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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE PROCESS OF PREPARING PSYCHOLOGICALLY FOR FATHERHOOD

BY

WILLARD R. FEWER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN FAMILY STUDIES

FACULTY OF HOME ECONOMICS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is the report of an investigation into the development of a man's identity as a father during the months prior to the birth of his first child. Men were interviewed when their wives were in the final three months of the pregnancy. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to obtain data on the pregnancy-related experiences of the respondents.

The interview material was analysed using grounded theory methodology. "Taking personal responsibility for the pregnancy" was found to be central to the process reported by the respondents. Men showed that they were taking responsibility by sharing in the pregnancy with their spouse and by making changes in their lives to accommodate the pregnancy. Psychological preparations for assuming an identity as a father were made by the respondents as they became involved in the pregnancy. However, only four of the eight participants reported feeling like a father prior to the birth of their child.

PREFACE

The names used for the participants in this thesis are pseudonyms which were assigned by the researcher. Names have been used to reduce the awkwardness of referring to participants as "this man" or "that man" throughout the report.

Names and some details about the participants were altered to protect their anonymity.

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FIGURE

Figure 1: The Process of Preparing for Fatherhood Page 120

Chapter I. Statement of The Problem

When a man and a woman add a child to their lives, they add more than a baby. Becoming parents means irrevocable changes in their relationship and alterations in each of them as individuals. Joys and sorrows, gratifications and trials accompany parenthood. Life will never be the same as it was before the child was born.

The news that a baby has been conceived announces a new stage in the couple's life-cycle. The arrival of the first child is often spoken of as the beginning of "family" life. A man and his partner have several months in which they may prepare for their child. How they use this time will affect their relationship as a couple. It will also affect the relationship they form with the expected infant.

Traditionally, the focus during pregnancy has been on the woman. The biological focus rightfully belongs here as the fetus develops in the woman's body. However, the transition to parenthood also involves important psycho-social changes for the man. This study is concerned with the man's experience of pregnancy as a period in which he faces demands for changes at the interpersonal level (between himself and others) and at the level of his own personality.

This chapter includes a brief examination of the part men play in caring for their infant children. Assumptions and concepts from

symbolic interaction theory were used to guide the investigation.

These are outlined and then the research problem is presented at the conclusion of the chapter. Research which has considered men who were becoming a father for the first time is reviewed in detail in the next chapter.

Fathers and Infants

Fathers have been "discovered" only recently by social scientists. The important part played by men in their children's lives is becoming recognized. We know that in addition to providing in a material way for their families' well being, fathers may contribute to their children's cognitive and social development. Additionally, women may receive support for mothering from their male partner.

We have learned through research that men can play important and unique parts in parenting their infants. Fathers have been seen to provide high quality care to babies. Observational studies have shown that men are capable of providing child care which is as good as that provided by mothers (Parke & Sawin, 1976; 1981). Fathers who are motivated to care for their child, and who have the opportunity of learning how to do this, are capable of providing the sort of attention that their baby needs. This is not to say that the capability equals performance, however.

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Studies in which mother and father interaction with infants has been examined have led researchers to conclude that mothers provide the majority of child care in most cases (LaRossa, 1981; Belsky, Gilstrap & Rovine, 1984)). While fathers are able to demonstrate competence in feeding, bathing, calming, and other domains of parenting an infant, these duties are most frequently performed by mothers. Fathers tend to interact with their babies most frequently through play (Parke & Sawin, 1981).

Infants gain important benefits from play with their fathers. They learn to interact with another person besides their mother. This may form the basis for learning to socialize with others later on in their development (Lamb, 1981). Play with father may also lead to the growth of the baby's motor skills. Men tend to interact with their young children in active, physical ways (Parke & Sawin, 1981). Stimulation is important to promote both muscular development and the baby's control of movements. Fathers' play with their young daughter or son functions as a means by which they may develop their relationship and as a way for the baby to become more physically competent.

Men have been given the opportunity, in recent years, for higher involvement in their wives' pregnancies and the birth of their children. No longer are the spouses of pregnant women assumed to be, at best, hindrances to the successful coping of their wives. Men are

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often encouraged to become involved in prenatal classes, to support their wives throughout the pregnancy, and to participate as active assistants in the delivery room.

Research findings on the transition from the childless part of life to parenthood have shown the difficulties that men and women face. Significant changes occur in the lives of the woman and the man, and in their relationship with each other. The support that each is able to offer to the other has been seen as important in helping them cope with the stress experienced at this time. Offering support to his wife during pregnancy and during the infancy of his child may be a way that a man can reduce the negative impact of parenthood on his marriage.

Although many men wish to play an active part in supporting their wife through the pregnancy and birth, they have few role models for this. Their own fathers typically relegated the preparations for a baby to their wives. Today's man who wants to be a part of the pregnancy needs to work out a new role for himself, often with little support or understanding from others.

Identity and Fathering

Components of symbolic interaction theory have been used in this examination of the process of becoming a father. Some of the key assumptions of this theory and some of the concepts that may prove

important in understanding the process of becoming a father are considered in this section of the report.

Assumptions.

1. The meaning which persons attribute to social behavior is considered to be of prime importance in determining their responses to the behavior of others (Blumer, 1969). People do not simply respond to stimuli, but rather interpret (and even select) incoming information on the basis of their previous experience. If an individual receives no response from a friend when he asks her a question, his subsequent behavior will be very different if he attributes her lack of response to a preoccupation with a problem she is having than if he attributes it to her being angry with him. The personal meaning which a man makes of his partner's pregnancy is expected to influence his response to it.
2. Social interaction is the basis for developing meaning about things (Blumer, 1969). A "thing" may be a concrete object, a cognition, or interpersonal behavior. Objects or phenomena are considered to have no intrinsic meaning. Humans learn to ascribe significance to aspects of their world through interacting with other humans. An infant learns that his parents are enjoyable through associating warmth, nourishment, and positive stimulation with their presence. Men develop their expectations for fathering through interacting

with others. If other people present parenting as a positive experience, men expecting their first child might be expected to anticipate enjoyment of a father role.

3. A third major assumption of symbolic interactionism is that "... the use of meanings by the actor occurs through a process of interpretation" (Blumer, 1969, p. 5). Interpretation involves the engagement of an individual in a cognitive process which consists of identifying the things toward which he is acting, and determining the meaning of those things - given the context and the goals of the actor (Blumer, 1969). In the case of a new father, a man may consider the costs and benefits to himself and to others of a given action. The benefits of involvement with his infant child are considered in terms of what he himself feels to be appropriate behavior for the father of a newborn, what his wife expects of him, the effect of this involvement on his future relationship with his child, and in terms of what other people will think of him. It is in this interpretive process that the concept of "self" is important.

Concepts and Definitions. The "self" is defined as "an object that the actor acts toward" (Charon, 1985; p. 66). People develop an understanding of their self through interaction with others. An

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individual's conception of self is dynamic; it varies depending on interaction particulars (persons, type of interaction, etc.).

An "identity" is a self-concept that relates to social position. Stryker defines identities as "internalized positional designations, claimed and validated in social interaction" (Stryker, 1972, p. 24). Identities are defined by Charon (1985) as "names we call ourselves" (p. 77). Adult men may simultaneously hold numerous identities that are called up through interaction in different contexts. In the context of work, a self-identity of "employee" may predominate. At home, the identity of "husband" or the identity of "father" may be called up in a man's interaction.

The concept of "role" is often used to examine the social behavior of persons. A role has been defined as "the set of prescriptions defining what the behavior of a [social] position member should be" (Biddle & Thomas, 1966). A second definition is that roles are "more or less integrated sets of social norms that are distinguishable from other sets of norms that constitute other roles" (Burr, Leigh, Day & Constantine, 1979). A role therefore includes the expectations held for the behavior of persons who are in a recognized social position, such as that of "father" or "husband" or "employee". A role is a unit of sociological analysis, whereas an identity is internalized by the individual - it is a psychological concept, related to the individual's social position.

Role behavior influences and is influenced by a person's self-identity (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984). Interaction with other family members from the social position of "father", leads them to respond to the individual in terms of his father role - supporting a self-identity of "father". Behavior in a role is generated from the self-identity that a person calls forth within themselves in a given situation. The quality of one's role behavior is influenced by the degree to which one has developed a comprehensive set of self-expectations for that role. A man will play the role of father poorly if he is not psychologically prepared for that social identity, even if others have high expectations for him in that role.

In symbolic interaction theory, the process by which social action is formed is considered to be crucial to understanding that social action. It is the "analysis of the career of the act [that] is essential to an empirical understanding of social action" (Blumer, 1969, p. 56). An adequate analysis of the acquisition of a father-identity must examine the process by which such an identity is acquired. The interaction of men with their wives and others must be studied to determine what factors, occurring during the pregnancy, are important in promoting or hampering the development of a man's self-concept of "father". The influence of marital interaction on men's parent-related behavior during the pregnancy must also be considered.

The Research Problem

Few researchers have looked at men's experiences during their transition to fatherhood. Most studies that have included men have done so by examining the degree of crisis or difficulty experienced by them when they become fathers (eg. LeMasters, 1957; Dyer, 1963). Another line of research has considered marital satisfaction or marital adjustment following the birth of a couple's first child (eg. Miller & Sollie, 1980; Harriman, 1983). These studies have enumerated the tensions and gratifications that accompany parenthood, but have failed to contribute to our understanding of the process by which men make the transition to parenthood.

The period surrounding the birth of a man's first child has been considered as a period of psychological development. A number of changes occur in this period, with most men going through important psychological changes (Barnhill, Rubenstein & Rocklin, 1979; May, 1980, 1982b; Osofsky, 1982; Richman, 1982; Ross, 1983; Smith, 1983). Little consideration, however, has been given to the marital relationship as a context in which men move into fatherhood. This study began with the assumption that a father-identity is formed through interaction with others, and that a man's wife is possibly the most significant of those other people.

The involvement of men with their infant children has been documented by those interested in child development (eg. Lamb, 1981;

Parke & Sawin, 1981). Family sociologists have looked at changes which occur in a couple's relationship at the time of transition to parenthood (eg. LaRossa, 1981; Miller & Sollie, 1980). Psychological studies of men have reported the difficulties which men experience as they become fathers (Osofsky, 1982). Little has been published on the ways in which men manage the challenges of pregnancy and prepare themselves for fatherhood in the context of their marriage.

The research reported here was designed to investigate the way that men develop an identity as a father before the birth of their first child. The inquiry looked for sources of influence on the identity-formation process. Most importantly, the purpose of the study was to determine the process by which the respondents prepared a father-identity during the pregnancy. The factors which accelerate, and those which retard, the psychological preparations of men were sought.

Interaction between men and their wives was examined because that is one of the ways in which the personal changes associated with becoming a father might be triggered. This study considered the part a couple's relationship played in the establishment of a new identity by the men who were interviewed.

The research was limited to men participating in LeMaze-type prenatal classes (those in which a woman's partner is taught to coach her through labour and birth). It was expected that men who had made

this commitment to their wife would be more likely involved in other aspects of the pregnancy - and able and willing to talk about it to a researcher. The study is thus limited to men who had already demonstrated an interest in providing support to their partner.

CHAPTER II. Literature Review

The transition to parenthood has been studied by social scientists using a number of perspectives. This chapter will review the approaches that have been used, and what we have learned about the period surrounding the birth of a couple's first child. Particular emphasis will be placed on the effects of this transition on the man who is becoming a father.

Birth as Crisis

Modern sociological investigation into the impact of becoming parents began in the 1950's. The early research viewed the transition to parenthood as a crisis in the couple's life together. Hill's (1949) family crisis model was used as a means of understanding the addition of a member to a family. The birth was seen as a dramatic event that precipitated changes in the couple. Their previous behavior patterns were rendered ineffective by the arrival of an infant, and they needed to learn to cope with the new circumstances.

The first study which used the crisis model to consider the experience of couples who had become parents was that of LeMasters (1957). LeMasters reported that 38 of 46 couples that he interviewed had experienced "extensive" or "severe" crisis in adjusting to the

arrival of their first child. Those couples who considered the transition to parenthood a "crisis" apparently had unrealistically positive expectations of parenthood. LeMasters speculated that a lack of training for parenthood contributed to the difficulties that the couples reported.

Dyer (1963) carried out an investigation into couples' adjustment to the arrival of their first-born child. This investigation also found that the couples surveyed considered the birth of their first child to be a crisis. The degree of crisis experienced was found to relate to the marital adjustment of couples and the length of their marriage prior to the pregnancy. The ability to cope with new circumstances appeared to be affected by a couple's past experience in solving the problems of living together as a couple prior to the pregnancy.

Only "slight" or "moderate" crisis was reported by the couples surveyed by Hobbs (1965) and by Russell (1974). These two investigators both found that parenthood contributed positive elements to the lives of the men and women that they studied. The recognition of the positive impact of parenthood on a couple's relationship led to a change in focus in research.

The research into the transition to parenthood which used a crisis theory framework suffered from inadequacies. Emphasis was placed on determining whether the arrival of the first child caused

difficulties for the couple and if so, what these difficulties were. Little attention was paid to the process by which they coped with the difficulties, or the ways in which difficulties were avoided.

Parenthood and the Marital Relationship

The couple's marriage was the focus of investigation for a number of studies on the transition to parenthood. The baby's impact on the marital relationship and on the well-being of the new mother and father was assessed by Miller & Sollie (1980). "Personal stress" was found to increase for both mothers and fathers following the birth of the first child. There appeared to be a "baby honeymoon" period immediately following the birth where men and women reported a feeling of well-being. Mothers reported higher "marital stress" when the baby was eight months old than at the six month point in the pregnancy and also greater than when the baby was one month-old. Men did not report significant increases in marital stress in this period. It appeared that mothers experienced more difficulties than did fathers.

New mothers have reported more changes in their lives than have their partners in other studies. Harriman (1983) found that the changes tended to be in the areas of decreased time and energy for activities outside of caring for the infant and carrying out the woman's daily routine. The new fathers in this study reported more change in their marital relationship than did their wives. Men found

the decrease in sexual responsiveness of their wives and the lack of time with their spouses to be important negative changes following the arrival of their first-borns.

The process by which spouses worked out their relationships with each other in the first year of parenthood was examined by LaRossa (1981). This longitudinal study found a strong tendency toward traditional male and female roles in families during the months following the child's birth. This occurred even for those couples who had a nontraditional relationship prior to the pregnancy. The change in the division of labour in the family was related to the high demands of the infant which require continual monitoring and frequent activity on the part of parents. These demands place the parents in competition with each other over free time, according to LaRossa. The man, with his employment outside the home and the ability to legitimate a peripheral role, is able to delegate the majority of child care responsibilities to his wife. The father is able to "help" with the child's care, rather than "share" in the responsibility. Women, according to LaRossa, find it difficult to use this strategy to avoid interrupting their careers. Social expectations for women do not allow them to legitimate their focus on employment when they have a newborn. Men derive power, within their spousal relationship, from their freedom to decide on their involvement in childcare and women lose power from their inability to do so when a child is born.

LaRossa's research is an important contribution to the understanding of family relations following the birth of a child because the process of change is considered. Previous studies had characterized beginning parenthood by measuring outcomes: difficulty experienced, impact on the marriage, etc. These studies were inadequate because interventions planned to assist men and women during the pregnancy or the postnatal period must be based on knowledge of how couples adjust to parenthood. The next section will focus more closely on men's experience of the transition to parenthood.

Becoming a Father

Richman (1982) has stated that much of the consideration of men and parenthood has focused on men as husbands rather than as fathers. This reflects the bias that parenting is a female specialty and women's responsibility. Men are seen as "providers" to their families and a source of psychological support for their wives. Research on the effect of parenthood on men, and the psychological changes associated with the new status will be examined in this section.

Osofsky (1982), in a review of literature on fatherhood, notes that the period of pregnancy is a time characterized by "considerable stress and upheaval". In his experience as a psychiatrist and in his research on the coping mechanisms of couples who were becoming

parents, Osofsky noted phases in men's pregnancy reactions. The initial phase was one of excitement and pride. The next phase was one of worry about changes in their personal life and in their marriage. A sense of responsibility also became stronger at this time. As the time for the birth approached, men worried about their ability to provide support to their wife during labour. During the labour and the birth itself, Osofsky (1982) reports that men felt left out and unhappy at playing a secondary role.

The pregnancy period and the period of early parenthood are characterized by Osofsky (1982) as a time of "developmental crisis" for men. It is a time of considerable stress, but also a time when men have opportunities to grow and to mature as persons. The disequilibrium experienced during the pregnancy may lead to a period of personal growth and change.

The psychological aspects of becoming a father for the first time have been investigated by a number of studies. May (1978) reviewed the literature and concluded that the development of an identity as a father may be related to the ability of a man to feel like a father during pregnancy. The way in which a man deals with the emotional stresses of the pregnancy may shape his future parental behavior. Men who are able to deal with the emotional impact of the pregnancy "will become actively involved in the pregnancy and childbirth process" (May, 1978, p. 8). Those men who were able to recognize and talk

about their nurturant feelings were most involved in preparing for fatherhood. They were preparing a future identity of "father" for themselves during the pregnancy (May, 1978).

The involvement of men in their wife's pregnancy was examined by May (1980). Involvement in the pregnancy was categorized into three styles. The most common type of involvement was an "observer style". These men were the least involved, both behaviorally and emotionally. They saw the pregnancy as belonging to their wives. The second style found by May was the "expressive" style of involvement. These men had a strong emotional involvement in the pregnancy with mood swings occurring in response to changes in the pregnancy. They shared their emotional reactions with their partners. Men showing an expressive style also anticipated active involvement with their newborns, and tended to make preparations for fatherhood during the pregnancy. An "instrumental" style was the third type of involvement that May noted in the men in her study. These men focused on tasks to be accomplished during the pregnancy while minimizing the emotional impact of their experience. They took on responsibility for the success of labour and birth, while actively involving themselves in the process.

The typology alerts us to the different degrees and types of involvement of men in their wife's pregnancy. It does not inform us about the reasons for men's response to the pregnancy, nor indicate

what might be done to change the involvement if this were desired by the woman (or by the man). In a later paper, May (1982b) examined men's involvement as it evolved over the course of the pregnancy.

May (1982b) looked at the psychological experience of pregnancy as reported by men who were expecting their first child. The experience was divided into three distinct phases. The news of the pregnancy and the man's reaction to the news were the most important part of the "announcement phase". This phase may have been joyful if the pregnancy was desired, or a shock if the pregnancy was not planned. The announcement phase was relatively brief, and followed by a period when men did not actively consider the pregnancy.

The "moratorium phase" lasted from about the 12th week of the pregnancy to about the 25th week of the pregnancy. The moratorium was characterized by emotional distance from the pregnancy on the part of the man. The distance was helpful in permitting a man to deal with ambivalence he was feeling about the pregnancy. The man's relationship with his partner was often affected as the woman began to feel that her spouse was not really interested in the pregnancy. Marital tension often resulted.

Eventually men reached the "focusing phase", when an increased interest and involvement in the pregnancy was found. May found that it was during this third phase that a man began to see himself as a

father. It was necessary for them to accept the pregnancy and its effects before men could begin to develop a father-identity.

The process of accepting the pregnancy was investigated further by May (1982a). "Readiness for fatherhood" depended on four factors for the men in this study. The "intention to have children" affected men's reaction to the news of the pregnancy. Those men who had not intended to become a father needed to deal with the alterations the pregnancy would make in their life plans. "Stability in the couple's relationship" was an important influence on men's feeling of readiness for fatherhood. Commitment to each other and the ability to work together well as a team were important in planning for parenthood. A third factor relating to readiness was "financial security". A man felt more prepared to become a father when he felt that he and his wife would be able financially cope with a child. The final factor was "a sense of closure to the childless period of his life". Men saw fatherhood as a qualitatively different part of their life. They needed to psychologically adjust to the loss of the previous part of adult life.

Psychological processes during the early part of men's pregnancy experience were reported by Smith (1985). The men who participated in this research were interviewed during the first five and a half months of the pregnancy. Men were found to be building an identity as a father even in this early part of their pregnancy experience. The

process of developing an identity as a father was based on identifying with one's own father, identifying with one's work, identifying with one's wife as a mother, and identifying with the expected baby as a real person.

Smith's findings are interesting in that they indicate the men she studied were actively preparing for fatherhood during a part of the pregnancy that May (1982b) termed the "Moratorium" phase. The men in Smith's study were building an identity as a father during the first half of the pregnancy. These men were each considering their wife as a mother while they themselves planned how they would behave as a father. Men used their own father as a model while developing their own personal identity as a father.

Barnhill et al. (1979) also considered the first pregnancy as a time of psychological development for men. The transition to fatherhood was seen as including a number of developmental tasks for men. The "decision-making" about whether or not to have children is the first task. Once a man learns of the pregnancy, he faces the task of "mourning" the loss of some of his personal freedom. "Empathic responding" to their pregnant partner's needs is necessary for adequate coping, at the level of the couple's relationship.

"Integrating" the child into the couple's lives is necessary, as the pregnancy culminates in the birth. The couple must interact with each other as father and mother as well as husband and wife. The family

must "establish family boundaries and differentiate from the extended family" (Barnhill, 1979, p. 233). The man's relationships with his family and friends are altered by his becoming a father. The final developmental task of new fathers is that of integrating the previous tasks into a coherent lifestyle: "synergizing".

The literature cited in this section has considered the psychological changes which occur in men during their transition to fatherhood. A number of developmental tasks have been identified as important factors in men's adjustment to fatherhood. Phases which men experience during the process of pregnancy were outlined, however there is not full agreement between researchers on the applicability of the phases to some men. An example is Smith's (1983) finding that men were actively preparing for fatherhood at a time May (1982b) termed a moratorium phase of the pregnancy.

In the next section, first-time fatherhood will be considered in sociological terms. The implications of a number of research reports will be examined, as they contribute to our understanding of the process of becoming a father.

Role Preparation

A father role includes a number of expectations for how a man will behave. The expectations of his partner, his family, and friends are important in shaping the way a man will play the role of father.

Pregnancy is a period during which a man may consider the anticipations which others hold for his behavior when the baby is born. He can fantasize about how he will relate to his baby, and thereby plan his own behavior as a father in advance of the birth.

Fein (1976) reported that it is important for men to develop a "coherent role" in relation to their baby and their wife. Men's adjustment to the birth was a function of a father role that met the needs of each man as well as those of his wife and his baby. The particulars of the role were unimportant, as long as the way in which a man behaved as a father fit for that particular family.

Men's plans for their parenting behavior may be developed during the prenatal period, in conjunction with their wives. The Fein study (1976) found that the pre-birth expectations of women for their husbands' involvement with the infant were even more accurate than the men's own predictions. It may be that couples jointly plan the way they will play parenting roles, or a woman may influence the involvement that their partner has with his first-born.

Backett (1982) has concluded that couples do negotiate the ways in which they play parental roles in contemporary families. Norms for father and mother roles are very broad, leaving it up to the individuals entering the roles to find a way of playing the part that works for that family. For the families studied by Backett (1982, p. 195), "the problematical nature of being a father lay in negotiating

with the mother a mutually satisfactory degree of direct involvement in home and family life, during the non-job time perceived as available."

Some evidence exists that preparation for the father role during pregnancy affects men's later interaction with their babies. Feldman, Nash & Aschenbrenner (1983) reported that men who spent time psychologically rehearsing for fatherhood during the pregnancy were more likely to be involved in providing childcare to their baby. Fein (1976) also noted that men frequently reported having observed children during the months before the birth of their own infant. Some men indicated that they had sought opportunities to "practice" a fathering role by caring for children during this prenatal period.

The men who were highly involved in their wives' pregnancy in May's (1978) study reported behavior that indicated they were preparing for the father role. Men who were emotionally involved in the pregnancy noted that they were fantasizing about themselves with the baby, and were frequently observing children during the pregnancy.

At least some men take the opportunity during their wives' first pregnancy to prepare themselves for the father role. Since parental roles are based on relatively flexible social norms, men must work out roles that function for their particular family. The norms for fathering in our society range from focusing primarily on the material needs of the family, to high emotional involvement with one's

children. The role of "father" is in many ways complementary to the role of "mother". The degree and type of involvement of a father is affected by the way in which an infant's mother plays her role. Negotiating parental roles that mesh well has been associated with good adjustment to parenthood by men. The development of complementary roles during the pregnancy may involve considerable planning for the future, discussion of expectations between spouses, and actual practice of the role-related behaviors.

Summary

A number of approaches have been taken by social scientists in an attempt to understand the transition to parenthood. Early research used a crisis model to investigate the experience of couples who had become parents for the first time. Attempts to characterize the period around the arrival of a child as a time of adjustment in the couple's relationship failed to examine the process of change. The focus tended to be on the degree of difficulty experienced or on the gratifications reported by first-time parents. The negative connotations of "crisis" also limited the acceptance of this research by practitioners. Many people prefer to think of the arrival of a child in romantic terms. The relabelling of the experience as a "transition" was useful in focusing on the changes in more neutral terms.

Research on the impact which the transition to parenthood has on a couple's marriage has provided us with data on the differential impact, on men and women, of the child. Women experience a great deal of personal stress in the postnatal months while men note strains, predominantly in their marital relationship. LaRossa suggests in his book (1981) that this may be due to the changes in lifestyle and relative power faced by a first-time mother. The lack of time and energy that a mother has for her partner may be the reason men complain of a decline in marital satisfaction.

The psychological changes which accompany the transition to fatherhood make the pregnancy an important period for men. The development of an identity of "father" prior to the birth of the baby is a significant part of the preparation for parenting. Little empirical research has been carried out on the process of developing an identity as a father during the first pregnancy.

The findings of research on the development of parental roles during the couple's first pregnancy indicate that negotiation of this matter may occur between the man and the woman. Parental roles are to some degree played in relation to each other. If one parent is highly involved with the infant, this constrains the involvement of the other parent. Conversely, if one parent is relatively uninvolved with the child, the remaining parent must bear the majority of the responsibilities. The research on developing a father role suggests

that a focus on the couple's interaction is important to understanding the way in which a man builds expectations for himself as a father.

The investigation reported on here sought to learn what important influences affect the psychological preparations of a man for fatherhood, during the months preceeding the birth of his first child.

The study was particularly concerned with the ongoing processes of interaction with others; and the man's own cognitive processes, as avenues through which psychological changes were brought about.

The next chapter in this report will describe the way in which the development of father-identity was investigated. The means by which data were collected and the process of analyzing the data are described.

Chapter III. Methodology

Little attention has been given to a man's developing father-identity during the prenatal period, in reports on the transition to parenthood. Consequently, we do not have a good idea of the variables which are important to understanding men's experience of becoming a father. The objective of the proposed research was to discover the process by which men develop an identity as a father, and the factors which influence this process.

Preliminary studies in any area of behavior must take an exploratory focus. Kerlinger (1973, p. 406) states that exploratory research has three purposes: "to discover significant variables in the field situation, to discover relations among variables, and to lay the groundwork for later, more systematic and rigorous testing of the hypotheses."

Qualitative research methods are used to develop theory about an area of interest. The researcher looks for patterns or similarities "by inference from [the] examination of specific instances or events" (Field & Morse, 1985, p. 6). Variables and the relationships between them are inferred from the patterns noted in the data.

Qualitative methodology which facilitated the discovery of some important variables associated with a man becoming a father was used

for this study. Grounded theory techniques as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978) were used to analyze the data and to develop theory about men's development of a father-identity. The section on "Analysis of Data" in this chapter will include a description of the use of grounded theory methodology in this investigation.

This chapter includes a description of the way in which participants were recruited for the research. A description of the participants follows. The procedure used for interviewing respondents is outlined. The means by which the interview data was analyzed is described, as well as a consideration of steps which were taken to ensure validity and reliability of the findings. Finally, the ethical issues connected with the research and the steps which were taken to minimize risk to participants are summarized.

Participants

The persons who participated in this research were recruited from prenatal classes. Couples in the final trimester of their first pregnancy were sought as respondents. The number of participants required was determined by the progress of theory construction. In total, eight couples were interviewed; five couples were interviewed for the purpose of developing grounded theory, and a further three couples were interviewed to validate this theory.

The researcher approached prenatal classes and asked for the participation of couples who were in the seventh, eighth or ninth month of their first pregnancy. A brief description of the study and the expectations for participation of respondents was given to each prenatal class that was approached (See Appendix A for a copy of the presentation). Those men who wished to volunteer for the research were asked to leave their names and telephone numbers for the researcher. They were contacted by telephone and an appointment was made for the first interview.

Couples who were at this stage of the pregnancy were selected because they were expected to be able to reflect on the majority of the pregnancy, yet still be unaffected by the experience of the birth. Previous research (May, 1982b) has indicated that many men experience a stage during which they tend not to focus on the pregnancy. This "moratorium" stage began as the novelty and initial excitement wore off. May found that men once more became interested in the pregnancy as the third trimester began.

Based on these findings, it was expected that the couples solicited for this research would be at a point where considerable birth-related interaction was occurring. It was also expected that men would be more likely to volunteer to talk to a researcher during this final part of the pregnancy, when their interest in the upcoming birth was increasing.

Most interviews were conducted in the participants' own homes. Some men chose to come to the University for their interviews, particularly the second interview, when they were interviewed alone. They preferred not to inconvenience their wife by asking her to leave the house to allow for a private interview.

The men who participated in the research ranged in age from 23 to 40 years of age. The actual ages of the five men who took part in the theory-development phase of the study were: 23, 28, 30, 34, and 36 years of age. The men who were interviewed for the validation phase were 23, 29 and 40 years of age.

The formal education level of the participants ranged from high school graduation (Grade 12 or 13 completed) to graduate degree (PhD.). One man who volunteered for the theory-development interviews had earned a Bachelor's degree. The other four men had completed high school.

Occupationally, the men represented a variety of areas. The initial five participants included a management trainee, a loans officer, a grocery clerk, a management trainee in a franchise operation, an unemployed contract administrator for a construction firm, and a police officer. The men interviewed during the validation phase worked as an electronics technician, a physician, and a manager in a small business.

The length of the couple's relationships (defined as length of marriage + length of time couple lived together prior to marriage) showed considerable variation. One couple had been together for only six months before the beginning of the current pregnancy. Another couple had been in their relationship for over nine years before their pregnancy began.

Procedure

This study of men's transition to fatherhood was based on in-depth interviews of men and their wives which were used to obtain data on the process by which men acquire father-identity. Prior to the first interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the investigation and asked the couple to sign a form (See Appendix B), signifying their consent to participate in the study. The consent form was read to the man and his partner, and answers were given to any questions which they raised about the study. Men and their wives were interviewed conjointly, since the study was interested in the part played by the couple's interaction. Couple interviews were considered advantageous because other researchers have found that respondents provide more information in the context of joint interviews than they do when interviewed separately (Bennett & McAivty, 1985). Couple interviews also promote consideration of the symbolic and emotional components of their experiences by respondents

(Bennett & McAvity, 1985). An additional advantage of joint interviews with the spouse is that couple agreements and disagreements may be seen directly, as well as some of the means by which the couple attempts to resolve their disagreements (Allan, 1980).

The first interview with each participant included the man and his wife. A second interview was conducted with the man alone. It was thought that men might be more open about some of their feelings and experiences if they were able to talk with the researcher privately. The discussion during this interview with the man centred around questions which arose from the researcher's analysis of the earlier couple-interview. Discrepancies between statements made by the man were brought up for clarification. Areas which the interviewer failed to follow-up on during the first interview were explored. Finally, the man was asked whether there were important topics or experiences which had been overlooked by the researcher. He was then given an opportunity to discuss these areas.

Provision was made for a third, couple-interview with participants. The purpose of this interview was to add to the researcher's understanding if the first two interviews had been insufficient. In two cases this third interview was carried out and contributed valuable information. In two other cases, it appeared that sufficient information for understanding the men's pregnancy experience had been obtained in two interviews. The final participant

in the first phase of the study was interviewed only once - with his wife - as their child was born earlier than expected.

Interviews consisted of an exploration of the experiences associated with becoming a father. Each interview began with the interviewer asking the couple how "excited" they were getting about the upcoming birth. Both the man and his wife were given an opportunity to respond to this inquiry. Their responses to this question usually brought out one or more issues which were then explored by the researcher.

The focus of questioning in the interviews was on the fatherhood-related thoughts, feelings and behaviors which the men experienced during the pregnancy (and prior to the pregnancy). Women were asked to describe the ways in which they had communicated with their partner about the pregnancy, and how they saw his current involvement as an "expectant father". Men and their wives were each asked to speculate on the way the new father would involve himself with the baby while it was an infant.

The interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner. Open-ended questions were used to encourage the participants to relate the experiences which had been important to them. General questions were posed concerning the man's experiences and involvement in the pregnancy - as well as the role played by spousal interaction in these matters. Themes for exploration (See Appendix C) were prepared in

advance of the interviews, but were used only if the respondents had difficulty talking about their pregnancy experiences.

Analysis of Data

Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Chenitz & Swanson, 1986) is an approach for examining social phenomena and developing a substantive theory of the underlying processes. The researcher gathers data using interview or observational methods. The data are examined to determine factors and processes which are common to each case or participant considered. Hypotheses are formed concerning the relationships between the factors, and these hypotheses are tested while further data are collected (Stern, 1985).

The grounded theory approach advocates that the investigator enter the research with as few preconceived hypotheses as possible. The researcher adopts a "Teach me about your experience." attitude toward the participants in the research. Research is a process of learning about the area of interest as it is perceived by those who are involved in it.

Interviews conducted for this study were tape-recorded. This recorded material was transcribed to facilitate analysis. The transcripts were then read and coded with substantive codes. Substantive codes are descriptions made up of a few words or a short phrase, which "reflect the substance of what people said or the

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observed events, actions, or other dimensions of the phenomena" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p. 8). Interviews were coded on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis, yielding over 100 different codes for the theory-development part of the study.

Codes were compared for similarity and differences and then clustered. These clusters or "categories" each contain a number of substantive codes which are logically related in some way. The category name consists of a label at a more abstract level than the codes within it. An example is a hypothetical category named "Support from Others" which would include the substantive codes: "talk with friends", "parents' help", "gifts", etc. The categories were revised a number of times as the analysis progressed. Codes were grouped and regrouped several times to fit different categories that emerged.

The goal of this study was to develop a theory of the process by which men developed their identity as a father during the pregnancy. One of the categories emerged as central to this process, a "core category". A core category is "one which solves ... the problem addressed, explains as much variation in behavior as possible, and uses the fewest number of concepts possible" (Fagerhaugh, 1986, p. 135).

The relationship between the core category and the other categories was examined as the next step in the analysis. Glaser (1978) suggests using the "6 C's" to determine how to arrange the

categories around the core category. The 6 C's are: 1) Causes, 2) Contexts, 3) Contingencies, 4) Consequences, 5) Covariances, and 6) Conditions. The analyst asks whether each of the categories is a cause of the core category, a context for the core category, a contingency for the core category to occur, a consequence of the occurrence of the core category, covaries with the core category, or a condition of the core category. Categories which do not relate to the core one in any of the six ways cited, are probably irrelevant for the current analysis.

The categories were arranged in the form of a model of the process of becoming a father. Each part (category) of the model was described. The relationship between the parts was determined from the data. These relationships were stated as propositions concerning the process of becoming a father.

Validity

The issue of validity in scientific research is concerned with the truth of the findings. Field and Morse (1985) enumerate several concerns about validity in qualitative research. The soundness of the answer to the research question, whether the findings represent reality, and whether the procedures which were used biased the findings are cited as issues to be considered.

The research reported here was begun with the assumption that men who were experiencing their wife's first pregnancy would be appropriate informants. They were expected to be the persons most capable of providing data on the processes which men experience during their transition to parenthood.

The social context for the collection of data was selected to minimize threats to the validity of the information provided by the participants. Interviews were conducted in the respondents' own homes to ensure their privacy and to maximize their comfort level. Those participants who so wished, were interviewed at the University in a private room. Men were interviewed with their wives in order to promote accurate data on the concrete aspects of the pregnancy. Women were asked to compare their perceptions with those of their husbands. The conjoint interviews were also chosen to allow the researcher to observe the interaction between men and their wives. The validity of men's reports about interaction with their wives over the pregnancy could be assessed by observing couples' interaction patterns during the interviews.

The interviewer sought to maximize the validity of the data by presenting himself as similar to the participants. He took the role of a student who was interested in learning about a neglected part of men's lives. The researcher took the role of "potential father" to allow the respondents to "teach" him about their experiences. The

"one-up" position given to the participants was designed to increase their willingness to relate the details of their experiences to the researcher (Glaser, 1978).

Validity of the data obtained was checked by the interviewer by several means. Discrepancies in statements made by respondents were pointed out and they were asked to clarify the perceived disagreements. Information was double-checked by asking men similar questions in successive interviews. The respondents were asked to describe events or experiences concretely and in detail to reduce the possibility of the investigator later making erroneous inferences from general statements.

The procedures used to obtain the data were designed to minimize the effect on the data of the interviewer's expectations about men's experiences during their wife's pregnancy. The investigator's attitude of "learner" gave the respondents an opportunity to tell about aspects of the transition process which had been important to them. Each participant was asked at the end of each interview to bring up any additional important issues which had not been discussed.

The soundness of the answer to the research question which is provided by this thesis may be assessed by further investigations which examine the validity of the concepts found as well as the proposed relationships between them. The investigator has attempted

to gather pertinent information and to organize it so as to address the research problem.

Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which the research findings are not limited to accidental circumstances (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Kirk and Miller note two types of reliability that are of particular relevance when qualitative methodology is used by a researcher: "diachronic reliability" and "synchronic reliability". Diachronic reliability refers to stability in observations over time. What is found now will also be found at a future time when the researcher uses the same methods. Diachronic reliability is a concern when the phenomena are assumed to remain stable over time.

Synchronic reliability exists when measurements made during the same time period give similar results. This type of reliability does not assume identical observations, but rather similarity only on the dimensions which are of interest to the researcher (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Research which assumes change occurring over time, such as the present example, should be evaluated in terms of synchronic reliability rather than diachronic reliability. The assumption of ongoing changes in the area of interest make the discovery of similar measurements over time unlikely and irrelevant to the purpose of the investigation. What is of importance here is far as reliability is

concerned is whether other men going through the same phase of their lives would report a process similar to that found in this research.

One serious threat to reliability is systematic bias on the part of the investigator (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Kidder, 1981). Researchers who seek information which confirms their particular bias may find only what they expected. Other investigators using the same methodology may not come to the same conclusions. Reliability of the findings is unacceptable if other researchers are unable to use the information provided in the report and repeat the observations to obtain similar findings. Kirk and Miller (1986) argue that qualitative investigators must report their data collection and analysis procedures in sufficient detail that others could test or assess the conclusions which were made.

This researcher sought to maximize the reliability of the findings by making explicit, in Chapter I, his assumptions about the development of a man's father-identity during his wife's pregnancy. The way in which the data were collected is described in detail. Typed transcriptions were made of the interview material to facilitate analysis.

An assessment of the grounded theory's usefulness was made by using the findings as a framework for considering the experiences of a "validation" group of participants. A list of questions (Appendix D) was devised from the grounded theory. The men and their wives were

asked these questions to determine if the findings of the study were consistent with their own experiences. These participants were also given an opportunity to describe any important aspects of the men's pregnancy experience that had not been referred to in the questions.

Ethical Issues

The rights of the participants were protected by means of the following measures.

Informed Consent. The researcher met with each couple who had volunteered for the research to explain the study to them. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, and of their right to refuse to respond to any questions which they did not wish to answer. The researcher answered any questions posed by the participants at this time. The potential benefits of the research interviews to the understanding of men's pregnancy experiences and to the men themselves were described. They were then asked to sign a Consent Form indicating that their rights and obligations had been explained to them (See Appendix B).

Protection of Privacy. The tapes of the interviews were transcribed for analysis and were erased at the completion of the study. Names of respondents were altered when the interviews are typed. A list of participants' names and addresses was maintained by

the researcher, stored separately from the transcripts. Information which might be used to identify the persons who were interviewed was deleted from the transcripts and replaced by a more general term (eg. A man or a woman in a specialized occupation, such as manager of a department at City Hall: the occupation would be described as "manager of a large department").

Protection From Risk. It was possible that interviews of couples may bring up information that one spouse would prefer not to share with the other. While this might have proven valuable to the research goals, it might have been harmful to the participants (LaRossa, Bennett & Gelles, 1981). The interviewer respected respondents' wish to keep parts of their experiences private. No attempt was made to pressure men or women to reveal material that they were reluctant to share. In practice, however, some couples seemed to use the interview context as a forum for communication with each other about the pregnancy. This communication was reported by one couple as valuable to their relationship. In cases where conflict did develop between spouses in the context of the interview, the researcher acknowledged the existence of a difference of opinion, and turned to a new line of inquiry.

Chapter IV. Findings

Introduction

The results of the data analysis are reported in this chapter. The findings revealed a number of significant aspects to men's prenatal experience. These aspects of men's preparations will be discussed in the following order. First, the influences on men during the prenatal period will be described. Next, the personal characteristics of men which affected their experience of pregnancy are considered. Third, components of the process of men's taking responsibility for the pregnancy will be outlined. These components will be followed by a consideration of the psychological preparations made by participants for the assumption of a father-identity. Finally, the results of interviews which were conducted to test the validity of the findings will be reported.

A. Sources of Influence on Men's Experience of Pregnancy

The men who were interviewed for this study reported a variety of influences on their experience of their wives' pregnancy. The influences considered here are those which were external to the man's own personal make-up. The personality of each man also affected his

The experiences of the respondents were affected by the people around them. News of the pregnancy led to a change in the type of interaction occurring between men and many of those with whom they were in contact. Expecting their first child gave these men a different status and the expectations which others held for them changed.

Wife. The most significant influence on men's pregnancy experience was that of their marital partner. Men reported that their wives kept them informed about the progress of the pregnancy. An example mentioned by most men was the woman letting him know when she was feeling the unborn child's movements. Brian said his wife "... makes a concerted effort to tell me what is going on. That the baby is doing this, she can feel it growing, she can feel these things inside."

Women took the role of "educator" if they felt their husband did not know as much about pregnancy as they did. Women tended to read about pregnancy or parenting and then tell their partner what they had learned. One man said "she tells me things all the time. We talk about it. [she says] 'Did you know this. Did you know that?'" Women also suggested that their husband attend prenatal classes with them. For at least one woman, getting her husband to attend these classes was part of her role in educating him about pregnancy: "I tried to get

Brian to read and he just wouldn't. So we went to those classes. I think he got a lot more out of it than I did."

Another way in which a woman tried to influence her partner's response to the pregnancy was by making explicit her expectations for his behavior. Four of the five women asked their husband to be present for the labour and birth (the fifth man suggested this to his wife). Each man's involvement in the pregnancy was influenced by the wishes of his wife. She made requests for participation, or communicated limits to her husband's involvement. Two women made efforts to decrease the involvement of their partners in the pregnancy. One decided that her mother was more helpful in selecting items for the baby, and she effectively discouraged her husband from taking part in this activity (by embarrassing him in a store). The other woman insisted that she and her husband wait to make major purchases until after the baby was born.

The way in which their husbands would play a father role once the baby was born was an area of concern for women. They were all able to state their expectations for their spouse's parenting behavior, when they were asked about this in the interviews. Several of the women reported stating these views to the man earlier in the pregnancy in an attempt to influence his subsequent behavior. One argument used by the women was that if the man wanted a good relationship with his son

or daughter later in childhood, it was important to start developing that relationship early - in infancy.

Families of Origin. The families of origin of the couples in the study served as an important influence on the men's pregnancy experience. The announcement of the pregnancy led to increased involvement by the potential grandparents, especially if the baby would be the first grandchild. Men reported increased frequency of contact with the families of origin. Parents often made known their opinions about the role the man should play during the pregnancy and after the child was born. The younger men (23 & 28 years of age) also stated that their parents began to treat them differently, now that they were about to become parents themselves.

Work. Employment was another area that had an impact on men's pregnancy experience. The demands of their work made it difficult for four of the men to share the pregnancy as much as they wished. They experienced a conflict between the demands of making a living and those of preparing for fatherhood. One man left his job, which had kept him out of the city during the week, so he could be with his wife for the last months of the pregnancy and for the birth. Two of the men were given opportunities during the pregnancy to become management trainees. Their employers apparently expected more stability and

greater job-related effort from these men, now that they were going to be fathers.

Peers. Men cited their peers as a source of influence on their pregnancy experience. Peers include other men who the participants felt were similar to themselves. They included friends, fellow employees, and others who associated with the men interviewed for this study. Two men reported increased status among the men at work when they announced that they were going to be a father. Andy experienced a sense of pride in his masculinity associated with the reactions of the men at work. "At the beginning there, I worked on an all male construction site. When I found out that Anna was pregnant, I was 'the cock of the block'!" He also experienced support and received advice from his peers.

There's all these long-time fathers there, they got kids 19 and 25 years old you know. All these helpful hints and stuff like that, so I got to bask in the afterglow of Anna.

The two younger participants found the reaction of many of their friends to be negative. These friends continued to expect the same lifestyle from the expectant couples, and were unable to accept the limitations that the pregnancy placed on their activities. The lack of support was significant for the men interviewed, and they tended to seek friends who were already fathers.

Peers also served as examples of how a man could adapt to fatherhood. The existence of models for the transition to parenthood was helpful to the four men who had friends that were fathers. These men had influence by demonstrating a "modern father" role for the participants. They served as a model against which a man could consider his own expectations for his behavior as a father. They were also a source of support when the man needed some advice or a sympathetic ear during the prenatal period.

Other Influences. Two of the men were interviewed three times each. At the end of the third and final interview, the participants were asked if the interviews had affected their experience of the pregnancy. One man felt that he and his wife had communicated, in the context of the interviews, about things that they hadn't discussed before. He also found that the interviews stimulated thought about his part in the pregnancy.

Before you show up I kind of think in my mind "Well, what's he going to ask?" What's new, how I handled certain situations. Like the miscarriage - I kind of really thought about those.

This man's wife felt that her husband had revealed his feelings and his position on issues related to the pregnancy. She thought he had become more assertive with her because he now stated his opinions more openly to her.

The other man spontaneously mentioned that the interviews had led him to think more about the pregnancy and his part in it. He had done little thinking about himself as a father prior to the first interview which was conducted about one month before the expected date of birth.

It's really funny but ever since the interviews have started, I [have] thought about a lot of the questions and stuff. I'm really happy with the way I answered them and stuff, you know. But I've even thought about them further. I sort of, [it] sort of made me feel a little - even more relaxed.

These two men who reported that the transition to fatherhood had been a difficult process stated that talking to a researcher about their experiences and their plans for parenting had been beneficial.

Participating in the research interviews influenced these men by focusing their thoughts on the pregnancy and fatherhood. They found themselves considering their experiences in more detail than they were accustomed to. The questions focusing on their role as a father reminded them that they would soon be in that role. Another effect that the interviews appeared to have on many of the men was that of promoting communication with their spouse about the pregnancy. The women were observed listening intently to their husband's responses to the questions asked in the conjoint interviews. One woman actually began interviewing her husband in the midst of the research interview. That couple admitted that they had not discussed the pregnancy among

themselves in any great detail. Other women were also noted asking their partner to elaborate on statements he had made in the interview.

Other sources of influence were reported by the respondents. The prenatal classes were affecting their experience of the pregnancy by focusing the couple on the upcoming birth. Men and their wives were actively preparing for labour and delivery as a team. Several respondents mentioned that, following each prenatal class, they discussed their plans for the birth and for their future lives as parents.

Some respondents mentioned books as sources of information about pregnancy and the transition to parenthood. Others preferred television and films as a medium for learning about the changes which might soon occur in their lives.

Summary. This investigation discovered a number of sources of influence on men's experience of the pregnancy. The strongest influence was the pregnant woman herself. She provided information on the progress of the pregnancy, and conveyed her expectations for the man's prenatal and postnatal behavior. Friends and associates were also sources of information and support during the pregnancy. The lack of understanding shown by childless male friends affected men in this study. The world of work had an impact on men's pregnancy experience - contributing to both difficulties and to opportunities

for development. The interviews conducted for this study also tended to lead some of the participants to focus on the psychological impact of their transition to fatherhood. The next section will outline the factors associated with the man himself that affected his pregnancy experience.

B. Personal Characteristics Affecting the Man's Experience of the Pregnancy

The way in which the participants in this study reacted to the news that they were to become a father was affected by a number of factors related to the man himself. The degree to which the man was psychologically ready for children in his life, prior to the pregnancy, affected his reaction to the news that he and his wife were to be parents. Men's confidence in their own ability to cope with new challenges interacted with the demands of preparing for their baby, to affect the amount of stress they experienced.

The Desire to be a Father. The men interviewed for this study varied in terms of their wish to have children. Two of the couples had each been trying to have a child for nearly two years. These men were very happy that a viable pregnancy had come about (one of these two couples had experienced the disappointment of losing an earlier pregnancy). Another man had a "fatalistic" attitude toward the

pregnancy. He had always thought that he would like to be a father, but had accepted his wife's apparent infertility. Although the pregnancy came as a big surprise, it was interpreted in positive terms by the man. The remaining two men had not wanted children at present. They had wanted to continue living with few responsibilities in their lives, enjoying the ability to socialize in bars with their friends when they wished.

Life-cycle Timing. Participants reported that the timing of the first pregnancy was an important influence on their responses. The three men who were in their 30's each felt that they were prepared to add a child to their lives. They had reached a point in their marriages and in their careers where they felt relatively stable. These men could now provide for children both materially and emotionally. They also compared themselves to other men and saw that many of their peers already had children. The participants saw the present as a good time to start having children. The timing was neither too early nor too late for them.

Personal "maturity" was cited as one of the factors important to the men in feeling that they could cope with their expected child. Maturity was described by the participants in terms of being less self-centered. They felt that they were now better able to be nurturant toward other family members than they had been earlier in

their adult lives. It was easier to focus on the needs of others, given the maturity that they had gained.

Timing of the pregnancy within their life plans was also cited as important by the two younger men. They felt that they were not yet ready for fatherhood. They recognized that they were self-centered, and described the disappointment that they felt in having to give up this part of their lives earlier than planned. Both of these men had hoped for a few more years during which they could satisfy their desire to indulge themselves. The perception that a transition to parenthood was occurring too early in their marriages was associated with a great deal of initial difficulty in accepting the pregnancies.

The two younger men had not yet developed the sense of stability in their relationship with their wives that the older men reported. The timing of the pregnancy was problematic in that these couples had not progressed beyond what they termed a "honeymoon" stage of their relationship before the pregnancy began. The normal adjustments which occur in a marital relationship in the first year were compounded by the adjustments required by the pregnancy.

Previous Parenting Experience. Men reported a great deal of variation in the amount of experience they had accumulated in caring for children, and specifically, in caring for infants. Brian could only remember holding a baby once in his life. He had not had any

experience in caring for infants or young children. This man was the slowest of the five participants to accept that he was going to be a father. He also found it very difficult to visualize himself as a father.

The youngest man who took part in the research was not emotionally prepared for becoming a father when the pregnancy began. Ed found the transition period difficult but he was able to use his previous, enjoyable, experience with young children to remind himself that there would be positive elements associated with being a parent.

The other three men had gained some first-hand experience with babies prior to their wife's pregnancy. They had spent time with nieces or nephews and with the children of friends. These men had gained some understanding of the problems and gratifications associated with babies through caring for younger siblings when they themselves were children. One of these men, in a reversal of the usual pattern, showed his wife how to diaper a baby. The challenges of caring for an infant were not a worry for him.

Coping Abilities. Throughout their lives, people encounter problems or situations whose resolution require more than the usual degree of effort. When the effort expended to deal with the situation is insufficient, stress is experienced by the person. Greater efforts are required to cope with the challenge. Coping is defined as "the

process through which the individual manages the demands of the person-environment relationship that are appraised as stressful and [manages] the emotions they generate" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.

19). The personal assets that men brought to their pregnancy experience were coping strategies which they had developed while facing previous changes or difficulties. They tended to attempt to use strategies that they had previously used when new difficulties faced them.

One man had a long history of helping others through difficulties. He typically focused on the needs of others while disregarding his own needs. Carl perceived the current pregnancy as a situation where his wife was experiencing physical difficulties (she suffered from morning sickness) and needed help. He made an effort to provide a great deal of support to her by taking on most of the household duties and by providing emotional support. This man stated that his role in the pregnancy was to support his wife, he even felt personal responsibility for her discomfort. "Part of it is my fault

... I think because of that I felt a certain responsibility to be as supportive as I could throughout." This focus on his wife's needs was an effective strategy for Carl because he gained affirmation of his own contribution to the pregnancy as he supported his wife.

A unique approach to life was the pride of one of the participants. Andy played the role of a person who responded to

life's challenges in an idiosyncratic way. His response to the pregnancy was to leave his employment during the seventh month of pregnancy so he could be with his wife (he worked at a job in Northern Alberta). This man also expected to be more involved in caring for the child than his wife would be. She acknowledged this, and felt relieved that he was considering a non-traditional father role. Andy's history of unusual responses to challenges made his responses to the pregnancy "normal" for him.

The way another man described his way of coping with the transition to fatherhood was the use of a logical approach. He claimed that he had to be logical in his job, and that this was a good way for him to cope with the preparations for the baby. He in fact described a rather illogical rationale for his prediction that the child would be a boy. However, he explained changes in his behavior in terms of the "logical" reasons behind them. As an example, this man decided that he should spend more time at home with his wife during her pregnancy because it was a way of getting accustomed to the responsibilities that he would have later as a father. He also saw the pregnancy as a time to practice taking care of people (his wife) so he would be able to nurture his baby when it was born.

A coping response that was inadequate or inappropriate for the situation compounded the difficulty which men experienced during the prenatal period. Responses that fail to address the source of the

difficulty are doomed to fail, or to worsen an already bad situation (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974; Montgomery, 1981). Examples of the use of coping styles which did not address the problem at its source were found in this research.

Two men reacted to their partner's increased demand of them by spending more time socializing with friends, away from their wife. The conflict within their marriages escalated, and other coping strategies were necessary. One of these two men was able to develop methods of dealing with the stresses of pregnancy which enhanced his marital relationship. That couple found a way of making productive use of their conflict and fighting. The second couple continued their unproductive struggle to manage the difficulties of the pregnancy with little progress evident. More consideration of the ways in which couples dealt with conflict in their marriages will be given in the section on "Making Changes".

None of the men felt confident about the labour and birth period. They all reported feeling very anxious about how they would react to the situation. Each worried about his wife's well-being and felt relatively powerless in being unable to prevent or lessen the pain she would experience while giving birth. Attendance at prenatal classes was an attempt to learn how to help with the labour, but all the men wondered whether they would really be able to give much assistance to their wives when that time came.

The effectiveness of the coping skills of the men was an important factor in moderating the anxiety that they experienced during the pregnancy. Some had well-developed and effective strategies for solving problems and for minimizing the impact of difficulties. If these strategies were appropriate to the pregnancy situation, respondents were able to control the amount of stress that they felt during the time of the pregnancy. Those who had a small repertoire of such skills, and those who had little experience of working jointly with their spouse on coping with difficulties, experienced a great deal of difficulty in adjusting to the demands of becoming a parent.

Summary. A number of factors related to each respondent were found to affect how that man experienced the first pregnancy. The degree to which the man wished to have children had an effect on how enthusiastically he accepted the news of the expected child. Timing of the transition to parenthood within the man's own life-cycle also affected his response to the pregnancy. Those men who felt they were ready for a new phase in their lives, where they would take on additional responsibilities for others, differed in their reactions from those who did not wish to become a father at that time. The amount of child care experience that men had acquired earlier in life was a resource that they could use to develop realistic expectations for their future involvement with their children. Those with little

such experience found it difficult to predict what impact fathering would have on their lives. Coping abilities which men had developed earlier in their lives were available to assist them in coping with the challenges of the prenatal period. Those men who had not developed adequate skills in this area prior to the pregnancy were at a disadvantage in coping with the challenges that they faced.

Taking Responsibility for the Pregnancy

This section consists of a description of the process by which men took action to deal with the pregnancy. Analysis of the data obtained from the respondents revealed that those men who took personal responsibility for the pregnancy and its outcome also engaged in psychological preparations for fatherhood. Men took responsibility by two complementary means. The participants shared, with their partners, in the experience of preparing for the child. Associated with this sharing was an active process of making the changes which would allow a man to accommodate the pregnancy in his life, and ultimately would allow him to incorporate the baby into his life. These two parts of taking responsibility for the pregnancy were complementary because changes in one part led to advancement in the other. Sharing in the experiences of the pregnancy increased the participants' motivation for making changes in their lives. Changes made to accommodate the pregnancy led to increased opportunities for sharing in the pregnancy.

C. Sharing the Experience With His Wife

Men began taking responsibility for the pregnancy by sharing the experience of becoming a parent with their wives. Each man's task was to accept the pregnancy and his own personal responsibility for that pregnancy. They also faced the task of considering the meaning of the

pregnancy for their own life, and for their relationship with their wife.

The term "sharing" is used here to refer to men's taking part in the pregnancy. Although pregnancy was physically the wife's experience, psycho-socially it had relevance at the level of the couple, and for the man as an individual. Respondents' acceptance of the psycho-social implications that the prenatal period held for their marital relationship and for their own lives was important. Men who shared in the pregnancy felt that they were engaged in a joint effort with their partner.

A number of phases to the process of coming to accept the pregnancy were reported by the men interviewed. Not all the men had successfully passed through all the phases. The degree to which they came to take personal responsibility for the pregnancy affected men's involvement in preparations for fatherhood. Later, men gradually accepted the emotional meaning of the news that they were going to be a father. The final phase of full acceptance led to active planning for parenthood and to men making changes in their lives that would allow them to accommodate the pregnancy and to prepare for the child.

Accepting the Pregnancy. Most men reported an initial sense of shock or numbness when they learned that their wife was expecting a child. This feeling of unreality was greatest for those men who had

not planned to have children at that time. Men who had been trying with their partner to conceive were quickly able to accept the news of the pregnancy and they became excited at the prospect of becoming a father. Notifying friends and relatives was another positive aspect of this phase. Men who found themselves expecting an unplanned child needed more time and consideration before they were able to accept the pregnancy. Eventually these men accepted the fact that their wives were pregnant. They then joined with their wives in telling others the news of the expected arrival.

The second phase, that of emotional acceptance, was affected by a number of "milestones" in the pregnancy. Following the initial medical confirmation of conception most couples experienced a few relatively uneventful months. Two of the couples needed to cope with the woman's nausea or morning sickness during this period. This was a signal to the husband that he needed to share in the pregnancy by assisting his wife through her difficulties. The gradual changes in the physical appearance of the women was concrete evidence of the pregnancy for their husbands. All the men mentioned that feeling the movement of the fetus at about the sixth month of the pregnancy was an important influence on their full acceptance of the pregnancy. Being able to hear the heartbeat of their unborn child or being able to see the fetus while an ultrasound test was conducted were also significant

experiences that led to a greater emotional acceptance of the fact that they would soon be a father.

Joint Involvement. : Participation in prenatal classes with their wives advanced men's sense of the reality of the approaching birth. Purchasing items for the baby and preparing the home for the baby's arrival, as a couple, were reported to strongly reinforce the men's emotional acceptance of the pregnancy.

Men who had accepted the pregnancy both intellectually and emotionally were able to consider their wives' need for support during the pregnancy, and the implications of fatherhood for their own lives. These men showed a greater interest in the progress of the pregnancy. They were more receptive to their partner's attempts to tell them about her experiences and to her efforts to "educate" them about pregnancy and parenthood.

Sharing of the pregnancy was characterized by increased communication between men and their wives about the transition to parenthood. Men who had adjusted to the fact that they would soon become a father, began initiating the sharing of plans and expectations with their wife.

Involvement in the experience of the pregnancy led men to consider the impact that becoming a father would have on their lives. Like their wives, they needed to make changes to accommodate to the

demands of preparing for a child. They shared the pregnancy by accepting the responsibility of preparing their lives for a baby. The next section will examine the changes which were reported by men in this study.

D. Making Changes to Accommodate the Pregnancy and the Baby

The latter months of the pregnancy were characterized by substantial change in the lives of the men who participated in this research. They made these changes in accomodating to the requirements of the pregnancy or in preparing for their future role as a father. The changes reported by the respondents will be discussed in this section. These changes include an increased emphasis on planning for the future, increased concern about employment and income, a growing personal maturity, alterations in the couple's relationship, changes in relations with extended family members, learning how to act like a father, and a different lifestyle.

Focus on the Future. All the men reported that the pregnancy had led to a change in focus in their lives. They now tended to focus more on the future, rather than on the present. As one man, Carl, said, "I think the reality of [having] the child is having to ... make plans. There's no more spur-of-the-moment decisions." Another man, Dan, said that he and his wife were doing "more sitting down talking

than we did before, about planning. More work in planning different things than we did before, looking long-term."

Planning for the future included negotiation with the woman over the role a man would play with his child. Parenting expectations had been discussed by three of the couples. Members of the other two couples had developed expectations for each other, but had not shared these expectations until the research interviews brought up the topic.

Focus on Employment. The increased focus on the future carried over into men's attitudes toward their employment. Four of the five men were making changes in their work or considering changes. For some men these changes were associated with a desire for increased income now that they were planning to support a child and possibly their wife (if she did not return to work after a maternity leave). For others, changes were related to a desire for more flexibility in their work situation so that they could spend more time with their families. Employment took on increased importance as men considered the responsibility of providing for a child. Two men reported increased opportunities for advancement, now that their employers knew about their expected child.

Becoming More Mature. The two younger men (age 23 and 28) found the period before the birth of their child to be one of rapid maturation. One of them said "I suddenly feel older, suddenly feel

older." The other found himself "acting like an adult" now, that he was going to be a father. He spent his summer vacation painting his house, something which he would not have considered a few months earlier. The maturing process involved these men giving up the period of relative irresponsibility that had characterized their earlier adult years. Ed's wife summarized the increased maturity she saw in her husband as "A lot more thinking about the family and not himself."

The three men who were 30 years of age or older did not report the pregnancy as a time of significantly increased maturity. They felt that they had matured over the years and were already prepared for the responsibility of parenthood when the child was conceived. These older men experienced the transition to parenthood as "natural" at their age, as many of their friends and relatives already had children.

Making Changes in their Marriage. Men made changes in their marital relationship as part of their adjustment to the pregnancy. Alterations were made in a number of areas of their relationships. Couples reallocated tasks and responsibilities among themselves as the woman's physical condition changed. The level of closeness between the partners was often described as changing. Men also modified their communication with their spouse during the prenatal period. Finally, there were shifts in terms of which spouse took responsibility for

parts of the relationship, as the couple moved toward parenthood. These changes will each be discussed in the section that follows.

The reality of the women's physical condition served as a stimulus for the reallocation of duties in the households. Men took on many of the tasks that their partner had formerly held responsibility for. Chores which involved lifting were ~~taken over~~ by the men. One man took on the majority of the meal-cooking during the period when his wife suffered from nausea. This increased support of their wives led men to feel more responsible for the outcome of the pregnancy. Two men mentioned that this was also a way of practicing a nurturing role before the arrival of the baby.

The amount of emotional and material support that men provided to their wives varied. Two of the five women reported a great deal of support from their husbands. In another couple, the man became more supportive during the pregnancy, but did not quite meet the expectations of his wife:

He's actually tried. He's been more helpful than he's been normally, that's a good sign. He's been very, fairly supportive. I can't say very supportive, but he's supportive.

The remaining two men had difficulty in providing assistance to their partners. These men were finding the adjustment to the pregnancy difficult. They withdrew from their wives during the early part of the pregnancy, spending more time with male friends. This lack of support

when their wife was experiencing emotional difficulties actually increased her worries and led to marital conflict.

The two couples who reported the greatest difficulty adjusting to the pregnancy were those who had spent little time together as a couple before the pregnancy began. One couple married after the woman became pregnant (they subsequently had two miscarriages prior to the current pregnancy). The other couple was only married for six months before the child was conceived. The woman described her experience of their relationship:

"It took a nosedive after [the pregnancy began]. ... That's what made it so hard. It was like 'Boy, you're not what I thought you were!' And he'd say the same thing. Then you realize, 'Yeah, you are.' You just don't have stars in your eyes anymore."

Her husband also had a great deal of difficulty in adjusting to the changes that the pregnancy brought to their relationship. He described the pregnancy as accelerating the process of getting to know each other. "It was like a crash course: Bam!"

Changes were reported in all the couples' relationships as the pregnancies progressed. The couples changed their interaction patterns as they faced the demands of the pregnancy - the physical and emotional needs of the women called for new responses on the part of their husbands, or at least an increase from the level of support which had been provided earlier. Prenatal preparations of the home for the baby also signalled the need for increased

interaction between the man and his partner about the baby. The preparation for the parenting dimension of their relationship increased the need for good problem-solving skills.

Couples differed in the means by which they brought about changes in their relationships. Two different processes for making changes were described by the participants. Each of the processes characterized the way two couples altered the way in which they interacted. The fifth couple reported elements of both of the processes.

The two couples that had been married the longest (about nine years each) reported that they altered their relationships in a relatively smooth fashion. The men stated that they began feeling closer to their wife as the pregnancy proceeded. They looked upon the baby as a shared project between themselves and their wife.

Greater communication was reported between these two men and their wives, over the pregnancy. The increased communication included the sharing of information about the woman's physical condition and about her needs. The men adjusted their share of household tasks to provide more support to their wife. One man even left his job so that he could be at home with his wife during the final months of the pregnancy (he worked on an out-of-town project).

Members of the two youngest couples engaged in an increased amount of conflict during the pregnancy. The term "conflict" is

used here to refer to "an interactional sequence which is characterized by disagreement" (Montgomery & Fewer, 1985, p. 53). The conflict which the respondents described was triggered by the way the men responded to the pregnancy. These men failed to change their behavior when more support was requested by their wife. Brian and Ed continued to engage in their usual recreational activities while ignoring their wife's requests for assistance or companionship.

Conflict in the form of arguments and verbal fights escalated as the needs of the women continued to be unmet. The result of the conflict differed between the two couples. Brian changed his behavior somewhat but failed to satisfy the demands of his wife. He began to focus more on his work rather than on socializing with friends. His wife's needs continued to be unmet and the conflict continued throughout the pregnancy, with no reports of the underlying needs being met.

Ed and his wife also argued and fought about his behavior during the pregnancy. His wife said

If I don't like the way something is done, I'll step on him and say "Hey, look, let's talk about this." Or we fight. It really happens, but we bring it out in the open and we discuss everything.

Ed did make significant changes in the way he behaved at home. He began taking responsibility for a greater share of household tasks,

and decreased his expectations for his wife in this area. They continued to have arguments, but the conflict led to changes in Ed's behavior so that he met some of his wife's needs for support. Conflict became a means of productively solving problems in this couple's relationship. Brian and his wife, however, failed to respond to conflict as a signal that changes were required in their relationship.

The fifth couple used a combination of communication about the pregnancy and conflict as a means for altering their relationship. Dan and his partner reported that he showed more consideration of her needs now that she was pregnant. He said that he had noticed that "there's a tendency to get closer" during the pregnancy. Dan also reported "more of a concern kind of thing, like 'Are you alright today?'" He had reduced his participation in volunteer organizations since the pregnancy began, so he could spend more time with his wife. There were times when this respondent's wife needed to remind him of her needs for his presence and support. As an example, she described her attempts to persuade Dan not to plan to attend an event in another city during the week prior to the baby's birth date.

The marital relationships of some of the participants changed in terms of which spouse was able to influence the course of the couple's relationship. In three of the couples, the women gained increased power to influence joint action by the couple during the pregnancy.

Influence with their husband increased because these women were able to use the pregnancy and society's expectations for fathers to support their requests for changes in behavior. One woman, for example, said that she was able to use her husband's desire to be a good father as a way of motivating him to begin behaving "like a good father" during the pregnancy. In another couple the woman began asserting herself during the pregnancy. She had taken a subordinate role to him prior to this. Now she was making demands from him and engaging in open conflict when he failed to consider her needs.

Relationship with Families of Origin. Respondents frequently mentioned changes made to relationships with people outside their marriage. Relations with families of origin became more intense in most cases. The interaction between the couple and their own parents became more frequent and intense during the pregnancy. Families of origin offered material and psychological support to the couple. In some cases the man's or woman's parents attempted to become involved in their preparations for the baby.

Two respondents were unhappy with the degree of involvement which their parents were attempting to have in planning for the baby. It was necessary for these men to set limits for their parents, because they were feeling that the grandparents-to-be were getting too involved in the pregnancy. These respondents had to enforce limits to

the involvement of their families of origin to allow themselves the freedom to plan for their expected child.

Learning Fathering Behavior. Men demonstrated that they were acting responsibly during the months prior to the birth of their first child when they took opportunities to learn and practice child care behavior. Several participants mentioned that they were much more aware of infants and young children now that they themselves were going to be a parent. They found themselves observing parents and their children, and fantasizing about how they were going to cope with their own daughter or son. The men were also making an effort to read articles and watch programs about parenting. They had reached a point where they wanted to learn all they could about being a father.

The two oldest men showed less interest in learning more about fathering than did the others. Each had had the experience of caring for infant siblings when they were teenagers. They felt relatively confident about coping, using the skills that they already had. If they needed to learn more, these men expected to be able to get the required information from family or friends.

The youngest man who participated in the research was taking the opportunity of learning more about caring for children by spending time with his infant nephew and with his godson. His wife encouraged this, and was gratified that Ed was taking an interest in preparing

for his own child. Ed reported that this time spent with the child was leading him to think more about himself as a father. His increasing ability to cope with the demands of caring for his nephew was giving him more self-confidence about parenting and was making him feel more like a father.

Ed found that now that he was awaiting his own child, he was seeking the friendship of other men who had children. These men were providing support and were serving as examples of fathers for him.

Lifestyle. Another change which men made to accommodate their wives' pregnancies had to do with their own lifestyles. Four of the five men in this study found that the pregnancy had a major affect on their lifestyle. They were required to shift the focus of their lives from activities outside the home to a greater focus on their marriage and life at home. Those men who successfully made this change felt that they were preparing for their child's arrival. They were adopting a more family-oriented lifestyle, one which would be compatible with a father role. The changes in lifestyle included spending more time at home with their spouse, placing more emphasis on their home, and planning for the child's future.

One of those men who felt the pressure to make changes in his lifestyle resisted doing so. Brian stated that the pregnancy period was his last opportunity to enjoy the "pleasures of youth". He

reacted to the pregnancy by increasing his socializing with friends, and by avoiding his wife. Later in the prenatal period he reduced his social time with peers, at the insistence of his wife, but increased his emphasis on work. He rationalized his overtime hours as a way of preparing a more financially secure future for his family. This failed to meet his wife's needs for his presence and support, however. He had not yet adopted a family-oriented lifestyle when interviewed two weeks prior to the birth of his child.

The other man who reported little change in his lifestyle during the pregnancy was Carl. Carl explained that the lack of change was because he and his wife already led a lifestyle that was relatively compatible with parenthood. They already focused on each other; they were "best-friends". Most of their socializing involved inviting another couple over for a quiet evening. Carl and his wife were considering the possibility of purchasing a house, because they were unsure how satisfactory apartment living would be once they had a child.

Summary. A large part of men's "taking responsibility" for the pregnancy involved their actively making changes which would allow them to integrate the pregnancy and eventual fatherhood into their lives. A number of areas in which the men in this investigation reported making changes have been cited. At the personal level, men

began behaving in a mature way as the pregnancy progressed. They engaged in more conscious planning for the future, considering the needs of their expected child. Changes were made in their relationship with their wife to support her through the difficulties of pregnancy. The man's and the woman's own parents were used for support and information. At times it was necessary for men to set limits on the involvement of relatives, when such involvement threatened their own part in the pregnancy. Other changes in behavior and attitudes were associated with some men's efforts in learning how to be a father. These changes all contributed to an alteration in the man's lifestyle. It was important for him to begin developing a family-oriented lifestyle as part of his preparations for an identity as a father.

E. Preparing for a Father-Identity

In this section of the thesis the findings concerning men's preparation for an identity as a father will be discussed. The research found evidence of preparations for fatherhood by all five respondents. The men were readying themselves emotionally; they were learning how to behave as a parent; and they were thinking about the role of a parent.

None of the participants in this study identified themselves as a "father" in the final months of the pregnancy. They stated that they would only start considering themselves as a father once the baby was born. The months prior to the birth were a period of preparation for the time when they would be a parent. Nevertheless, there were times as they made these preparations when some men felt like they thought they would feel as a father. These respondents had brief experiences of feeling fatherly as they prepared for their baby's birth. This section will examine the ways in which men reported feeling prepared to assume the identity of "father" once their child arrived.

The final month of pregnancy was a time of increased anticipation for the respondents. They had made many of the preparations for the new family member, and were anxiously waiting for the birth. Carl conveyed his expectations for the birth of his child:

I'm very much looking forward to the point where I can, where we can see the child and are lucky enough to go through the feelings that pretty much everyone has

described to us. That special something that happens to you when that child is born.

He expected that he would start feeling the special feelings - that he associated with witnessing the birth of one's child, and with becoming a father - once the child was born. Carl regretted that he was unable to feel as close to the child as his wife did during the pregnancy.

Dan also expected to start feeling like a father once his child was born. He said "Once it's here we'll probably react a lot differently. ... it's not tangible now." The presence of the baby would signal to him that he should begin behaving as a father, that he should look at himself as a father with all the responsibilities that such an identity entailed for him.

The participants varied in terms of how prepared they were for assuming a father-identity. The degree to which they had engaged in the tasks and activities of "taking responsibility" for the pregnancy (as described above) affected their readiness for taking on a self-identity of "father". Readiness was expressed in the domains of emotion, cognition, and behavior.

Emotional Preparation. Men associated their readiness for fatherhood with their emotional growth during the prenatal period. Developing the caring side of their personality was reported to occur during the prenatal period. Ed's description of his experience was as follows: "Your more feminine side ... comes out and you become more

understanding. You become more emotional, caring, and you basically have more feelings."

Signs which participants gave of their growing capability for nurturing included an increasing concern for their wives' well-being.

Carl saw his role in the pregnancy to be one of nurturing his wife.

... this is a good training ground as far as I'm concerned. To be helpful, to be supportive, to be there when you're needed. When this new life comes in, it's going to be looking to you for everything. This is a way to learn how to be there for someone.

By taking care of their pregnant wife - taking on more of the work in the household, monitoring her health, accompanying her to medical appointments, and considering her needs above their own - men began to feel nurturant, and also felt that they would later be able to meet the needs of their child.

Part of the emotional preparation which the participants made for fatherhood was resolving their feelings of loss concerning the ending of the previous stage of their lives. Each of the men mentioned negative changes in their lives which would be brought about by the transition to parenthood. The extent to which they had successfully dealt with such regrets affected their readiness to take on an identity as a father. Some men were able to look at the benefits that would accompany the parenting stage of their lives, benefits such as being able to share their lives with a child, being able to watch their child develop over the years, and especially, being able to

contribute to that child's growth. These men said they felt emotionally prepared to assume the identity and responsibility of fatherhood.

An ability to manage the worries and stresses that they experienced during the transition period was an important component of the respondents' emotional preparation for fatherhood. The extent to which they felt in control of the process was related to the preparedness they felt for parenting. One man, Brian, had experienced a great deal of psychological discomfort over the course of the pregnancy. He felt that his life was to some degree "out of control" during the final month of the pregnancy. Brian reported that he had not experienced feelings of preparation for the birth. It was only in the last month before the birth that he even began to think about fatherhood in any serious way.

Other men were more capable of coping with the negative feelings that they experienced during the prenatal period. Ed found ways of dealing with the strong sense of disappointment that he was going to become a father so early in his adult years. He reminded himself of the desirable elements of being a father. Ed even came to revise his feelings about his previous lifestyle. He now saw those men who were leading that sort of lifestyle as being immature, like he now considered himself to have been. Rather than feeling disappointed, he was feeling proud of his ability to change and prepare for fatherhood.

Cognitive Preparation. Ed's change's also included a great deal of thought about how he would behave as a father. He considered his father's parenting style and planned how he would like his own style to be the same and the ways he would like to improve on his father's style of parenting. Other men also reported planning for the way in which they would care for their child. Areas such as discipline, the type of relationship they wanted with the child, and activities they would want to be involved in were considered.

Part of the respondents' planning for their role as a father involved fantasizing or imagining themselves as a father. Men visualized themselves interacting with their child, and used this as a way of considering how they would like to relate to the child. These fantasies served as an opportunity for men to mentally practice fathering in the period prior to the baby's birth.

Behavioral Preparation. The psychological preparation for fathering was affected by the prenatal parenting-related behavior of the respondents. The actual behavioral component of nurturing their wives during the pregnancy is one example of practicing parent-like behavior. Practice gained in caring for young children was reportedly associated with an increased sense of readiness for assuming a father-identity. Several men joked that changing diapers would be one of the least desired parts of being a parent. Those who gained

experience in this area, even if it was a "dry run" on a doll in a class, tended to consider diapers less of a concern for them.

Men noted that they needed to learn how to relate to their partner as a mother, in addition to relating to her as a spouse. They adjusted to this new dimension to their relationship during the pregnancy by making joint plans for the child's arrival. This teamwork element of parenting was also developed as the couple carried out some of the shopping and other preparations together. Confidence in their ability to function as a parent together with their wife led men closer to feeling like a father.

Summary. Contrary to the original assumption of this research, most men did not actually begin taking on a father-identity during the pregnancy. Respondents stated that they would not begin considering themselves to be a "father" until the baby was born. What they did do during the pregnancy was to prepare themselves psychologically for fatherhood. The degree to which they felt ready for the new status was affected by growth in the areas of their feelings, thoughts, and capabilities for parenting behavior.

F. Validation of Findings

Three more men were interviewed to validate the grounded theory reported previously in this chapter. These men were interviewed with

their partner and asked questions designed to elicit information related to each of the major areas of the theory which had been developed from the earlier interview data. The findings of this part of the research are summarized in the section which follows.

Sources of Influence. The men in the validation part of the study reported sources of influence on their pregnancy experience that were similar to those found affecting the earlier respondents. Each of the three stated that his wife had influenced his involvement in the pregnancy. Two men noted friends as being a source of influence, and their own parents were also mentioned by two men. A close friend who had recently become a father for the first time was an important source of information and support for one of the men. The other source of influence which was reported by one man was his career. This man was a medical doctor and he had been working in pediatrics and obstetrics during the pregnancy. His employment experiences in these areas of the hospital affected the way he experienced the pregnancy of his wife. As an example, he was pleasantly surprised that his wife was very healthy and coped well emotionally during the prenatal period.

Personal Factors. Two men had planned the pregnancy with their wives and wished to become a father at this point in their lives. They had adjusted to the prospects of parenthood when they were

interviewed in the last trimester of the pregnancy. The man who had not wished to have a child, on the other hand, showed few signs of being involved in the pregnancy, and did not appear to be psychologically prepared for fatherhood. He had only begun to accept the reality of the pregnancy, and stated that he did not see himself becoming involved with the child until he or she reached adolescence.

The coping styles which men reported using throughout their adult life affected the way these men dealt with the pregnancy. Two of the men stated that they typically try to prepare for the future. They had taken such an approach to the current transition in their lives also, involving themselves in preparations for the infant's arrival as well as preparing themselves psychologically to play a parental role with the child. Hal, the third man, stated that he normally dealt with the challenges of life by "reacting when necessary." He stated that he had made no changes related to the pregnancy or parenthood so far.

Sharing the Experience. Two of the three men affirmed that they had shared in their wife's pregnancy. They both mentioned making preparations with their wife for the baby's arrival, such as purchasing items for the baby and preparing the home for the baby. Both of these couples had been discussing names for the baby. The

prenatal classes were also cited as an area in which sharing between husband and wife was taking place.

The sharing of the pregnancy by these men had been emotionally affected by the experience of feeling the baby's movements, and by the confirmation, for them, of the reality of the pregnancy by an ultrasound test. Knowledge of the gender of his baby also contributed to one man's full acceptance of the pregnancy. He was able to participate in preparations for the baby's arrival with the knowledge that he would soon be the father of a son.

Hal, however, stated that he could not see how a man could really share in his wife's pregnancy. He looked at pregnancy as predominantly a biological experience of women. This man had a great deal of difficulty accepting the pregnancy even at an intellectual level. For example, Hal stated that in the early months he felt that his wife perhaps "had gas or something". Even when her abdomen began getting larger he tended to think that she was just putting on a little weight. Hal's lack of desire for a child led him to deny many of the overt signs of the pregnancy. When he first felt the baby move, he began to feel that there was "somebody else there", that his wife was not just a little overweight. When interviewed in the seventh month of the pregnancy this man reported that he and his partner did not very often discuss the pregnancy or their plans for the baby. His wife said that she had done all the shopping for the

baby thus far and that Hal was not interested in sharing this task. Hal confirmed this to be true. This respondent referred to the constraints on his freedom that fatherhood would bring, but mentioned no benefits that he would likely experience as a parent.

Making Changes. One of the men reported making extensive changes in his life since the pregnancy began. He noted a greater tendency to plan for the future. He painted parts of the house so it would be done when the baby was born. This respondent also did the yardwork in the fall, whereas other years he would leave it until spring. He also was more concerned about his employment. He was remaining at his present job while he searched for a better one - whereas in the past he would have left one job before he found a replacement.

Changes in his relationship with his wife were also reported. This man was showing more concern for his wife's safety and health. He was showing this concern by monitoring her diet and ensuring that she ate properly. He also was making sure that she used her seat belt when riding in a car. The woman noted that her husband had taken on a greater share of the housework, and was serving crackers to her in bed on mornings when she experienced nausea. Another way the man was nurturing her was to calm her fears when she worried about the pregnancy.

The second man in this part of the research also reported an increased focus on the future. He was planning for his child's arrival. He stated that he had done much of the planning even before the pregnancy, however. The respondent was modifying his career plans to accommodate the needs of his wife and child. This participant mentioned that he had not found it necessary to make extensive changes in his life as he was already relatively mature before the pregnancy. He stated that he was prepared to take on the increased responsibility of fatherhood and was more ready to give things up for others, now that he had reached this stage of his life.

The final man who was interviewed reported no active efforts at making pregnancy- or father-related changes in his life. He stated that there had been no need for him or his wife to change their lifestyle or their relationship. He did note that their relationship had become a little closer and it felt more permanent to him now ("cemented by the pregnancy"), but that was due to circumstances, not any effort on his part. He was financially secure and expected no economic difficulties associated with supporting his partner and his child after the baby was born.

Psychological Preparation for Fatherhood. The three men differed in terms of their psychological preparation for an identity as a father. Fred related a number of examples of preparations that

he was making for fathering. He had been taking opportunities to care for young children as a way of preparing himself for his own child.

This respondent said: "We've been babysitting for our cousins lately ... I'm getting a chance to hold a baby a little more, feed a baby and that." He was now noticing babies and their parents more often when he encountered them in the community. Fred was also spending time imagining himself with his child, and taking pleasure from the prospects of contributing to the child's development: "I've been thinking about ... the future of the baby. Wanting to teach it and that sort of thing." He was also anticipating a major change in his life once the baby was born and he became a father.

Gerry also reported some mental preparations for parenthood. He found himself more interested in newborn babies in his work as a physician. He found his assistance in births more meaningful now since he himself was expecting to go through the process. Gerry used his knowledge and experience in the medical aspects of labour and birth to prepare for this experience. He was also making plans for his involvement with his infant, despite the demands of being on-call several nights a week during the immediate post-natal period. Some of his preparations for taking on a father role had been made prior to the couple conceiving, fitting with his proactive style of coping with life changes.

Hal was the least prepared of the men interviewed. He had accepted the fact that he was going to be a father, but did not see any personal implications for him prior to the baby's birth. He also foresaw little involvement with the infant because he felt that he had little knowledge of caring for babies. He also felt apprehensive about involvement because he was worried about doing something wrong or accidentally hurting the infant. His fantasies of the child involved focusing on it as a teenager or as an adult.

Summary. The pregnancy experiences reported by three men were examined in terms of categories developed during the theory-development phase of this study. Two of these men reported that they had prepared in a number of ways for the changes that the child would bring to their lives. Their preparation had been affected by a number of the factors that were discovered to be important in the experiences of the men in the earlier phase of the research. The medical doctor's experience differed somewhat, but the difference may be attributable to the special knowledge and experience that he has gained in his career.

The remaining participant appeared to have made little preparation for the birth of his first child. Hal no longer denied the reality of the pregnancy, but had taken few steps to incorporate the meaning of it into his life. The lack of psychological

preparation less than three months before the birth of his baby may be explained by the following factors.

This man and his partner reported few attempts by the woman to involve him in the pregnancy to a greater extent. She did want Hal to be involved with their baby, but they reported that there had been little conflict during the pregnancy ("We never fight"). Arguments or disagreements were said to be infrequent. This man stated that his involvement in the pregnancy and his anticipated involvement with the child were affected by his cultural background. "He was raised in a family and in a culture where children were a woman's responsibility. He also cited his age (40) as a factor which made change in his behavior difficult. These, coupled with his stated preference not to have children, were all excuses he could use for not altering his current lifestyle. His attitude was perceived to be the following:

"It is her baby; she got pregnant and she can take care of herself and the baby. I do not want to give up my current lifestyle for a child I do not particularly want." This attitude, and his difficulty accepting the pregnancy, prevented the man from sharing in the pregnancy in any way which would lead him to willingly make changes to his life. The lack of changes and lack of focus on the pregnancy were associated with little mental preparation for his role as a father.

The categories which were developed from the earlier analysis were helpful in promoting understanding of the pregnancy experience of

the three men in the second phase of the research. Psychological preparation for assuming an identity as a father was found to be stimulated by a man's taking personal responsibility for the pregnancy - through sharing the experience with his wife and through making changes in his life to accommodate to the pregnancy. The degree to which men showed this responsibility was affected by a number of personal factors and by the influences which others exerted on him.

Having examined the validity of the grounded theory, some issues raised by the findings of this study will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter V. Discussion

Introduction

This thesis is the report of an investigation into the preparations which men made for the birth of their first child.

Initially the study was concerned with the development by a man of his identity as a father. In the course of the research it became apparent that not all the respondents had assumed a father-identity during the months prior to the arrival of their first-born. The researcher altered the purpose of the research to include a consideration of the psychological preparations which were being made by the respondents during their wives' pregnancies. Grounded theory was developed to describe these preparations.

In the previous chapter, the process whereby the respondents assumed part of the responsibility for their wives' pregnancies was described. Taking responsibility was found to be important in the psychological preparations a man makes for assuming the self-identity of "father". Some of the issues which arose from the findings of this study will be examined in this chapter. The suitability of the methodology which was used will be discussed. The issue of whether men engaged in "psychological preparation for fatherhood" or whether they "developed a father-identity" during the prenatal months will be

considered. The contribution which coping theory makes to our understanding of part of the respondents' experience is noted. The influence of "age" and "maturity" on the participant's experience of the prenatal months will be discussed. The relationship of the findings of this study to those of previous investigations is considered and the unique contributions of the current report are described.

The findings are presented in the form of a model of men's transition to fatherhood. Propositions are made concerning relationships between components in the model. The chapter concludes with some suggestions for further investigation of men's preparation for fatherhood.

Appropriateness of the Research Methodology

This study of men's experience of the transition to parenthood was conducted using a qualitative research methodology. The grounded theory approach developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967) was used as a basis for understanding the data which were obtained from interviews with men and their partners. This approach proved useful for learning more about men's preparation for fatherhood. Unstructured interviews, in which the researcher stimulated discussion of the elements of men's experience that they themselves reported significant, were very appropriate for generating data on the many influences on men's

prenatal experiences. A rich body of data was derived from the interviews, permitting the recognition of a number of important aspects to the process of becoming a father. Factors such as the importance of well-developed and appropriate coping skills might have been ignored if the research had set out to test existing theory. A diverse variety of elements were discovered to be related to the respondents' psychological preparations for fatherhood.

Conjoint interviews, including the man's partner in some of the interviews, proved valuable in this research. Women assisted their husbands in remembering some of the details of the pregnancy. Some women opened topics of discussion that the men might not have initiated on their own. The interaction between the couples in the interviews gave the researcher an opportunity to observe the way they related to each other, and served as a way of assessing statements made about their relationship. In one case, the conjoint interview was also helpful in allowing the woman to provide support to her shy husband.

Psychological Preparation for Fatherhood or Development of a Father-Identity?

The initial intent of this research was to learn how men develop a father-identity prior to the birth of their first child. The assumption that men gradually begin considering themselves to be a

father proved to have limited support. Participants in the study very clearly stated that they would begin to consider themselves to be a father only after the baby was born. They were engaging in psychological preparation for this new part of their lives, but the identity of "father" would not be assumed until the moment of the birth.

The respondents made preparations for assuming a father's role during the prenatal period. They developed self-expectations for parenting behavior toward their infant child. They acquired these self-expectations from a variety of sources. Men reported that they negotiated with their partner over what kind of involvement they would have with the child. Each man said that their spouse wanted them to be involved with the baby in some way. Role preparations were made through observing peers as they interacted with their babies. Some participants took opportunities during the prenatal period to practice the role of father. Others gained knowledge from a class on child care, from books, or from television programs. Practice was also gained through caring for their pregnant spouse during the pregnancy.

Four of the eight respondents stated that there had been times during the prenatal period when they felt like a father. These men temporarily took on a self-identity of "father". This was reported to have occurred when they were taking care of young children, fantasizing about their involvement with their own child, and when

these men were labelled as a "father" by their spouse. One woman gave her husband a Father's Day card during the pregnancy. He related that he was shocked when he received the card but felt "kind of special" when he thought about the reason for the card. Another participant was frequently reminded by his wife that he was going to be a father. He said that he kept telling himself that "I'm going to be a dad" and this helped him make the changes that were called for in his life.

Theory concerning role acquisition has divided the process of acquiring social roles into several stages (Thornton & Nardi, 1975).

The first stage, and the one which corresponds to the period of pregnancy for a father role, is the "anticipatory" stage. During this stage,

Individuals develop images of what they feel will be expected of them and start to prepare themselves psychologically for what they expect the roles will be like (Thornton & Nardi, 1975, p. 875).

Engaging in fantasies about themselves as father to their child, and gaining actual practice in caring for young children were two of the ways in which men prepared for their future role as a father. Four of the participants were even able to feel like they were a father at these times. Each was able to briefly identify himself as a father.

It is only after a role is assumed that people are able to adapt it to meet the needs of both their social organization (their family) and themselves (Thornton & Nardi, 1975). Several of the respondents

mentioned the speculative nature of their remarks concerning fatherhood. They realized that once they had a baby in their home the real work of forming a self-identity as a father would begin. It would take time and experience in a father role for the identity of "father" to become an established part of their self-concept.

The prenatal months were primarily a time when the respondents learned how to do the work of parenting. They prepared for the role of "father" through the process of "taking responsibility" described in the preceding chapter. A psychological identity as a "father" was considered tentatively by some men, but the period of pregnancy could be best characterized as a time of preparation for assuming a father-identity.

Coping Skills and the Transition to Fatherhood

The important role which men's coping skills played in their preparation for fathering was discovered following several interviews. Men tended to compare their reactions to the pregnancy with their responses to other changes or difficulties earlier in their lives. The effectiveness of the coping strategies employed by respondents varied widely. Some men were able to respond in a way which managed the demands and allowed them to keep their personal integrity intact. Others were less successful at this. This section will consider men's use of coping skills during the transition to fatherhood.

Moos and Shaefer (1986) group coping skills into three major categories: appraisal-focused coping, problem-focused coping, and emotion-based coping. "Appraisal-focused" coping involves the person's attempt to make sense of the situation. Moos and Shaefer (1986, p. 14) include "logical analysis and mental preparation", "cognitive redefinition" and "cognitive avoidance or denial" in this category of coping skills. The participants in the present investigation mentioned a variety of appraisal-focused coping attempts. Those men whose child had not been planned said they experienced "shock" and disbelief when they were told of the pregnancy. They initially denied or avoided consideration of the meaning that the pregnancy held for them. Later these men began to redefine the pregnancy as something which also held important positive ramifications for them. They redefined the meaning which becoming a father held for them.

Those men who had wanted to have a child with their wife reacted to the news of the pregnancy differently. They reported being pleased to learn that they and their wife were going to have a baby. Their primary appraisal-focused coping strategy was to logically analyze the situation and to make mental preparations for being a father.

The prenatal period was characterized by additional demands placed on couples. The woman's changing physical condition made increased instrumental and emotional support from her partner

desirable. Each man also needed to cope with the changed expectations which people were holding for him now that he was soon going to be a father. Preparations for the baby's integration into the couple's home and their daily routines were required. Problem-focused coping was reported by some of the respondents as they faced these demands. Information and support were sought from friends, fellow employees, or relatives. Some men had learned about difficulties that men face during the transition to fatherhood from their friends who had already experienced this phase of their lives. They used this knowledge to guide their coping responses.

Problem-solving action taken by men included taking on a larger share of the household duties, becoming more nurturant toward their wife, and involving themselves more in the preparations for the baby. One man found that he and his wife were best able to resolve their differing needs through periodic fights which allowed the expression of each person's expectations for the other. They used conflict as a vehicle for solving their problems.

Fighting also served the function of managing the tensions of one man and his wife. They seemed to use fighting as a way of discharging emotional tensions, an example of emotion-based coping. The woman reported that as the end of the pregnancy came nearer, and she felt calmer, her partner seemed to try to provoke more fights with her. Her husband stated that he was feeling increasing anxiety in the weeks

prior to the expected birth date. This participant also described ways in which he tried to provoke his partner. Earlier in the pregnancy the woman described her "moodiness" and her own tendency to provoke the man when she felt depressed.

Some men were able to use coping strategies, which they had developed earlier in their relationship with their wife, to deal with the stresses of the pregnancy. Those who had effective strategies within their repertoires were able to select an approach appropriate to the situation that they faced. One couple had the experience of coping with two miscarriages prior to the current pregnancy. This man described the experience that he gained in providing emotional support to his wife. He felt that they had developed an improved ability to communicate and to share feelings as a result of coping with the miscarriages. The respondent also redefined his own role in relation to his pregnant wife as a result of these experiences. He learned that she needed his involvement in the preparations for their baby.

Other men were less effective in their coping efforts. Some men used inappropriate strategies, or continued using strategies beyond a point where they were appropriate. An example is the man who denied that there would be any significant change in his relationship with his partner after the baby was born. He was still using this denial during the seventh month of the pregnancy, rather than discussing with her ways in which they could incorporate the baby into their lives.

Another man was relying primarily on emotion-focused coping efforts late in his wife's pregnancy. Brian was just beginning to seriously consider himself in the role of a father two weeks before the expected birth of his child. Although Brian and his wife both said that he would be involved in caring for the baby, there was little evidence that he had developed any skills related to infant-care. He gave few examples of problem-focused coping skills which he could mobilize once the baby was born.

An ability to shift from one coping strategy to another which more effectively met the needs of the situation was important for some men. One man and his wife reported that he had changed the way he reacted to his wife when she was behaving in a way that might provoke a fight. Early in the pregnancy the respondent engaged his wife in conflict over whatever issue was being discussed. By the final months of the pregnancy this man was able to react to provocations of his wife in a way which defused the situation. He responded to what he perceived to be the real issue behind her complaints: his wife's need for support and affection. The woman stated "Now, he'll just laugh at me and he'll give me a hug and say 'I love you.' The fight goes away. I just don't feel like fighting anymore." The man's changed response interrupted the interaction sequence that formerly culminated in conflict between him and his wife.

The men who participated in this study showed variation in terms of their ability to meet challenges and difficulties which faced them. Some had learned effective coping strategies earlier in their lives, or earlier in their relationship with their spouse. Those men used such strategies as a means for controlling the amount of stress they and their partner experienced during the prenatal period. Others needed to develop additional means for coping with tensions so as to manage the interpersonal difficulties they experienced in their marriage during their wife's pregnancy. Two men gave little evidence of effective coping skills which they could use in their marital relationship. It was the perception of the interviewer that these two couples would experience significant difficulties in adjusting to the reality of their baby's needs.

Age and Maturity

The issues of age and maturity came up in the interviews. Men who were 30 years old or older mentioned their age and maturity as an important factor which affected the way they dealt with the pregnancy. They felt that they were now more capable of handling the challenges posed by their wife's pregnancy and the demands of parenting than they would have been earlier in their lives. They predicted that younger men would find the transition more difficult. Two men under 29 years of age were interviewed for the theory-development phase of the study.

They both characterized the time of their wife's pregnancy as a period when their lives changed significantly. They had difficulty accepting the added responsibilities of parenthood.

The age/maturity issue became less clear, however, after two of the validation interviews. One of these men was in his early 20's, the other was 40. The younger man mentioned that early in the pregnancy he had some concern about his readiness to assume the responsibility of having children. However, he did not have the sort of difficulty which the earlier participants had reported in accepting the pregnancy. Fred was able to accept the pregnancy and the meaning that it held for his life with his wife. He was actively making preparations for the baby's arrival. This was the youngest participant in the research and he appeared to be among the best prepared for fathering.

The oldest participant in the validation phase was having great difficulty accepting the pregnancy and in considering the baby to be a shared responsibility. He mentioned his age (40) as being a factor which made psychological acceptance of the meaning of the pregnancy difficult. He had established a childless lifestyle and did not look forward to the changes a child would bring.

The information obtained from these last two participants suggests that it may not be "age" or "maturity" that is the important factor affecting men's pregnancy experience. It may be men's "desire

for fatherhood" which affects their acceptance of the pregnancy and their preparations for parenting. This readiness may be affected by a person's age or maturity, but is also affected by one's values and attitudes toward adding children to their life. An example of this is the case where an unplanned pregnancy was accepted and interpreted positively by one of the men. He enjoyed children and was able to see ways in which a child might enhance his life. Another example was a young man who had difficulty adjusting to the pregnancy. He reported a conflict between his value of self-centered enjoyment of life and his love and desire for children. The desire that he felt for becoming a good father allowed him to overcome disappointment at a premature end to the childless phase of his marriage. This man allowed his wife to influence his involvement because she associated her requests for behavior changes with his wish to be a good father.

Relationship of Findings to Existing Literature

Three men reported significant difficulties in accepting the news that they were to become a father. These respondents had been married to or living with their partner for only a relatively brief time prior to the pregnancy. Dyer (1963) found a relationship between the length of a couple's marriage and the difficulties that they reported following the birth of their first child. Those who had been married for a longer time reported less difficulty. He explained this finding

in terms of couples developing better ability at solving problems if they have a period of time together before the first pregnancy. May (1982a) noted that "stability in the couple's relationship" was an important determinant of men's readiness for fatherhood. It may be that those men in the present study who had not decided to become a father prior to the pregnancy needed more time to develop a sense of security in their marital relationship before they would be ready for a pregnancy.

Osofsky (1982) stated that the prenatal months are a time of "stress and upheaval" for men. He also characterized pregnancy as a time of developmental crisis and psychological growth for men. All of the participants in this research mentioned areas in which they had changed or grown, but few described significant "stress and upheaval".

It was only the men who were unprepared for the pregnancy that reported serious difficulties. Osofsky's perception of men's pregnancy reactions may be coloured by the clinical cases he has worked with in his role as a psychiatrist. None of the men in the current research had sought professional assistance with their transition to fatherhood. Their experience may be more characteristic of a nonclinical population than the experiences of the men studied by Osofsky.

The phases of men's reactions to pregnancy reported by Osofsky (1982) are consistent with the findings of this study. Most

participants did note an initial sense of excitement at the news of conception. This was then followed by concern about the ways in which their lives and their marriage would need to change to accommodate the baby. All of the men noted increasing anxiety about their ability to provide sufficient support as the time for the birth approached.

May (1980) described three styles of involvement by a man in his wife's pregnancy. Only one of the participants in this study could be considered to have shown an "observer" style throughout the pregnancy. He was not involved with his wife in any active preparations for the child. Another man fit in May's "instrumental" category - he was predominantly concerned with getting the apartment ready for the baby and with coaching his partner through labour. The remaining six men were involved in both expressive and instrumental aspects of the pregnancy. It appeared that several men became increasingly involved emotionally following their involvement in the instrumental activities of preparing for the baby. The man who was categorized as having a predominantly "instrumental" style was beginning to show some emotional involvement as the date of the birth neared.

Smith (1983) found that men used their relationship with their own fathers as a model for a paternal role. Four men in this investigation mentioned their own father in the interviews. They each compared the relationship that they had with their father to the type of relationship that they wished to develop with their child. These

men noted aspects of their father's parenting style that they wished to replicate, while stating other aspects that they hoped to improve upon. All eight men stated that they wanted to relate to their child as a "friend" or as a "buddy" rather than as an authority figure. They hoped to be able to discipline in a way which would not interfere with this relationship.

Like the men in Smith's research, the participants in this study prepared for a relationship with their child. This was accomplished through planning parenting roles with their spouse and through fantasizing about how they would relate to the child at various points in childhood.

Bringing closure to the childless part of their lives (May, 1982a; Barnhill, 1979) was an issue mainly for those men who had not chosen to have a child at the time the pregnancy occurred. Men who had decided to have a child did not mention a mourning process. The respondents received news of the pregnancy with relief that they would be having the child that they had hoped for.

Many of the men in this study were planning with their wife for the content of their role as a father. Women had some influence on the expectations of most of the men, as Fein (1976) noted.

Belsky (1984) has proposed a model of parenting that takes into account the effect that a parent's marital relationship has on their parenting behavior. Men and women who have a supportive spouse are

better able to care for their infant in a way that promotes the child's growth. Belsky (1981) proposes that the parenting behavior of each spouse will also affect the quality of their marital relationship. The men in this study noted that their involvement in the pregnancy was influenced by their partner's behavior.

Women kept their partners informed of the progress of the pregnancy and encouraged them to share some of the experiences, such as feeling the baby's movements. The way in which men reacted to these influence attempts affected the women's further behavior. If the man showed interest in the progress of the pregnancy and began planning for the baby's arrival, the woman experienced support and felt encouraged that she had a partner for the transition to parenthood. Three of the men in this study responded to news of the pregnancy by avoiding the implications which it held for them personally. Two of the women increased their efforts to involve their spouse. They escalated the attempts to the level of overt conflict. Their husbands eventually began to take part in shared preparations for the baby.

The third woman reacted to her husband's lack of interest in the pregnancy by taking on the majority of the responsibility herself.

This woman reported that she had decided to carry on with the pregnancy and planned to raise the child on her own if necessary.

This woman was not married to her partner at the time of the

pregnancy, and perhaps saw any strong attempt to involve the man as
—risking his continued involvement with her.

The responses of men to the influence attempts of their wives affected their wives' further attempts to influence them, in a recursive manner. The prenatal period was characterized by a number of such interactions. Men's increased focus on fulfilling their employer's expectations of them, so as to ensure security of employment, led to increased opportunities for advancement on the job. Changes made by the couple in their friendship network to include other couples with children led to increased support from this source. This support in turn increased the couple's interaction with others who had experienced the transition to parenthood.

A Model of Men's Preparation for an Identity as a Father

The findings of this investigation into the transition to fatherhood are diagrammed in Figure 1. This section will describe the model and the relationships between its components.

 Insert Figure 1 about here

Sources of influence on the man's experience of the pregnancy and on his development of an identity as a father are diagrammed on the top horizontal row of the figure. Chapter IV of this thesis includes a detailed description of these sources.

The personal characteristics of the man which are related to his development of a father identity are also listed along the bottom horizontal row of the diagram. These factors were also described in the previous chapter of this thesis.

The vertical columns show the factors which were found to be important to the respondents at different times. Factors which existed prior to the pregnancy affected men's acceptance of the pregnancy and affected the way they coped with the changes brought about in their lives by the pregnancy. The sources of influence during this period prior to conception affected "the man's personal characteristics". The man's desire for becoming a father was reported

to be affected by those around him. Respondents noted that friends influenced their own decision to have children by serving as examples of what parenting was like. Men came to the decision to have a child, and the timing of the pregnancy

The column labelled "Pregnancy" is the focus of this thesis. A box labelled "The Process of Taking Responsibility" is found between "Sources of Influence" and "Personal Characteristics of the Man". It is the taking of responsibility for the pregnancy by the man that was found in this study to be the key element in a man's psychological preparations for fatherhood. Through taking responsibility, men prepared for their eventual identity as a father. Emotional, cognitive and behavioral preparations for a father-identity were found to be associated with the respondents' taking on responsibility for the pregnancy.

The psychological preparations which a man made for fatherhood affected those persons who were sources of influence for him. A man who was perceived as devoting much of his time and energy to preparations for his child would receive positive feedback from those persons who considered such a focus to be appropriate. Other persons who did not see the value in these preparations tended to distance themselves from this prospective father. This latter phenomena was reported by Brian and by Ed in this study. They found their circle

of friends changing. Childless friends were seen less often, while they sought out new friendships with couples who had children.

Families of origin were also affected by a man's taking of responsibility for the pregnancy. Some respondents reported that they were feeling closer to their own parents since they now had another common interest: the expected child/grandchild. These men's involvement in the preparations for the baby brought them closer to their families of origin. Other men found the increased interest of the prospective grandparents to be undesirable. These men took steps to limit such involvement. They themselves (with their wives) took on the responsibility of planning for the baby, thus relegating their families of origin to a more peripheral role during the pregnancy.

Figure 1 also shows the period following the birth of the child. At this time men are assumed to have developed an identity as a father. This father identity is assumed to be affected by their interaction with the sources of influence which were important during the pregnancy, as well as by the men's interaction with the baby. No further discussion of the postnatal period will be included in this thesis as only the pregnancy period was considered by the research.

Propositions

The following propositions - concerning the ways in which men prepare psychologically for fatherhood - are made, based on the findings which were previously reported in this thesis.

1. A man prepares psychologically for a father-identity through engaging in the process of taking responsibility for the pregnancy.
2. A man's taking responsibility for the pregnancy is affected by prenatal personal characteristics related to fatherhood.
3. A man's pregnant wife affects his taking responsibility for the pregnancy through sharing information about the progress of her pregnancy with him.
4. A man's taking of responsibility is accelerated or made easier through his interaction with peers who are already fathers and who value highly their own role as a father.
5. A man's taking of responsibility occurs more slowly or is made more difficult through his interaction with peers who have no experience as fathers, and who do not value a father-role.
6. A man is influenced to take responsibility for the pregnancy by the couple's families of origin, by participation in prenatal classes, and by other sources of information about pregnancy and parenthood.
7. A man's taking responsibility for the pregnancy affects those persons with whom he interacts:

(a) Those who share his level of interest in the pregnancy will tend to maintain or increase their level of interaction with him.

(b) Those persons who differ from the man in terms of the value they place on fatherhood will tend to decrease their level of interaction with him.

The above propositions may be used as the basis for further, confirmatory, investigation of the process of forming an identity as a father. The propositions may also be utilized by professionals as a basis for making interventions with men who are experiencing difficulty in preparing for the arrival of their first-born child.

Delimitations

A convenience sample of eight men and their pregnant wives was interviewed to determine the process by which men develop an identity as a father, during their wives' first pregnancy. Respondents were all participants in LeMaze-type prepared childbirth classes. As such, the men had already demonstrated some commitment to supporting their partner through the labour and delivery process. It is possible that this commitment is reflected in the central importance of "taking responsibility for the pregnancy".

Approximately 10% of the men in the prenatal classes which the researcher approached agreed to take part in the interviews. This self-selection may have affected the findings. To assess the

likelihood of such a source of bias, several of the respondents were asked why they had agreed to participate. Two men indicated that they had previously participated in other research projects and had enjoyed that experience. These two men expected the interviews for this study would also be interesting experiences. Another man wanted to tell the researcher about the difficulties that he had been experiencing during the pregnancy of his wife. It was the researcher's perception that this respondent wanted an opportunity to tell his story to a sympathetic listener. One of the men indicated that he volunteered to participate because he thought his experience of his wife's pregnancy had been rather unique. Another man stated that he liked helping people out, and hoped his participation would help the researcher and, eventually, other men who were experiencing the same phase of their lives. One man was "volunteered" by his wife. This man was later given the choice of participating in the study or declining the opportunity. The varying motivations of the men for participating in the research likely preclude any systematic bias of the findings.

The respondents were somewhat higher than average in socio-economic status. All but two of the men who participated in the study were employed as professionals or as managers in small businesses.

These limitations to generalizing the findings of this study are further addressed in the next section of this chapter.

Suggestions for Further Research

A number of important parts to a man's experience of becoming a father remain to be investigated. Several questions which arose during the course of this study will be noted in this section. Two general areas need to be investigated to provide a better knowledge of the process of becoming a father. These areas include an examination of the relationship between preparations made during the pregnancy and men's behavior as a father to their infant child, and consideration of the pregnancy-related experiences of men who are less involved in active preparations than were the men in this study.

Outcome Research. This research was based on an assumption that preparation of an identity as a father during the pregnancy would have an impact on a man's later behavior in a father-role. Investigation is needed to determine whether making psychological preparations during the pregnancy facilitates men's assumption of a father-identity after the baby is born.

The men who reported feeling like a father also expected to be highly involved with their child. Based on the reports of those who have measured men's share of child care duties (eg. Women in Canada, 1985), these self-expectations seem overly optimistic. Research is needed to investigate the extent to which men's prenatal expectations in this area are translated into post-natal behavior.

Longitudinal study of men's parenting expectations and actual behavior would also provide data on the process by which self-expectations about fathering are realized. If men do not meet their own prenatal expectations for involvement with their child, data from a longitudinal study could reveal the process by which a couple renegotiate their shares of parenting tasks.

Broadening the Focus. The findings of this study are based on the experiences of a small group of men, most of whom were already involved in preparing for the arrival of their first child. Most of the respondents planned to be highly involved with their baby. It is important to also consider the experiences of men who plan a more traditional father-role with their young child. This would allow a determination of whether the process of preparing for fatherhood which was found in this study also applies to these other men.

Summary. Further investigation of men's transition to parenthood has been suggested to improve our understanding of the relationship between prenatal preparations and a man's behavior as a father. Longitudinal research is required to answer questions in this area. A consideration of the experiences of men who do not participate in prenatal classes would permit an evaluation of the generalizability of the model which was developed from this study.

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Conclusions

The research for this thesis was conducted to discover the process by which men develop a self-identity as a father during the months prior to the birth of their first child. Data on this process was sought in interviews with the respondents during the final months of their wives' pregnancy. The information which was obtained was analyzed and grounded theory was developed of the process by which men prepare for fatherhood.

The initial research question proved too narrow to adequately capture some important aspects of the respondents' preparations for parenting their child. The process of a man taking on personal responsibility for the pregnancy was found to be the central process in the experiences which respondents related to the researcher. It was through this process that men prepared for their future identity as a father. Only four of the men stated that they had felt like a father at times during their wife's pregnancy. Each of the men said that he would not begin to identify himself as a father until the baby was born. The prenatal period was a time when they were able to prepare emotionally and cognitively for that identity. These men also learned and practiced the behaviors of a father during the months prior to their baby's birth.

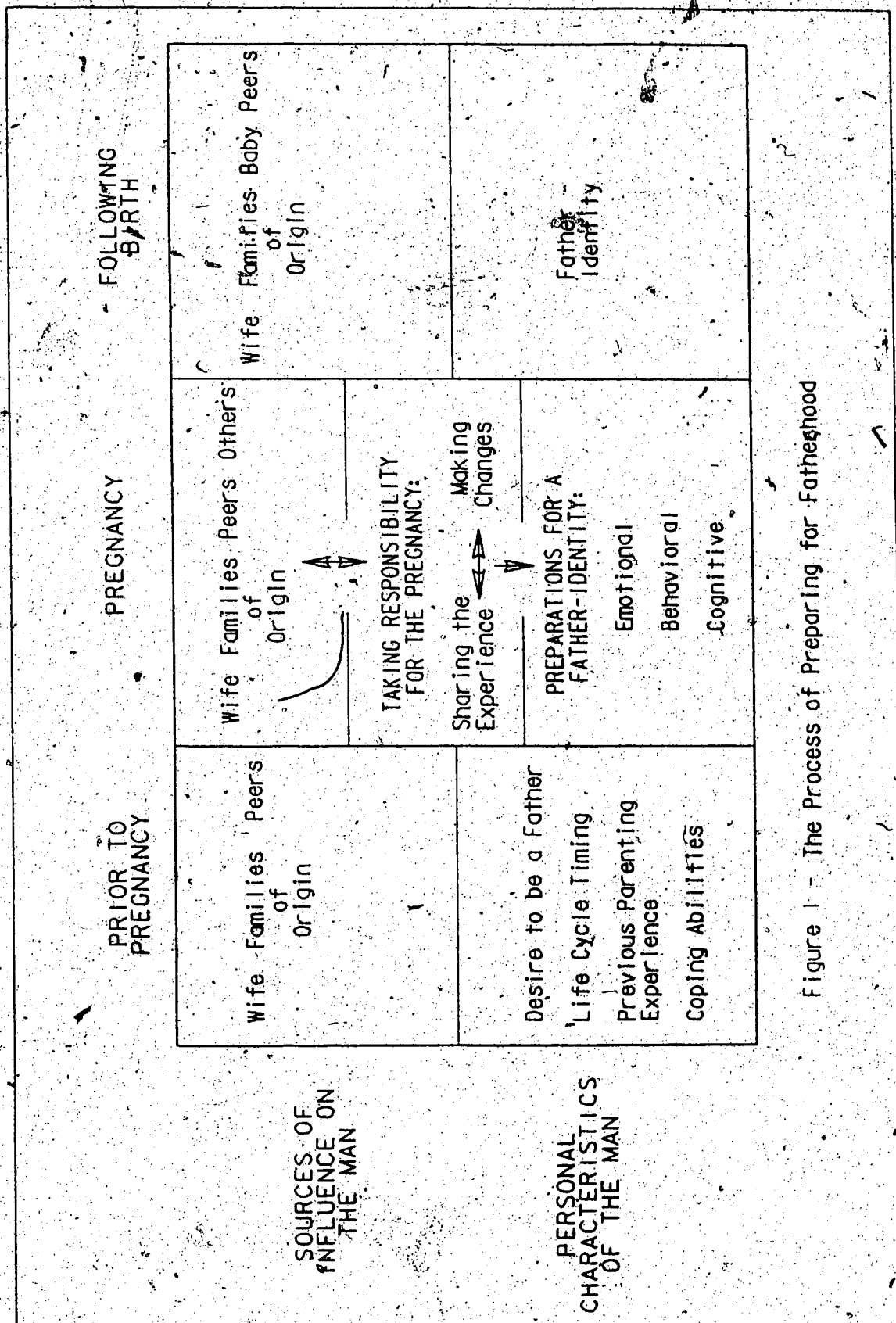


Figure 1 - The Process of Preparing for Fatherhood

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Appendix A

Request for Participation

My name is Willard Fewer and I am working on my Master's degree in Family Studies at the University of Alberta. I am now carrying out research for my thesis. The research is about couples who are having their first child. I am especially interested in the experiences of men.

Social scientists do not know very much about the experiences of men during the period when their wives are pregnant with their first child—I would like to learn more about this topic from you.

I am interested in interviewing men and their partners who are in the 7th, 8th, or 9th month of their pregnancy. I am interviewing men two and possibly three times. Each session lasts for one hour. I am interviewing men and their partner together for the first interview, men alone for the second interview, and men and their partner together again for an optional third interview.

Confidentiality: names will not be used in reports of the research. The identity of participants will not be revealed to anyone other than me.

Your participation will help scientists and professionals to better understand the experiences of couples and especially men who are expecting their first baby. Participants may find it interesting and beneficial to reflect upon the past few months and discuss their plans for the future.

I will be glad to answer questions and will take the names of those who wish to participate.

Appendix B

Agreement To Participate

We agree to participate in the research conducted by Willard Fewer into the experiences of men who are becoming a father for the first time. We understand that the study will look at the experiences we have had during pregnancy and our expectations for the time after our baby is born.

We agree to be interviewed as a couple once and possibly twice before our baby is born. We understand that each interview will last about one hour. I (the man) also agree to meet alone for an interview with Willard Fewer, to discuss my experiences of the pregnancy. In all, three interviews of about an hour's length each will be required for participation in the study.

We understand that the interviews will be kept confidential. The tape recorded interviews will be transcribed with false names substituted for our own. The tapes will be erased at the completion of the study. Our names will not be used in any reports of the research - any report will disguise our identity.

We understand that we do not have to answer any questions that we object to. It is our right to withdraw from the research at any time.

A brief description of the findings of the study will be provided to us at the completion of the research.

We may contact Dr. Jason Montgomery in the Family Studies Department at the University of Alberta at 432-5767 if we have further questions about the research.

Signature

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Topics for Exploration

- a) How excited are the man and the woman?
- b) Couples' expectations about "fathering"
meaning/content of role
division of labour
responsibility for child's well-being
who is the model for the role?
- c) How have the man and the woman prepared for a relationship with each other as "mother" and "father"?
- d) Woman experience physical and psychological changes over the course of pregnancy -- has the man? What kind? Woman's comment on these changes.
- e) What has pregnancy been like for you?
- f) What comes to mind when you think of yourself/your partner as a father?
- g) What led to their decision to have a child?
- h) How excited are each of you about the approaching birth?
- i) How is pregnancy affecting the man's life?
- j) What will family life be like with an infant at home?
- k) How does the man feel toward his expected child? How has his wife influenced this?
- l) What fantasies does the man have about his child? About his interaction with the child?
- m) Have the couple become closer or more separate? How do they explain this?
- n) Have the interviews with the researcher affected the man's pregnancy experience? (ask in last interview)

Appendix D

Questions for Validation of Theory

Short history of the pregnancy thus far:

- a) Events that stand out,
- b) How man learned of pregnancy,
- c) Planned pregnancy?
- d) Miscarriages?

1. Have there been changes in your life associated with this pregnancy? What sort?
2. How have these changes come about? (Strategies)
3. Does the man feel/act like a father yet? What does this feel like? (will it feel like?)
4. What has led/will lead to feeling like a father?
5. Do you think you have shared the pregnancy with your wife? If so, in what ways?
6. What has led to this sharing? or Why has it not been a shared experience?
7. How has the way the man has shared in the pregnancy affected the woman?
8. What else has stood out in the man's experience of the pregnancy so far?