by historical and international comparative demography. This description is based on a model according to which the first phase of the demographic transition is characterized by a multistep process of modernization and adaptation. The starting point is a relatively stable state of high mortality with simultaneous high fertility. Especially because of high infant mortality and a relatively stable mortality risk across all other stages of the life-span, high fertility does not result in a significant change in population size, but rather in fast turnover. The second phase of the transition is characterized by an initial increase in mean life expectancy without a simultaneous decrease in fertility, which results in population increase. In the third phase, fertility rates decrease to a similar extent such that in the fourth phase a new equilibrium is reached based on low mortality and low fertility with a resulting slow population turnover (see Figure 1). As far as the first three stages are concerned, the model of the demographic transition provides a rather adequate description of transitions observed in most societies.

The fact that practically no societies have seen stabilization of fertility rates around replacement level, as depicted as the fourth phase in the model, has resulted in an extensive debate in demography. This debate considers the possibility of a "second demographic transition" being caused, not by adaptation to longevity, but by other factors related to modernization, affluence, and value change (Coleman, 2004; Lesthaeghe, 1995;

FIGURE 1
Idealized slopes of transition periods.

Van de Kaa, 1987). The starting point of this controversy is the observation that fertility reduction stabilizes predominantly far below replacement level and has to be explained by factors other than those influential in the first demographic transition.

The beginning of the first demographic transition occurred in central and Western European societies as early as the 18th century. Major changes took place in Germany, for example, in the 19th century. In 1875 the life expectancy of women was still only 38 years (men: 35), and it has increased since then to more than 81 years in 2000 (men: 75). The major decrease in fertility began with the cohorts of women born in the second half of the 19th century: The fertility rate of women born around 1880 was still higher than 5; it was about 2.1 for cohorts after 1900. Accordingly, from women's birth cohorts of 1880 onward, fertility in Germany never again reached replacement level (fertility sufficient to keep the population size constant over time disregarding in- and out-migration).

In other societies, such as Japan and Taiwan, the demographic transition took place during the 20th century. In Taiwan the life expectancy for women increased steadily from 30 years in 1906 to more than 79 years in 2000, and at 85 years, Japanese women have the highest longevity worldwide. The total fertility rate in Taiwan (the sum of age-specific fertility rates of the respective period, which, if no strong period effects occur, equals the total number of births to be expected for a woman during her lifetime) remained as high as around 7 until 1950, dropped sharply thereafter, and hovered around 1.5 in 2000.

Other countries are currently in the middle of their demographic transitions. In Turkey, for example, the total fertility rate was still higher than 6 in 1960 but dropped by more than half within one generation and was about 2.3 in 2000 (thus reaching replacement level). Other regions of the world, such as the Middle East and central Africa, find themselves at the beginning of the demographic transition and can still be characterized by "stable high mortality and stable high fertility."

IMPLICATIONS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES FOR DEVELOPMENTAL CONDITIONS

The worldwide reduction of both fertility and mortality and the resulting longevity have various direct and indirect consequences for the developmental conditions, or the "developmental niche," of the next generation. Any discussion of these consequences of sociodemographic change must take into consideration significant intra- and intersocietal variation in fertility and life expectancy. Demographic changes are, by definition, a de-

scription of the societal macro level and consist of observed changes in highly aggregated measures, such as rates of fertility or mortality. Parenting or intergenerational relationships, however, are effective on the micro level of individual families, which constitute the context for an individual's actions. Individual persons do not respond to fertility or mortality rates but to their individual action situations in the given context. Indeed, within many transitional societies, such as India, Turkey, or Indonesia, there is considerable variation in reproductive behavior. Thus demographic changes typically have no direct effect on individual behavior; however, they are related to socioeconomic changes, and they may change the opportunity structures for individual choices (e.g., increased employment opportunities and decision-making autonomy for women; Freedman & Freedman, 1992). If demographic changes are long lasting and "powerful," they may also change value orientations, behavioral routines, and incite their culture-specific institutionalization, which in turn may affect the developmental niche and parent – child relationships.

When discussing more or less indirect effects of sociodemographic changes on parenting and parent – child relationships, we take into account the influence of social change and cultural context on the developmental niche. First, we focus on the relation between changing opportunity structures and demographic changes for parents and children as these changes pertain to everyday life. Second, we offer speculative discussion on the consequences for parenting and parent – child relationships drawing from the limited empirical research available.

CHANGES IN FERTILITY AND CHANGES IN DEVELOPMENTAL CONDITIONS

Extensive debate in demography about a "second demographic transition" has arisen of late following the observation that fertility reduction regularly stabilizes far below replacement. In Germany the total fertility rate has oscillated around 1.4 since the beginning of the 1970s. In other European countries (Sweden and France, for example) this value is a little higher; in societies along the northern rim of the Mediterranean the value is significantly lower, reaching a total fertility rate of 1.0 in some regions, which theoretically means a population reduction by one half within one generation. These countries, which include Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, are called "low-low-fertility countries." Most of the former socialist societies also presently rank among low-low-fertility countries.

The consequences of this demographic transition for national social security systems; labor markets; age-related institutions, from educational

institutions to nursing homes; the development of national economies; and for other demographic processes, such as immigration, and its consequences for the ethnic and cultural diversity of modern societies have been targeted for decades by scientific analyses in population economy and social policy. The microsocial implications of these powerful transitions in the age composition of societies and in the composition of interrelated generations became the focus of scientific investigation much later.

At present, some theories of fertility provide relatively differentiated, empirically tested models that can explain relations among fertility decisions, the timing of family formation processes, and resources and contextual opportunities available to (potential) parents (e.g., Becker, 1991; Caldwell, 1982; Coale & Watkins, 1986; Easterlin & Crimmins, 1985; Leibenstein, 1957; Lesthaeghe & Surkyn, 1988). However, with regard to the implications of these demographic changes for developmental conditions, including parenting and intergenerational relationships across the entire lifespan, empirical data is sparse.

The major consequence of the reduction of fertility is that the size of birth cohorts decreases steadily over time such that each younger cohort is smaller in size than the preceding one. At younger ages this is typically an advantage in favor of the younger cohorts. Under conditions of poverty, having fewer children might lead to less competition among offspring for parental resources, such as nutrition, clothing, and medical care. In societies with increased welfare levels the reduction of fertility diminishes the competition for parental resources with regard to educational investments. In all affluent societies the quality of competition among siblings for parental care and love is changed. In sum, parental resources of all kinds are pooled in favor of the few offspring. This phenomenon is described by population economists as a shift to investment in the "quality" instead of the "quantity" of children. Additionally, this relative advantage may last well into young adulthood in the competition for higher education and entry into the labor market.

Reduced fertility could theoretically lead to greater spacing between children, but it has led, instead, to greater standardization. Effective methods of birth planning have contributed to a sharp reduction of the fertile period of women, and the few children born typically have two to three years of space in between. This results in an age-specific homogenization of interaction partners for children and adolescents, which is reinforced by the simultaneous increased age specificity of the educational system. In welfare societies, this trend is further enhanced by age-specific institutions for extracurricular activities. Under these conditions, children primarily experience age-heterogeneous interactions in the context of intergenerational or educational relationships. Accordingly, both kinds of age-hetero-

geneous relationships provide little opportunity for cultural and social learning in a zone of proximal development (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1962).

In the second generation of a steep fertility decline the situation changes further because lateral kinship relationships in the parents' generation (uncles and aunts) also become less common. Occasional substitution of parental obligations typically occurs less frequently with collateral relatives (multiple mothering) and more frequently with grandparents or with professional educators. This substitution of parental obligations by professional educators is another effect of the fertility decline in the context of socioeconomic changes as having fewer children reduces the need for parents to temporarily alter their life course to "specialize" on parenting. Educators are increasingly professionalized and do not allow for personal bonding (e.g., attachment) because of functional specialization and their transience in the child's life. The effect of nonfamilial mentors on adolescents' social development is usually independent of the effects of parent-child relationships (Greenberger, Chen, & Beam, 1998). Empirical studies of attachment security in children reared on kibbutzim have demonstrated the limits of establishing attachment relationships with multiple (and changing) caregivers ("metaplot," see Van IJzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). Findings regarding the developmental outcomes of children are inconsistent when examining the effects of parenting in the case of changing numbers of multiple mothers (by aunts or other permanently available females of a comparable age to the mother) and regarding the effects of fluctuations among family members.

CHANGES IN MORTALITY AND CHANGES IN DEVELOPMENTAL CONDITIONS

A psychologically relevant consequence of longevity on parent-child relationships in affluent societies is the increase in joint lifetime. The short life expectancy and the relatively high birth age of mothers in central Europe in the late 19th century resulted in the youngest child typically experiencing the death of their mother in youth or early adolescence. Personal contact with grandparents in middle childhood was an exception and not the rule. This situation changed rapidly at the end of the century. In Germany, mothers born in 1875 had a mean joint lifetime of 42 years with their children (fathers: 29 years), which increased to almost 58 years for mothers born in 1940 (fathers: 50 years). The joint lifetime of grandparents and grandchildren changed accordingly: Whereas less than 50% of males born in 1875 experienced the birth of their grandchild, men born in 1940 shared, on average, 26 years with their grandchildren. Among women born in

1875, the mean joint lifetime with their grandchildren was 15 years, which rose to 32 years for women born in 1940 (Klein & Nauck, 2005; Lauterbach, 1995; Lauterbach & Klein, 2004). Because of the extension of longevity, intergenerational relationships last longer. However, the consequences of these extended periods of overlap for parent-child relationships, parenting, and individual development in different cultural contexts are not yet systematically understood, and no theoretical approaches for investigating these questions have been described. For example, in East Asian Confucian cultures, the value of filial piety reduces the occurrence of otherwise activated intergenerational conflicts (Trommsdorff, 2006). Additionally, extended periods of overlap for parent-child relationships may create new opportunities for grandparents to actively engage in the socialization of their grandchildren and for the younger generation to benefit of the grandparents. Effects of social change and related coping may be less dramatic when the older generation's experiences of scarcity and frustration help the younger generation to regulate its own frustration.

Demographic changes related to increased longevity are structural prerequisites for turnover in the intergenerational flow of wealth. On one hand, it is typical of the pretransformative phase (at least in societies with descent-related kinship systems) for intergenerational wealth to flow from the younger to the older generation as soon as offspring earn their own first income — which, in the extreme case of the agricultural subsistence economy, can be as early as in the sixth year. On the other hand, it is typical of the posttransformative phase for intergenerational wealth to flow (lifelong) from the older to the younger generation, the major difference with the pretransformative phase being that the younger generation benefits from their parents during the lifetime of the parents through the transfer of material goods (Kohli & Künemund, 2003). The considerable increase in length of joint lifetime thus delays inheritance as one means of transfer of material goods from parents to children. In the pretransformative phase, (male) offspring typically expect to inherit their parents' property (e.g., real estate or business) at a relatively early age (e.g., in patrilineal societies, inheritance attends the death of the patriarch). In that case, inheritance is relatively close in time to the family formation process of the offspring and is a primary resource for establishing one's own household and achieving economic security at this stage (Nauck, 2002; Nauck & Klaus, 2005). Longevity postpones such intergenerational transfer. Whether this change in economic and material transfer affects other aspects of parent-child relationships, such as emotional support, is unclear. However, one may speculate that both positive effects on emotional support (due to earlier material support) and negative effects (increasing conflict due to unfulfilled expectations for financial transfer) are possible. Also, it may be possible that ma-

terial transfer does not affect the emotional quality of the relationship at all, especially in the case of material independence of parents and their adult children.

As children grow up in a generational "convoy" and in groups organized typically by the age of their members (as in kindergarten, school, and leisure groups), death and related losses of close relationships become rare events in the life course of children and adolescents in affluent societies. This may induce a naive conception of continued availability of family members and fewer worries about possible loss. Whether parent-child relationships are differentially affected in situations of high infant mortality and high risk of mothers dying in childbirth, as compared to high survival rates of both mothers and infants, is difficult to clarify empirically because of confounding factors. It seems that investment in fewer children is stimulated by parents' expectations of having their children be successful in school and in the job market.

Another implication of decreasing mortality is that increasing proportions of people live in extended generational succession as the common lifetime of generations increases. Parents and children can safely prepare for the fact that their joint lifetime is reaching almost 60 years in welfare societies, whereas the mean joint lifetime is less than half in the pretransformative phase, even for those who have survived the mortality risks of their early years. The joint lifetime with at least one grandparent today typically reaches middle adulthood. Bengtson, Rosenthal, and Burton (1990) coined the term "beanpole family" for the phenomenon of increased joint lifetime and reduced lateral kinship. Again, demographic regularities shape opportunity structures. Because of the differences in the mean life expectancy and the mean age difference between spouses, the highest probability for a long joint lifetime is with the maternal grandmother, who typically survives the paternal grandfather by more than a decade. Interestingly, differences in the probability of duration are positively correlated with emotional closeness (Bengtson, 2001).

The changing structure of intergenerational relationships (e.g., parent-child, grandparent-grandchild) allows for the continuation of family members' "linked lives" over the life course (e.g., Elder, 1974, 1998; Elder, Caspi, & Burton, 1988). Social and economic changes and their impact on intergenerational relationships have been described as changes in vertical or horizontal economic transfers and investments (Kohli & Künemund, 2003). Grandparents are usually not directly responsible for the socialization of their grandchildren but may take on significant burdens from the parents, especially working mothers (Szinovacz, 1998). Also, grandparents play an important role where parenting obligations are concerned in the case of divorce of the adult daughter (Parke, 2002; Schwarz, 2006). In Afri-

can countries, grandmothers often take the role of the first caregiver in case of the mothers' early death (recently, often due to AIDS; see Oburu & Palmérus, 2003). However, there is some evidence regarding the negative effects of grandmother/single-parent families on child outcomes, presumably due to intergenerational conflict among caregivers (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 1995). The consequences of the extended joint lifetime and the extended generational succession for the intergenerational transmission of values and for family socialization processes in different cultural contexts are not yet fully understood (Trommsdorff, 2006). On one hand, an increase in the intergenerational transmission of culture, including intergenerational stability of beliefs and values, could take place. On the other hand, those societies with greater longevity may face the most dramatic social changes (e.g., with respect to economic changes due to a small work force of a younger generation which has to support a large group of elderly people). Other effects of longevity may be seen in the decline of intergenerational solidarity, that is, the willingness to provide mutual support. When the quality of intergenerational relationships begins to deteriorate, egoistic pursuit of individual goals due to intergenerational distrust and conflict may occur. So far, the conditions under which parent-child relationships remain supportive or increase in tension are not known. Here cultural values (e.g., values emphasizing filial piety, reciprocity, or independence) may have a significant effect. Therefore, the processes and effects of transformations of parent-child relationships over the life-span under changing sociodemographic conditions need to be studied both cross-culturally and intrasocietally.

IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES FOR PARENTING AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS FROM A LIFE-SPAN PERSPECTIVE

Fertility and longevity are not the only factors in sociodemographic change. Other related factors include a gender gap in life expectancy, postponement of first birth, decreasing family stability, and increasing diversity of family structure (due to divorce, single-parent families, second or third marriages, or changing gender roles; Bengtson, 2001; Zarit & Eggebeen, 2002). Such sociodemographic changes have implications for parenting and parent-child relationships.

According to family sociologists' work on intergenerational relationships, "solidarity" can be considered an important concept in describing parent-child relationships over the life-span (Bengtson, 1996). In developmental science, parent-child relationships are traditionally studied from

an attachment perspective, focusing in particular on early childhood (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969) and adolescence (Steinberg, 2005). Recently, the study of parent – child relationships has extended beyond childhood and adolescence, taking into account “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2000) and later life (e.g., Blenkner, 1965). However, given extended life expectancy, we must recognize that multiple generations can build relationships (grandparents; parents, and grandchildren) (Trommsdorff, *in press*) and extend the concept of parent – child relationships not only over the life-span, but also over generations.

Most developmental studies of parent – child relationships in Western countries assume that the asymmetry in parent – child relationships evident in early childhood gradually transforms into a symmetrical partnership by adolescence. From the Western perspective, this implies conflicting interests and negotiations between parents and their children in the pursuit of individuality and individual need fulfillment (Cooper, Grotevant, & Condon, 1983). Parent – child relationships in middle adulthood have been characterized by an extension of the family and growing responsibility of adult offspring who parent their own children and care for their aging parents (Neugarten, 1968). The transition between middle adulthood and old age is influenced by the changing relationship between adult children and their aging parents which may be based on the values of intergenerational solidarity, support, and filial care (e.g., Bengtson & Roberts, 1991; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Again, demographic changes play an important role in the shaping of intergenerational obligations. On one hand, postponement of parenthood to age 30 or later increases the age difference between generations, which increases the probability that children will be required at an earlier age to care for their aging parents. On the other hand, increased health and longevity postpones this necessity to a degree. Thus the structural prerequisites for a “sandwich situation” (e.g., caring for one’s own children and for one’s parents at the same time) occurs only in the case of (very) late parenthood and/or (very) early frailty of parents. Interestingly, this term was coined for modern affluent societies to describe the multiple burdens of mothers. However, as a widespread phenomenon in these societies, the “sandwich generation” can historically be placed in the limited phase at the beginning of the second demographic transition, when postponement of parenthood had already occurred and life expectancy of parents was still low (partly due to the special historical situation of the 20th century, with its world wars and economic crisis). This term is perhaps an even more appropriate descriptor for impoverished societies, where adverse living conditions undermine health in the fourth and fifth decades of life, thus rendering elderly care a much earlier necessity.

Increased life expectancy also inflates the incidence of separation and divorce in parents and the chance of beginning a new partnership in later life, which, in turn, presumably affects the quality of parent – child relationships. Early- or late-timed parenthood alters the course of marital relationships and the quality of parenting (Bradbury, 1998). Therefore, diverse family contexts, ascribable to increasing divorce rates and remarriages, and the numbers of children living together with stepfathers or stepmothers or in single-parent families, is again increasing to a level nearly as high as in pretransitional times, when remarriages due to spousal death were frequent.

Increases in the variety of parenting arrangements in Western countries, however, do not necessarily directly result from sociodemographic changes, but rather are embedded in multiple socioeconomic and cultural changes. Examination of parent – child relationships in this time of drastic change leads to the expectation that in cases where a supportive, proximate, family-related developmental niche provides secure attachment and positive developmental outcomes for the child, parent – child relationships may undergo fewer conflicts and stressful changes and be based on filial maturity, autonomy, and mutual support throughout the life-span. This optimistic scenario of parent – child relationships depicts a mutually supportive, helpful relationship, even in later life. Whether this view of parent – child relationships is valid in Western and other cultural contexts needs further investigation, especially in times of ongoing sociodemographic change (Trommsdorff, 2006, *in press*).

Empirical cross-cultural studies indicate that parent – child relationships have different meanings in different cultures (Bornstein, 1991; Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003). The Western relationship is usually confined to interpersonal negotiations between parents and their children on the basis of relatively independent positions. In contrast, in many East Asian cultures, parents’ and children’s roles and their respective parent – child relationships are embedded in a hierarchical structure that is not subject to negotiation but is characterized by loyalty and mutual trust (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Trommsdorff, 2006, *in press*). Children’s and parents’ behavior is part of a stable relationship of mutual obligation; it is based on emotional interdependence as indicated by the concepts of filial piety and reciprocity (e.g., Kim, Kim, & Hurh, 1991; Schwarz, Trommsdorff, Kim, & Park, 2006; Wang & Hsueh, 2000).

From a culture-informed point of view the quality of the parent – child relationship depends on whether the goal is to establish and stabilize interdependent relationships based on cooperation and harmony or independent relationships, including conflicts and negotiations of power (see also

Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). The basic cultural difference in the quality of parenting and parent – child relationships can thus be seen in values of independence or interdependence. Whether this culture specificity in parent – child relationships is somehow related to culture specificities in sociodemographic changes is an open question.

EXAMPLES OF EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF RELATIONS AMONG SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES, PARENTING, AND PARENT – CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Value of Children Study

Because there is little empirical evidence of the effects of sociodemographic change on parent – child relationships, the authors initiated a large cross-cultural study (e.g., Nauck, 2005; Trommsdorff, 2001a, 2001b; Trommsdorff & Nauck, in press) that is a partial replication and extension of the original “value of children” study conducted three decades ago in several countries (Arnold & Fawcett, 1975; Fawcett, 1973). This comparative study comprises a major theoretical revision of the basic explanatory model as it goes beyond questions of fertility by also taking into account cultural and individual values, family structure, parenting, and intergenerational relations (see reports on eight countries in Trommsdorff & Nauck, 2005). One major topic of this study is to analyze parent – child relationships in countries that differ in fertility and longevity by taking into consideration three generations of one family (grandmother, mother, adolescents). Because the situation of aging parents partly depends on the quality of the parent – child relationship, cultural differences are assumed to affect this relationship over the life-span (Trommsdorff, 2006).

Cultural values regarding family and children have to be taken into account in explaining parent – child relationships across three generations. For example, in high-fertility contexts, such as India and Indonesia, as compared to countries with low fertility, such as Germany, parent – child relationships can be characterized by filial piety and loyalty. The high importance of family values is related to more control in parenting and support-oriented intergenerational relationships (Albert, Trommsdorff, Mayer, & Schwarz, 2005; Mishra, Mayer, Trommsdorff, Albert, & Schwarz, 2005). It remains to be seen whether sociodemographic changes (e.g., decline of high fertility rates in countries like India and Indonesia) will engender changes in value orientations and intergenerational relationships.

The Chinese One-Child Family

The study of sociodemographic change on parent – child relationships in the People’s Republic of China is an empirical approach profiting from a quasi-natural experimental design. The fertility transition in China is presumably the world’s first state-mandated one-child policy. In the early 1970s, when population control policies began, the total fertility rate was nearly 6 births per woman; after the start of the one-child policy, this rate diminished to 1.6 births per woman (Population Reference Bureau, 2006), with significant differences between rural and urban areas. Thus intracultural differences with respect to family size could be assessed with respect to parent – child relationships (including the transfer of investments from parents to children; Fong, 2004). For example, singletons meet with high parental expectations, heavy pressure, and competition for elite status in the educational system (Chen, Cen, Li, & He, 2005). At the same time they are described as being “spoiled” (Fong, 2004). As for the parent – child relationship, enormous generational differences exist between the parents and children in terms of socialization experiences (e.g., large vs. small families; many vs. no siblings), values, expectations, and lifestyles. However, emotional bonding, parental investment, and filial duty are reported to characterize the parent – child relationship in China (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Fong, 2004). The value of the child and the parent – child relationship has changed from an economic orientation to a more emotion-based relationship (Trommsdorff, Zheng, & Tardif, 2002; Zheng, Shi, & Tang, 2005). It remains yet to be seen whether the next generation, and especially the generation of singletons, will decide to have children or not and how they will relate to their parents and, eventually, to their own children.

CONCLUSIONS

Empirical studies in parenting and developmental science are usually carried out without much reference to ongoing dramatic sociodemographic changes. Thus the impact of social demographic changes on the “developmental niche” and the parent – child relationship in individual development is unclear. To identify the possible effects of sociodemographic changes, it seems promising to focus on the quality of the parent – child relationship, including the degree of value similarity, emotional closeness, and the impact of social norms. Relevant aspects of the parent – child relationship include whether conflicts occur and how they are resolved,

whether and in which ways cooperation and support take place (e.g., patterns of intergenerational exchanges, family eldercare), and whether there is continuity or discontinuity in the quality of intergenerational relations over time. Although most of these aspects of parent – child relationships have previously been investigated (e.g., Bengtson & Robertson, 1985; Cooney, 1997; King & Elder, 1997; Zarit & Eggebeen, 2002), the relevance of cultural conditions and the impact of sociodemographic changes have so far not been the focus of these studies; these issues have garnered interest only very recently (Rubin & Chung, 2006; Trommsdorff, 2006, in press).

Certain variations in parent – child relationships may be due to changing reproductive technologies (e.g., in vitro fertilization; anonymous and nonanonymous sperm donors; surrogate mothers). Although a variety of “routes to parenthood” will affect fertility, it is an open question whether these changes in reproductive behavior will also affect parent – child relationships (e.g., more overprotection by parents who underwent in vitro fertilization after a period of infertility). Other open questions regarding aspects of fertility and longevity relate to the effects of timing the onset of parenthood on parent – child relationships. Today, a woman may conceive her child at a much later age than her mother did. At the age of 40 she may rear her child at least as long as a 20-year-old mother did 100 years ago.

From a cultural and historical perspective, parenting and parent – child relationships vary significantly. Whether sociodemographic changes contribute to such variation needs more systematic empirical investigation. So far, the effects of increasing the length of overlapping lifetimes on the quality of parent – child relationships beyond childhood and adolescence and on intergenerational relationships are not yet known; the informed speculations presented in this tutorial, together with the two examples of ongoing empirical studies, may offer a fruitful start for empirical investigation. Parent – child relationships develop within wider socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Therefore, the interconnections between sociodemographic factors and parent – child relationships need to be studied in a culturally informed, theoretical framework, taking into account contextual factors (on various macro and micro levels) and their consequences for the individual life course.

AFFILIATIONS AND ADDRESSES

Gisela Trommsdorff, Department of Psychology, University of Konstanz, Germany. E-mail: Gisela.Trommsdorff@uni-konstanz.de. Bernhard Nauck is at Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by a grant from the German National Science Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for the study “Value of Children and Intergenerational Relations” (principal investigators: Gisela Trommsdorff, University of Konstanz, Germany and Bernhard Nauck, Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany). We are grateful to Holly Bunje and the three anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on an earlier version.

REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Albert, I., Trommsdorff, G., Mayer, B., & Schwarz, B. (2005). Value of children in urban and rural Indonesia: Socio-demographic indicators, cultural aspects and empirical findings. In G. Trommsdorff & B. Nauck (Eds.), *The value of children in cross-cultural perspective: Case studies from eight societies* (pp. 145–172). Lengerich, Germany: Pabst Science.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469–480.
- Arnold, F., & Fawcett, J. T. (1975). *The value of children: A cross-national study: Hawaii*. Honolulu, HI: East-West Center.
- Becker, G. S. (1991). *A treatise on the family* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bengtson, V. L. (1996). Continuities and discontinuities in intergenerational relationships over time. In V. L. Bengtson (Ed.), *Adulthood and aging: Research on continuities and discontinuities* (pp. 271–307). New York: Springer.
- Bengtson, V. L. (2001). Beyond the nuclear family: The increasing importance of multi-generational bonds. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 63, 1–16.
- Bengtson, V. L., & Roberts, R. E. L. (1991). Intergenerational solidarity in aging families: An example of formal theory construction. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 53, 856–870.
- Bengtson, V. L., & Robertson, J. F. (Eds.). (1985). *Grandparenthood*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Bengtson, V. L., Rosenthal, C., & Burton, L. (1990). Families and aging: Diversity and heterogeneity. In R. Binstock & L. George (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and social sciences: Vol. 3* (pp. 263–287). San Diego, CA: Academic.
- Blenkner, M. (1965). Social work and family relationships in later life with some thoughts on filial maturity. In E. Shanas & G. F. Streib (Eds.), *Social structure and the family: Generational relations* (pp. 46–59). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bornstein, M. H. (Ed.). (1991). *Cultural approaches to parenting*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bradbury, T. N. (Ed.). (1998). *The developmental course of marital dysfunction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Caldwell, J. C. (1982). *The theory of fertility decline*. New York: Academic.
- Chao, R., & Tseng, V. (2002). Parenting of Asians. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 4. Social conditions and applied parenting* (2nd ed., pp. 59–93). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

- Chase-Lansdale, P. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (Eds.). (1995). *Escape from poverty: What makes a difference?* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, X., Cen, G., Li, D., & He, Y. (2005). Social functioning and adjustment in Chinese children: The imprint of historical time. *Child Development*, 76, 182–195.
- Coale, A. J., & Watkins, S. C. (Eds.). (1986). *The decline of fertility in Europe*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Coleman, D. (2004). Why we don't have to believe without doubting in the "Second Demographic Transition"—Some agnostic comments. In G. Feichtinger (Ed.), *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research 2004* (pp. 11–24). Vienna, Austria: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Cooney, T. M. (1997). Parent-child relations across adulthood. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of personal relationships* (2nd ed., pp. 451–468). Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Cooper, C. R., Grotevant, H. D., & Condon, S. M. (1983). Individuality and connectedness in the family as a context for adolescent identity formation and role-taking skill. *New Directions for Child Development*, 22, 43–59.
- Easterlin, R. A., & Crimmins, E. M. (1985). *The fertility revolution: A supply-demand-analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Elder, G. H., Jr. (1974). *The children of the great depression: Social change and life experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Elder, G. H., Jr. (1998). The life course as developmental theory. *Child Development*, 69, 1–12.
- Elder, G. H., Jr., Caspi, A., & Burton, L. M. (1988). Adolescent transition in developmental perspective: Sociological and historical insights. In M. R. Gunnar & W. A. Collins (Eds.), *Minnesota Symposia on Child Psychology: Vol. 1. Development during the transition to adolescence* (pp. 151–179). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Fawcett, J. T. (Ed.). (1973). *Psychological perspectives on population*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fong, V. L. (2004). *Only hope: Coming of age under China's one-child policy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Freedman, R., & Freedman, D. (1992). Family planning as a fertility determinant. In J. F. Phillips & J. A. Ross (Eds.), *Family planning programmes and fertility* (pp. 10–27). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Greenberger, E., Chen, C., & Beam, M. R. (1998). The role of "very important" nonparental adults in adolescent development. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 27, 321–343.
- Kim, K. C., Kim, S., & Hurh, W. M. (1991). Filial piety and intergenerational relationship in Korean immigrant families. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 33, 233–245.
- King, V., & Elder, G. H. J. (1997). The legacy of grand parenting: Childhood experiences with grandparents and current involvement with grandchildren. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 59, 848–859.
- Klein, T., & Nauck, B. (2005). Families in Germany. In B. N. Adams & J. Trost (Eds.), *Handbook of world families* (pp. 283–312). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kohli, M., & Künemund, H. (2003). Intergenerational transfers in the family: What motivates giving? In V. L. Bengtson & A. Lowenstein (Eds.), *Global aging and challenges to families* (pp. 123–142). Hawthorne, NY: de Gruyter.
- Lauterbach, W. (1995). Die gemeinsame lebenszeit von familiengenerationen [The shared life-time of family generations]. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 24, 22–41.
- Lauterbach, W., & Klein, T. (2004). The change of generational relations based on demographic developments: The case of Germany. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 35, 651–663.
- Leibenstein, H. (1957). *Economic backwardness and economic growth: Studies in the theory of economic development*. New York: Wiley.

- Lesthaeghe, R. (1995). The second demographic transition in Western countries: An interpretation. In K. O. Mason & A. M. Jensen (Eds.), *Gender and family change in industrialized countries* (pp. 17–62). Oxford, UK: Clarendon.
- Lesthaeghe, R., & Surkyn, J. (1988). Cultural dynamics and economic theories of fertility change. *Population and Development Review*, 14, 1–45.
- Mishra, R. C., Mayer, B., Trommsdorff, G., Albert, I., & Schwarz, B. (2005). The value of children in urban and rural India: Cultural background and empirical results. In G. Trommsdorff & B. Nauck (Eds.), *The value of children in cross-cultural perspective: Case studies from eight societies* (pp. 121–143). Lengerich, Germany: Pabst Science.
- Nauck, B. (2002). Families in Turkey. In R. Nave-Herz (Ed.), *Family change and intergenerational relations in different cultures* (pp. 11–48). Würzburg, Germany: Ergon.
- Nauck, B. (2005). Changing value of children: An action theory of fertility behavior and intergenerational relationships in cross-cultural comparison. In W. Friedlmeier, P. Chakarath, & B. Schwarz (Eds.), *Culture and human development: The importance of cross-cultural research to the social sciences* (pp. 183–202). Hove, UK: Psychology Press.
- Nauck, B., & Klaus, D. (2005). Families in Turkey. In B. N. Adams & J. Trost (Eds.), *Handbook of world families* (pp. 364–388). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Neugarten, B. L. (1968). *Middle age and aging: A reader in social psychology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Oburu, P. O., & Palmerus, K. (2003). Parenting stress and self-reported discipline strategies of Kenyan caregiving grandmothers. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 27, 505–512.
- Parke, R. D. (2002). Parenting in the new millennium: Prospects, promises, and pitfalls. In J. P. McHale & W. S. Grolnick (Eds.), *Retrospect and prospect in the psychological study of families* (pp. 65–93). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Population Reference Bureau. (2006). *2006 world population data sheet*. Retrieved August 30, 2006, from <http://www.prb.org/pdf06/06WorldDataSheet.pdf>
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rossi, A. S., & Rossi, P. H. (1990). *Of human bonding: Parent-child relations across the life course*. Hawthorne, NY: de Gruyter.
- Rothbaum, F., Pott, M., Azuma, H., Miyake, K., & Weisz, J. (2000). The development of close relationships in Japan and the United States: Paths of symbiotic harmony and generative tension. *Child Development*, 71, 1121–1142.
- Rubin, K. H., & Chung, O. B. (Eds.). (2006). *Parenting beliefs, behaviors, and parent-child relations: A cross-cultural perspective*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Schwarz, B. (2006). Adult daughters' family structure and the association between reciprocity and relationship quality. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27, 208–222.
- Schwarz, B., Trommsdorff, G., Kim, U., & Park, Y.-S. (2006). Intergenerational support: A comparison of women from the Republic of Korea and Germany. *Current Sociology*, 54, 315–340.
- Steinberg, L. (2005). *Adolescence* (7th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Szinovacz, M. E. (Ed.). (1998). *Handbook on grandparenthood*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Trommsdorff, G. (2001a). Eltern-Kind-Beziehungen aus kulturvergleichender Sicht [Parent-child relations from a cross-cultural perspective]. In S. Walper & R. Pekrun (Eds.), *Familie und Entwicklung: Aktuelle Perspektiven der Familienpsychologie* (pp. 36–62). Göttingen, Germany: Hogrefe.
- Trommsdorff, G. (2001b). *Value of children and intergenerational relations: A cross-cultural psychological study*. Retrieved August 30, 2006, from <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/developmental-psychology/vocpsychologieaspects.pdf>.

- Trommsdorff, G. (2006). Parent-child relations over the life span: A cross-cultural perspective. In K. H. Rubin & O. B. Chung (Eds.), *Parenting beliefs, behaviors, and parent-child relations: A cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 143–183). New York: Psychology Press.
- Trommsdorff, G. (in press). Intergenerational relations and cultural transmission. In U. Schönplüg (Ed.), *Perspectives on cultural transmission*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Trommsdorff, G., Kim, U., & Nauck, B. (Eds.). (2005). Factors influencing value of children and intergenerational relations in times of social change: Analysis from psychological and socio-cultural perspectives [Special Issue]. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 54(3).
- Trommsdorff, G., & Kornadt, H.-J. (2003). Parent-child relations in cross-cultural perspective. In L. Kuczynski (Ed.), *Handbook of dynamics in parent-child relations* (pp. 271–306). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Trommsdorff, G., & Nauck, B. (Eds.). (2005). *The value of children in cross-cultural perspective: Case studies from eight societies*. Lengerich, Germany: Pabst Science.
- Trommsdorff, G., Zheng, G., & Tardif, T. (2002). Value of children and intergenerational relations in cultural context. In P. Boski, F. J. R. Van de Vijver, & A. M. Chodyncka (Eds.), *New directions in cross-cultural psychology: Selected papers from the Fifteenth International Conference of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology* (pp. 581–601). Warszawa, Poland: Polish Psychological Association.
- Van de Kaa, D. J. (1987). Europe's second demographic transition. *Population Bulletin*, 42(1).
- Van IJzendoorn, M. H., & Sagi, A. (1999). Cross-cultural patterns of attachment: Universal and contextual dimensions. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (pp. 713–734). New York: Guilford.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language* (E. Hanfmann & G. Vakar, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wang, Q., & Hsueh, Y. (2000). Parent-child interdependence in Chinese families: Change and continuity. In C. Violato, E. Oddone-Paolucci, & M. Genuis (Eds.), *The changing family and child development* (pp. 60–69). Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Zarit, S. H., & Eggebeen, D. J. (2002). Parent-child relationships in adulthood and later years. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 5. Practical issues in parenting* (2nd ed., pp. 135–161). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Zheng, G., Shi, S., & Tang, H. (2005). Population development and the value of children in the People's Republic of China. In G. Trommsdorff & B. Nauck (Eds.), *The value of children in cross-cultural perspective: Case studies from eight societies* (pp. 201–234). Lengerich, Germany: Pabst.