

## **THE EXPECTANT FATHER**

**THE EXPECTANT FATHER**  
**MEN'S STATUS PASSAGE AND EXPERIENCE OF PREGNANCY**

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A Thesis  
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree  
Master of Arts

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (2001)  
(Sociology)

McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario.

TITLE: The Expectant Father: Men's Status Passage and Experience of Pregnancy

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. D. Pawluch

NUMBER OF PAGES: x, 175

## **ABSTRACT**

This research project examines how men experience their partners' pregnancy. While the literature on fatherhood is large and varied, there is very little material on pregnancy and how it is experienced from the point of view of the prospective father. What literature does exist focuses on negative aspects of the experience and themes such as pathology, pregnancy envy, and the crises associated with becoming a father. Other literature is prescriptive telling expectant fathers what women are going through during pregnancy and how they can be supportive. The literature is important and provides some insight into men's view of pregnancy and pending fatherhood. However, it provides a limited perspective on men's daily experiences and adjustments through the expectant fatherhood and pregnancy.

The study is framed within a symbolic interactionist perspective. Symbolic interactionism assumes that people individually and collectively develop meanings for objects, activities and events within their world (Blumer, 1969). People act on the basis of meanings that objects or events hold for them (Blumer, 1969). Through interaction and association with others, people note, interpret, and assess their life situations and then act accordingly (Blumer, 1969). Thus, symbolic interactionism as a theoretical and methodological approach places importance on the meanings that social actors construct and on the ongoing interactions and interpretive processes unfolding between individuals. The data for this research project came primarily from in-depth and unstructured interviews. Participants were recruited using snowball sampling.

The main story line of the thesis is about how men enter into a new status and the pregnancy event. In this regard, the anticipatory stage of men's involvement in the decision to start a pregnancy occurs through the desire to have a child and family. As the men become further involved they are mindful of their partners, family, and friends. Partners play a greater role as the men consider others, assess readiness, manage reservations, and make plans to conceive. The initial developments in men's lives demonstrate the active involvement of the men in the decision to have children and a family. The men are not passive recipients of a new status but begin the entrance by considering a number of aspects of their lives.

The second stage in men's status passage, becoming pregnant, deals with matters of confirmation, a key turning point in the status passage and entrance into pregnancy. As the men receive confirmation they experience a variety of emotional responses. The men begin to reorient their lives. They start to consider how to deal with the pregnancy. Further, the men become concerned with who they are and what it means to be a father. Informing family, friends, and others completes the turning point.

The third stage in the men's status passage is about coming to terms with the changes in their lives. Men manage the change by learning about the unknown aspects of their partners' pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. Engaging in learning activities, the men's conception of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood becomes more detailed and complex. Men accommodate the changes of pregnancy by providing support to their partners, curtailing activities, and participating in new activities such as prenatal appointments. In completing the passage, the men start to relate to the developing child

through ongoing confirmations, by talking to the developing child, making preparations for the arrival of the infant, and experiencing birth. At birth the passage is complete and the men adjust their lives accordingly. The study addresses the gap in the literature and contributes to the limited understanding of men's lives throughout their partners' pregnancy and their own expectant fatherhood.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Another Kind of Healing

*Excerpt taken from "The Wind is my Mother" p. 111 – 115 by Bear Heart and Molly Larkin.*

*A witch doctor from South Africa told me how they catch monkeys there. They bore a hole in a pumpkin large enough to slip in a banana, then they reach through the hole with a spoon, clean out the inside, and drop in the banana. When a monkey comes around, he smells the banana inside the pumpkin, sticks his little forearm in there, feels around, grabs hold of that banana, and then he's stuck. His brain will not tell him that to free his hand he's got to release that banana. He just holds on . . . That's the way of a lot of human beings today – holding on to that banana for years . . . Now what happens? You are given a choice when you hold on to that banana. A choice either to let go or to blame that stupid old pumpkin: "If it wasn't for that pumpkin, I be out there free." . . . There are many, many ways to let go of our bananas, so to speak. The way my people take care of something that we're not happy with is to honour it and say, "Thank you, you've taught me a lesson." If it's anger, if it's hate, if it's a drinking problem: "Boy, you've been with me for a long time. Now I'm going to try something else. But I want to thank you for teaching me something about myself." Never try to just get rid of it . . . Instead, honour it and say, "Thank you." . . . fill that space with something else, what you're doing is employing the law of physics that says no two things can occupy the same space at the same time. So get it out and put something else in. If you've got a negative, put a positive in. They can't both be in the same place at the same time. Clean it all out . . . I knew a man who was mad because he had loaned some money to someone he thought was a friend and it was long past the time when the friend should have paid it back. I said, "Whoa, wait a minute, wait a minute. Before you point a finger at him, let's consider this. You had the option to say no when he first asked you. So let's start there. You allowed this to happen. You created the circumstance. Say to yourself, 'Yes, I did it.'" I don't know how much money it was. If it was a lot, it was a costly lesson. But it was a lesson nevertheless . . . We learn from these experiences. Be grateful for all the difficult situations in life because you can learn something from each one. When you learn and say, "I did it," and you accept that fact, then you have dealt with something that's been nagging you . . . You have finally let go of the banana of that situation and it doesn't come and nag you all the time.*

Anyone who has ever undertaken a thesis would be familiar with the banana situation and the lessons they were taught. Dorothy, my advisor, at the outset attempted to warn me of the banana and the pumpkin, but I chose to continue on with the project. The project has taught me a great deal about myself, about research, and about others who facilitated me through the project. Having said that, I would like to take the opportunity to thank and honour those involved in my learning. I would like to begin with my advisor and committee members who have taught me many lessons that will be particularly helpful in other research endeavors. I would like to express my indebtedness to Dr. Dorothy Pawluch for her patience, guidance, and advice throughout the research process. I would also like to thank Dr. Billy Shaffir, Dr. Graham Knight, and Dr. Bob Prus. I would like to thank Billy for his continued lighthearted attitude and emphasis at the start to just get out there contacting and interviewing men. I would like to thank Graham for his excitement and interest in the project. I would like to thank Bob for his insight, guidance, and support in this and prior projects. I would also like to thank him for the great literature he continues to provide me with, as well as, the lectures and teaching that I continue to learn from as I do more research.

Further and most importantly, I would like to thank the men that participated in the project. I was continually excited, nervous, surprised, and inspired by how much they had to say and how much more I would have liked to ask them. They all took time out of their busy schedules of work and family life to tell me about their experiences. They have taught me many things that may not be readily apparent in the thesis. Each time I



read the transcriptions I am reminded of their voices, laughs, concern, uncertainty, excitement and gratification of being able to have children.

I would also like to take the time to thank my husband, Jason, and my four children Jordan, Jessica, Jacy, and Jasper for teaching me about the process of pregnancy and the life they bring in each smile and hug. I would like to thank them for their continued patience as I began my education in grade eleven when I first had Jordan, and later Jess. Their blessings have given me the greatest reward, greatest teaching about all the intricacies of life, and they have brought the greatest joy. Their teachings are a daily experience different from that of formal education. They have supplemented my formal education with lived experienced and have continually emphasized, or necessitated, that I balance education and the ideas with the practicalities of every day life. When school and the project became frustrating they were continually a source of smiles, excitement, noise!, and understanding because of their participation in education, particularly Jordan, who too seems to have to work hard to get the grade! Finally, I would like to thank my sister Sarah for her continued support of my education and the editorial changes she did even though she was busy with her own life.

The project has taught me many lessons that are readily apparent – and lessons that I am sure will become apparent later in my researching and education.

I honour the research project and those who have taught me directly, and indirectly, throughout my formal and informal education.

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## CHAPTER ONE:

### INTRODUCTION AND SUBSTANTIVE LITERATURE

*We were on that couch . . . watching a movie and she could always feel it move but I could never for some reason. I could never . . . catch it when the baby was moving she would grab my hand and put it on her stomach and she would go 'feel it? feel it?', and I'd go, 'no I can't feel anything' and I was so disappointed. I felt kind of left out because she was feeling that and I wasn't. So, I kind of in away I said 'I don't want to feel it yet' and 'I don't want to try feel it' because it was disappointing . . . Then all of the sudden she paused the a movie . . . and she said 'put your hand here' so I did and all the sudden I felt it . . . It's like . . . that's the first time I realized there's a real baby in there. It's the first time I really gave it that much thought that that's a little baby . . . and I would love at night cuddling up in the spoon position where we cuddle and where I would have my arm over my wife on her stomach . . . just feeling the baby move around as it got older . . . every once in awhile you would feel like a foot go past or you'd be pressing in and stuff and I used to love that feeling of being able to go to sleep with my hand around my whole family. Ed.*

The thesis uses the symbolic interactionist framework as a theoretical and analytical tool to examine and explain men's experience of their partners' pregnancy. Focus is placed on the lived experience of men and the ways in which they deal with the changes associated with the event of pregnancy.

My interest in men's experience of their partners' pregnancy and pending fatherhood developed out of my undergraduate study of women's experience of pregnancy. The women I interviewed continually made reference to their partners. It was clear that their partners were an integral part of the pregnancy process. When the pregnancy was planned, decisions about whether and when to become pregnant were

negotiated and usually mutual. With confirmation of pregnancy, the partners became involved participants to a greater or lesser extent. I was left with the impression that men are often the silent partners throughout the pregnancy experience. While the women provided some idea what men go through, I was curious as to how men themselves would describe their experiences of pregnancy and pending fatherhood.

When I examined the literature I began to realize how little material there is on men's view of pregnancy. The literature that is available focuses on negative themes such as pathological responses to pregnancy, womb envy, and the crises associated with becoming a father. Other literature is prescriptive telling men what women are going through during pregnancy and how they can be supportive (Parke, 1996). Although studies have focused on expectant fathers during pregnancy and pending fatherhood, these studies provide a limited explanation of expectant fathers' perspective and experience of pregnancy. I felt that further work was needed to augment our knowledge of expectant fathers and to gain a deeper understanding of how men experience pregnancy and pending fatherhood.

The thesis has two main objectives. The first is to provide an analysis of and insight into men's day-to-day experiences, focusing on men's involvement, sense of self, knowledge development, and relationships as they undergo the changes associated with pregnancy and pending fatherhood. The study addresses a gap in the literature and contributes to the limited understanding of the day-to-day experiences and adjustments that men undergo during the event of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood.

The second objective is to demonstrate the value of using a grounded approach in understanding the behavior of social actors. Sociologists continue to debate how human behavior is to be studied and conceptualized. Some determinists subscribe to a positivist standpoint and seek to understand human behavior by examining contributing factors, forces, or structures that influence or act on people to create specific outcomes. Others align themselves with the interpretive epistemological perspective and seek to understand human behavior by attending to people's lived experiences, meanings, interpretations, interactions, and activities. The approach developed herein provides an in-depth interpretive understanding which shows that the experience of fathering during the pregnancy term cannot be understood apart from the meanings and interpretations of the men. The thesis distinguishes its approach to the study of a social phenomenon by using a grounded inquiry rooted in a symbolic interactionist theoretical framework and an accompanying ethnographic methodological foundation.

With these two objectives in mind, the thesis provides the reader with a greater understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of men's lives, their experience of pregnancy, and the status passage involved in becoming a father. Attending to the process oriented nature of human behavior, the approach developed herein is important to the development of an in-depth understanding of the emergence of the phenomenon of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. In the remainder of the introduction I discuss the substantive literature and its relevance to developing the study and questions around men's experiences of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. The introduction ends with an outline and summary of subsequent chapters.



## **Part One: Early Studies on Men's Experience of Becoming a Father**

In this, and the following section, I review the literature. The substantive literature on men's lives is both sparse and diverse. Studies of men's lives in comparison to women's lives and focused on family experiences are lacking. Those studies that have been done on men's entrance into fatherhood take either a psychological or medical perspective. Although becoming a father is a universal phenomenon, researchers have examined and written more about women's entry into motherhood than about men's entry into fatherhood (Barnhill et al. 1979; Benson, 1968; Einzig, 1980; Fein, 1976). The earliest studies of men's entrance to parenthood focused on men who became ill – either mentally or physically – as a result of their role transition. Normal reactions to parenthood remained an unstudied topic until the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 1970's researchers have broadened their interest in the transition to fatherhood, focusing on more than the pathological and problematic reactions to the event. Even so, there is little material that centers on the normal day-to-day experiences and adjustments that men face during pregnancy.

### **Pathological Reactions to Expectant Fatherhood**

One of the perspectives that developed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century resulted from observations of parents who developed pathological reactions to parenthood. At this time, psychological explanations for behavior, particularly extreme behavior, were prevalent. Zilborg (1931) was one of the first to explore how some parents experience pathological reactions to parenthood (Einzig, 1980). Zilborg (1931)

asserts that some men react to becoming a parent by becoming depressed and by exhibiting other abnormal reactions ranging from paternity denial to the extreme desire to kill the child (Einzig, 1980). These extreme reactions to parenthood were seen as a result of problematic and incestuous relationships with their birth mother. Left unresolved, the relationship conflict with one's mother would lead to rivalry with one's children – born or unborn.

A number of studies developed this view of pending fatherhood as pathological. Freeman (1951), for example, studied six men who experienced various forms of mental illness with the onset of their partners' pregnancy. He discovered that pregnancy was only a contributing factor to the development of their mental illness (Einzig, 1980). Pregnancy, he argued, may stimulate mental illness in some men because adding a child takes away from the husband-wife relationship and decreases the attention the husband receives from his wife, resulting in rivalry between the father and child. According to Freeman (1951: 51) "[t]his reactivates the father's hostility and guilt feelings from his own oedipus period" (Einzig, 1980: 120). Freeman (1951) also suggested that men's pathological reactions to pregnancy could result in "overt jealousy . . . over-solicitousness and excessive anxiety for the woman's welfare" (Einzig, 1980: 120).

Similarly, Towne and Afterman (1955) state that it is during a pregnancy or the birth of a child that expectant fathers are most susceptible to developing a psychosis. They found that all 28 of the expectant fathers they studied experienced psychosis concurrently with their partners' pregnancies. These men had dependency needs that became expressed as hostility, aggression, and self-destructive activities that damaged the

men's important relationships. Towne and Afterman (1950) also found that the men often denied paternity and had lives that were characterized by problematic family backgrounds, sibling deaths, parental quarrels, and personal tragedy. Cavenar and Butts (1977); Curtis (1955); and Jarvis (1962) as well, emphasize the potential for pregnancy to produce a mental illness in men. Cavenar and Butts (1977) presented four cases of expectant fathers that experienced "extreme neurotic conflict and symptoms" when their partners were pregnant (Einzig, 1980: 122). Curtis' (1955) study of 55 expectant fathers who were military men also found evidence of major psychiatric problems (Einzig, 1980). Jarvis (1962) described four cases of men who experienced unusual reactions to marriage, pregnancy, and birth (Einzig, 1980). These early studies provided the initial impetus for studying men's experience of pregnancy; however, they only speak to the experiences of a minority. The number of men who experience extreme reactions or changes in behavior is relatively small.

### Pregnancy Envy among Men

Another body of literature, related to why men experience extreme reactions to pregnancy, focuses on pregnancy envy among men and expectant fathers. Boehm (1930) believed that birth was a powerful event with the potential to produce parturition envy in boys and men. Boehm (1930) maintained that birth envy was as central to males' development as penis envy is in female development (Einzig, 1980). Nelson (1956) was the first to coin the term womb envy (Einzig, 1980). Nelson believed that adult male creativity and productivity was a result of womb envy. Van der Leeuv (1958) and others

speak of the narcissistic nature inherent in boys when they begin to realize that they cannot give birth. This realization in boys has the potential to produce rage, jealousy, helplessness, and aggressive impulses at times particularly towards the mother (Einzig, 1980). Socarides (1960) similarly believed that male perversions (i.e. homosexuality) resulted from a deep longing to usurp the woman's birthing capacities and emulate the magical act of creating offspring.

### Physical Reactions to Expectant Fatherhood

Perhaps stimulated by womb envy, the couvade ritual was the earliest evidence of men's desire to share psychologically, and physically, in the pregnancy and childbirth (Einzig, 1980). Couvade was a term coined by Sir Edward Taylor in 1865 that was derived from the French word "couver" or to brood or hatch (Trethowan, 1972). Today couvade is a term used to describe

*a wide range of symptoms that expectant fathers may display or report during the pregnancy of their partners. The salient feature is timing: the symptoms have their onset with the pregnancy; are not explained by injuries or illnesses; and resolve with the birth of the child (Schodt, 1988: 89).*

In primitive cultures, couvade was used to define the activities that men engaged in to protect the fetus and participate in the woman's birthing experience. At this time the role of the father in pregnancy and birth varied "and was often stylized and ritualistic. He usually assumed an active supporting role and assisted when needed" (Anzalone and Phillips, 1982: 1).

Under the general name couvade, there are two distinct rituals that are connected to the fetus, pregnant mother, birth, and the infant. One ritual had expectant fathers

adhering to a strict and regimented diet throughout the woman's pregnancy. It was believed that the diet would benefit the newborn child because the father was intimately linked to the child in the womb and all his acts could potentially affect, hurt, or even kill the fetus (Einzig, 1980). Another couvade ritual that expectant fathers participated in occurred around the time when the mother was going to give birth. During the stage of early labor, expectant fathers would simulate or mimic the woman's laboring process (Anzalone and Phillips, 1982; Munroe and Munroe, 1971). The expectant father would go to the birthing bed and pretend to be in labor by groaning, moaning, and seemingly experiencing the woman's labor process.

Some believe the ritual was an expression of men's desire to be a part of pregnancy (Anzalone and Phillips, 1982). Others interpret the ritual as a way to express the conflicting emotions men may feel regarding birth and the movement into fatherhood (Anzalone and Phillips, 1982). Still others see the ritual as being practiced for the benefit of the mother, in order to relieve her of pain by transferring it to a surrogate "mother" (Reik, 1931; Einzig, 1980). Regardless of the reason for the ritual "it has allowed primitive fathers to be actively involved in birth for centuries, since it would be difficult to ignore the father's presence as he moans and groans on his birthing bed" (Anzalone and Phillips, 1982: 2).

Perhaps stimulated by the couvade ritual of primitive cultures there are a number of studies that have focused on couvade and pregnancy symptoms among men (Inman, 1941; Knight, 1960; Munroe, 1964, 1971; Trethowan & Colon, 1964, 1965; Trethowan, 1972; Clinton, 1987; Schodt, 1988). According to Einzig (1980), anthropologists like

Mead (1935) and Malinowski (1937) were the first to study the couvade ritual across cultures. Although couvade is more common and recognized in Eastern cultures, men in Western cultures also appear to develop symptoms similar to those of women during pregnancy. Munroe and Munroe (1971) studied men in three societies (United States, British Honduras, and Western Kenya) and found that in the United States and Western Kenya there is more evidence of pregnancy-like symptoms among expectant fathers than the men in Honduras. They also found that men in the United States and Western Kenya, reported more involvement with the daily care of their children than the men who experienced no pregnancy-like symptoms.

Clinton (1987) examines the responses of expectant fathers during pregnancy and found that the physical and emotional state between non-expectant and expectant men was similar throughout the nine months of pregnancy. During the postpartum period the health of these two groups of men differed with the new fathers experiencing more emotional symptoms such as “irritability, nervousness, inability to concentrate, headaches, restlessness, fatigue, and insomnia” (Clinton, 1987: 66). Clinton (1986) concludes that it is during the early postpartum period when fathers experience the greatest stress and are most vulnerable to psychosis; and therefore, men should be monitored during and after the pregnancy.

Schodt (1988) was interested in understanding men’s attachment to the fetus in the womb. Perspectives on women’s attachment are often understood from a biological perspective and linked to their capacity to gestate. Men’s attachment; however, is much harder to explain because they are not biologically connected to the fetus in the same way

as women. Despite being biologically detached from the fetus, studies illustrate that there is an emotional attachment between fathers and their unborn child (Weaver and Cranley, 1983); men grieve the loss of a fetus (Benfield, Leib and Vollman, 1978; Kennell, Slyter, Klaus, 1970); and men are attached to the child during birth (Greenberg and Morris, 1974). He (1988) was interested in finding out what led to men's attachment and proposed that men are linked to their unborn children through integrality and a human environment energy field. He (1988) found that these concepts were not helpful in developing an understanding of how men become attached to the developing fetus. Schodt (1988) suggests that studies should observe men's attachment patterns in a qualitative way as there may be a number of patterns in how men become attached to the developing fetus and it may be unique to each man (Schodt, 1988).

### The Crises of Becoming a Father

Beyond the studies of pregnancy as a factor in producing pathology, pregnancy envy and couvade, there are studies that have focused on the entrance into fatherhood, or parenthood, as a crisis experience. For instance, Barnhill et al. (1979) took the perspective that the entrance into fatherhood is characterized by extensive or severe crisis and that it is during this transition that men are prone to developing a psychosocial disorder. Programs that address psychosocial disorders connected to pregnancy focus primarily on the women's needs and have excluded expectant fathers. Using an applied approach, Barnhill et al. (1979) created discussion groups that were designed to provide men with an avenue to discuss pregnancy and childbirth.

Barnhill et al. (1979) found that men's knowledge base and expectations about pregnancy and birth were narrow. They provided basic information on a wide range of topics in order to increase the knowledge that expectant fathers had. They also sought to encourage and stimulate self-disclosure. Personal information from the expectant fathers was sought. They wanted men to share their experiences and move the groups into personal interactions rather than the passive receptive interaction that tend to characterize childbirth classes (where an expert speaks and provides knowledge while the audience listens). Barnhill et al. (1979) found that it was hard to access personal information regarding men's feelings around pregnancy and birth. It was easier for men to talk about how their wives felt than it was to express their own feelings. The main objective of the programme was to prevent a psychosocial disorder by raising men's awareness and emphasize that expectant fathers were a vital part of pregnancy, the childbirth process, and the family.

#### Adjustments During the Entrance into Fatherhood

While some studies focus on the crises or negative experiences, Arnstein (1972) notes the need for studies that focus on pregnancy as a normal part of adults' development. During the movement into parenthood and a family status, Arnstein (1972: 46, Einzig, 1980: 123-124) states that "a great deal has to be learned and relearned in a very brief time." It is plausible that anxiety may accompany this event; however, "... florid and bizarre symptoms will only develop when anxieties are too intense and when the person is overwhelmed by them. Thus, they would reflect serious difficulties and



failures, [that are] not the norm” (Arnstein, 1972: 46, Einzig, 1980: 123-124). Arnstein (1972) then moved the locus of study from the extreme, unusual, bizarre, or crisis experience towards a focus on understanding the normal adjustments men undergo as they enter into parenthood.

Gurtwitt (1976; In Einzig, 1980: 124-125) also played a role in shifting the emphasis from a crisis view of men’s experiences as they enter parenthood to a developmental view:

*When a man prepares himself to produce offspring . . . the equilibrium attained is challenged . . . As a new task arose . . . that of becoming a father . . . it required a new reordering . . . The pregnancy and the child-to-be now seemed to serve as the new organizing foci . . . [T]he pregnancy . . . initiated a major reworking of the past and current relationships . . . as well as a shift and resynthesis of his sense of self.*

Research began to look at normal couples through the entrance to parenthood and found that this time is characterized by considerable stress refueling childhood conflicts, particularly with one’s father (Liebenberg, 1969). Leibenberg (1969) found that the entrance into parenthood accentuates dependency needs in men that were dealt with by initiating letters and phone calls to their parents. He also found as well that men seemed envious of their partners’ pregnancies, angry at the increased burden of a child, and negative about their partners’ body (Liebenberg, 1969; Einzig, 1980). Similarly, Jessner, Weigert and Foy (1970) found that there was a developmental pattern that men moved through during the entrance into parenthood that begins with the desire to produce a child and moves to envy for the childbearing of women, a focus on his productive capacities and then identification with his own father (Einzig, 1980).

Fein (1976) interviewed couples about their experiences six weeks prior to, and six weeks after, the birth of a child with the investigator focusing particularly on men's experiences. He found that there are crisis aspects to men's experiences prior to, and through the first two weeks after, the birth. But by six weeks out of the pregnancy men had adapted their lives and were less anxious about their new role. He (1976) found that men varied in their level of participation in the pregnancy and in the preparation for parenting. Men's participation in pregnancy included sharing experiences with their wives, dealing with feelings, examining long term changes in the couples' lives, providing emotional support to their partner; as well as, dealing with their own concerns about labour, delivery, and how to parent. Preparation for the arrival of the infant and parenting included observing other children, caring for other people's children, and learning practical tasks, such as diapering and bathing an infant. Men's preparation also included reading materials on child development and how to parent. Men who were active participants in infant care expressed lower levels of anxiety than those who did not participate in infant care. Furthermore, Fein (1976) found that men's adjustment through the entrance to parenthood is related to developing a role such as the provider role or non-traditional father role.

## **Part Two: More Recent Studies of Men During Pregnancy and Birth**

Moving away from the pathological reactions and physical symptoms, the prior studies eventually began to look at pregnancy as a normal life event and focused on the adjustments men undergo. Recent studies of men during pregnancy and expectant

fatherhood have become diverse and detailed, focusing on particular moments and events that make up the pregnancy process.

### Readiness for Fatherhood

May's (1982) study of expectant fathers' readiness for pregnancy found that men identified three important features of their readiness for fatherhood. The first feature was whether they wanted to have children at some point in their life. The second feature is related to the relationship with their partner. Men stated that having a stable relationship was a criterion for bringing a child into their lives. A stable relationship included a commitment to parenting as well as loving, needing, knowing and understanding each other well enough to be able to predict how the other would respond and react to any given situation. A third feature that was important in men's readiness included having a sense that the youthful part of their life was over and that they had accomplished some of their goals prior to pregnancy.

May (1982) also discusses some of the consequences when men are not ready for fatherhood. She (1982) argues that in any pregnancy there is some ambivalence even if parents have planned the pregnancy; however, knowledge of how people resolve their second thoughts and ambivalence about pregnancy has not been studied in great depth. May (1982) found that the men who perceived themselves as ready for pregnancy experienced doubts but they were fleeting and did not prevent participation in the pregnancy. Men who perceived themselves as somewhat unready were able to resolve their doubts and redefine the experience in a positive way. While there is a common

belief that men who react negatively to the pregnancy and are unready for fatherhood will eventually come around, May (1982) found that men who were opposed to the pregnancy did not redefine their perspective. When a man is strongly opposed to the pregnancy, the potential for unmet expectations and strain increases greatly. The man's opposition is frequently expressed in anger, adding to the personal strain that often characterizes the first trimester of pregnancy. Men in opposition to the pregnancy do not always come around or become involved in the pregnancy and birth; rather, they often maintain a distance from the pregnancy and their wives.

#### Experiences of Ultrasound

Another recent study of expectant parents focuses on the role of ultrasonography in including men in the experience of pregnancy and creating the possibility for attachment to the fetus (Sandelowski, 1994). Sandelowski (1994: 242) concludes that technological innovation such as ultrasonography "makes seeing and getting a picture of the fetus at least as significant as carrying the fetus". Fetal ultrasonography allows for a minimization of difference between the expectant mother and father. It also allows men to access the developing child and a realization of their desire to share in the pregnancy (Rothman, 1989; Sandelowski, 1994). However, she suggests that we examine and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of innovation in technology because allowing men access to the child through ultrasound may trivialize women's experience.

## Experiences of Birth

Similar to the pathological studies on pregnancy, early studies of labor and birth also took a psychological perspective focusing on the negative, pathological, or deviant reactions of men. For instance, Wainwright, (1966) cites eight cases of men who experienced distress around the birth of their child; however, they all attributed it to other causes other than the birth itself. Coley and James (1976) state that the entrance into fatherhood elicits a number of unusual responses on the part of men as the father anticipates the birth of his child. Coley and James (1976) study three men and the build up of tension around birth. They contend that moving into fatherhood is an event that can result in problems, such as severe depression, inability to sleep well, loss of appetite, delusions and in some cases suicide. During birth and the entrance to fatherhood the three men in their study expressed acting out behaviors and “defensive reactions, which are derivatives of the biological emergency behaviors; namely, fight, flight and identification” (Coley and James, 1976: 360). The erratic behaviors that some fathers express, strains the relationship and can at times cause friction with other extended family.

While the early studies focused on pathology and crises, Richman et al., (1975) emphasizes that men’s participation in birth has shifted over the century. Lay influence and the natural childbirth movement of the 1950’s stimulated a shift in perspective where fathers participate in the birth of their children. The natural childbirth movement envisioned fathers, as involved participants in the birthing process, supporting their partner’s during labor and birth. Hospitals have become more open to father’s

participation in birth, particularly with the removal of the father's waiting room (Anzalone and Phillips, 1982). The participation of fathers in labor and birth has become the norm (Chapman, 1991).

The more recent research on birth takes the perspective that men want to be involved in this event and that the outcome is usually positive. Chapman (1991) states the research is biased and narrow in developing an understanding of men's actual experience. Expectant and new fatherhood have rarely been studied as normative events or a developmental process. Chapman (1991) examined the experience of 20 men who participated in the labor and birth of their child. He found that men took on one of three roles, the coach, teammate, or witness. Coaches were those who saw "themselves as leaders or directors of the labor and birth experience" (Chapman, 1991:25). In this role men "led their partners through labor and birth and assisted them with breathing and relaxation techniques" (Chapman, 1991:25). In the teammate role men saw themselves as helper, following the lead of their partner. Men helped their partners' by "responding to the requests for physical or emotional support" (Chapman, 1991:25). Last, the men in the role of witness "were present during labor and birth as a companion and to observe the birth of their child".

Jordan's (1990) study also examined the experience of expectant and new fatherhood. The experience of expectant and new fatherhood has both intra-personal and inter-personal aspects where men labor to develop a paternal role that is relevant to their sense of self and their roles. Furthermore, Jordan (1990) states that the expectant father labors to incorporate the paternal role into his self-identity as a salient and integrated

component of who he is and to be seen as relevant to childbearing and childrearing by the other. Laboring for relevance is a process of grappling with the reality of pregnancy and child, struggling for recognition as a parent, and building a role of involved father.

Chandler (1997) conducted an ethnographic study of men's first experience with birth. He interviewed 14 men, examining how they expected the birth to go with the actual experience of birth. These men stated that although they wanted, and expected, to be an active participant in the labor and birth, they ended up in a role that supported their partner. Chandler (1997) states that men found that participating in the labor was harder than they expected. Chandler (1997) suggests that fathers need to be seen as a coach as opposed to a support and given the opportunity to participate more in labor and birth.

### **Research Questions**

The literature suggests that since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century men's involvement in the familial realm has changed. Men have become more involved in pregnancy as a result of technological changes such as ultrasound. Prenatal classes that were first geared towards women now include both men and women. Men have become more involved in birth since the 1950's and the removal of the father's waiting room (Anzalone and Phillips, 1982). Unlike their forefathers, men now participate and are involved in pregnancy. They attend prenatal classes, doctor's/midwife appointments with their pregnant partner, ultrasound appointments and participate in other pregnancy-related activities (Parke, 1996). However, rather than focusing simply on the indicators of this

involvement, I am interested in understanding how men become involved and how they experience this involvement. The review of the literature raises a number of questions:

- How do men experience and involve themselves in pregnancy and expectant fathering?
- How does a man's sense of self begin to change with the onset of pregnancy?
- How do men develop knowledge of pregnancy and expectant fathering?
- How do men accommodate the pregnancy and relate to the developing child?

Although the substantive literature reviewed informed the study, it is fragmented taking the perspectives of psychology and the medical field. In developing a natural history of men's passage into expectant fatherhood and involvement in the event of pregnancy, perhaps the best literature is the literature on involvement and status passages (discussed in chapter two). This literature provides a conceptual base to draw upon in developing a theoretical and conceptual statement of men's status passage and experience of the pregnancy event.

## Chapter Outlines

The subsequent chapters of this thesis are presented as follows:

Chapter Two lays the foundation of the theoretical framework, symbolic interaction and the related methodology used in the study. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes social actors' role in making sense of, creating, and shaping their social world. The theoretical framework acknowledges the meaning-making, interpretive process, and the activities that people engage on a day-to-day basis. The accompanying methodology stems from the ethnographic tradition of researching by entering the social



world of those under consideration. Utilizing a modified ethnographic, grounded, and qualitative approach, the chapter also explains how I gathered and analyzed the data.

Chapter Three provides an analysis of men's impending status passage and a comprehensive look at the issues that men consider prior to confirmation of pregnancy. The chapter addresses men's reasons for wanting children, the readiness to have children, the role of others in the decision to have children. It also considers how men manage their reservations and deal with practical matters such as re-arranging work, obligations and schedules. Finally, the chapter includes a discussion of how men plan a pregnancy.

Chapter Four deals with the key turning pointing in men's lives and the entrance into expectant fatherhood and the pregnancy event. At the stage of suspicion and confirmation the men are initiated on a sustained basis into the new status and event. The turning point is illustrated by the responses of the men to the confirmation. We find men experiencing a range of emotionality and misalignments as they assess the change. Men begin to re-orient themselves around the confirmation, the new knowledge of pregnancy, and around being a father to the developing child. The chapter addresses men's recognition of self-change and how they inform others of the change in their lives.

Chapter Five also considers men's status passage and how their initial conceptions of the change in their lives and activities are managed. The chapter looks at men's involvement in the pregnancy, the support they provide to the pregnant partners', and how men curtail some activities and take on others as they accommodate the changes of pregnancy. The chapter ends with a discussion of how men relate to the developing

child, make preparations for the arrival, complete the passage through birth, and adjust their lives.

Chapter Six concludes the thesis with a summary and discussion of the findings. A discussion of the limitations and future directions for research is also provided.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS**

The account of men's lives during the event of pregnancy recognizes some of the adjustments and changes that men undergo. The different theories and studies stress that some men do develop a psychosis or react strongly to the event of pregnancy, whereas others react more mildly and less negatively to pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. Regardless of the approach there is an underlying emphasis on the changes and adjustments that occur in men's relationships, activities, perspectives, and in their sense of self as they experience the event of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. In much of the research there is an epistemological assertion about the origin, nature, and limits of knowledge. The approach used here diverges from other theoretical positions, such as the positivistic theoretical framework and quantitative methodologies, and focuses on the intersubjective and enacted features of human activity. An explanation of the guiding theoretical framework, methodology, and research process is provided.

#### **Theory: Symbolic Interaction**

Informed by the symbolic interactionist theoretical framework, importance is placed on the social-psychological dimension of human beings and their capacity to act willfully, mindfully, and voluntarily within their social world (Blumer, 1969; Prus, 1997).

Blumer (1969: 35) stresses the importance of respecting the social world in which human beings exist:

*the empirical world of human beings . . . consists of what they experience and do, individually and collectively . . . If one is going to respect the social world, one's problems, guiding conceptions, data, schemes of relationship, and ideas of interpretation have to be faithful to that empirical world . . . because of the persistent tendency of human beings . . . to build up separate worlds, marked by an operating milieu of different life situations and . . . of different beliefs and conceptions for handling these situations. (Blumer, 1969: 35)*

Utilizing the symbolic interactionist perspective, the main assumption is that human beings are active, intersubjective, and develop an awareness of, and existence within, the social world through meanings, interaction, interpretation, and action. Human beings (symbolic) reality develops and becomes actualized as two or more people begin to place particular meanings on an object, event, or situation. They envision their meanings and “definitions of the situation as real or “objective” (Prus, 1996:15) and a reality, working consensus, or mutuality is developed or assembled. People’s reality may not always be constant or uniform, but instead a shifting and changing feature of human group life (Prus, 1997).

Further, human beings are relational as they develop a reality and ways of interacting mindful of one another. They are capable of developing multiple ways of defining, acting, and taking initiative mindful of their essences and the essences of others. They distinguish between one another through awareness of others identities, loyalties, affections, disaffections, and associations that emerge between people in the course of any given interaction or situation.

Symbolic interactionists also assume that human group life is constituted by the activities in which people participate. Although they vary in the degree to which the individual creates the social world, they propose it is the doing or the actions that allows for the development of things in both a physical and psychological, intersubjective sense. While the activities may be objective and something envisioned as real or observable, they may also shift, alter, and vary as people engage in the social world. In the study of human actors' focus is placed on the active forging, the ways in which people assemble their activities, and how they work their way through situations on a solitary basis and in conjunction with others (Prus, 1996,1997).

In addition, human beings exist in a social world that is negotiable. The concept of negotiable attends to people's ability to strategize and pursue particular interests as they interact with others. Acknowledging people's ability to actively engage in the social world, people are consciously able to consult, pursue interests and intents, confer, influence, resist, and parley with others on a daily basis. People may also knowingly adjust, alter, and change their interests, intents, tactics, and agendas as they engage the social world. The ability to change one's stance, direction, or activity is important because it may jeopardize or enhance their economical, physical, or emotional state.

Symbolic interaction also denotes the importance of the process-oriented nature of human existence. Process crosses the intersubjective, relational, perspectival, reflective, activity-based, and negotiable features of existing in the social world. People change in terms of their physiology but also "the struggle for human existence is built on an attentiveness to continuity and change in the broader [social and physical] environment"

(Prus, 1997: 16). Attention is focused on the stable, constant, established, perpetuating; as well as, the unstable, shifting, ambiguous, and changing features of the social world. “Although some sense of process seems applicable to all phenomena . . . the concept of process seems especially consequential for comprehending the human condition” (Prus, 1997: 15-16).

The symbolic interactionist theoretical framework stands in contrast to other social and psychological theoretical positions by diverging from the traditional view that meaning is a “psychical accretion brought to the thing that has meaning” (Blumer, 1969: 4). In this regard, the thing, object, interaction, situation, or event takes on meaning derived from the “person’s psyche, mind or psychological organization” (Blumer, 1969: 4). Thus, the meaning of a thing, object, or action is explained through singling out the psychological elements such as perception, cognition, repression, transfer of feelings, and association of ideas that produce the meaning (Blumer, 1969). Other positions also place importance on human behavior and conduct as the result of a variety of factors that are seen to influence how people behave. In these approaches the meanings, interpretations, and interactions that people engage in are either disregarded or take second place to the factors and behaviors the researcher deems important. Blumer (1969) states that some social researchers may try to accommodate meanings by placing the meaning into the initiating factor(s) that produces a behavior. This position still regards meaning second to the factors and once again does not recognize the process through which meanings develop and are negotiated. Symbolic interaction is distinguished because it considers the multiple meanings, interpretations, and interactions as important in their own right.

The approach taken in the thesis emphasizes that meaning-making is central and important for people (Blumer, 1969). Meanings arise out of the process of ongoing interaction, interpretation, and the multiple ways in which people act towards the thing. The interactions and actions operate to define an object or interaction for the person. Thus, symbolic interactionism views meanings as social products or creations that are formed in and through defining and interpretive activities of people as they interact. People play an active role in making sense of and participating in the world around them. The study aims to apply the symbolic interactionist perspective to men's experience of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood.

### Relevant Concepts

Two inter-related concepts that bear directly on men's experience of pregnancy are career involvement (Becker, 1963; Prus, 1997) and transformations of identity or status passages (Strauss, 1959). Becker (1963) used the concept of a career to explain the process of becoming deviant (Gomme, 1998). In a brief synopsis, Becker (1963) described the status change through which deviants moved from a novice deviant, to a new recruit, veteran, and retiree. Associated with each of these career stages is a new social status accompanied by a different reaction from primary groups such as friends, family, and colleagues and external agents of social control such as the police. The new reaction that accompanies each of these new statuses serves to define and solidify the deviants' place therein. The reactions from others are related to the deviants' sense of self, self-worth, and identity development.

Prus (1997) takes the idea of a career and uses it to develop a natural history of involvement, to explain people's involvement in the emergence of a phenomenon, which could be illegitimate or legitimate. The career of involvement explains the general course of action people take as they progress through day-to-day life and become involved in different phenomenon. Four processes are relevant to the emergence of a phenomenon and these include the *initial emergence* of how a phenomenon comes about; *continuity and intensification* of activities or participation with others therein; *discontinuity* such as the interruptions, lack of continuity, and/or the stopping of one's participation in a phenomenon; and finally, there is a possible *re-emergence* of involvement in the phenomenon. In attending to the interactional component of social life, the concept of natural history acknowledges the range, variation, diversity, and similarity that occurs as people become involved in a phenomenon. Thus, the role of the social researcher is to attend to, analyze, present and outline many episodes and interchanges (both the routine and banal practices) that constitute the larger event as possible.

The concept of identity transformations or regularized status passages (Strauss, 1959) fits well with the career and the natural history of involvement (Becker, 1963; Prus, 1996, 1997). According to Strauss (1959) participation in a social group that persists involves a movement from status to status; hence the lives of people can be traced theoretically "as a series of passages of status" (Strauss, 1959: 109). A regularized status passage involves both predecessors and successors. That is, there are those who have gone before, those who are going through, and those who will be going through the status passage. The regularity in movement of people through the status provides



continuity and permanence. The transformations in one's identity and "[self-perception] is irreversible; once having changed, there is no going back. One can look back, but he can evaluate only from his new status" (Strauss, 1959: 91). At the same time a status passage is temporal. According to Strauss (1959:124) "[a] temporal dimension is implicit in all kinds of status. No one is assigned, nor may he assume, a position or status forever. Always there is a clause, whether hidden or openly acknowledged, whereby a man may be dispossessed or may dispossess himself of the status".

A status passage also implies the notion of development, or a series of transformations of self that result in a "change of form" or to their "being, kind, or psychological status" (Strauss, 1959: 91). There are important incidents, or events that serve as turning points. These incidents not only involve a *turning point* that stimulate a cognitive shift, but also a *terminology shift* involving a change in one's conceptions whereby older conceptions may be replaced with newer and more complex conceptions, a *recognition* that I am not the same as I was, as I used to be (Strauss, 1959). The shift involves new alignments, new stances, and an *announcement* that signifies to self and others that a passage has occurred (Strauss, 1959).

When a status passage is regulated, there are predecessors and successors. The predecessors are people ready, able, and willing to facilitate the adjustment of the successor (Prus, 1997; Strauss, 1959). Personal experience may be shared between the predecessors and successors. Others play a role in facilitating the adjustment of the successor by forecasting, foretelling, forewarning, coaching, or tutoring the successor through the status passage. Forecasting or foretelling makes it easier to recognize one's

transformation and status passage. It also makes one aware of the next stage, transition, or transformation (Strauss, 1959). Guidance from predecessors is essential because “[c]ertain aspects of what lies over the horizon are blurred to the candidate, no matter how clear may be his general path. This forces his predecessors not only to counsel and guide him, but to prepare him” (Strauss, 1959: 109). As the passage of status is completed, the status is likely to become a way of being; as well as, a way of acting (Strauss, 1959).

The thesis draws on Strauss’s notion of status passages to explain men’s experiences of becoming a father to the developing child and their involvement in the phenomenon of pregnancy and having a child. Prus’s (1996, 1997) notion of a natural history of involvement focuses attention not only on the social-psychological but on the sequencing, diversity, similarity, routine and banal aspects of people’s involvement in an event or phenomenon. Strauss’s (1959) notion of status passages focuses attention on the social-psychological changes taking place in the individual as one not only passes through the event but also into a new status. With these concepts in mind, men who become fathers pass through a sequence of events that I conceive of as a career or natural history of men’s status passage into expectant fatherhood.

## **Methodology**

Informed by the symbolic interactionist perspective, the study emphasizes that the meanings people hold are central to understanding and respecting the social world under consideration. The thesis used a grounded and inductive approach that goes beyond a

simple description and aims to develop a theoretical and conceptual statement empirically grounded in men's experiences (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). A pure grounded approach refers to the researcher entering into the field and developing questions and themes from this initial involvement. A pure grounded approach also consists of "the researcher suspending preconceived notions about what to expect in the data" so that biases can be avoided (Daly, 1994: 175). In this respect, the literature review, prior experience in interviewing women during pregnancy, personal experience with the phenomenon under examination, and receiving input from my advisor did influence, direct, and shape the study. The previous experience helped in developing an awareness of the phenomenon, the relationships, and in explicating a conceptual and theoretical statement (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Daly, 1994; Dietz, Prus, and Shaffir, 1994).

### The Research Process

Since the study is concerned with men's perspective on pregnancy, I used a methodological approach that allowed me to access the day-to-day lived experiences of my respondents. I collected data in three ways - through participation in prenatal classes, brochures and written materials about pregnancy, and interviews. Participant observation in prenatal classes involved a more interactive and active role where I attempted to "fit into the setting at hand" (Prus, 1997: 201). Since I was pregnant it was fairly easy to utilize the participant-observer role in the prenatal class setting. This method provided an opportunity to discover what the professionals disseminate about pregnancy.

My participation in the prenatal classes consisted of three Saturday classes, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., where I would sit and listen to the nurse teach people about pregnancy and birth. I spent a total of 18 hours in the prenatal classes. Through my participation in the classes I found that the health nurse was interested in disseminating knowledge about pregnancy, birth, and postnatal adjustment taking into consideration past knowledge such as the prior studies and previous ways of teaching about pregnancy; as well as, current knowledge, current studies, and new techniques and technologies available (Field Notes, Jan 2001). It is important to note that prenatal classes have existed for some time becoming popular during the 1960's and 1970's and are continually changing in terms of the knowledge that is disseminated. The first week the health nurse opened the lecture by stating, "pregnancy is a normal life event and perhaps one of the most significant events in people's lives" (Field Notes, January, 2001). Pregnancy and birth is an event "that stays with you for the rest of your life and you will find that you remember sights, sounds, smells, and feelings". The participant observation provided an opportunity to understand the different aspects of pregnancy, birth, and postpartum adjustment that the health nurse felt were important for expectant parents to know (discussed further in chapter five).

I expected the classes would also provide an opportunity to see how men participated in these classes, what they were interested in, and curious to learn about. The participant observation did not prove all that helpful in understanding what men were interested in learning about. Men asked very few questions about pregnancy and the classes did not facilitate two-way communication. The purpose of the classes was to

provide a range of information to the expectant parents. Understanding what men desired to learn about pregnancy and birth is best achieved by asking them as opposed to observing them in classes.

Observation was another method of data collection I used. This method includes learning about a setting through one's senses, particularly seeing and hearing; as well as, gaining access to any documents related to the setting (Prus, 1997). In the prenatal classes I collected brochures and materials the health nurse distributed. One of the main handouts was the prenatal class kit that provided a number of pamphlets, advertisements, and sample products to try out. The advertisements and services provided information that was geared towards those who are having a baby. Mail order forms for children's books and toys, advertisements for accident insurance, RESP a scholarship trust fund for children's education, magazine subscriptions and sample products such as laundry soap, sample diapers, cream for rashes, and breast-feeding pads were also present in the prenatal class kit.

Other materials disseminated in the prenatal classes focused on child health and safety. The Canadian Dairy Products and the Osteoporosis Society of Canada disseminated health materials, which explain healthy eating. Health Canada provided pamphlets that emphasized the importance of breastfeeding; as well as, information on sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and how to reduce the risk of SIDS. The Public Health Services Division provided information on developmental issues of babies and how to respond to their cries. The Red Cross, the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police, the Hamilton-Wentworth Social and Public Health Services Division, Ontario Provincial

Police and the Trauma Prevention Council disseminated safety materials on child car seats and instructions on using them. The observation that came from these classes provided insight into the professionals and what they consider important for expectant parents to learn. There was little insight into the importance or relevance of the men as new fathers because of the learning method that was utilized in the course. What proved most useful in gaining access to men's experience of pregnancy were the interviews.

### *Recruitment*

The interviewees were recruited through a process of snowball sampling. I asked those in my social network to refer me to men who were currently going through a pregnancy or who had done so in the recent past. A few initial contacts generated a longer list of names. I suspect there was some self-selection on the men's part. That is, when I asked if they knew of other men, they would make comments like 'oh you don't want to talk to him' or 'he doesn't talk very much'. Twenty-one men were approached about doing an interview - nineteen men agreed; two did not. In total, fifteen interviews were conducted.

### *The Sample*

The men in the study had all experienced pregnancy within the past twelve months previous to the interview date and while it could be their first, second, or third pregnancy, the time frame allowed for relatively recent recollections. They all lived in Southwestern Ontario. The sample illustrates that the men in this study are varied in

terms of their age, religious affiliation, educational attainment, and level of income.<sup>1</sup>

With this in mind, the ages of the men ranged with 47 % of the men between the ages 20 to 29; 40 % of the men were between the ages 30 to 39; and 13 % of the men were between 40 and 49 years (Refer to Table One).

Table One: Ages of Respondents

Ages	Frequency (f)	Percentage %
20 to 29	7	47
30 to 39	6	40
40 to 49	2	13
Total	15	100.0

The religious affiliation illustrates that men are affiliated with a number of different religious orientations; however, 86.6 % of the respondents have a Christian orientation. More specifically the religious affiliation of the men varied, with 26.7 % of the men claiming Catholic affiliation; 26.7 % claimed a Christian background; 13.3 % claimed a Brethren affiliation, 13.3 % claimed a Baptist affiliation and 6.7 % of the men claimed a Pentecostal affiliation; 6.7 % of the men were not religious and 6.7 % claimed a nondenominational (Refer to Table Two).

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<sup>1</sup> The sample is not representative. For example, the men are overwhelmingly Christian and educated. A more systematic sample needs to be done.

Table Two: Religious Affiliation

Religious Affiliation	Frequency (f)	Percentage of Participants %
Roman Catholic	4	26.7
Brethren	2	13.3
Baptist	2	13.3
Pentecostal	1	6.7
Christian Faith	4	26.7
Non-Denominational	1	6.7
Non-Religious	1	6.7
Total	15	100.1*

\*Due to rounding

In terms of their educational attainment, 6.6% of the respondents had less than a high-school diploma; 13.3 % hold only a high-school diploma; 20% have a college degree; and 60% have a university degree (Refer to Table Three).

Table Three: Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency (f)	Percentage of Participants %
Less than High-school	1	6.7
High-school Diploma	2	13.3
College	3	20
University	9	60
Total	15	100.0

Just over 6 % of the men interviewed had an income between 10 to 20 thousand dollars and 30 to 40 thousand dollars. Just over 13 % of the men interviewed had an income between 40 to 50 thousand dollars and just over 13 %cent had an income between 50 to 60 thousand dollars. Of the men 40 % had an income between 60 to 80 thousand dollars and 20 % had an income above 80 thousand dollars (Refer to Table Four).



Table Four: Income Level

Family Income \$	Frequency (f)	Percentage of Participants %
10,000 – 29,000	1	6.7
30,000 - 39,000	1	6.7
40,000 – 49,000	2	13.3
50,000 – 59,000	2	13.3
60,000 – 79,000	6	40
80,000 and above	3	20
Total	15	100

All men in this study were married at the time of the interview. The men experienced a total of 25 pregnancies with 46.7% of the men having experienced one pregnancy; 40% had experienced two pregnancies; and 13.3% of the men experienced three pregnancies.

Table Five: Number of Pregnancies Experienced by the Men

Number of Children	Frequency (f)	Percentage of Participants %
One Child	7	46.7
Two Children	6	40
Three Children	2	13.3
Total	15	100.0

Of the fifteen most recent pregnancies (i.e. the pregnancy experienced within the last year) 93.3 % of the pregnancies were planned and 6.7 % of the pregnancies were unplanned.

Table Six: Planning the Pregnancy

Planning the Pregnancy	Frequency (f)	Percent %
Planned	14	93.3
Unplanned	1	6.7
Total	15	100.0

The ethnicity of the men as they expressed it was at times tied to their country of origin. There were 26.7 % who stated Canadian as their ethnicity, 60 % from the Western-European background, 6.7 % from an African background, and 6.7 % from a Mennonite background.

Table Seven: Ethnicity of Men

Ethnic Background	Frequency (f)	Percent %
Western-European	9	60
Canadian	4	26.7
African (Ghanaian)	1	6.7
Mennonite	1	6.7
Total	15	100

Further respondent profiles are available in Appendix D, page 155.

### *The Interview*

Since the social world of men experiencing pregnancy is somewhat harder to access, the study relied primarily on interviewing as a means of data collection. Utilizing in-depth interviewing, I sought to achieve a less structured dialogue between the men and myself (Marshall, 1998). Once I was informed of their willingness to do an interview, a

meeting time and place were arranged. Face-to-face interviews were conducted. The interviews began with an explanation of the study and signed consent was obtained. The interviews proceeded from a schedule of 80 to 90 questions developed from the substantive literature, prior experience interviewing women during pregnancy and my personal experience with four pregnancies.

There was an attempt to eliminate gaps in data collection and represent, more fully, men's experiences. As the interviews developed some questions were added and/or altered, as they were not relevant to the particular individual. For instance, only one man experienced an unplanned pregnancy; therefore, in the cases where pregnancies were planned the questions related to unplanned pregnancies were disregarded. Thus, the interviews were not always exactly the same. Given the very personal nature of pregnancy and their relationships with their partners', the men had some degree of freedom to discuss what they thought was pertinent. Men often initiated topics that I intended to address later in the interview. When this occurred I took their lead, rather than stifling the interview by stating 'I'll ask about that later on'.

The interviews were conducted in a variety of places convenient to the respondent. Eleven interviews were conducted in the men's homes, two were conducted at their place of work, and two were conducted at a library. Ten of the interviews took place in the evening after the men finished work and five interviews occurred during the day. The length of the interview varied considerably, but most lasted between a 1-2 hours, with two interviews lasting three hours. The format of the interview overall was a one-to-one dialogue between the respondents and myself. In four of the interviews the

partners' were not present. In one interview the partner was present and in ten of the interviews the partners' were around but were busy looking after the child or children in another room. In these cases, the partners did not interrupt and allowed for a private discussion.

Besides audio-taping the interviews I also took written notes. Taking notes gave the respondent time to think about the question and elaborate on what they said. I was able to jot down points that needed further clarification or elaboration and in that way ensure that I collected detailed responses. The open-ended and in-depth nature provided an avenue to gather detailed data regarding the respondents' meanings and experiences of pregnancy. As with in-depth and intensive interviewing there was diversity in the responses of men. While the event was considered to be an important time in men's lives, some men were more informed about pregnancy than others were. Some were more helpful and were able to explain things in greater detail and provide more examples of their thoughts, discussions, and experiences. Some men had more experiences to draw from while others had less. In keeping with the goals of this study, the focus on men's experience of starting and experiencing pregnancy was paramount as opposed to birth and post-natal adjustment.

### *Data Analysis*

Once data collection and transcription was complete, the analysis and write-up of the data commenced more completely. The coding, analysis, and write-up of the data commenced in a method similar to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) method of open coding,

labeling, and categorizing. Working with certain conceptual categories that I had incorporated into my schedule of questions I identified emergent themes as I went through my notes and transcribed data. The data were coded in accordance with these themes. Initial themes and conceptual categories in some cases were renamed and changed to reflect more adequately the data. The themes I ended up with were: (a) motives for having children, (b) the role of others, (c) assessing readiness, (d) managing reservations, (e) planning a pregnancy, (f) suspicion of pregnancy, (g) confirmation of pregnancy, (h) reorientation, (i) informing others, (j) learning about pregnancy and expectant fatherhood, (k) accommodating pregnancy, and (l) relating to the child. Working with the labeled data under the emergent themes the materials were then coded into the conceptual categories (a) anticipating pregnancy, (b) becoming pregnant, and (c) experiencing pregnancy. These themes were coded into the following categories:

*Anticipating Pregnancy:* At the outset this category included thinking about pregnancy, making plans to have children, and an unplanned pregnancy. In the analysis these categories were changed to reflect more fully men's experience and their considerations prior to confirmation of pregnancy. Coded into this category is the data on men's considerations prior to starting a pregnancy such as the reasons why men want children; the readiness to have children; others' influence on their decision to have children; as well as, how men manage their reservations and deal with some of the practical matters such as re-arranging work, prior to the start of a pregnancy. Coded into this category as well are the materials related to planning a pregnancy and subsequent children.

*Becoming Pregnant:* Changed from the initial category in the interviews, the sub-themes included here deal with matters of: discovering pregnancy which include men's suspicion of pregnancy and confirmation of pregnancy; re-orienting oneself which includes the data on men's initial focus on pregnancy and fathering; and informing others about the pregnancy. The materials on informing others were further coded into waiting to inform others, who they inform, and how they go about informing others in their social world of the news.

*Experiencing Pregnancy:* Changed from the initial category in the interviews, included in this category are the sub-themes: learning about pregnancy and expectant fatherhood, accommodating the pregnancy, and relating to the developing child. Under the sub-theme learning about pregnancy and expectant fatherhood the data were coded into the different ways men learn about pregnancy and expectant fatherhood such as informal learning through prior pregnancy experiences, self-directed learning, learning and receiving advice from others (i.e. partners, family, and friends). The materials on formal learning were coded into the data I acquired through participant observation of prenatal classes; as well as, men's experience and accounts of their formal learning activities. This category also includes an analysis of how men accommodate the pregnancy. Included is the data on men's experience and involvement in pregnancy, which is organized into men's support for their partners, their participation in prenatal appointments, and household activities. This category also includes an analysis of the data on how men relate to the developing child. The data were coded into men's experiences of ultrasound, the physical changes in the partner, and their experience of

hearing the heartbeat and feeling the baby move are included here. Also, the data on the men's interaction with the developing child, how they prepare for the child, and those who spoke of their experience of birth is included in this sub-theme.

Once the data were coded into sub-themes and conceptual categories, an analysis and written description followed. The sub-themes and conceptual categories were further qualified and delineated throughout the written process. Utilizing men's accounts coded into the sub-themes and conceptual categories, I wrote an explanation of what men are experiencing, feeling, concerned about, interested in, and the like. I also draw comparisons from men's accounts to the theoretical framework and the concepts of involvement and status passages explained earlier in this chapter. The analysis is focused on the process-oriented nature of men's experience, involvement, and entrance into a new status rather than focusing on contributing factors that would neglect the depth of men's experience. The analysis is also mindful of the range, variation, and similarity in men's experience of pregnancy and the entrance into expectant fatherhood.

### **Summary**

I have employed in this study a theoretical perspective and a methodological approach that would allow me to investigate the enacted features and social processes shaping men's experience of the pregnancy event. I relied primarily on in-depth interviewing to access men's voices. Participant-observation and observation were relied on to a lesser extent. During the interviewing I was there to learn, inquire, probe, and gather data from the men who have experienced pregnancy. Although men are not

attuned in exactly the same way and the interviews varied in the value and depth, the accounts provided by the men were central to the study and the understanding of men's lives as they enter a new status and the pregnancy event.



### **CHAPTER THREE:**

#### **ANTICIPATING PREGNANCY**

Focusing on men's anticipation of pregnancy, this chapter provides an account of the initial stage in men's status passage, their considerations as they decide to start a pregnancy. As outlined, men differ in the age at which they started a pregnancy, as well as, in their education, income, and religious affiliation. Men also differ in why they want children, how they assess readiness, manage their reservations, and plan a pregnancy. Acknowledging the temporal dimension of involvements men vary in how long they anticipate the start of a pregnancy. For instance, one man found himself involved in a pregnancy rather quickly and by surprise. Others found themselves involved in pregnancy while still planning the pregnancy. Yet, for another he found himself involved in starting a pregnancy over a considerable period of time (six years) and after extensive medical procedures. During the anticipation of pregnancy men consider a range of potential changes that pregnancy and the new status will bring to their lives.

Although the concept of men's readiness (May, 1982) is an important dimension of the decision to start a pregnancy and have children, it does not capture the range of considerations men make and the process-oriented nature of their involvement. The literature on status passages is helpful in explaining what is happening once a turning point has occurred, but the ethnographic literature on involvement in a social event or

activity, sheds light on the decision to have children. The literature illustrates that there are a number of routes and considerations people make as they become involved in this or that activity. The prevalent ways people become involved is through seekership (Lofland, 1966; Klapp, 1969), recruitment, and closure (Prus, 1989, 1999). According to Prus (1989: 47) the concept of seekership is relevant and applicable when people become involved by pursuing their own interests and these activities are defined as “attractive, interesting, enjoyable”. When people become influenced and persuaded to participate by others the concept of recruitment is relevant. Closure (Lemmert, 1953), according to Prus (1999: 171) implies the “the sense of obligation and (sometimes) desperation that people may associate with achieving (or avoiding) certain outcomes”. Further, Snyder (1986) researches involvement in the world of shuffle board and found that players became involved through the social influence of friends and the intriguing aspects of the game (Dietz, Prus, and Shaffir, 1994: 88). Wolf (1991) maintains that people became involved in the world of the outlaw biker through a search for identity. The ethnographic literature illustrates that there are numerous ways, motives, and routes people take as they become involved in particular situations, activities, or events (Dietz, Prus, and Shaffir, 1994; Grills, 1989; Prus, 1989, 1999; Snyder, 1986; Wolf 1991).

In this regard, the anticipatory stage of men’s involvement in the decision-making process to start a pregnancy occurs through the desire to have a child and family. As the men become further involved they are mindful of others in their social world, particularly those they are close to. Partners play a greater role as the men consider others, assess readiness, manage reservations, and make plans to conceive. The anticipatory stage in

men's passage illustrates the men's active involvement in the decision to have children and a family. The men are not passive recipients of a new status but begin the entrance by considering a number of aspects of their lives. There are initial developments in the men's lives that occur prior to the entrance into expectant fatherhood and the pregnancy event and they impact the men's lives in a profound and unique way. The recollected accounts and experiences of the men, both past and present, are a guide to understanding and presenting the meanings attributed to the anticipatory stage in men's status passage. Utilizing the sequencing characteristic of a natural history, men's impending status passage and anticipation of pregnancy deals with matters of: (a) why men want children; (b) the role of others; (c) assessing readiness; (d) managing reservations; and (e) planning a pregnancy.

### **Why Men Want Children**

Engaging in self-reflectivity, one dimension of men's impending status passage and the anticipation of pregnancy involved the motives or reasons for having children. Men's desire to have a child is necessary as men consider starting a pregnancy and entering into a more permanent status change. The literature indicates the importance of the desire to have a child. Nett (1993) states that it is not uncommon for people to want to have children at some point in their life. A common belief is that children are necessary to leading a fulfilling and happy family life (Nett, 1993). May (1982) also expressed the importance of the desire to have a child. In her study of expectant fathers she found that part of men's readiness to have a child stems from their desire to do so.

Men who did not want a child did not always come around by the end of a pregnancy and they were not always able to redefine an unplanned pregnancy in a positive light (May, 1982).

Although the literature illustrates the importance of the desire to have a child, little material acknowledges the desire to have a child as stemming from people's meanings, interpretations, and defining activities. Acknowledging people's capacity to be self-reflective, it was common for all men to desire to have a child at some point in their life. Though the desire is apparent, their motives for having children differ. The differing motives of men included understanding the joys of having children and wanting a family to fulfill who he is and who he wants to be:

*We both come from a family with siblings . . . we are used to having kids around and we know the joy of having a family. Yeah, so that was something we wanted to do . . . I would say that it [being a parent] was [also] something that I always wanted to be. I always wanted to have kids and I feel that, . . . it is just a really huge part of 'who I am'. Kyle.*

Other meanings attached to having a child were focused around having children to carry on the family name:

*I've always wanted kids, someone to carry on the legacy. I guess the family name. I'm the only boy on my side of the family. So, if we didn't have any kids that would be it for us. Anthony.*

Yet, others desired to have a children because it was a way to start a family and become a father:

*With this one I am focused on this kid. I know what I am doing [and] where I am going . . . I had a couple kids very young and I didn't get a chance to be a live-in dad . . . I really wanted to start a family. I wanted to be a live-in dad and raise my kid this time. Greg.*

*My father . . . I never got a chance to see him much [and] . . . I was always wondering how I look like in the eyes of my father and . . . if I should have a child I don't think I was ever going to leave my child that much . . . I need to have a wife and definitely I need to have a child so that I can build a family. Tim.*

The desire to start a pregnancy and have a child is common to all the respondents. The motives for having children vary. Men's self-defined interest is the initial impetus of the decision to have children. The desire is important, however, in itself it does not necessarily ensure that one will be able to, or will follow through with starting a pregnancy.

### **The Role of Others**

Although men consider their own motives for having children others also play an important role in the decision making process. Strauss (1959) maintains that others play a role in people's status passages especially when the passage is regulated and characterized by predecessors and successors. Strauss (1959) suggests that there are people ready, able, and willing to foretell the different aspect of the status passage. Prus (1997) maintains that others may openly or subtly recruit and facilitate the adjustment of the new member or successor during and after the entrance into a new event. The literature on the family also emphasizes that family and friends play a significant role in influencing people's decision to have a child (Nett, 1993). In this respect, the men were profoundly influenced by their partners and to a lesser extent by extended family and friends. The hints or cues men receive from their partners were subtle suggestions about the viability of having a child and emphasizing the joy that it would be to have a child:

*When you're wife starts going up to you and saying, 'oh, the little baby is so cute'. 'Ah, the baby's so cute' . . . that's how I think it happened . . . It [was] starting to approach that time when you start thinking about it a bit . . . [and then] you start talking about it and you open further to the prospect of it and say 'yeah, ok lets go for it'. Art.*

Other subtle suggestions and cues included hints such as picking names for the potential child:

*Since we got married she would be coming up with names. She would ask me about names all the time, which was a total indicator that she wanted kids . . . from the get go. Ed.*

The cues men received from their partners to start a pregnancy might also take the form of an open request. Men were more inclined to pay attention to open requests from their partners:

*We usually have this meeting and set out the goals. Her only dream was to have kids . . . that's the only thing that she's ever really focused on . . . she . . . really talked [how] . . . we keep saying every year we are going to start trying and we don't . . . I finally decided that . . . we just got to let it happen . . . It was about then that we started realizing that we wanted to start. Ed.*

Subtle cues and open requests from the men's partners were paramount, but cues from family and friends also emphasize the importance of starting a family:

*My wife's family . . . they are a little quicker on the ball . . . Four years of marriage before starting to think about having a family is a little long for them . . . We were encouraged to start a family . . . It's kind of what they were used to. Kyle.*

Those men who were in relationship with their partners for a number of year and/or who's partners were approaching thirty years of age were encouraged by parents to start having children:

*There was hints on her side because she's the youngest . . . [her mom] would always say, your first one you should have before she turns thirty. I guess there's*

*less risk of complications . . . So, just reminders, 'you're getting up there in age you better have one soon'. Randy.*

The age of the parents and the meaning they attached to grand parenting played a role in the decision-making of the men:

*[There was] [p]ressure from her side. Her mom really wanted her to have a baby soon because they're getting old and they'd like to be a part of the babies life. So, they didn't want us to wait too much longer. They wished it had been done a couple years back . . . They convinced me that it was time [and] that if we were going to we should. Greg.*

The extended family may promote their desire for the couple to start a family, encouragement does not always ensure that the men and their partners will start to have children right away. Men states that it was important to start a pregnancy when they and their partners were ready:

*My wife's mom . . . she's kind of wanted to be a grandmother over the years but it wasn't sort of anything that influenced us too greatly . . . It was always something we were aware of, but we like to make the decision ourselves and we don't succumb to any pressure outside of the relationship. Keith.*

For the most part, decisions about starting a pregnancy stemmed from the negotiation and discussions between the men and their partners as opposed to direct pressure or encouragement from family members.

While predecessors such as parents may encourage and emphasize having children, predecessors such as friends may also play a role directly, or indirectly, in the decision to have children. The men's involvement in having children may occur by following a similar trajectory of their closer friends:

*One of the things too was that a lot of our new friends were at the point where they were just starting to have children or had young children. So, that . . . encouraged us, you know. Knowing that there are other young couple's out there*

*that already had . . . or are having children . . . That was probably the only event that maybe encouraged us. David.*

Friends may also influence the men's decision by emphasizing and pointing out the benefits and joys of having children:

*My friends . . . boasted about their kids and how . . . it's a different . . . life 'you go from being totally selfish [to] . . . you've got these little amoebas . . . demanding everything. Yet, it's still such an incredible experience' . . . We always talked about kids . . . They would give us information . . . [and] say how great they were . . . It was always definitely pro kids, which helped me in the decision process. Ed.*

Though the literature emphasizes the importance of others influence on getting people into certain activities, or events, the partners of the men played a greater role in the decision to have children. Open cues provided by the partners facilitated discussions that were seen as more important to the decision making process. Family and closer friends play less of a role in the decision to have children.

### **Assessing Readiness**

Although one dimension of the anticipation of pregnancy involved awareness and consideration of others desires for them to have children, a greater part of the decision included assessing the readiness to have children. Societal messages stress waiting until both participants are ready to have a child, however, this goal is sometimes hard to achieve in practice (Nett, 1993). Men's assessment of readiness is ambiguous at times and contingent upon the relationship and desires of their partners. For instance, the men's assessment of their own readiness was uncertain:



*There was a lot to thinking . . . centered around . . . am I ready . . . I wanted to have children it was just a matter of am I ready to have children . . . if you were to wait until you were a 100% ready . . . I never would of had children. David.*

They express that there is always the opportunity to put off the decision:

*You could put [having children] off forever. You could say 'well, I have to wait until I start a career', ok 'now I have to wait until I purchase a house', and now 'I have to wait until the car is paid off' . . . and you would never be ready. David.*

*I am not sure that I was totally ready . . . I mean I knew it was kind of time and it was something that was totally new and nothing else in my life can really prepare me for it, so I kind of jumped into it with two feet. Kyle.*

Despite not being fully ready to have children and feeling that there is little opportunity to become prepared, the men considered a number of aspects of their lives before the decision making process was complete.

Part of the men's assessment of readiness included considering and evaluating the relationship with their partners. In this regard, men were concerned with the level of commitment to their partner before having a child. They emphasize the importance of being in a commitment that included marriage before having children. For example, in two of the cases, the men and their partners were together for a number of years (7 and 10 years) and decided to marry in order to start a family and have children. In one case, they started planning and trying to become pregnant shortly before the marriage. In the other case, he and his wife started trying shortly after the marriage. In the unplanned pregnancy, he and his partner planned a wedding and were married six weeks after receiving confirmation of pregnancy. The other men were all married for a number of years, ranging from three to ten years, and felt that it was important to do so before having children.

The marriage commitment is important to the men; however, the readiness of the relationship was an equal, or greater, concern. As the men and their partners discuss and ascertain the proclivity to have children they found they were at times negotiating, or juggling, the desires and readiness of one another:

*Um we just plain had discussions like . . . Are you ready? No, not yet. Are you ready? Yeah I am. How many kids do you want? Three. No, I don't want that many . . . Well that is still open . . . to discussion. Anthony.*

*There were many discussion where she would say 'oh, we're ready' and I would say 'oh, but we don't have the money' and she'd say 'oh, but we're ready'. Kyle.*

Included in the assessment of the relationship is a consideration of their partners' perspectives or viewpoints (Prus, 1997) towards having children. Understanding and knowing the partners' perspectives for some started during the dating relationship:

*I always . . . like when I was dating girls I would tend to take a look at them and what their family type of views were . . . I kind of thought yeah I can see myself raising a family with this girl . . . we . . . had kind of the same ideas about raising a family . . . the old fashion way. Jared.*

For others, a more serious consideration and discussion of the relationship started in the marriage relationship. As they considered the relationship it was important that they and their partners see having children as a part of their life plan or goal to work towards:

*Becoming parents is something we had set our hearts on. It was one of our original goals, even prior to getting married. It was always in our life plan, and consciously, as opposed to by default. Daniel.*

*We've been together for the longest time . . . it's always been something that we've wanted to do all along . . . It has been a long process of working towards it . . . One of the major reasons why we finally decided to get married [was] . . . to get a family started. Keith.*

Despite the variation in when discussions started, a detailed examination of the relationship included interrelated issues of timing, living styles, and how they relate to

one another in the marriage relationship. Figuring out when was the right time to start having children was not always precise, or easy, and it often included exploring the marriage relationship and having a relative time frame in mind about when to start having children:

*Once we were married we figured that we would take three or four years to just sort of explore the marriage relationship before bringing any kids into it to further complicate it, or to just change it. Kyle.*

The exploration of the marriage relationships also included taking time to bond:

*We always wanted to have children but . . . we wanted to give ourselves . . . a few years before we had children just to bond in our marriage. David.*

Exploring the relationship also included figuring out who one another is and the expectations of each other in the relationship. The men desired to reach a point in the relationship where they and their partners were able to understand one another, accept who they are, and how they engage in day-to-day activities and living:

*There was a lot of things to figure out about 'who you are' and . . . [the] expectations you have . . . I had to accept that just because she didn't do things the way I did doesn't mean that she did them wrong. She just did them differently. Kyle.*

At times, a detailed look at the relationship included working on the problematic aspects and issues, becoming comfortable, and secure in the marriage relationship:

*When we got married we are like 'oh, my gosh who did we marry?' We struggled a lot through the first few years . . . But, you kind of get that comfort built up after awhile and . . . you have that security . . . We have gotten some of the antics out of our way that we were arguing about . . . and we found that little click with each other. It was just a matter of we needed to work through the problem. Ed.*

*We were both very comfortable with each other and [having a child] was something that we both wanted and we'd had a couple of years of marriage to get used to each other and get used to the relationship . . . we knew we were both ready. Dillon.*

Once there was an understanding between the men and their partners and the differences in the relationship were worked out, the relationship was defined as ready and a stable environment could be provided for the child:

*I think we both had a good understanding of 'who we are' . . . and that having kids . . . would make it better . . . Working on the relationship . . . made it a more stable environment for the kids to be raised in. Kyle.*

Developing a relationship that was ready to incorporate a child not only involved taking time to figure each other out, but also having some of the problematic aspects of the relationship figured out. Working on the relationship and being comfortable in the relationship with their partners was important as men assessed the readiness to have a children.

While assessing the readiness of the relationship was important, in some cases, there were further discussions as to how they and their partners would maintain the relationship after the arrival of the child. Considerations of the relationship in these cases included a plan that involved setting aside time for one another:

*It's important to maintain our relationship and that's probably going to be more of an issue later on . . . You have to be purposeful . . . in maintaining the relationship or . . . [the] kids define the relationship . . . We try to spend some time . . . every night just talking about whatever is going on . . . We try to do it for our marriage and we'd like to continue doing that. Art.*

Maintaining the relationship included keeping a focus on one another, showing love, and continuing to engage in activities such as a date night together:

*I think we should still have the focus on each other so that our kids are raised up in the confidence that [we] love each other . . . We really talked about how it was important for us to stay that way and that the child was going to revolve around our lives . . . My wife and I need to keep each other number one and . . . have date nights where we go out on our own and do our own thing . . . We did discuss that a lot. Ed.*

While the discussions around assessing the readiness to have a child may, or may not, have started in the dating relationship, they occur more seriously in the marriage relationships of the men and in the planning of their lives together with their partners. The assessment and consideration of their relationships illustrate the interconnectedness of their lives with their partners.

An additional and interrelated consideration and assessment of readiness incorporated the constraints of aging and the biological timing of children. The men were concerned with aging, their physical competency as a father, and the ability to remain active in the lives of their children:

*I did want to make sure that I wasn't too old . . . I want to be able to go out and play ball with the kids. I don't want to be in a rocking chair and saying 'I can't go out and play ball with you because I am too old'. That was my side of it. Kyle.*

*I couldn't wait too much longer or I'd be an old timer when my kid was like ten . . . I'll be fifty when [it's] eighteen, that's reasonable. Greg.*

Though men were concerned about age, to a greater extent a consideration of aging centered on the age and health of their partners. Albeit societal messages stress that it is important to have at least one child before the age of thirty and that childbearing should be completed before the age of forty so as to avoid complications. Men and their partners were aware of and concerned about avoiding potential complications of having children later:

*Age was continuously a concern . . . she was always worried . . . [and] that was continually a stress for her and from a number of perspectives, medical complications, and the boundary of 40 . . . is approaching. Daniel.*

*My wife's age . . . like the younger you have children I guess the less likely there is for complications and stuff like that. David.*

Aging and health were also a consideration as they and their partners thought about having subsequent children:

*As they say . . . the biological clock is ticking . . . So, yeah, we thought about that and we thought 'boy, if we don't start now and we want to have two . . . it will [start to] get on there'. David.*

Aging and timing was not only a dimension in considering the biological clock, but also in realizing the tentativeness of having a successful pregnancy. Men considered this:

*Ok now we're open to the idea of actually becoming pregnant . . . it may or may not happen quickly or it may not even happen at all. So those things were definitely talked through . . . not making any assumptions that pregnancy was a given. We definitely wanted to move ahead in that way and we were hoping but there wasn't an assumption that it would happen. Dale.*

While part of men's impending status passage, anticipation of pregnancy, and assessment of their readiness involved an ambiguous decision that they were relatively ready to have children, they were also concerned about being in a commitment and taking time to understand their partners perspectives on family, living styles, and idiosyncrasies. Aging was considered as a part of their readiness and decision to have children. In this regard, the men desired to be young enough and able to participate in activities with the child. They also desired to avoid complications that are said to accompany childbearing late in life and they wanted to ensure that there was enough time to keep trying should conception not occur right away.

### **Managing Reservations**

A further dimension of the impending status and anticipation of pregnancy involved managing reservations and dealing with practical matters of having children. In

this respect, the concerns and reservations of the men during the anticipation of a pregnancy revolve around a number of different practical matters such as the schooling of the child, the religion the child will be raised in, choosing a place to live and having a house in which to raise the children, dealing with financial matters; as well as, discussing parenting, parental leave, and deciding who would stay at home parent. While there were a number of discussions on many issues related to having children, the issues discussed in greater depth by the men were parenting, finances, and parental leave.

The partners perspectives on having a family was important as they assessed the readiness of the relationship, it was also important as the men managed their reservations and considered aspects of parenting. Part of the men's decision to start a pregnancy meant knowing and discussing how one another would parent the child:

*We talked about issues [like] would we home-school our kids . . . where we want to raise them . . . how we would do it . . . to see if we had compatible ideas about how we would raise our kids together. Ed.*

*We talked a lot about . . . the way we thought about parenting and occasionally talked about what we would do in terms of discipline. Dillon.*

The discussions on parenting may also stem from assessing the parenting styles of other predecessors, or parents, they come across in day-to-day living:

*We felt the concept of being a parent is a big responsibility . . . we talked about what ways would we try to bring up a child. Often I find you start talking about the things you didn't like about the other kids you've seen or how different parents you've seen have treated their kids and it really just grows out of these. Like are the things we don't like or we do like. Art.*

While part of men's impending status passage and management of reservations involved knowing their partners' parenting styles, finances were also of concern. The literature on the family often expresses that it is men who have been expected to provide

financially for the well being of the family; however, in this case the circumstances of the men vary in terms of the focus and attention placed on finances. There is considerable diversity in how work and the financial aspects of life were managed and re-arranged to incorporate the child at the end of the pregnancy.

Major concerns with finances were not evident for some because they felt that they were doing ok financially:

*Finances weren't an issue. We were doing ok. It's obviously going to cost more for all the things you end up requiring . . . [and] need . . . There's a lot more consumables like diapers . . . We were lucky in that it wasn't a major concern. Daniel.*

In other cases, the men's reservations with starting a pregnancy were quite pronounced because their financial goals were not achieved. They at times may put off having children on account of finances:

*Because we were self-employed and we own a business . . . one of the main factors we kept holding off on having children was the business. We had goals with that of where we wanted to be financially before we started having children and we hadn't quite got there yet . . . So there was a major issue with that and a lot of fear. Ed.*

Although they desire to have their financial goals underway, careers and finances were not always in order before the arrival of the child:

*It's just a matter of trying to get our careers together . . . but unfortunately it didn't work out . . . I wanted to finish the . . . program and be working at the time of the birth . . . I feel a little inadequate about that right now because it will be another 6 or 7 months before I finish school with a . . . professional salary. Keith.*

When financial stability seemed unattainable men found ways to re-defined or minimized the importance of financial security:

*I was always skeptical . . . like sure you always want to have more money because it seems to make life easier sometimes, but . . . we realized that if we wait forever,*



*or if we wait until we did have enough money we might be waiting forever. So our idea of enough money may never come true. So we decided that it wasn't as big a deal as maybe we thought it was. Kyle.*

Utilizing skills that were developed earlier and finding other ways around the concern with money were some of the ways men dealt with the financial reservation:

*Finances have always been a concern . . . But my wife and I are very good with budgeting . . . I really think it's not something that we can't overcome. Keith.*

*If you don't have [money] you seem to find ways around not having it, like going to garage sales, thrift shops . . . and we were really good at garage sailing. So that's kind of how we got around it. Kyle.*

Once again drawing attention to people's relationships and propensity to negotiate (Prus, 1996, 1997), finances are also important as the men and their partners dealt with matters of parental leave and who was staying home after the birth of the child:

*The discussion was business related and about how we would work the business around kids or how we would work the kids around the business . . . that was the biggest stress of how we were going to work a baby and clients . . . So, there was a lot of stress there that . . . caused me to be very moody at times. Ed.*

While the ideal of the men was to have one person remain at home to raise the child, in practice it did not always work out. Men balance their ideals of parenting the child with what can be managed financially:

*Again the financial worry that she's going to stop working . . . We knew she would get maternity leave . . . [But] the ideal thing would be that she wouldn't have to go back to work and she could stay at home. That would be very difficult for us financially. It was something that we talked about and we thought that maybe she can go back part-time. David.*

For some, sacrifices would have to be made to avoid daycare and have one parent stay at home with the child:

*That was another thing was just trying to make sure that there was at least one parent around. We didn't want to go the root of daycare or anything like that we*

*wanted to ensure that the child was raised by us and we'd make any sacrifices necessary to have one of us home. Keith.*

The decision about who stays at home developed out of who made less financially, as well as, the portability and ease of getting back into the career once the children were in school:

*My wife and I have come to the decision that one of us will stay home . . . so in terms of salaries and everything, it was the one that could most afford to stay home at least until they get through nursery school. Keith.*

In most cases, it was the woman who made less financially and would remain at home. In one case, the man made less financially and found himself considering staying at home with the children until they were in school:

*[We] started [discussing children and] . . . the first question that she asked was 'what if you have to stay at home'? I was kind of tense. I was very tense at the time because I didn't think of the question 'that I stop working' because we're never asked that. So, it was kind of an argument at that point . . . it took me awhile to think that 'yes, of course, I may be the one to stay at home. So, I may have to consider that also'. Frank.*

Part of the decision making process involved dealing with concerns, reservations, and managing practical matters before having children. Parenting the child together, financing, and deciding who will remain at home after the birth was discussed in greater depth by the men. Men were inclined to deal with some of their financial concerns by budgeting, going to garage sales and purchasing items second hand. Part of a concern with finances involved considering how to rearrange work life and deciding who will remain at home and parent the child while the other is at work. Men were concerned about avoiding, as much as possible, the route of sending the child to day care. While

concerns and reservations are more pronounced in the anticipation of pregnancy, they may carry on into the pregnancy.

### **Planning a Pregnancy**

A final dimension of men's impending passage and anticipation of pregnancy is focused on planning the conception. Although men considered the timing of their children as it related to the health of their partners' and the marriage itself, timing also takes on more precise considerations in planning a pregnancy. According to Nett (1993: 169), "[a] remarkably higher number of couples discuss and plan for the birth of children . . . [which would] appear to be a change from a generation ago". While planning children appears to be a part of people's discussion, it was common to all, but one man, to have some sort of plan and time frame in mind as they started trying to conceive. In this respect, the planning and timing of children had to do with birth control. In some cases, men and their partners' felt that distancing the conception from the effect of the birth control pill was necessary. During this waiting period other methods of birth control were used as a way to allow time for hormonal changes to take place in their partner's bodies and to avoid complications in the development of the child:

*Once we decided on the timing we had to make plans for it to happen. So, we terminated birth control . . . and [used] another method of contraception for awhile just to sort of have a distance from the pill . . . before we actually have kids. There was some fear that you know there might be some side effects . . . So, we waited awhile and . . . we started trying. Dillon.*

The waiting period between stopping birth control and trying to conceive varied between the men. Some felt that only a few months of waiting for hormonal changes to take place was necessary; others felt that more distance from birth control was needed:

*She went off the pill like a year and a half ago and we still used protection. We waited [and] . . . decided that within a couple of weeks of getting married we would start trying. Greg.*

Still others had a laissez faire attitude and left conception to chance:

*We just let everything go . . . It was only about the third time without birth control that it took effect . . . So, it wasn't a lot of time in between from the decision to trying . . . We never did consult anybody. Ed.*

While doctors and medical experts become involved on a more sustained basis after confirmation of pregnancy, they may also be utilized prior to the confirmation of pregnancy. In a few cases, there was some consultation with the doctors about starting a pregnancy:

*We have a really good doctor actually . . . and she did a thorough examination with him and he talked with her about what would be good you know the necessary steps to have a safe conception. So yeah we tried to do a little bit of research about all the channels available to make sure that we're doing everything right. Keith.*

In one case, a man visited the doctor for a check up to make sure that he was healthy prior to trying to conceive:

*The only thing I did was go and get all my blood work done and everything and just checked my health in that sense. Greg.*

Plans set in motion were not always 'problem free' and there was variation in terms of the time it took to conceive, ranging from three months to six years. Despite the variation and relativity of conception, part of the planning included deciding on the time of year the child would be born:

*We planned it . . . she didn't want to go through the hot summer months pregnant that's what my wife said . . . we [wanted] t have the child so that its old enough for the summer and the winter. Kyle.*

Although the couples may have a timeframe in mind, the planning of conception may not go as expected:

*So we thought we'd time it towards the end of three months but unfortunately or fortunately we didn't make it through that three-month time period . . . my wife became pregnant through the three months but it was definitely planned. Keith.*

The men illustrate that they do plan with their partners, the conception and the time of the year the child would be born. We also find they plan the spacing of subsequent children and the time of year the subsequent child would be born. For some it was important to have the children close in age so they can play and interact together:

*We wanted to make sure they were less than two years apart. So there was a timing issue with that one. We wanted them to be closer in age so they can play together and relate together a little better. Kyle.*

Timing the birth to correspond to the earlier children also meant they and their partners would avoid unnecessary costs of having to buy a new pregnancy wardrobe:

*[With the second one] . . . it was actually it was more planned than the first one, as far as the date when we wanted my wife to be pregnant. She had the maternity clothes and everything for the summer and the wardrobes. So, we wanted to kind of make sure she was big and pregnant during that time. Kyle.*

The men's impending status passage and their considerations takes on more precise considerations as they wait for distance from the effect of the birth control, plan the time of year the child is to be born in, and timing of subsequent children.

## Summary

The chapter began with a discussion of men's anticipation of pregnancy and the initial stage of their status passage. Building on the ethnographic literature and the multiple ways people become involved in certain lines of activity, consideration was given to five dimensions of the anticipatory stage of men's impending status passage and the ways men become involved in the decision to have children. The data show that the decisions of the men to have children are contingent upon the meaning they attach to the object – the child and to having a family. While the meanings or motives for having children vary, the men's self-defined interest in having children is an important dimension.

Exchanges and interactions with others in their social world are also important. At times there were subtle and open cues from partners. Discussions that were open requests on the part of partners were more important to the men and the decision to have children. Exchanges with family and friends played less of a role. Predecessors such as the extended family provided hints, encouragement, and emphasized their desires to have grandchildren regardless of whether or not their influence tactics work. Family may encourage children; however, it does not guarantee that the men will have children right away. Further, the interchanges with predecessors such as friends that have children provided an example for the men to follow and a foretelling (Strauss, 1959) of what the men would experience once they had children of their own.

Adding to May's (1982) emphasis that readiness is important to men's movement into fatherhood, we see another dimension of men's anticipatory stage included self-

reflectivity and self-assessing of the readiness to have children. While this included self-questioning, the men were ambiguous about their readiness and felt that there were always opportunities to put-off having children. Further, they felt there was nothing they could really do to prepare themselves prior to the decision to have children. Despite the ambiguity, further assessments of readiness involved examining the relationship with their partners. The assessment of the relationship included taking a look at the partners' perspective regarding children and family life, as well as, each others living styles. Men desired to have a commitment, time to get to know their partners' idiosyncrasies, and take some time to bond in the marriage before having children. Men, in some cases, expressed that they worked on the problematic aspects of the relationship prior to the decision to have children. The relationship was defined as ready once the problems were worked out, they were comfortable with one another, and were able to provide a stable environment for the children. The men also considered aging as they assessed readiness. The men's age was important because they desired to have children before they were too old. They also desired to be young enough to be able to engage in activities, such as baseball, with their children. The age of their partners', in most cases, played a greater role because of the medical complication associated with having children late in life. The concern with age also focused on having enough time to conceive because they realized the uncertainty of not conceiving right away, or not at all.

A further dimension of men's anticipation of pregnancy and impending status entailed the men managing reservations and dealing with some of the practical matters of having children. While the men were interested in understanding how they would parent

the children together, they were also concerned with finances and the decision of who will stay at home with the child after the birth. Men vary in their concern with finances and those who were experiencing anxiety with finances emphasize the stress that accompanied the decision to have children. When finances were an issue the men were inclined to deal with the reservation by budgeting and economizing. Part of a concern with finances also involved decisions about how to rearrange work life, deciding who will stay-at-home and parent the child, and avoiding sending the child to daycare.

A final dimension of the anticipation of pregnancy and the impending passage included the plan to have children. Although the planning efforts on the part of men vary from one to the next, it was important to have some sort of plan in mind. Plans set in motion were not always problem free and men varied in terms of the time it took to conceive. The planning and timing of conception involved considering the impact of birth control, the desired season for pregnancy, and the spacing of subsequent children.

Though few studies have focused on men's experience prior to the entrance into pregnancy and the new status, the main assertion of the chapter contributes to the theoretical and conceptual literature on involvements and the entrance into a new status. In this respect, the main story line of the chapter is about men's considerations prior to the entrance into the new status, expectant fatherhood and the pregnancy event. The chapter contributes an examination of a range of considerations men make prior to the entrance into a new status. The chapter demonstrates that there are developments in men's lives particularly once the meanings they attach to having children are aligned with



their goals and desires. The men commence or become involved in an anticipatory and decision-making process to have children.

The chapter attends to the diversity, variation, and similarities in experience as they work out their lives around the desire to have children and a family. Men are not passive recipients of a new status but actively engage in decision-making processes and planning to have children. Although the men were individually interested in having children, their actions show that they are also mindful of others and their interests. The chapter also demonstrates that men work out matters focused around having children, individually, and in conjunction with others. Being in a relationship with other successors, their partners, and attending to the cues provided were an important dimension of the anticipatory stage in the men's status passage. The anticipation and decision making process can be said to commence once one desires to have a child, considers other's role in their lives, readiness has been assessed, reservations and practicalities are managed, and plans are set in motion. Having considered the anticipatory stage in men's status passage, attention now changes to becoming pregnant. Although often disregarded in the literature, becoming pregnant greatly affects men's lives and is an important stage in their entrance into the new status and event.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **BECOMING PREGNANT**

Chapter Three focused on men's impending status passage as they considered and anticipate pregnancy. In this chapter the focus shifts to a consideration of a key turning point (Strauss, 1959), suspicion and confirmation of pregnancy, and the entrance into expectant fatherhood. According to Strauss (1959) a status passage involves developments or transformations, self-change, and important incidents or events that serve as turning points resulting in a cognitive change and misalignments, such as "surprise, shock, chagrin, anxiety, tension, bafflement, self-questioning" (Strauss, 1959: 93). The ethnographic literature emphasizes the role of emotions and stresses that it is not uncommon for people to experience emotionality as they enter into a new situation, event, or activity (Prus, 1996). According to Prus (1996: 174) the "expressions of emotions and gestures are not inherently meaningful but rather reflect the social context in which people find themselves". The emotional states develop out of the interactions, meanings attributed to the event, and the situation at hand. Strauss's (1959) conceptualization of a status passages also emphasizes recognition of self-change that I am not the same as I once was and an announcement that directly, or indirectly, points to the awareness of the entrance into the new status.

In respect to the men's entrance, becoming pregnant is the second stage in men's status passage. Becoming pregnant involves a key turning point and recognition of self-change as they confirm pregnancy and incorporate details of reorientation and announcing the news of pregnancy to others. Becoming pregnant initiates the men more completely, and on a sustained (Prus, 1997) basis, into expectant fatherhood and the pregnancy event. While confirmations were somewhat surreal, the entrance into expectant fatherhood and the starting a pregnancy is temporal having implications in the present, future, and longer term. The men are not passive recipients of a new status. Men are actively engaged and we find that their conceptions start to change direction and they refocus their attention to the present situation and how to deal with and manage the pregnancy. Further, the men are initially concerned with and change their attention to their sense of self and the future-oriented task of fathering and what that means. Informing others draws attention to the importance of men's relationships and completes the turning point. The experiences and recollections of men, both past and present, are once again a guide. Utilizing the sequencing of the natural history, becoming pregnant initiates men into expectant fatherhood, the pregnancy event, and deals with the matters of: (a) discovering pregnancy; (b) reorienting oneself; and (c) informing others.

### **Discovering Pregnancy**

Utilizing Strauss's (1959) notion of turning points, the change to men's lives and conceptions starts as they discover pregnancy. Attending to the process of how men enter into the turning point and new status, the first part of men's turning point occurs as

they become suspicious of conception. The initial indicator that stimulates the suspicion of conception to the men is the changing physiology of their partners. Indicating a potential pregnancy, the most uniform and obvious physical change in their partners that they viewed as a sign of pregnancy is the late or absent menstrual cycle:

*Her period has always been like clockwork so when it wasn't happening [and] just as every day went on . . . it seemed more and more likely. Dale.*

In most cases, suspicion was contingent on either the men's, or their partners', awareness of the physical changes. However, friends of the couple may also facilitate the awareness and suspicion of pregnancy:

*Shortly after we had tried . . . and she was at a friends house . . . She got up . . . feeling very ill . . . just after three she gives me a call on the cell phone and says it went away . . . I said 'ok' and I hung up the phone . . . and my buddy I told him that she is feeling better. He comes and says, 'let me be the first to congratulate you' . . . 'that can only mean one thing' . . . I guess he was the first to congratulate me . . . I just brushed him off and said 'awe you're full of it and said oh that's not right' but inside I was thinking, yeah, he's right. David.*

When this occurred the men were concerned with not acknowledging to friends that a pregnancy is starting, especially that early.

Initial suspicion and confirmations were followed up quite quickly with official tests at the doctor's office:

*It was kind of strange we missed the first trimester . . . finally there were a few things that I said oh maybe you are pregnant . . . We did the test at home and . . . it was like bang, bang, bang, one week we did the test, the next week we went to the doctor . . . [and] at that point we were totally confident. Dillon.*

For some, suspicion and home pregnancy tests were an adequate indicator of conception, whereas others defined a visit to the doctor as an official verification that finalized the suspicion and conception:

*It wasn't like we hadn't been prepared for it . . . with this one we kind of knew so it wasn't a real surprise. It was just a finalization when we got the doctors word. Greg.*

Acknowledging the variation in the ways men experience and receive confirmation, we also find that men vary in their involvement in the confirmation. In some cases the men were present at the doctors office, whereas, in other cases the men were not involved at the doctor's office and received official confirmation from their partners later. In the case of the unplanned pregnancy, the partners' disclosure of the pregnancy did not occur until she was certain that the pregnancy was underway. Here, the suspicion of pregnancy was bypassed and he entered into a turning point, new status and the pregnancy event upon the partner receiving official confirmation:

*She would have liked for me to be there when the doctor said yes, your pregnant . . . We talked about having kids and a family . . . for when we were married 2 years from now . . . So she was unsure what to tell me [and] she wanted to make sure herself that she was pregnant before she told me . . . not "I think I am pregnant". She wanted to say, "yes, I am" or "no, I am not" . . . I kind of wished I had been there. Jared.*

Although most confirmations were fairly straightforward, some results of testing for conception were negative and inconclusive:

*We were leaving for our honeymoon for Jamaica and she actually did two home pregnancy tests . . . We got a blood test when we left and phoned from Jamaica and the tests were 'inconclusive' so we couldn't find out . . . the not knowing was a little frustrating because we had took the precautions and went to the effort to get the tests done . . . So that was a little frustrating not knowing. Greg.*

Receiving negative results could potentially stop men from entering the turning point, new status, and start of a pregnancy. When negative results occur, the men remain in limbo with their status passage. If the difficulties continue over a long period of time, the

men may find themselves back in the anticipatory stage and impending status beginning to consider and plan the start of a pregnancy once again.

*We actually had difficulty becoming pregnant. We tried for a period of time and then we went to a fertility clinic . . . It was six years from when we started before we had our first child . . . it was painstaking and it was a very difficult emotional roller coaster . . . The stress of not being able to become pregnant was just a real traumatic experience . . . it's hard . . . when you keep going through it over the years and different specialists and different procedures. Daniel.*

They may also find themselves managing emotionality, disappointment, and seeking ways to deal with the problem of trying to become pregnant. Focusing on the changing physiology of the partner, purchasing a home pregnancy test, and going to the doctor for a subsequent or follow up test were the main events that raised and confirmed the potential pregnancy to be real.

Initiating men into the key turning point and new status, the men's reactions are misaligned and they swing between positive and negative self-feelings. Despite the fact that pregnancy was confirmed there were still many experiences yet to come. Building on Strauss's (1959) assertion that the entrance into a new status is accompanied by misalignments, we find men in the process of coming to terms with the new change to their lives. The turning point in men's conceptions and reaction to the reality of child is accompanied by misalignments and mixed feelings that are both positive and negative:

*I didn't know how to react. I was excited but I was scared. I had every single emotion going through me . . . like for the most of it I knew I was happy, but then all those fears started filtering in. Jared.*

*[When it was actually confirmed] I think I felt partly a lot of apprehension and of course part joy that we were going to have a baby, you know and that I was going to be a father. David.*

In some cases, the men were surprised, startled, and scared after they receive confirmation of pregnancy:

*In some senses it was unexpected . . . it was in the back of my mind that it was possible . . . [But,] it was a bit of a startle because I wasn't expecting it to be that soon. It definitely was a happy kind of startle because it was something we wanted . . . It was a bit of a startle [and] . . . it was kind of scary. Keith.*

In other cases, the men were shocked and caught off guard even though they planned to have a child:

*You don't know what to think of it when the actual possibility happens. It just catches you off guard even though you are expecting it. It's just until the whole process starts it's still that thing in the future. It hasn't happened yet and then once you get verification from the doctor 'yes, you are pregnant', you go wow we're into this now. Art.*

The men who were in their first pregnancy experienced anxiety because it is a new and first experience. The men who had been through a few pregnancies were still experiencing anxiety, shock, and fear because of not knowing how the subsequent child would change their lives and the uncertainty in knowing how things would proceed during this pregnancy:

*The first one was shock . . . so was the second one. I guess it's always some level of shock because it's going to change your life . . . and you have to wonder what's going to happen . . . I guess the most fear is . . . as a father, you just want to make sure . . . that the baby is healthy and hope that everything is going along to that point. Dalton.*

Although there may also be excitement, anxiety, fear, and shock that accompanies the news of pregnancy, confirmation may also mean that worries about initiating pregnancy subside:

*We wanted confirmation [and] once that took place there was . . . sort of a relief, to some extent knowing that ok this test . . . seems to indicate a pregnancy . . . I*

*think we said well 'wow it looks like we are going to become parents' . . . The confirmation was a nice thing to know. It was definitely an exciting thing. Dale.*

While men vary in their reaction to confirmation, it served as a key turning point that illustrates an initial awareness of the change to their lives. The men's misalignments in their emotional response to suspicion and confirmation not only emphasizes the surprise, shock, fear, and tension Strauss (1959) characterizes, but the men are also excited, elated, and happy at the turning point. Although men may not enter into the pregnancy event and status passage in exactly the same way or at the same time, they all entered into the new status and event feeling a variety of emotions to the new reality.

### **Reorienting Oneself**

With the confirmation of pregnancy underway the men were no longer concerned with plans, trying to conceive, or suspecting pregnancy; but rather, they realign their conceptions and lives to the new development and status. Immediately after confirmation and the turning point, the men process not only their feelings but also begin to process the meaning of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. The shift or change to the terms of the men lives is characterized by an initial, intermittent, and ongoing change in the direction of their conceptions, activities, and lives.

Part of the initial alteration in the men's focus and conceptions is towards their partners. The men begin to re-evaluate their partners and attend to them in terms of being pregnant. The re-evaluation and central point of attention, in some cases, was on the changes the pregnancy would bring. Anticipating what is involved in pregnancy and a



concern for the health of the pregnant partners were evident as the men spoke of their changing focus:

*[I was] leaning more towards just anticipating what the pregnancy [and] how that was going to change us . . . making sure that my wife is healthy and safe. We've always been pretty commonsensical about dealing with things in the immediate and then focusing on the longer term to a lesser degree. Keith.*

In some cases, when pregnancy was a first-time experience there was a greater concern with the pregnancy and what it would be like for the partner:

*It was a challenge . . . I knew that everything would be a progression. The pregnancy would be it's own challenge because I didn't know where my wife would be at. Like, would it be a difficult pregnancy? It was taken in stages. My first thoughts were towards how my wife would do over the next . . . seven and a half months. Dale.*

With their lives changing, men concerns about finances were an issue or anxiety for some once again:

*I was scared because at that time the [place where] I was working just closed because of ministry cut backs. So I was working part-time and so was my wife. So, I was really worried financially about how we were going to be able to support the child. Jared.*

Although preparations for the child are discussed further in chapter five, the changing terms of men's lives also initiates a focus on preparing for the child and on the changes that will need to take place before the arrival of the child:

*You start thinking about the things you need in preparation and . . . there's so much things you need, things like a crib and a change table, everything that was not there but fills that room [the baby's room] . . . that was not here originally . . . I knew I had time to get it but its in the back of my mind and you start thinking about these things. Art.*

*There were things almost to get in order . . . the focus was much more what's taking place now and you know what needs to be done these next months. Dale.*

While some men found themselves focusing on the pregnancy, another dimension of the status change deal with the reorientation of their identity and sense of self.

Emphasizing Strauss's (1959) assertion that the shift in one's status may be slow and gradual, at some point it is accompanied by a self-questioning and recognition of the self-change. Men's reorientation involves a cognitive shift in focus as they come to terms with their changing sense of self:

*I was more focused on being a father. I come from a broken family . . . So that was a big scary thing - "Like, can I do this?" . . . So, I think I had put a lot of pressure on myself that way and that's why it's so important to me. Kyle.*

Here, we find men engaging in self-reflectivity, self-questioning, and assessing who they are in relation to the new development:

*Yeah [I found myself thinking about being a father] all the time. Mostly, was I good enough to be a father? Could I be a good father? I think the biggest thing is I thought about all my imperfections and wondered if I could get a handle on those before the baby was born. Ed.*

Further, the attention to being a father was not concern free, or taken lightly.

Coming to terms with the changes in their lives also includes reorganizing their sense of self. In this respect, the self-questioning involved further inquiring about how they would handle the changes and a self-searching, such as can I live up to the expectations and demands of fathering:

*I was nervous or scared whether I would be able to stand up to the preconceived notion of being a father . . . live up to one's expectations. Anthony.*

Further, the men's changing focus oriented around the new development brought about a questioning of the meaning of a parent and self-doubt in regards to their ability to parent:

*Even though its something you started the process for, you know you are going to be a parent some time soon. Still it's, awe, 'what does it mean to be a parent?' It*

*starts to eat at you a bit at that point . . . I don't know if everyone has doubts but you always wonder 'if I am up for the task'? Just thinking about it is a big responsibility . . . [I] realiz[ed] that no one becomes a father of a five-year-old over night. Art.*

In some cases, the concern with the changes to the terms of the men's lives developed out of the newness of the change and their idealistic perspective on who they desired to be in relation to the new child:

*Being a father . . . it was a challenge that . . . I haven't encountered to this degree. So, once it actually sunk in . . . I was going to be a father . . . I kind of realized oh, oh, I don't know what those aspects are . . . I really wanted to make sure that I would be the best father and to challenge myself in every aspect of being a father. Jared.*

Not only do we find that men recognize the change to the terms of their lives but we also find that that men start to realize the permanence of the change. Although Strauss (1959) states that it is in the announcement where we find the recognition and forward facing aspect of the new status, here we find that as the men consider the changes they are conscious of the permanence of having children and the changes the child will bring to their lives:

*There's the thinking that this [pregnancy] is going to be a huge change. It's going to be something that you can't bring the child back to the other parents. It's something that is yours for the next fifty years. Keith.*

From the moment of recognition the men's focus and conceptions about their partners and themselves change and adjust. The men's priorities start to adjust to the new developments and they refocus their sense of self and lives:

*The whole process has started you are going to be a parent in nine months from now your priorities change and from that moment you start changing. Art.*

Undertaking a process of reorientation and realigning, we find that the men start to look at their partners, themselves, and their lives in a different manner. The men's conceptions begin to shift and they initially start to evaluate their partners from this new development and change. They also start evaluating themselves from the new status and engage in self-reflectivity, self-questioning, and self-assessment of who they are in relation to the developing child. Here, we also find an awareness and concern with the permanence of the change to their lives. Despite the variation and inability to pinpoint the exact moment of recognition, the entrance into expectant fatherhood is evident by the self-questioning of the men and the reorientation around the changes the new status and event brings.

### **Informing Others**

Although the recognition of the changing terms of the men's lives is evident as the men refocus their lives around the new event and status, Strauss (1959) also states that announcements indirectly, or directly, point to the recognition of self-change and entrance into the new status. While the men's reorientation illustrates recognition of self-change, the announcements of the men further illustrate the change to the terms of their lives and the importance of their relationships with others. As men begin to come to terms with the changes, they begin to disclose the news to others in their social world. Disclosing and informing others of the news is not as straightforward as it would seem. Societal messages emphasize that the first trimester of a pregnancy is the most critical

and most likely time for women to experience a miscarriage, thus the announcement of the news is somewhat ambiguous.

The pregnancy is a pending event where complications could impact the reality of becoming a father to the child. Hence, the men's announcements involved matters of timing. The announcements to others often hinged on the first trimester remaining problem free:

*We were going to wait until we were out of the first trimester before we mentioned anything to anybody . . . I was a little apprehensive because if there were problems in the pregnancy you would be able to see it in the first three months [and] . . . it's always in the back of my mind that there's a potential there for it to happen. Keith.*

Concerns about losing the child particularly worried those who were familiar with some of the problems of pregnancy, or who have friends that have recently been through a miscarriage:

*We decided to speak about it after three months and the reason behind it was there was always a chance of a problem . . . a miscarriage . . . That happened to my wife's friend [she lost the child]. She was pregnant at the same time as my wife. Frank.*

Attending to the diversity in experience, waiting to announce the news in some cases involved the desire to avoid having to go back and un-tell everyone that the pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. Consequently, for some there were two parts to waiting and announcing the news. The closest people in their lives were told the news early, whereas, the rest were informed later:

*We avoided telling anybody who weren't close. We figured that if we lost the baby 'who would we tell?' and whoever we came up with we would tell, which were close friends and family. We would tell them if we lost the baby . . . so we told them early . . . Eventually we told everybody. Ed.*

While for most waiting to tell others developed out of their concern about complications, in one case this was not so. Acknowledging the diversity, waiting to announce the news was a way to get back at parents that were over zealous in their emphasis on starting a family:

*[Waiting to tell people] . . . that was just my wife's way of getting back at her family for asking every time we got together, so are you pregnant yet . . . So, she wouldn't tell anyone . . . until she wanted to tell them. Kyle.*

Although most of the men waited some period of time before disclosing the news, the respondent that received confirmation in the third month of the pregnancy were inclined to announce the news quite quickly:

*We were comparatively farther along when we found out that we were pregnant . . . We waited two weeks until we had the ultrasound pictures and then we talked to my parents . . . it wasn't very long before we told people. Dillon.*

As well, the one man who had been through pregnancy twice before also informed others quickly and the announcement was not subject to the completion of the first trimester:

*We didn't wait . . . I just called my parents and awe she told her probably better friends, maybe two or three people . . . My wife was showing. I guess because of the frequency of the kids . . . there was no way to hide it. Dalton.*

Further, friends and family members who knew that the one couple was trying to conceive were also informed of the news shortly after confirmation:

*[We told] her sisters . . . they were very much in the loop sort of all along . . . knowing that we were trying and that so they found out I'm sure within a day or two . . . almost as early as we knew. Dale.*

The ways men informed others started with those who were closest to them. Those who were not as close were involved later, on an intermittent basis:

*We told my parents and then we told her parents and you sort of work out from there in concentric sort of circles of closeness. So her siblings and my siblings*

*and then grandparents and then sort of good friends . . . and after that we sort of . . . figured we could tell anybody else when we ran into them. Dillon.*

Although informing others was important, the men vary in how they went about disseminating the news. In some cases, men announced the news through a phone call:

*My mother-in-law . . . we called her up on the phone . . . she was going to be coming for a visit . . . around May, which was my wife's due date. So, I said to her on the phone, 'Mom, can you do me a favor? Can you stay an extra week during that time?' . . . 'Oh before I forget, I thought of a new baby name.' . . . 'What is it?' And I said, 'How about you ask it when you talk to the baby in May'. Ed.*

In other cases, the men were inclined to be creative. Creativity may stem from those who have gone before and what they did to inform family and friends:

*We were hoping to make it a bit of an event . . . we read stories about how others have revealed their upcoming birth. So that was helpful to maybe get little ideas because we didn't have anything clear in mind. Dale.*

Some of the ways men disclose occurred by sending out announcements:

*With my family I sent out little cards saying you know we're going to have a baby and that kind of thing. Keith.*

Another more creative way of disclosing was by using a catchy saying such as a child is mom and pop art:

*I always looked forward to . . . when I could share [the news] at work . . . I looked for quotes about what it meant to be parents . . . I ended up using one 'A child is . . . mom and pop art'. So the subject [of the e-mail] was mom and pop art and then I used the quote and . . . made it clear . . . that my wife and I are . . . pleased to announce . . . that we expect to welcome a child. Dale.*

Yet, others disclosed by using different baby symbols such as setting a place at the table for the baby when friends were over for a meal:

*One that we did with . . . friends was . . . we had a little bowl, a jar of baby food, and a little spoon . . . set as another place at the table and they didn't really notice anything until like the end. They were like 'are you planning to do*

*something with that? ' We almost had to say like ok why would we have this and then it all became very, wow, wow, wow. Dale.*

Drawing attention to the selectivity in relationships, there were only a few cases where the men avoided informing particular individuals. Avoidance of these individuals represented concerns about unpleasant and negative reactions:

*I didn't tell them . . . my mom, my grandmother, my father, and my sister. I don't speak to them [and] I didn't go out of my way to phone them up and tell them. Greg.*

*My grandparents I was worried . . . like I had done something wrong. That was the only time [I avoided telling someone] . . . I'm not a practicing Catholic but my grandparents are . . . that's the only people we really avoided telling. Jared.*

While the news of pregnancy is disseminated in a number of ways, the reactions from family and friends on the whole were congratulatory and excited for the expectant father and their partners:

*Everybody was really happy . . . we got a couple of really ecstatic reactions from my brother and my wife's sister in law . . . They were extremely, extremely excited . . . It's nice to have your excitement reciprocated . . . There is the cool congratulations, the semi excited, and then there was the really exotic exciting . . . shrieks of joy kind of thing. That was amusing and very gratifying. Dillon.*

*She wasn't listening to what I said and then all the sudden you hear this pause . . . she goes, 'Really?' She just broke down. She couldn't talk . . . and she was screaming and crying so hard. Her husband . . . grabs the phone, 'What happened?' . . . I told him and he's like, 'awe, no wonder.' . . . She was so excited and she gets back on the phone, 'how many are there?'. Ed.*

Similar to men's decision to start a pregnancy, the men's announcements involved matters of timing. At times, the men wait to disclose the news because of their concern about losing the child during the first trimester. Those who were familiar the problems of pregnancy were more concerned with not disclosing the news until the completion of the



first trimester. Acknowledging the importance of relationships and selectivity in relationships, we find that the men told the closer people in their lives first. Then, they worked their way out to the broader network of friends and acquaintances. The ways the news was announced to others in some cases was uninspiring, whereas, in other cases the men were quite concerned that they were creative and imaginative in announcing the news to family, friends, acquaintances, and co-workers.

### **Summary**

The chapter started with a discussion of becoming pregnant and a key turning point as men enter into a new status and the pregnancy event. Building on Strauss's (1959) notion of turning points and self-change, consideration was given to three dimensions of becoming pregnant and how men discover pregnancy, initially process and reorient the change to their lives, and inform others. Although each entrance into expectant fatherhood and the pregnancy may vary, we first find that men discover pregnancy through suspicion of their partners late, or absent, menstrual cycle. Following up suspicions with confirmatory tests, men were experiencing misalignments (Strauss, 1959) and mixed feelings. Although, on the one hand, the new development was exciting, relieving, and elating, the men were also shocked, surprised, scared, apprehensive, caught off guard, and fearful of the new change to their lives. Herein, the men experience a key turning point and change to the circumstances of their lives as they enter into the new status.

While not all men are attuned in exactly the same way to the full impact of the confirmatory news, the importance of the change, and to their conceptions of themselves and their partners is illustrated by the reorientation to the new development. The initial alteration in the men's reorientation involved a new conception of their partners as pregnant. They are concerned for her health and how the pregnancy would progress. The reorientation process also involved a concern for the new object - the fetus - developing in the womb of their partners. A further change to the men's direction, conceptions, and to the terms of their lives involved a focus on, and realignment of, their sense of self. Here we find that the reorientation and realignment process of the men included self-questioning, self-assessment, and an initial recognition of who they are in relationship to the object, the developing child, and the new status as an expectant father. We also find men concerned with the permanence of the change to their lives.

Informing others illustrates the importance of men's relationships. It also serves as another indicator of the men's awareness of their changing life and entrance into the new status and event. Given the ambiguous nature of pregnancy, some waited for the completion of first trimester before announcing, whereas others involved family and friends quickly. Denoting the importance of the men's relationships, the men first inform the people in their lives that they were close to, and then move out to their wider network of people who were not so close. They chose not to inform individuals who were perceived as difficult or negative. The men utilize a variety of ways and activities to inform others of the news.

Few studies have focused on men's experience of becoming pregnant and the key turning point that facilitates their entrance into a new status and event. The main assertion of the chapter contributes to the theoretical and conceptual literature on involvements and status passages by illustrating the involvement of the men and their self-directed reorientation and alignment as they enter into the new status and event. In this respect, the main story of the chapter is about how men enter into expectant fatherhood and pregnancy. Contributing an examination of their entrance, we find that there are developments and transformations taking place as the men begin to attach significance and value to the confirmation of pregnancy. The men commence and become involved in a process of reorientation and realignment of their conceptions, sense of self, and lives. Men are not passive in accepting the new status but rather begin a process of understanding what the new development means for their partners and themselves.

The chapter also attends to the diversity, variation, and similarities in experience as they work out their lives around the entrance into the new status and event. Although the men were reorienting their self-conceptions, they are also mindful of the changes to their partners. Their changing conceptions include a perspective of their partners as pregnant. Being in a relationship with other successors is as equally important in this stage as it was in the anticipatory stage. Predecessors such as family and friends were less important at this stage, although we find that the men include them. The men's entrance into the new status and event can be said to commence once they discover pregnancy, reorient themselves, and inform others of the news. Having considered

becoming pregnant and the passage into expectant fatherhood, our attention now turns to the pregnancy term and further involvement, and managing the changes in their lives.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **EXPERIENCING PREGNANCY**

Chapter Four addressed becoming pregnant, a key turning point and how men enter into expectant fatherhood and the pregnancy event. The focus now shifts to consider men's continued involvement (Prus, 1997) and management of the change to their lives. The literature on men's experience of pregnancy is sparse emphasizing the negative aspects of becoming a father. Other literature maintains that men are able to identify with the pregnant woman through couvade or sympathy pains (Anzalone and Phillips, 1982). However, the literature on status passages sheds light on men's experience of pregnancy. This literature states that as people enter more completely into a new status old conceptions are replaced complex conceptions that result in terminology shifts and changing behaviors (Strauss, 1959). The entrance into the new status is also accompanied by "a need to try out the new self, to explore and validate the new and often exciting or fearful conceptions" (Strauss, 1959: 91).

The focus of the chapter is on how men experience the pregnancy term and engage in managing the new status and event. One dimension of how the men deal with and manage the change transpires through the desire to learn about the unknown aspects of their partner's pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. Engaging in learning activities, in both informal and formal settings, the men's conceptions become more detailed and

complex. In listening to men, one gains an appreciation of their prior experience with pregnancies of friends or siblings, the self-directed learning activities; as well as, learning activities that occurs in conjunction and association with others. A further dimension of how men deal with and manage the changes to their lives is revealed as they begin to accommodate the pregnancy. Men begin to act towards their partners in a manner that takes the pregnancy into account. Men's activities change and they provide support to their partners, curtail activities, and participate in new activities such as prenatal appointments. The final dimension of the passage considers how men relate to the developing child through ongoing confirmations, by talking to the fetus, and making preparations for the arrival of the infant. Men's experiences and recollections, both past and present, once again are a guide. Utilizing the sequencing of the natural history, men's experience of the pregnancy term and expectant fatherhood deals with matters of: (a) learning about pregnancy and expectant fatherhood; (b) accommodating the pregnancy; and (c) relating to the developing child.

### **Learning about Pregnancy and Expectant Fatherhood**

Although men's status passage involved a refocusing as they reorient their lives, men's conceptual change continues to develop as they learn, informally and formally, about pregnancy, the developing child, and expectant fatherhood. Learning is one of the most distinct and unique aspects of living and participating in human group life and a component of how people develop definitions, attribute meanings, engage in activities, and how they make sense of the world (Livingstone, 1999; Prus, 1997). In the academic

and social sphere there are diverse bodies of knowledge and a number of ways to learn about the new development. Building on Strauss's (1959) notion that status passages are accompanied by terminology shifts, men were engaged in a number of learning activities. They seek out new ways to understand and manage the ongoing changes.

Strauss (1959) emphasizes that predecessors may forewarn, foretell, coach, or tutor one through the unknown aspects of a status change, the changes to the men's conceptions came from predecessors as well, but not in expected ways, and not exclusively. Men's changing conceptions were facilitated by a number of people in their social world whom were predecessors (i.e. family and friends), successors (i.e. partners, others who were pregnant at the same time), and others (i.e. health nurses, midwives, service providers, and the like). Men's learning activities also includes an analysis of what they are interested in and deem important to learn.

There were activities where men acquire knowledge prior to their entrance into the pregnancy event and expectant fatherhood. Being a supplementary participant to the pregnancies of other predecessors such as friends was one prior experientially based learning opportunity. Participating in another's pregnancy provided a familiarity with the field of pregnancy and birth, as well as, an understanding of some of the terminology, techniques, and technologies utilized by the experts:

*I was a birthing coach for a friend . . . because her boyfriend skipped out on her . . . Coming into this pregnancy I did have some background [on] what to expect . . . I knew what things were going to be coming and it got me familiar with a lot of the terms . . . like what it an epidural is . . . It prepared me emotionally [and] . . . it just introduced [me] into the whole field. Art.*

Another opportunity for the men to learn about pregnancy transpired through third party witnessing when predecessors (Strauss, 1959) such as siblings were starting to have children:

*Two of my sisters have had children before . . . We have definitely been around pregnant women before and knew what was going to happen as far as that goes. Kyle.*

Despite the opportunity to learn through these avenues, indepth knowledge of all the intricate details of being pregnant were not learned:

*Siblings of mine had all gone through it, so from that I had some third party understanding. It's nothing like having that type of experience you have yourself. . . I had some idea, yes, but the intricate details, no. Dalton.*

These activities did not provide an opportunity for men to learn about the day-to-day aspects and the toll pregnancy may take overtime:

*My two sister-in-laws, I'd seen them go through the pregnancy . . . You see them at a family function . . . [and] at their best . . . when they've got make-up on and everything else . . . You don't see the day-to-day grind it takes on [or] . . . anything else behind the scenes, the morning sickness, cramps . . . Until you go through it on your own and you do it day-to-day, you don't know what you're getting into. Randy.*

Although prior experiential learning were helpful, a greater part of the learning occurred during the men's own experience of pregnancy.

Learning about the new change to their lives is an intermittent activity and occurs more rigorously during the pregnancy. Expanding on Strauss's (1959) notion that predecessors forewarn, coach, or tutor the successor, we find men learn about the unknowns of pregnancy through the advice provided by other predecessors in their social world. The advice the men received from predecessors not only covered a variety of



topics, but also what they and their pregnant partners should and should not do during the pregnancy:

*Everyone has their opinions awe and everyone has their advice whether correct or not . . . everyone tries to share their wisdom . . . one story everyone comes up with is the mothers cravings . . . the physical, emotional responses of the wife a lot of talking about that. And there's the one that your life changes for good and I'd always play around, yeah I know my life's changing now, I'm enjoying it now . . . because I won't have freedom then. Art.*

*Everybody's got stories, everybody's got advice, dos and don'ts, especially if they've gone through it. Even some aunts that haven't had kids and they've got stories . . . people are always telling you what you can and can't do. Randy.*

Men also distinguish, evaluate (Prus, 1997), and attach value (Strauss, 1959) to the advice and knowledge provided by others in their social world:

*We took most advice with a grain of salt. Everybody gives you different advice and you got to filter through it and make you own decisions and that's how we went into it . . . we do what we want to and not what people are telling us . . . what we should . . . or shouldn't be doing. Jared.*

Men may disregard advice when the character of the person was in question. They may also disregard those who were not thoughtful in the advice they supplied:

*If I get a feeling if the person that is offering me advice hasn't put much thought into it I won't pay too much attention to it because I think my ability to judge a person . . . I have a good understanding of what they're saying is a load of crap or if it actually has some merit to it. Keith.*

Men were inclined to attach value to the advice they received from those who were knowledgeable on a subject:

*There's one lady . . . who is a nurse who's knowledgeable and has taught prenatal classes. We had a number of informal discussions with her just chatting and she lent us a lot of pieces from her private library on various aspects of pregnancy and early childhood. Dillon.*

Although Strauss (1959) emphasizes predecessors, Prus (1997) stresses the importance of being in relationships and how a number of people may facilitate the new members adjustment to the situation (Prus, 1996, 1997). In this respect, the men also learn about the changing terms of their lives through their partners. In some cases, the men's partners play an integral part in their learning strategy:

*My wife did a lot of reading before . . . and a lot when she was pregnant . . . on the whole pregnancy process, what to expect, [and] all different theories on child raising . . . She would discuss them with me and let me know what she had found out, then she would summarize, and that's sort of my method of education.*  
Daniel.

The partners' relaying information provided insight into some of the unknowns or weird occurrences during pregnancy:

*She did all the reading and then relayed it too me . . . She's big into the books and looking things up 'well what does this mean' and you know self-diagnosing [what it was]. There were a lot of weird things happening when you are pregnant.*  
David.

The partners' dissemination of information is also related to how the men make sense of the changes to their partners and understand her experience of pregnancy. The men stress at length the importance and value of learning about what the partners' are experiencing and feeling throughout the duration of the pregnancy. Further, seeing similar materials in the literature to what their partners' were experiencing during the pregnancy provided a legitimacy that helped their understanding and acceptance of the changes:

*I wanted to know what physical changes to expect . . . and [the] feelings she's having and just the fact that she's going to need time alone, she's going to be emotional . . . It's important that you know those things . . . If you're seeing it in a book, you kind of go 'ok I'll give her the benefit of the doubt or I'll listen to her at*

*least' . . . She'd say, 'Don't talk to me, I'm emotional' and she'd walk away and 'I'd be like, ok, it's in the book . . . I'm ok with that'. Randy.*

While the partners impart knowledge about themselves, they may also impart knowledge about the developing child. Men stress that it was important to learn about and understand what was going on in the womb:

*Before bed she would read to me a couple passages of what the baby looked like . . . It had pictures in the book and what the baby looks like now and . . . I really wanted to know about those things because I could close my eyes and picture what that baby was looking like . . . I wanted to know what was happening inside. Ed.*

Learning activities with their partners also provided men with an opportunity to become more involved and feel a part of what was going on:

*It was good because she would tell me the size of the baby and what sort of things were developing. Whether it had eyelids yet, or whether it had fingers, or finger nails, what sort of internal organs it had and that was good to know . . . It was good to keep me involved in the pregnancy so I could know what was going on. Kyle.*

Men were interested in what was going on and attended to knowledge or information relayed from their partners. Knowing the pregnant partners' experiences provided an opportunity to understand what she is going through and become knowledgeable of what to expect. The partners are important in facilitating and explaining the unknown aspects of pregnancy. Further, the partners are important in facilitating the men's changing conceptions about pregnancy because of the first hand information and experience they can impart about what is happening to them. The learning activities of the men with their partners are related to how the men's conceptions of their partners as pregnant are developed.

Similar to learning about pregnancy, the self-directed learning of the men was an important part of understanding what happens during pregnancy. In some cases, the men's self-directed learning developed out of their own learning style and utilizing a variety of sources:

*[I read] everything . . . everyday articles like newspaper articles . . . down to . . . journal publications, textbooks, videos, . . . and even patient education from the OB . . . I don't turn my nose up . . . until I get a feel for what I am reading. The parenting magazines can be a good starting source . . . obviously they are directed more towards the average reader . . . If [I] want to go deeper . . . [I] can do that. Keith.*

In other cases, the self-directed learning is focused on understanding the potential problems during pregnancy. Acquiring knowledge of the potential problems was important to preparing potential lines of action (Prus, 1997) should an issue develop:

*I . . . read at least 20 books. I was looking around at the different problems . . . One of a little concern was the test for the amniocentesis and we discussed it . . . and we chose not to. The reason being that . . . the intervention may cause a problem . . . We were aware of some of the problems . . . and [we wanted] to be prepared . . . There's some people where it happens and we could have also been in that situation. Frank.*

Further, the information may be useful in explaining the unexpected changes that may develop during the pregnancy. It may also be helpful to avoiding unnecessary trips to the doctor:

*It was very important to get information about the pregnancy . . . because we're dealing with an unknown here and not knowing what we're getting into [and] you don't want to be calling your doctor every minute, every second . . . I think it's very important to have information at your hands so you can figure out what's going on. Art.*

Having information available was also important to understanding and anticipating the changes they may encounter during the pregnancy event:

*I . . . read on a daily basis what changes are taking place and that's interesting . . . reading that and trying to anticipate what's too come. Keith.*

When it came to information about pregnancy, some utilized commercially based organizations through the Internet. Men signed up to a web-based service that was geared towards expectant fathers. Information provided by this web-based service was ongoing weekly information dissemination about the changes that their pregnant partners may be experiencing:

*There was this Internet thing that I had signed up for. It was very useful for me to get that weekly stimulation - ok, here's what's happening to her right now. It helped give me perspective on what some of the issues she was dealing with right now. Art.*

The weekly update also informed men about the development of the fetus and how it was changing. The update provided an opportunity for the men to follow the pregnancy and the development of the child more closely than reading a book:

*They keep you up-to-date . . . Every week of the pregnancy they would say what was going on . . . as opposed to three months, six months, nine months . . . They would [also] say your baby can do this in the womb . . . It was neat to know how they were progressing as opposed to fetus very early to all the sudden there is a fully developed baby . . . I'm not sure I would of followed it so closely in a book. Dale.*

Much of the self-directed learning activities of the men were focused around pregnancy and gathering information for a specific purpose and learning about specific procedures, tests for the mother, and the fetus. Lines of action, plans, or decisions may develop out of the learning activities and new materials they were engaging.

Men may also engage in formal learning activities as part of their learning.

Formal learning is often discussed in the sociological literature in terms of the educational system and fulltime study in school (Livingstone, 1999). Herein, formal

learning is defined as learning that occurs in a setting where the expert disseminates knowledge and information to teach expectant parents. Although there were a number of formal learning opportunities, prenatal classes were the main formal learning activities of the men.

Prenatal classes have existed for some time, becoming popular during the 1960's and 1970's, and are continually changing. For instance:

*The doctor used to calculate the due date by the first time there was movement and women would go past there due date. Now it's calculated from the last menstrual cycle. Doctors won't let a women go four weeks past due. There is a better outcome if the baby comes out on time . . . Ultrasounds are used to pinpoint the due date (Field Notes, January 2001).*

During my participant observation, I found that the prenatal classes were temporal in essence as they provided knowledge of pregnancy, and prepared men for the birth, and postpartum adjustment. Prenatal classes provide a range of information about pregnancy and the changes to the woman and the fetus:

*In the first 3 months . . . women may experience nausea . . . and have no energy. This protects the baby . . . In the first 3 months the baby is about as big as their father's thumb. At 26 weeks the baby starts to gain about a half a pound per week. You may find that you start to feel a shortness of breath and sharp pains as a result of the ligaments stretching. (Field Notes, January 2001).*

Other information provided by the health nurse is practical advice:

*At the end of the pregnancy lower your standards with regards to keeping the house cleaned and accomplishing all the tasks that need to get done before the baby is born. Partners should lower their standards of the pregnant partner as well. (Field Notes, January 2001).*

Another dimension of teaching focused on the stages of labor, such as early labor, active labor, transition, pushing, birth, and delivery of the placenta. Discussions of birth emphasized the men's involvement and role during birth. For example, she provided

illustrations of how men could assist their partners and help their partners with positioning, massaging, and providing birthing support (Field Notes, January 2001). The health nurse also provided information and explained different procedures, technologies used during labor such as the baby heart monitor, and pain relief available to the laboring woman such as the epidural and gas.

Postnatal adjustment focused on the hospital stay, going home, safety in taking the child home (i.e. car seat safety, sudden infant death syndrome), taking care of oneself (i.e. getting sleep, eating properly, and how he can support in breast-feeding), as well as, how to deal with friends and visitors. It was also mentioned that the new parents “may be nervous when they go home because it is such a short stay but there are lots of services available to new parents” (Field Notes, January 2001). Some of the other changes in the hospital are that:

*The hospital assessment unit . . . assesses how dilated you are, if you are not very far along they may send you home . . . come back when the contractions are stronger and closer . . . In the hospital after birth . . . you give yourself your own pain medicine . . . The baby . . . stays in your room . . . The partners are now more involved in the labor, the hospital stay. The father can stay with you and the baby on a cot. (Field Notes, January 2001).*

During the prenatal classes the health nurse also distributed information in the prenatal class kit. The prenatal class kit provided a number of pamphlets, advertisements, and sample products to try out. The advertisements and services provided information geared to expectant and new parents.

While the participant observation of prenatal classes provided the opportunity to understand the type of knowledge disseminated by the experts in the field, the men in the study did not participate in these particular classes. Thus, their experiences with prenatal

classes are not specific to the classes in which I participated. Men's formal learning occurred in a variety of settings such as prenatal classes, prenatal yoga classes, university courses, hospital tours and registration, obstetrician appointments and around a number of topics related to pregnancy, birth, and expectant fatherhood:

*We went [to prenatal yoga classes] to figure out what was safe and how far my wife should go in terms of exerting herself and keeping herself healthy . . . and what kind of exercising my wife should be doing to prepare herself. . [and] all the soft tissues [and] bones . . . to deal with that kind of trauma [birth]. Keith.*

Men vary in their interest and experience of the classes. Some enjoyed the classes were because of the opportunity to acquire information and to interact with other expectant parents:

*The program was just great. They provide the opportunity for interaction and it involves asking questions and talking about what we felt about various stages and what was happening. Plus it was a way to get a lot of information . . . I'd say that was probably one of the highlights about the pregnancy. Art.*

Other men were not so keen on the experience because of the lecturing style and the sharing of personal experience rather than useful information:

*They [prenatal classes] weren't a tremendously valuable experience . . . In general; I don't enjoy things like being sat down and being lectured to. I prefer to go at my own pace. Dillon.*

*I wasn't really a big fan of prenatal classes . . . because the lady who was teaching it . . . had four kids and she was just talking about her four kids and her personal experience, not what I should look for or what I felt. Jared.*

Similar to other ways of learning, part of men's learning in a formal setting included becoming knowledgeable of the potential problems that could arise during pregnancy and birth:

*[The health nurse] tried to temper you to some of the things that could go wrong . . . The things that could go wrong aren't necessarily bad [and only] temporary*



*like the shape of the head and the colour of the skin and the rating on [the] colour . . . You don't really know what abnormalities or things are going to happen so at least you've talked through it when you don't have the emotion. Daniel.*

Men's learning about pregnancy is quite encompassing and detailed. Being a supplementary or third party participant provided some information about pregnancy. The men utilized a number of sources and people, in both informal and formal settings, as they learned about pregnancy and the developing child. They also attend to the advice of others drawn from their social circles. The classes in which I participated were useful insofar as they provided an opportunity to understand what the experts felt were important to teach people. While men vary in their accounts and experience, there was an opportunity to learn and become involved in the pregnancy with their partners.

Although pregnancy related learning activities were important, an equal or greater extent of their learning activities was interrelated to their new status and how the men managed the new status. Similar to how men learn about pregnancy, men's prior perspectives on expectant fatherhood developed through interactions with other predecessors such as friends and their children. At times, the men found they interacted with their friends' children in a manner similar to how they would parent:

*There were a couple of cases where . . . I started to notice kids around me more and friends with kids. You know, I would have interaction with them that would seem a little different because I was thinking in terms of, well you know soon, soon it's time for me to have kids and these would be my kids. DW.*

The men would also watch other predecessors and how they interact with children:

*I have friends who have little kids [and] I always interact with them. You always have the attentive ear . . . you watch and see how they interact with their kids . . . you pick things up that way. Like there's one friend of ours he's had the kid for three months and he's been a father now for a couple months . . . I just keep my eye on him and the way he interacts with his daughter. Art.*

During the pregnancy and expectant fatherhood the men's learning activities were more focused and detailed. Similar to learning about pregnancy, men also utilized the Internet and signed up to a web-based service for expectant fathers. Information and materials provided by the service were from other male predecessors and their experience of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood:

*The web site . . . was directly towards dads. Like it was a dad's type of thing that you could look at . . . There were often interesting articles . . . of what other dads were thinking . . . They had this first time father sharing his journal . . . It was neat to even read just to get another person's experience and go oh you know we were experiencing that. Dale.*

While some men were able to find relevant materials, others had difficulty finding materials relevant to them and their experience as an expectant father. At times the literature was prepared from the women's perspective:

*The books were from the pregnant mother's perspective. There was one for pregnant fathers [and] . . . on fatherhood and what to expect and what to do, but in some ways I find them biased . . . I think they're gender specific . . . mothers will mother one way and fathers will father one way. I think being a parent is heterogeneous . . . I think I can be a mother in that sense, I mean I can't breast feed, but my emotions can be the same as a mothers emotions. Frank.*

Despite the gender bias, these materials were still utilized as a way to acquire information.

In understanding and coming to terms with the new status, the men were also interested in learning about their role during labor and birth:

*I guess also just what to anticipate with the birthing process itself. Like what kind of people we are going to be working with, who's going to be in the room kind of thing, how involved I can get, what my role is in the delivery. Keith.*

As Anzalone and Phillips (1982) maintain that men's participation in birth has changed from an inactive role of being on the sidelines or in the waiting room to a more active

role where they are present and expected to participate in birth. Men desired to be prepared for what they would encounter in the hospital setting.

The men were inclined to value the formal learning opportunities that were focused around knowing when to go to the hospital, what to do to help their partner, and as well, they were concerned with doing things properly:

*I wanted to know how I could be there for my wife, at the right times, especially when she was about to have the baby . . . [and] what to do when she went into labor . . . [and] when to bring her into the hospital . . . I really wanted to do my job because I felt I didn't have much of a role. So, I better get the part that I had right . . . or I would feel like a real louse as a father . . . So I really wanted to do that right. Ed.*

*We started learning together . . . the signs . . . of labor starting and pre-term labor . . . and I all of the sudden started feeling just as involved as my wife was and some of my role . . . going to go into labor and what I could do . . . the course . . . gave me a chance to put involvement into it. Ed.*

Men's formal learning in prenatal classes also involved trying out (Strauss, 1959) the new status by participating in practical tasks and activities. For instance, we find men involved in activities and tasks such as properly buckling up a doll in a car seat or diapering a doll. These activities taught men aspects of fathering that were useful once the baby arrived:

*The course was very valuable for me especially. I'm the guy with the hands on, so when the car seat was there, I was right into it learning how to buckle them in and everything . . . We had to take a doll or teddy bear and I learned how to hold it . . . do diapers, burping, feeding, and sleeping, crib safety, all of those things. Randy.*

Men also learn about their part in the process of labor and birth through the advice of others in their social world. In some cases, the men received advice that was focused around their role in labor, preparing for birth, and the hospital stay:

*[With] my wife's cousin and his wife, we talked about [the hospital] because she has had both of her deliveries at the same hospital that we're going to have ours. So [we were] just asking like what's the room like . . . [and] what [are] the nurses were like, what were the residents like, [and] is there anything unpleasant about what they went through . . . to give us a perspective on what to expect . . . at the hospital. Keith.*

Other advice men received focused about expectant fatherhood included preparations for the baby, as well as, which baby items and products were the best brand to use and purchase:

*I got advice on what other people use in terms of strollers and the car seat that attaches [on to the stroller] and then you just attach it to the base of the van of the car and they give you advice on what to use baby-wise, use this type of product or that, these types of diapers or they're the best, that kind of thing. Art.*

Men were inclined to be interested in and attach value to the practical advice they received:

*Friends of ours . . . had organized their experiences in a booklet . . . and they had given that to us and it had some of the practical things . . . that stuck with me . . . She talked that sometimes it's useful to put a diaper on the baby that is an extra size up during the night so they don't fill it up to bursting during the night. Dillon.*

Men were also inclined to listen to the advice of those they respected and desired to emulate:

*Some advice was really good. So I would really try to remember that and think about it . . . The people I respected [and] the people I looked at their families and I said I want a family like that I really listened to the way they did it and took that to heart . . . I wanted to follow the people that had the results I was looking for. Ed.*

Interrelated to men's identity, another dimension of men's learning about expectant fatherhood and how they manage the changes in their lives involved an intermittent focus on parenting the child. When the couple prepares for a child they discuss parenting and as the pregnancy progresses parenting continues to be a focus of

the expectant fathers. Although men learn about expectant fatherhood in formal classes and through advice provided by others, we also find that a more comprehensive consideration of fathering continues as men examine and evaluate how predecessors such as their fathers parented. In some cases, there was an accompanied disquiet about being a father because the men's fathers were not around when they were growing up. Their anxiety with becoming a father to the child upon birth developed out of not having a role model or example to follow:

*I was nervous because I came from a single parent family. So, I lived with my mom my whole life and I never met my father so being a father I wasn't really too sure about. I wanted to be I just didn't know if I knew how to be. I wasn't sure what the proper procedures was to be a father, if there were any. Jared.*

Although men without a live-in father experienced some anxiety those with live-in fathers' expressed similar concerns, anxieties, or critiques of where their parents failed in parenting:

*My father was very topical . . . He always loved us . . . but he wasn't that affirming to me and you never knew whether he was proud of you or not. He would never . . . sit down with you and say 'So, son how's life? Do you have a girlfriend? Do you want to . . . go for an ice cream?' He never did that . . . and I thought that he missed out on my life . . . and the satisfaction of being a father. Ed.*

Men's attention to parenting not only focused on evaluating and judging how their fathers' parented, but also on diverging from their parents and developing their own parenting perspectives:

*You don't want to be like your parents. You don't want to bring your children up the way that your parents brought you up. So, there were things that were important to me . . . the discipline or changing the discipline that were applied to me and to change it for my child. I think that was really important. Frank.*

*School is one thing that my parents didn't really get involved with was what I doing in school or helping with homework . . . that's something that I want to get involved with . . . [and] the biggest one is spending time with the child . . . I don't remember my own father doing that. We didn't have a really strong relationship just because he was working so much. Keith.*

Attending to the difference, most used their upbringing and their own father as a model to judge, reform, and create their own parenting styles. However, in one case, the expectant father desired to emulate the styles of parenting and moral foundation of his parents:

*My parents set a good example. They were honest . . . They said they believed something and they showed that they believed it . . . I wanted to be able to bring my child up like I was brought up . . . then I thought that's going to be very difficult because I don't know how my parents do it . . . [They are] very supportive in everything that you do and I want to be able to give that to my child. David.*

Men also develop their potential parenting styles as they consider the parenting techniques of other predecessors besides their fathers:

*When you are just going through a pregnancy there's lots of things you think 'oh, I'm not going to do that'. Just like when you are a kid and you think oh I'm not going to do what my dad did . . . there's lots of things like 'oh, I'm not going to let my kids run around like that' or 'I'm not going to yell at my kids out in the shopping mall' or whatever. Lots of things like that. Kyle.*

Men were inclined to be attentive to those predecessors, such as fathers, who were involved with their children and who's parenting style fit closely to who they wanted to be or emulate as a father:

*Our neighbor here he's always out with his three kids . . . and he's always with the kids and always taking them out and stuff, very involved father . . . I look at that and I think to myself, yeah I hope that I am going to be that good of a father, that involved with my kids, have that much of an attachment with them, that I'll want to spend time with them, and that I'll want to put the energy into them. David.*

*A friend of mine . . . he has told me a lot of the added responsibility . . . but what you receive is a 100 times more . . . It was something I . . . attached a lot of*

*credibility to his perspective on parenthood . . . Talking with him brought things into a clearer perspective of what's important and what I'm going to import into the relationship with my own child. Keith.*

Part of men's fathering perspectives also developed by reading literature about parenting:

*Reading the different books about the process learning from a child's perspective . . . I think the biggest one for me has been to try to figure out from authors, that I have respect for, is how a child learns, how to best facilitate that learning, and just how to provide a stimulating environment for the child, even before they go to school. That's really where I focused all my energy. Keith.*

A dimension of men's parenting style focused on being closely involved in the child's life. The literature suggests that fathering activities are changing in the level of involvement that is incorporated into the fathering role, in the motives for being involved, and in the meaning of that involvement. The men reflected the suggested changes that are occurring in the meaning of fatherhood. While the meaning of being involved differs between the men, it was a main component of their fathering perspective. Men's desired to be involved included a consideration of how to balance work and family life. Family life was often seen as more important than work and they desired to focus a greater part of their attention on the family and their children:

*I want to focus all my attention, enough of my attention on work to keep us afloat or whatever but I want to focus a huge amount of attention on both my wife and our children . . . It's something that people describe to me that goes by so quickly, so I want to make sure that I am part of it all the way. Keith.*

The attention to the child and fathering also included a desire to spend time with the child, being responsible, and continuing one's involvement throughout the child's life:

*I think it is very important for me to be a parent who's involved in my child's life right from the beginning. I want to be there for the child and it does require more responsibility on my part . . . I don't want to be one, which I don't know what's happening to my child. I don't want my wife to tell me that something has happened and I didn't see it coming because I wasn't keeping up-to-date. Art.*

*I think about how I would like to raise my kid and the quality time that I would like to spend with my kid. It's so hard being a part-time parent I compare it all the time to that . . . When you come home from work and your kid is there and you can just . . . spend some time with your kid there for that moment . . . whether it's reading a book or going out and throwing the ball outside. Greg.*

Being involved in the child's life also included a consideration of the kind of relationship they desired to have with their children. Developing a relationship with the child, building the self confidence of the child; as well as, being an understanding father were important and of concern as the men thought about parenting:

*I am hoping that I will build a strong enough bond [and] that the child will be able to grow up trusting her father . . . [and] to be able to come to him for anything . . . [and] when there are problems that we could talk about it . . . When she does something that I'm really proud of that I can have the confidence to go 'you know what I am taking you out to . . . celebrate . . . and to tell my [child] how proud I am of them, so I can build their self-confidence. Ed.*

Men were also concerned about being a father that would instill values and morals in the child:

*I wanted to make sure that I was able to instill values and morals in my kids and teach them as much as I possibly can so that they can grow up and make their own decisions and become their own individuals. Those kinds of things are real important. Jared.*

A further dimension of the men's desire to be involved included the activities they wanted to do with their children. Men were concerned about being a fun father and spending time doing activities such as biking, running, and swimming. They also desired to provide opportunities where the child can be creative:

*I would think about what I was going to do with my child you know when he's old enough. Am I going to put him into sports or where am I going to take him or what am I going to do with him. David.*

*I want to be as involved as possible with the playing because I think playing is a huge aspect of life. I want to get right into the trenches with him and get down . .*



*. and just get goofy with them and let them be what they need to, to be creative.*  
Keith.

While we have seen that others play a role the decision to start a pregnancy, they also play a role in the men's identity as a father and parent to their children. In this regard, the men's partners play an important role. When the men were concerned about their ability as a father, partners may provided feedback and reassure them that they will be good fathers. Partners may also provide example as to how they acted father-like and responsible with other children in the past:

*If I do have a little bit of insecurity about my potential and if I am going to live up to the requirements she'll say oh you are going to be a great father and she'll give me different examples of how I have interacted with kids and how well I have dealt with different situations with kids before and all the qualities that I have that are directly applicable to raising a child. She's always there to reassure me.*  
Keith.

The feedback their partners provide helped to minimize their concern and insecurity about fathering:

*When I was going through the struggle of not being sure in myself . . . she was always sure of me and always said that I would be a good father . . . We had talked about the struggles that I was having . . . [and] she would always encourage me like saying that I have a great personality for being a father and that I have so much to give and I was great with kids . . . and it helped me get through that.* Kyle.

Although partners are more highly regarded in terms of receiving feed-back about them as a father and parent, others in men's lives may also accredit men with definitions of who they think they will be as fathers:

*I got that all the time . . . I guess its affirmation of people always saying oh you'd make a great father and such. I'm such a big sap I know it.* Art.

Friends may also help with men's concerns about fathering. Friends may lend an ear and listen to the concerns and fears of the expectant father:

*I knew all my faults and . . . and I thought that this child is going to be a pair of eyes . . . staring at me, watching me, and I really need to clean up my act in a lot of areas, you know to set a good example . . . That was a big fear for me. I would talk to my friends about it and say did this scare you guys . . . and they kind of went yeah . . . they were there to lend an ear more than give me practical advice back. Ed.*

Similar to learning about pregnancy, the men's learning about expectant fatherhood is also quite extensive. Men learned about expectant fatherhood prior to the entrance into the status passage and pregnancy event. Formal learning activities provided an avenue to try out some of the fathering tasks that would be relevant later. In some cases, the men enjoyed formal learning activities because there was an opportunity to participate in activities that were hands on. They also learn about the new status from a number of people in their lives. Examining others parenting skills, the men develop a potential fathering perspective to be used in parenting of their children. When the men were insecure about their abilities as a father, we find that partners, family members and friends may provide feedback and assurance with regard to the new task.

### **Accommodating the Pregnancy**

Expanding on Strauss's (1959) notion that status passages involves changing conceptions and behaviors, the men's conceptions of their partners and themselves changed and adjusted as they learn about pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. Men's behaviors also change as they start to accommodate the pregnancy. They act towards their partners in a manner that takes the pregnancy into account. Although the men vary

in terms of how involved they become, one dimension of day-to-day experience of pregnancy included supporting the pregnant partners'. Part of the support men provided to their partners was demonstrated by interest and involvement in the pregnancy. Even though men did not always understand or experience pregnancy in the same fashion as their partners, they still desired to be involved. Further, although men felt that the connection to the developing fetus was mediated through their partners, they still desired to be involved in the event:

*I wanted her to know that even though I didn't see it exactly the way she saw it I still was very interested and excited about this baby . . . I mean for a guy you don't have any other connection except for to ask questions and be able to touch her belly . . . it was really, it was my only way to feel apart of the pregnancy. Ed.*

Part of the men's involvement and support included remaining interested in what was going on with their partners' and asking her questions in regards to how she felt, if she enjoyed being pregnant, and if there was anything wrong. These interactions with their partners served two purposes. They served to illustrate to the partners that they were interested in them and their experiences. They also served as a way for the men to find out if things were progressing smoothly or on course during the pregnancy:

*I would ask her how it felt . . . if she was enjoying it [or] if it felt neat to her, or . . . how did you feel today? I wanted to know if she was feeling anything wrong . . . [and] to see how she was doing . . . I was genuinely interested in knowing . . . [if] we [are] going to run into a problem? . . . so I can prepare . . . I wanted to be totally involved both from the practical standpoint . . . [and] for the experience. Ed.*

In some cases, the men felt unprepared as to how to support their partners during the pregnancy. They felt that there was little opportunity to learn about preparations for

the pregnancy term and the changes to their partners. In providing support men figure out new techniques through a process of trial and error and learning how to be sensitive:

*After awhile . . . you learn what you can do [and] can't do around her, what to say what not to say . . . how to be supportive and how not to be supportive . . . how to be sensitive instead of insensitive . . . you kind of learn that ok before I speak I am going to think about how I answer that question because she's very emotional right now . . . there was a process of being sensitive that was important. Ed.*

Part of being sensitive to the ongoing changes in their pregnant partners' also included being able to empathize, take the role of the other, and imagine how they would feel when they were over tired:

*When she gets a little bit fatigued she gets a little bit more edgy and some times I have to approach her in a little bit different of a way . . . I try to put myself in her shoes which is . . . impossible because I don't understand everything . . . but I just try to think of from the perspective of being tired [and] how do I want to be treated when I'm completely exhausted. Keith.*

Men's support included utilizing lines of action such as massages that may be helpful to her discomfort:

*Just doing extra things to make sure that she is comfortable . . . I've always been a touchy feely type of person so just making sure she is comfortable like giving her massages and stuff like that and just looking after her in that respect. Keith.*

Other lines of action men utilized included toning down the tenor of their joking and becoming aware of appropriate times to joke around:

*Sometimes I tend to joke around a little bit more and sometimes that can be frustrating if you are tired, sometimes I can be a little bit too sarcastic and goofy and I know I try to think about when it's appropriate and when it's not appropriate, just so I don't cause any trouble that way. Keith.*

At times men's support for their pregnant partner included being a voice of reason to help their partners say no to others when she was taking on too much:

*I wanted to be another voice to try and encourage her to slow down when needed. She's a fairly get up, go, and do things . . . She has the tendency to be more 'well I can still do this'. I wanted to be . . . a voice of reason in the sense that if she needed someone to say no . . . I think we have to cancel our plans or . . . commitments. Dale.*

Although men desired for their wife to be comfortable, they felt like a bystander and helpless to the physical changes. They were not always able to address the evident discomfort:

*I felt bad for the poor girl at eight, nine months [and] she can hardly move in bed and she was so uncomfortable all the time and the pillows between her legs because she couldn't get comfortable and the getting up to pee every two minutes . . . awe those things you felt bad for her but there was nothing that you could do, you just got to try to make her comfortable. Ed.*

Women experience the physical and emotional changes, whereas, men experience the side effects. Side effects included the changing moods of their partner, the changes to her energy level, changes to her figure, and her sensitive appetite:

*I'm really just a by-stander . . . It's the woman that carries the baby . . . I just deal with the mood . . . The physical stresses are just becoming more and more an issue . . . She's always exhausted one way or another and that's got to be the pits . . . The point is, . . . it's too bad that she has to go through this. It can't be fun at all. It's not like she can take a break from carrying [the] weight. Dalton.*  
Elaborating on Strauss's (1959) emphasis that behaviors change and Prus's (1997)

emphasis that when people enter into a new situation their activities begin to change, we find men's activities changing to accommodate the pregnancy. In some cases, prior plans and activities were changed in order to accommodate the new development:

*We have a cruise that we won at one point and for various reasons didn't go on it yet. It had a time frame on it and we never went on it . . . and then there was a good possibility that we could have gone this fall. It wasn't going to happen as soon as we found out about [the pregnancy]. Art.*

In other cases, men found themselves curtailing activities to accommodate the ongoing changes:

*The physical changes . . . there's that to consider . . . maybe you want to go to something whether it's going to a restaurant . . . or a social event, all of a sudden you've got to think . . . you're 4 months pregnant . . . New Year's we didn't go to our friends' place . . . everyone would be drinking and partying . . . and then sleepover . . . She's not going to get . . . the sleep she wants . . . [so] we stayed home. Randy.*

Although the men curtail activities, we also find that they participate in new activities. Men become involved in activities such as prenatal appointments. In this respect, each of the men participated in a least one appointment. Others participated in most of the prenatal appointments. Though men varied their participation, all participated in a doctor appointment where they listened to the heartbeat. They all went to an ultrasound session where they saw a picture of the developing baby:

*I wanted to be at all the ultrasounds and all the appointments . . . just to be there and be a part of it [and] . . . so the OB. knows who I am before the baby comes . . . I was excited and it was a part of the process and I just wanted to be there with her and be a part of that . . . Whenever . . . she'd see the OB. or be going for some kind of appointment I always talked assuming I was going and she'd make arrangements for when we were going. Art.*

Prenatal appointments provided an opportunity for the men to keep up to date on what is going on during the pregnancy. It was also a way to help their partners when things were uncomfortable:

*I wanted to go to the appointments . . . I missed one or two of the appointments . . . I wanted to know what was going on and just be there to hear as much and be . . . a support. My wife definitely appreciated that I was always there especially later in the pregnancy just because she didn't feel as up for moving up and all around on her own. It just was nice if I was driving and stuff. Dale.*

Participating in appointments also provided an opportunity to raise concerns and figure out details as they approached birth:

*It was just a chance to ask questions that we were thinking of and . . . it was just a good chance to voice things that we had thought of. As it went on it was [focused] around what would happen, what could we see clearly in terms of water breaking, or what would happen during the birth and what would be my involvement. Dale.*

Men's activities also change around the house. Men do more of the daily household tasks such as cleaning and groceries:

*I knew that was going to be a steady decline as she went through the nine months . . . I wanted to . . . let her conserve her energy as much as she needed to and I [would] pick up a little more of the slack in terms of responsibility around the house. I think the big one is just because of the danger associated with her exposing herself to the cat litter . . . [and] just taking the dog out as well. The cleaning around the house, grocery shopping stuff like that . . . when she comes home from work she's just totally exhausted. So I will get that under control [and in terms] of the cooking, I've pretty much taken over in that department. Cleaning . . . [now] it's a 60/40 kind of situation . . . because of her lack of energy at the end of the day. Keith.*

Though men desired to help with more of the household chores, in practice things did not always work out as they had planned:

*My wife . . . had to take bed rest which put a lot of strain on me . . . She wasn't able to lift or wash the dishes or anything . . . [I didn't deal with that] as well as I possibly should have. I didn't do everything. I put off things as much as I could. It was just so much happening . . . It was difficult. Like the baby's about to come and you're excited . . . and at the same time there's a lot more work. Art.*

In some cases, there were two parts to dealing with the household chores. One part was to help out during the pregnancy and after the birth of the baby:

*When we were both working theoretically we shared the load and practically speaking it fell into more of a traditional role based thing where she did most of the cooking, cleaning . . . I'd do my part occasionally but often I would get lazy . . . we knew that when the baby came that probably there would be some need for me to pick up a lot more of that early on. Dillon.*

The second part involved going back to their earlier relationship roles where the wife would become a homemaker and he would provide for their financial well-being:

*By the same token we were talking about her staying home and we were also talking longer term that you know part would transition back and the full load would be a full-time mother and homemaker and mine would be to be at work . . . We talked about both of those and where our various responsibilities would lie and . . . [that] we [would] adopt more traditional . . . roles later on. Dillon.*

In accommodating the pregnancy, the men provide support to their partners and for their pregnancy experiences. The men also curtail some activities and take on others to help their partners with some of the challenges they faced during the pregnancy.

### **Relating to the Child**

Although we have seen that men's conceptions start to change throughout the pregnancy, it is during the more exciting activities that men's conceptions of the developing child becomes apparent. The literature suggests that men do relate to the fetus, have feelings towards the fetus, and mourn the death of a fetus when it is lost. In this respect, men begin to construct a conception of the child. Men's behaviors also start to incorporate the child. They begin to attach value and significance to the developing child, engage in preparatory activities for the arrival of the child, and complete the passage through birth. The men adjust their lives accordingly.

Men differ in the times at which they saw the child through an ultrasound, hear the heartbeat, and felt the baby move. Seeing, hearing, and feeling the developing child were important because of the meaning attached to having children. Ongoing confirmations may dispel any doubts of pregnancy and child within:



*And she [the doctor] was pushing and making the baby move and that was neat and it just gives you a reality check of the reality of it all. When you hear the heartbeat you know that's there's the baby, if you don't believe it that's when it becomes, not that I had doubts . . . but it just lets you into the reality of it. Greg.*

While the men were interested in the growing baby, a greater part of their interest and focus on the developing child was concerned with the health of the developing child:

*I guess the most fear is, not as a parent but as a father, you just want to make sure, you don't really care about the gender or anything like that. You just want to make sure that the baby is healthy and hope that everything is going along well. Dalton.*

Visual confirmations through ultrasounds were important to the men because they dispel concern about the developing child's health:

*We got the ultrasound and we took a videotape in . . . the best part was being able to take the video home and watch it over and over again . . . I was kind of worried and was counting all the hands and trying to find out if there are ten fingers and ten toes and does the baby have a brain because we heard horror stories about that . . . and so my wife was paranoid . . . So we were like 'yes, yes this baby is normal'. Ed.*

Visual confirmations were also important to the men because of the insight they can provide about the changes within their partners:

*The ultrasound was the first real evidence, other than her getting larger . . . that it really hits home that there's a little person in there. Like my wife she's larger but it doesn't give, like you know the baby's there but when you actually saw the baby it's a total realization oh we're getting into something here . . . It definitely made it more real . . . There's a real life right there. Art.*

The men expressed at length how important the ultrasounds were. They provided tangible proof that the child is on the way:

*The ultrasound, you can't forget those kinds of things. The ultrasound I didn't forget. You get the picture and you're out in the parking lot, you're looking at it and you're like, wholly cow, look at these pictures and it's still sinking in. So, that was the other time it really hits home . . . that was pretty moving. Guys have*

*to have that tangible proof . . . guy's need the proof, they need to see it on paper, black and white like logical reasoning. Randy.*

The ultrasound also provided a further opportunity to recognize their self-change and new status:

*The ultrasound . . . it was neat and it was really just a reality check . . . Wow, there's a life in there and it's growing and isn't that an amazing thing. It just made it real and gave me a whole new respect for it . . . [and] the way that life continues . . . It was just amazing that I can have offspring. Kyle.*

Other physical changes such as the heartbeat and the physical movements of the developing child in the womb were also exciting moments for the men. They also served as another reality check:

*Hearing the baby's heartbeat and feeling the baby kick and the ultrasound were just great . . . We'd be lying in bed and she would say 'hey put your hand here' and I put my hand on it and it would just be doing summersaults in there and like wow that must feel really weird when it's inside you. That was neat too just another thing to bring it more real to you. I heard the heartbeat and that was good to find out that it was healthy. Kyle.*

While in general the physical confirmations of the child led to a reality of that the child was coming, at times men were frustrated and felt left out of the experience when they were not able to feel the baby movements:

*A couple times she would say, put your hand right here I put my hand and . . . 'Ah, it just stopped' . . . So, you're like, 'what the hell is this, she's full of it' . . . Then she'd be like 'feel right here on the side'. I'd put my hand there and there's nothing . . . A couple of times it went like that . . . Finally she said, 'ok put your hand here' . . . she was in a bath . . . so I put my hand on her tummy and there's no clothes so I'm right there and I could feel it and I was like, 'wow, what was that?' She's like, 'that's it, [it's] moving, and it's rolling over'. You're like 'that was wicked' . . . That's . . . when it hits you in the head. Randy.*

Further, once they experienced the different confirmations continual demonstration of the child was not needed to make the child more real:

*I wasn't sort of always just dying to feel the baby kick. I enjoyed it when it happened . . . she would say it was kicking and I laid my hand on her stomach and it didn't kick for thirty seconds it was awe . . . call me when it's going to do it again. I wasn't going to hang around and wait for this kid to kick . . . I had certain knowledge that it was in there . . . I didn't need it demonstrated to me over and over again. Dillon.*

Throughout the course of the pregnancy there are a number of events that facilitate the men's growing reality and awareness of their children but also an initial rudimentary relationship to the growing child. Acknowledging the capacity to develop bonds and relationships, ultrasounds may also facilitate men's bonds to the developing child:

*You're both committing to raising a child [and] you have to bond too . . . if you don't bond there with the child at the ultrasound then it's kind of tough to bond . . . You've got to go down the journey with her [his wife] and go through the whole development with her. See the ultrasound, know it's coming down the road. Randy.*

Part of this rudiment relationship included relating to the developing child by talking to it while it was in the womb:

*We already started . . . talking to the child . . . and just already becoming aware and thinking pregnancy wise . . . It sort of made it [the child] become a little more real just because we may not see anything physically for awhile [and] just sort of starting to have that mind set . . . So we spoke to the baby that way in terms of calling it Sonya but we also had a couple of boys names. So we sort of intermixed those every once in awhile but just sometimes trying to be more personal. Dale.*

Another aspect of how men relate to the developing child included making preparations for the arrival. Preparations for the arrival of the infant vary. In one case, the expectant father built a change table as part of his preparation for the child:

*[I was] looking around for cribs and change tables because I was researching to build one, so I built one upstairs because . . . we couldn't find one to match our crib. Art.*

The men were involved in purchasing items such as clothing and diapers as they made preparations for the child's arrival:

*I . . . wanted to be involved . . . in terms of what we needed to buy or . . . even when we were considering . . . whether we would go cloth diapers or disposable . . . and we made sure that we went together to do that and that was just something again where I wanted to be involved in. Like this does effect me to some extent and it's probably more important for the baby in terms of what will actually be on her butt also just ok I'd like to be aware of what the process is as opposed to just saying to my wife can go and meet with this lady . . . I mean it was neat over all to know about this and . . . preparing for the baby in terms of clothes. Dale.*

Preparations also included rearranging living quarters and other children to accommodate the new child:

*We are in the process [of preparing for the child] we've just cleaned out the spare room we've moved the bed downstairs now and we've bought a lot of stuff for it and we've bought the crib and the boarder and the highchair and dresser, change table, so we're pretty well on our way to being prepared. Greg.*

*We're moving Mary into the other room and the new baby will have the nursery room . . . we've taken everything out of that room. There's nothing in it, upstairs. Mary will move in to that room in the next month or two. We want to get her in, you don't want to move her right away because then she might think, well, I'm just getting kicked because of the new kid. Randy.*

While family and friends play a role throughout the pregnancy event, they may also help with the preparations for the arrival of the child:

*We haven't had to buy anything in particular for the baby. We've been getting clothes from friends and family that I wouldn't anticipate it being a huge cost in the first year. Keith.*

The men's reality of the child is complete at birth. Birth brings together all prior stages and dimension of the men's status change and passage. Men adjust their lives accordingly. While men's conceptions begin to change throughout the event, it is at birth men complete the passage. Men's experience of birth varied:

*In the delivery room it was just me and the head was coming out and she was pushing the red button and it took about three minutes before they got there. It was scary and then like when they got there was like a whole fleet of doctors and nurses . . . I watched the whole thing happening . . . I was worried about being in the delivery room. I guess that cord was wrapped around the baby's neck so they wanted to get him out . . . they had to cut . . . and I was watching it. Honestly . . . I can't see stuff like that because I'll pass out. But I watched everything and I was so interested and kind of worried and scared and excited at the same time . . . I guess it was a situation of adrenaline going. Although when the placenta came out I passed out. I missed the chair and fell . . . And the doctor is like, "Get him!" And they tried to pull a chair up for me and I hit the chair and fell to the ground. Jared.*

*It was a very positive experience because I didn't see myself as fulfilled until I was a father . . . the actual birthing experience was just amazing! I wouldn't miss it for the world. I can't believe that . . . they didn't allow men in the birthing rooms. That's just terrible because when I talked about having a better respect for it, talk about just opening your eyes and having a huge respect for your wife as she's lying there going through the delivery, just amazing. It was amazing that they can go through that and actually bounce back from it. Yeah definitely that was a great experience . . . [It] was great that she wanted me to be involved in [it] and that she needed me to be there and help her through [the birth]. It was just amazing! Keith.*

Although their experiences vary, the birth also initiates the men into fathering on a sustained basis. They focus their attention to fathering and the day-to-day activities of having children:

*Throughout the pregnancy, although I knew it was coming and I'm more doing what's necessary to get ready for it . . . It's a growing process, that's for sure, because there's a lot to learn . . . The whole thing is about getting prepared for it . . . [and] being a father. . . It takes time and you grow into that position . . . It was a process and there's a lot to learn and you can never jump into it but the day-to-day you think about it . . . A lot of the pregnancy was just learning about what it meant to be a father, a parent. And when you have the little one then it's learning and living it. Art.*

The pregnancy event and expectant fatherhood is now complete and they adjust their lives to fathering and the changes the birth of the child brings:

*Things have changed because of the birth . . . we feel very fortunate that . . . there wasn't anything that came up during that time that would have made things stressful . . . That's probably the thing that has changed more since. Almost everyday we're active until she goes to bed and we just have a couple hours to run off and do errands or something. So things have changed since the birth. Dale.*

The more concrete visual, auditory, and touch-oriented experiences sharpen and define for the men the realness of the developing child. A changing focus on pregnancy and fathering started with receiving confirmation. Receiving ongoing confirmations of the child, as well as, the physical changes of the wife serve as an impetus to continue thinking about the realness of the child. Ongoing confirmations involved the partner's figure changing to accommodate the child, going to ultrasounds and seeing a visual picture of the child, listening to the heartbeat, and feeling the child move. These confirmations facilitate a growing awareness and a rudimentary relationship to the developing child. All prior dimensions of their passage are culminated in birth. Birth is the event that completes the passage. The men begin to adjust their lives accordingly.

## **Summary**

The chapter started with a discussion of men's experience of pregnancy and the final stage in the status passage. Building on Strauss's (1959) notion that conceptions and behaviors change once people begin to examine their lives from the new status, consideration is given to three dimensions of how men further manage and come terms with the changes in their lives after entering into expectant fatherhood and the pregnancy event. In this respect, one dimension of how men come to terms with the changes occurs through the different learning activities. The men participate in a number of learning

activities to understand the pregnancy, the developing child, and expectant fatherhood. Prior pregnancy experiences provided an inclining or foreshadowing of what their partners would experience during pregnancy. Although prior experiences provided familiarity with the terminology associated with pregnancy and birth, these experiences did not provide an opportunity to understand all the intricacies and intimate details that were worked out as they participate in pregnancy and expectant fatherhood.

Men's self-directed learning sharpens their understanding of pregnancy and birth. The learning activities influenced men's prospective lines of action and decisions. Learning also helps in their relationships because they are able to understand the progression of pregnancy and what the partners experience during pregnancy. The learning activities that men found particularly interesting were focused around the development of the fetus and around their partners' particular pregnancy. Learning about the child was even more interesting when they had pictures of the developing baby because of the opportunity to visualize some of the changes and the growth of the child.

While prenatal classes are geared to teaching expectant parents about pregnancy, birth, and postpartum adjustment, men's accounts of the classes vary. In some cases, men found the classes useful, whereas, others felt the experience was not all that valuable. Despite the variation, classes provided an opportunity for men to interact and learn with other expectant parents. The classes provided an opportunity for men to become more involved in pregnancy, learn about birth and their role; as well as, practice some of the fathering tasks they would be doing once the baby was born.

Men learn from a number of people and they attribute significance to the knowledge they received from the people in their lives that had the parenting results they desired to emulate, were knowledgeable on different topics, and had practical examples to utilize. Those people who gave advice and did not have the results in parenting that the men desired were not well received.

Further, as men come to terms with the changes and accommodate the pregnancy, they are engaged in activities focused around the new development and pregnancy. We see men involved in providing support, participating in prenatal appointments, and helping out with the household chores. Part of men's support for their pregnant partners is focused on being involved in the pregnancy and taking an interest in what is going on with their partners. Although men wanted to be involved and supportive, their attempts were a process of trial and error figuring out what to do and how to be sensitive. They also felt helpless to the physical changes and the inability to address the physical discomfort of their partners'. Activities in some cases were curtailed to accommodate the pregnancy and changes to the partners. They also participate in new activities such as prenatal appointments. During prenatal appointments men may take the opportunity to raise concerns about the pregnancy or the developing child.

A final dimension of men's status passage and experience of pregnancy involved relating to the developing child. At the outset men's conceptions of the child are not as detailed and the whole event seems surreal or unreal; however, the different confirmations throughout the pregnancy serve as reality checks that facilitate a growing awareness of the developing child. The more exciting and concrete events sharpened



men's awareness of the developing child. The ongoing confirmations of the child included ultrasounds, the changing body of the wife, hearing the heartbeat, the moving and living child. The ultrasounds and physical confirmations of the child also dispel some of the concern for the health of the child and they provide an opportunity to bond with the child. In some cases, the men's behaviors change and they begin to talk to the child in the womb. They also make preparations for the arrival. In birth, the men complete the passage. They begin to father the child on a more sustained basis and adjust their lives to the changes the child brings.

The chapter contributes to the theoretical and conceptual literature on involvements and status passages. The main story line is about how men further come to terms with and manage the changes of the new status and the entrance into the pregnancy event. The chapter contributes an examination of how men begin to supplement earlier conceptions of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood with knowledge acquired from a number of different people and in a number of ways. Expanding Strauss's (1959) emphasis on the role that predecessor play in facilitating or teaching one about the unknown aspects of the passage, we find that that men learn from a number of people and not just predecessors.

Further, it is clear how much the men's status as an expectant father is interrelated and interlinked with the passage of their expectant partners into motherhood. At times, men's management of their status change and pregnancy is a juggling between the ongoing changes between them and their partners. In managing and accommodating the pregnancy men start to help their partners with her passage and entrance by playing a

supportive role and engaging in pregnancy related activities. Accommodating the pregnancy is a means to an end for the men. It serves two purposes. That is, while the men are engaged in supporting the partner through the different pregnancy related activities, it also helps in providing feedback about the men's initial goal to have a child and eases their concern for the developing child. We also see the active participation of men. While men do not exactly care for all the changes in the same ways as their partners, their participation in the pregnancy related activities is also part of their preparation for the completion of the passage. The status passage can be said to be complete once men learn about pregnancy and expectant fatherhood, accommodate the pregnancy and relate to the child.

## **CHAPTER SIX:**

### **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

The thesis attends to the process of change and the ways in which men are involved in the pregnancy event and expectant fatherhood. The thesis had two interrelated tasks. The first was to address a gap in the literature on men's experience of pregnancy. The second was to demonstrate the value of using a grounded approach to understand the behavior of social actors. To accomplish this, the thesis started with a discussion of the literature on men's experience of pregnancy and the entrance into fatherhood. It is clear that men's experience with pregnancy is documented little in sociology. Psychology and the medical field document the negative, pathological, and crises men undergo during pregnancy. I approached the project as a symbolic interactionist and built on Prus's (1997) notion of involvements and Strauss's (1959) concept of status passages. The thesis provides an initial account of men's passage into expectant fatherhood and involvement in pregnancy. The focus on involvements and status passages proved to be a useful way to bring together the theoretical and conceptual literature with men's experience of expectant fatherhood and pregnancy.

Using a grounded approach, I examined the phenomenon of pregnancy and expectant fatherhood as men experience it and uncovered their perspectives, interpretations, and meanings. I relied primarily on in-depth interviewing to access

men's voices. Participant-observation and observation were relied on to a lesser extent. Although the interviews varied in the value and depth, men's accounts were central to presenting men's experience of the pregnancy and new status. While the men's entrance into a new passage is divided into a stage-like fashion, all stages are interrelated. Though the men are not attuned in exactly the same way, all express pregnancy and expectant fatherhood is exciting, an important experience, and impacted them in significant ways.

### **Summary of Findings and Discussion**

As a contribution to the literature the thesis provides an account of men's entrance into expectant fatherhood and pregnancy from their point of view. Thirty to forty years ago, the social context of men's lives changed when the welfare state developed and women's liberation became prominent. Societal change led to a change in the definition of men's social roles and they have continued to shift over time (Benson, 1968). Men's involvement during pregnancy shifted to include participation in prenatal classes and their partners labor and birth. Although researchers have studied aspects of the change in men's participation, the men's perspectives of pregnancy and the day-to-day changes men undergo have been neglected. The thesis contributes to the knowledge of the day-to-day life of men and demonstrates their active involvement. The thesis also contributes an analysis mindful of both the banal and routine aspects of participating in pregnancy.

While Strauss (1959) emphasizes the importance of developments in people's status passages, little is said about the initial developments prior to entering the status change. One of the main findings of the thesis is that men are engaged in a number of

developments that lead to a status change. Demonstrating the active involvement, men consider and assess their lives in a substantial ways. The data show that men anticipate pregnancy and their decisions are contingent upon the meaning they attach to children. The data also demonstrate that the partners play a role in men's decisions by emphasizing the desire to have children through subtle and open cues. Family and friends may also encourage and provide an example to follow. In assessing their readiness, the data illustrate that the men were ambiguous and felt there were opportunities to delay having children. Further, men considered the relationship and commitment to their partners. The partners' perspectives on children and family, their idiosyncrasies, and the ability as a couple to work on the problematic aspects of the relationship were important to readiness. Once the major problems were worked out and they were comfortable with one another, the men felt they were able to provide a stable environment for the children. The relationship was seen as ready. In assessing readiness, the men also considered aging for several reasons. They desired to be young enough too play with the child, avoiding medical complications, and leave enough time to conceive.

Further, the data demonstrate that prior developments in men's lives entailed the management of reservations and dealing with practical matters. For example, men were concerned about parenting with their partner, managing finances, and deciding who will remain at home after the birth. The data also illustrate that men plan to have children. However, their plans were not always problem free and they varied in terms of the time it took to conceive. The planning and timing of conception involved considering the

impact of birth control, the desired season for pregnancy, and the spacing of subsequent children.

The second main finding of the thesis builds on Strauss' (1959) notion of turning points, recognition of self-change, and announcements. Acknowledging the sequencing and process-oriented nature of involvement, physical changes such as the absent menstrual cycle and confirmatory tests brought attention to the pregnancy. These developments demonstrate men's initiation into a key turning point and status change. Though Strauss (1959) asserts turning points are accompanied by negative misalignments, the data demonstrates men's emotional responses were balanced with negative and positive emotional responses to the status change. Men experience a range of emotional responses such as surprise, shock, excitement, fear, joy, and elation, suggesting they define the new development in positive and negative ways.

The data also diverges from Strauss (1959) by demonstrating that the recognition of self-change and a new status begin prior to the announcement to others. The men's recognition of the change is clear when they begin to examine their lives from the perspective of becoming pregnant. Recognition of change included reorienting their conceptions to the perspective of their partners' as pregnant. They are concerned for their partners' health and how the pregnancy term would proceed. The men's conceptions of self are also oriented to the new development. Through self-reflective questioning, men focused on understanding what the new development means with respect to becoming a father. Men explore and self-question how they would handle the changes of fathering, what fathering means, and if they can live up to the expectations of

being a father. Although Strauss (1959) emphasizes that it is the announcement that indicates the entrance into the new status, data show that the men's entrance and recognition of self-change is evident in the orientation prior to the announcement.

Even though recognition occurs prior to the announcement, the data also illustrates the importance of the men's relationships with others and how they inform others of the news. The men's announcement is not straightforward and was ambiguous. Due to the perceived risk and uncertainty in pregnancy, men waited for the completion of the first trimester to tell others, whereas, some who had been through pregnancy before disclosed the news rather quickly. The men prioritized to whom they announced the news. The data demonstrate men informed people such as family members and friends first, and then they branched out to the wider network of people, such as coworkers and acquaintances. In some cases, men avoided announcing to particular people because of the perceived difficulty, or negativity. The way men inform others of the news also varied and they utilized a number of ways and activities to inform others. For example, some men sent out announcement cards, whereas, others announced the news through a telephone call to family members.

The third main finding is that as men continue their involvement in the pregnancy their conceptions and behaviors change. For example, men participate in learning activities and were focused on understanding the unknown aspects of the pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. Juggling and managing the two different developments, men learned in greater depth about the changes in their lives, accommodate the pregnancy and relate to the developing child. Although men learned prior to the entrance into pregnancy

and were introduced to pregnancy, however, they did not learn about the intimate details and day-to-day experience of pregnancy until they actually went through pregnancy with their partners. The data demonstrate that the men's knowledge about pregnancy become complex during their status change and they desired to understand the progression of pregnancy, the problems that could develop, and they wanted to learn about the developing child. The men learn from a number of people such as successors (i.e. their partners' and other couples going through pregnancy), predecessors (i.e. family, friends, and acquaintances who have been through pregnancy), and others (i.e. the experts in the field such as health nurses, midwives, doctors, and the like). They also gained knowledge in self-directed ways. They utilize a variety of sources and literature.

Men also become informed about the unknown aspects of expectant fatherhood. The data demonstrate that managing the changes included understanding what is involved in labor and birth. The men desired to know what options for participation they could chose from during the labor and birth. Men were concerned about their role during labor and birth. Failing to live up to the expectations during labor and birth was not how they wanted to start fathering. Other important aspects of how they managed the changes and the new status included learning and practicing parenting techniques such as diapering and holding a baby doll. Not only were these learning activities important to how they managed their new status, but they also provided an opportunity to interact and learn with other successors who were going through similar changes.

The data demonstrate that part of the men's learning and management of the changes included formulating a fathering style by diverging or emulating predecessors



such as their own fathers, friends, and neighbors. When men were insecure about the new status, partners may provide assurance that they have the skills to be a good father. Men formulated fathering perspectives that included the desire to be involved in the child's life. What involvement meant and included varies from one man to the next. It was at times focused on sustained involvement and spending time with the child. Involvement also included being responsible, building a relationship that was strong, and developing the self-confidence and morality of the child. Men also talked at length about the activities they wanted to engage in with the child as it grew.

A further development during pregnancy dealt with matters of men's management and accommodation of the pregnancy. From the data it is evident that men accommodate pregnancy by supporting the partners. This included learning how to be sensitive and empathetic of their partners' experiences with pregnancy. The support also included remaining involved in the pregnancy and taking an interest in what is going on. Attempts to be supportive were a process of trial and error, figuring out what to do, what not to do, and how to be sensitive. At times men were a bystander and unable to respond to the physical changes their partners experienced.

Further, as the men accommodated the pregnancy, the data show the men curtailed some activities that were planned prior to the pregnancy or seen as unnecessary. When there was an opportunity to participate in activities, they considered the pregnant partners and how they would feel. Whether it was going out for dinner or over to a friends place, the pregnancy and changes to the partners' were taken into account. The data also illustrate men engage in new activities, such as participating in prenatal

appointments that were seen as necessary to managing the pregnancy. These activities illustrate the men's support and they provided an arena in which to raise concerns about pregnancy or aspects of expectant fatherhood. The prenatal appointments also provided an opportunity for the men to become a part of the pregnancy.

A final dimension of the men's conceptual change and management of the new status included a consideration of the developing child. The data also show that the men take the child into account. While the conceptions and reality of the child start to develop throughout pregnancy, the data demonstrate that the concrete events such as the visual, auditory, and touch-oriented experiences sharpen the realness of the developing child. Ongoing confirmations included the partners' morning sickness, going to ultrasounds, listening to the heartbeat, and feeling the developing child move. These confirmations provide an opportunity to develop a bond to the child and were helpful in developing their reality of the developing child. Something that was not immediately visual became real. Confirmations may also assure men that the child is growing and healthy. Men were excited and overjoyed at these developments. They were also frustrated, disappointed, and felt excluded when they could not feel the developing child move when their partners did. However, once they experience the ongoing confirmations continual demonstration was not needed to make the developing child more real.

Men were also conversational towards the child while it was in the womb. Men take into account the needs of the baby and they intermittently prepared for the baby's arrival. Preparations for the arrival included purchasing items, building items, and helping prepare the baby's room. The extended family may help in the preparations and

purchase items for the baby's arrival. The men participate in the birth and complete the passage. The men adjust their lives to the changes the child brings. The data demonstrates a conceptual and activity-based change in the men's lives as they experience pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. The data demonstrate men have entered into a new status and are actively engaged in managing the change in their lives.

The thesis also contributes to the knowledge of status passages. The thesis contributes an examination of the developments in people's lives prior to the entrance into the new status. Although men's considerations prior to starting a pregnancy were in retrospect, they instruct us to consider and examine the context of people's lives in advance of the entrance into the new status. The anticipatory stage of people's status passage instructs researchers to examine the prior meanings, desires or interests, motivations, intentions, goals, or objectives of those entering into a new status. Researchers should also consider the uncertainties, questioning, doubts, misgivings, worries, reservations, fears, and the practicalities of entering into a new status. The anticipatory stage of the entrance into a new status suggests that we examine the implications, consequences, worth, value, and importance that these initial considerations have for people's lives. The data demonstrate that the prior developments are important because they illustrate the initial changes in one's life. Further, they provide insight into how people work out prospective lines of action (Prus, 1997) and how they make their intentions or goals a lived reality. The initial developments also illustrate the individual's active role in the acquisition of a new status, as well as, how they are initially mindful of others.

A further contribution of the thesis deals with matters of the turning point and recognition of self-change. Elaborating on Strauss' (1959) notion turning points and misalignments in emotionality, the thesis suggests that we should examine more than the negative emotions expressed during turning points and entrance into a new status. The thesis instructs us to consider the role of emotion and how people are able to define the situation in positive and negative ways. Researchers also need to examine how people come to terms with the emotional responses and how emotions influence the involvement and entrance into a new status.

A subsequent insight is that status passages are not necessarily a change that occurs with just one group of people. Rather the developments are worked out in conjunction with others and in a number of ways. The thesis contributes to our understanding of status passages in two ways. The thesis extends beyond Strauss' (1959) emphasis on the role of predecessors facilitating one through the status passage. Men are interlinked to others in their social world, which are successors (i.e. their pregnant partners, other expectant fathers, and other expectant mothers), predecessors (i.e. family, friends, siblings), and others who are more externally based (i.e. health nurses, midwives, doctors). The thesis also instructs us to consider the ways people learn about the passage. In this respect, researchers need to broaden the perspective to include an examination of informal and formal learning activities, self-directed learning, and the learning that takes place in conjunction with others.

Extending Strauss' (1959) emphasis on one group of successors moving into a new status, the thesis demonstrates how the entrance of men run parallel to, and is

intertwined with, the entrance of their partners into a new status. The interrelation of status passages or the notion of a joint passage may be different from how Strauss (1959) describes the entrance into a new status. For example, during each stage men were mindful of their partners and were juggling their passage with that of their partners. At times, men were influenced by their partners' desires, attend to their partners' needs, assist them; as well as, manage their own status change. The thesis demonstrates a joint or interlinked passage and instructs us to examine how passages into a new status may be co-joined. A joint status passage may include distinct and common considerations, distinct and common learning about the joint passage, providing support to one another in the joint passage, engaging in distinct and mutual activities, as well as, developing mutual or interrelated perspectives of self and the other. The thesis suggests that researchers examine the joint activity and how one group's passage (i.e. the expectant fathers) is entangled, intertwined, or linked with and influenced by the status passage of another group (i.e. the expectant mothers).

The thesis also instructs us to consider what a status passage is like when the passage is uncertain and when societal messages emphasize the joy of having children and importance of family. Since the pregnancy is somewhat uncertain, men at times delayed their announcement. They were also concerned for their partners' and the developing child throughout the pregnancy event. Uncertainty in the pregnancy leads to a continual focus on their partners' health and the health of the developing child. To some extent the uncertainty takes the focus off of the men and delays their entrance into the new status. Researchers should consider how people work out their lives and manage

the changes when there is uncertainty in reaching the goal? Further, when societal messages emphasize the joy and happiness that is supposed to accompany this event; how do people manage the uncertainty and remain excited at the same time?

A final insight the thesis provides is that it raises questions about whether a status passage is different when the definition of the status is in question. Strauss (1959) wrote about statuses when there was continuity in the definition of the statuses, such as career related status changes. At that time, one could enter into a career and remain there for quite a number of years. These examples do not reflect the current reality of contract positions, self-employment and a very fluid job market. In regards to the definition of fatherhood, it fluctuates ideologically at the societal level and individually at the experiential level. At the beginning of the century, fathers were seen as the sole providers of the family. Recent definitions of fatherhood are focused on the new father that is involved in family life. Although in any given status change there is likely to be some level of uncertainty, there is an added uncertainty because the definition of what it means to be a father is in transition. Thus, uncertainty and ambiguity accompanies the men passage and the pregnancy event is lived as problematic.

When the change is seen as problematic the negotiation, meaning-making, and interactions become explicit. We are provided with a candid picture of the dilemmas men face, the excitement, ambiguity, importance of their relationships, and the management of the changes in their lives. The relational dimension of men's lives is the initial development that initiates men into the pregnancy and it is a source contention and anxiety. The relational dimension in men's lives is also a solution to the uncertainty and

anxiety that accompanies the status change. Men utilize a number of people in their lives throughout the passage to manage the uncertainty and ambiguity. With contention and ambiguity in the definition of fatherhood, the thesis instructs us to consider whether status passages are different from when Strauss was writing.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The thesis is limited and is unable to generalize. The sample size is small and there is a limited perspective. While the thesis speaks of the experience of fifteen men, the personal nature of the interviews and the small sample does not speak to all men. It comments on how this group of men experience pregnancy and expectant fatherhood. Additionally, the questions were focused more on the couple and pregnancy as opposed to the men and expectant fatherhood. The focus on the couple may be part of the reason the men made a distinction between what they felt and what their partners felt during the interviewing.

Further, there were gaps in the men's accounts of pregnancy that became apparent during the analysis. Prior considerations of the men such as schooling, housing, or choosing a community to live in were not queried exhaustively during the interviews. Also, how men managed their reservations and the practicalities of children could have been explored further during the interviewing. In future research, these gaps need to be fleshed out in greater depth. The perspective of the study is also limited. It focused primarily on pregnancy as opposed to birth and postnatal adjustment. Examining birth and postnatal adjustment would provide greater insight into how the status is completed

and how they work out their lives once the child is born. For instance, we are left with the following question: Do men dispossess of the expectant father status and experience closure at birth or does the status continue to be a processual change in which they continue to develop what father means as the child grows?

The thesis is also limited in that it groups together both men who are first time expectant fathers and subsequent expectant fathers. It also groups together the planned and unplanned pregnancies. It does not distinguish in great depth between the similarities and differences in these two passages. Though status passages are often seen as an entrance that only occurs once, Glaser and Strauss (1971) state that a passage may be repeatable or non-repeatable. That is, one may enter into a status more than once. For example a person who is ill may move from the status of being healthy to ill and back to healthy again (Glaser and Strauss, 1971). They suggest that there is reversibility or re-entrance into the sick role during these developments from healthy to unhealthy. The thesis provides a limited analysis of the difference between those who were first time expectant fathers and subsequent expectant fathers. At points during the analysis the data demonstrate that there are similarities between these two passages. That is, men who were first time expectant fathers and subsequent expectant fathers are similar in their experience of the change to their lives. Subsequent expectant fathers were concerned with anticipating pregnancy, becoming pregnant, and the pregnancy term. They also experience a turning point at confirmation and orient their lives to the changes. They were concerned because of the uncertainty of not knowing how the subsequent child would change their lives.



Though the thesis is limited, it provides a number of directions in which future studies could commence. The thesis instructs researchers to examine the initial developments in people's lives that lead the entrance into a new status. Future directions for researching could also examine the role that emotions play in key turning points in people's lives. Strauss (1959) emphasizes negative misalignments in turning points, but the men's turning point was accompanied by positive and negative responses. Although both emotions were part of men's turning point, I did not examine what role each of these emotions played in the passage. When there is a greater emphasis on the positive emotional reaction to pregnancy, is it easier to adjust to the changes during pregnancy and the status of expectant father? While perhaps a major task, future studies would also benefit and provide greater insight into men's experience if men were followed through the anticipatory stage of the passage and then through the pregnancy and birth event. The research could also be extended to focus on the postpartum adjustment and the development of fatherhood through early childhood.

Research should also examine the entrance into parenthood as a joint passage. It would be interesting to study and conceptualize both men and women going through the status passage and how they work co-jointly to reach a common goal. Research should consider the distinct and common concerns, how they develop distinct and common perspectives, engage in distinct and common activities and so on. Examining these two groups of successors as a joint passage would provide insight into the acquisition of a new individual status (i.e. expectant father and expectant mother) and joint status (i.e. expectant parents).

Research should also examine the role of uncertainty and excitement that accompanies a new status. The men's lives were uncertain in regard to the definition of fatherhood. At the societal level the definition of fatherhood is changing and men are told that this event is supposed to be an exciting and joyous. The event is also uncertain in regards to the pregnancy being carried to term. In dealing with the uncertainty men state that there was no one person they looked to. Rather, they looked to a number of people to deal with the changes. Future research should extend beyond the role of predecessors and examine in greater depth those that are involved in helping men manage and the ways they manage the uncertainty, excitement and joy said to accompany this change.

Also, future research should explore other status changes that involve the movement into statuses where the definition of the status is in question. While complex, comparing and contrasting status passages where the definition of the status is in question may provide insight into people's behaviors and the ease at which they move into a new status. For example we could examine if there are similarities, do they experience similar misalignments, and how do these two groups adjust to the changes of the new status? In addition, examining and comparing men who are first time fathers with subsequent expectant fatherhood would provide insight into whether or not people may enter into the same status twice and if there are the differences between the two entrances? For instance, the men who were subsequent fathers experienced similar misalignments in emotionality because they did not know how the new development and baby would change their lives. They were also concerned with the health of their partners during

pregnancy and the developing child. The thesis instructs us to consider the repeatability of entering into or re-entering into the status passage. Examining in greater depth the similarities and differences in the first and second entrance would be an interesting direction for future research.

Lastly, future research should examine the status passage more systematically and examine the role of education, age, ethnicity, and income. Research should consider questions such as how education impacts the ease at which men move through the status change? Also, does finances impact the ease at which men move through the status passage? Future research should consider the different levels of education and income and how these may play a role in the status change. Research could also include an examination of religion and how that plays a role in the status passage. The men in this study were educated and were overwhelmingly Christian in their faith. The impact of how these may play a role in the men's experience of pregnancy and the entrance into expectant fatherhood need to be addressed in future studies. Clearly, the thesis demonstrates some interesting findings, however, more work in this area is needed.

## APPENDIX A: Interview Schedule

### A. MEN'S INVOLVEMENT AND EXPERIENCE OF PREGNANCY

#### THINKING ABOUT PREGNANCY

1. Did you and your partner do a lot of thinking about being parents before this pregnancy?
2. Were there specific events in your life that made you think about starting a family (i.e. your partner missing a pill, pregnancy scares, pressure from family and friends, etc)?
3. Did you know much about what it would be like to go through a pregnancy before the pregnancy occurred?
4. Have you had any experiences, like the pregnancy of a sister or friend that gave you some idea of what pregnancy would be like?
5. Did knowledge of those pregnancies carry over into how you thought about what your own experience with your partners' pregnancy might be like?
6. Did you give much thought to what going through a pregnancy with your partner would actually be like?

#### MAKING PLANS

7. Was this pregnancy planned?
8. [If Yes] Can you tell me about the kinds of things you and your partner considered as you talked about becoming pregnant?
9. Did your plans include discussions with a doctor, midwife, family and/or friends about becoming pregnant?
10. Did you and your partner have a time frame in mind as you discussed becoming pregnant?
11. Did your plans go as expected?
12. Did you and your partner disagree at all about becoming pregnant? If so, how did you work it out?
13. What were some of the things that made you feel ready to become a father?

#### EXPERIENCING AN UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

##### [If Not A Planned Pregnancy]

14. If you feel comfortable talking about it, can you tell me a little about receiving the news that your partner is pregnant?
15. Can you tell me about some of the issues the pregnancy raised for you and your partner?
16. How did you feel or think about the pregnancy, initially?
17. Have your thoughts about the pregnancy changed over time?
18. Did you feel ready for fatherhood?

### SUSPECTING A PREGNANCY

19. Did you and your partner suspect that she might be pregnant before it was confirmed?
20. What events triggered the suspicion?
21. Can you recall any of your thoughts or reactions to the suspicion that she may be pregnant and that you might be about to become a father?

### EXPERIENCING CONFIRMATION OF PREGNANCY

22. Do you recall what it felt like to receive confirmation?
23. How did you feel when you found out that you are going to be a father?
24. Were you focused right away on the fact that you were going to be a father or were you more focused on getting through the pregnancy?

### INFORMING OTHERS

25. How did you go about telling others that you are going to be a father?
26. Did you wait to tell others of the pregnancy?
27. Who did you tell first?
28. Did you tell many people?
29. Did your telling people the news lead to any interesting discussions that you can recall?
30. Did anyone comment on what it is like to be pregnant, becoming a father, or on what you should do as a partner?
31. Were there people that you avoided telling about the pregnancy?
32. When you think about this pregnancy or talk about it, do you say “my partner” is pregnant or “we” are pregnant?

### EXPERIENCING REACTIONS FROM OTHERS

33. Do you remember the reactions you got to telling people the news (i.e. family, friends, co-workers, your boss, acquaintances)?
34. Did anyone’s reaction to the pregnancy and pending fatherhood change throughout the course of the pregnancy?

### MEN’S ONGOING REACTION TO PREGNANCY

35. What has the pregnancy been like for you?
36. Have your feelings changed in any way as it goes along?
37. How do you think about the bodily changes that your partner went through (or is going through)?
38. How do you think about the pregnancy? Do you think about a baby in there or about a fetus?
39. Did you get to hear the baby’s heart beat? What was that experience like?
40. Did you go to the ultrasound with your partner?
41. What was it like for you to see the baby inside the womb?
42. Did seeing the fetus make the pregnancy and child more real to you?

- 43. Did the ultrasound change how you think about the pregnancy?
- 44. Can you recall your reaction to the first time you felt the baby move?
- 45. Do you want to know about everything that is changing in your partner?
- 46. How involved do you want to be in the pregnancy?
- 47. How involved does your partner want you to be in the pregnancy?
- 48. Were there opportunities where you became more involved with the pregnancy?

#### MEN'S PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES OF PREGNANCY

- 49. Some men find themselves reacting physically to their partners' pregnancy. For example, they might start experiencing some of the same symptoms. Has this ever happened to you?
- 50. Has the pregnancy produced any physical changes in you?

#### B. DEALING WITH RELATIONSHIPS

- 51. Do you think that things between you and your partner have changed in any way as a result of the pregnancy?
- 52. Have your feelings changed?
- 53. Have your activities changed?
- 54. Have your routines changed?
- 55. Did the fact that you're now pregnant and about to become a father change your relationship with anyone, either in your family or among your friends? In what way(s) did the relationship change?

#### C. DEVELOPING KNOWLEDGE OF PREGNANCY

- 56. How important has it been for you to go out and get information either about pregnancy or becoming a father?
- 57. Where did you get most of your information about what to expect and what's about to come?
- 58. Did you read many books or articles on pregnancy?
- 59. Are you curious about things connected with this pregnancy? What sorts of things are you curious about?
- 60. Does your partner share a lot about what she is learning with you?
- 61. Does she share a lot about her physical changes and what is going on within her?
- 62. Does this sharing teach you about the pregnancy?
- 63. Do you go along to the doctors' visits?
- 64. Do you get a lot of information or advice from others? Can you tell me about this knowledge from others? Was it valuable or taken to heart?
- 65. Do you get too much advice or knowledge from others? What is this like for you?
- 66. Who would you say has been the greatest support for you through this?
- 67. Did you go to prenatal or Lamaze classes with your partner?
- 68. Were the classes a source of information?

D. MEN'S DEVELOPING IDENTITY

- 69. Have you thought any differently about yourself since this pregnancy happened to you?
- 70. Did you find yourself thinking about being a father?
- 71. Did you think about the kind of father you want to be or the kind of father you don't want to be?
- 72. Did you find that your partner thinks of you in terms of what kind of father you will be?
- 73. Have your partners expectations of you changed in any way?
- 74. Did family or friends begin to act any differently since the pregnancy started?
- 75. Did you find that you began to talk more to with people who have children than friends who are single?
- 76. Did you practice with other children or with friends' children as to how you would interact with your child?

MANAGING CONCERNS

- 77. What are some of the things that you worry about when you think of this pregnancy?
- 78. What are some of the things you worry about when you think about becoming a father?  
[Concern for mother, fetus, self, financial concerns, household or living concerns, becoming a father concerns, birth concerns, relationship concerns, extended family].
- 79. Do you have doubts about becoming a father? or about the pregnancy?
- 80. How do you handle them?
- 81. Do you talk to anyone about these worries or doubts?
- 82. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the pregnancy and becoming a father?

## APPENDIX B: Consent Form

McMaster University  
Department of Sociology

This form when signed indicates the respondents' willingness to be interviewed and tape-recorded for a study of men and the experience of pregnancy and pending fatherhood.

Julia Arndt, a graduate student at McMaster University, is carrying out this research. She will use this information for completion of her Master's thesis in Sociology. She will answer any question I have concerning this study and may be contacted by: telephone at 905-521-2759 or by e-mail at [arndtjb@mcmaster.ca](mailto:arndtjb@mcmaster.ca). Dr. Dorothy Pawluch, the Faculty Supervisor for this study, may be contacted at the Department of Sociology, 905-525-9140, ext. 23618. The objective of this study is to learn more about men's experience of their partners' pregnancy and pending fatherhood. This study seeks to understand how men experience and think about such issues as whether or not to start a family, implications for their relationship with their partner, the anticipation of new responsibilities and learning what one needs to know to get through pregnancy and become a father.

Participation in this study includes an audiotaped interview ranging from 1 to 1 ½ hours, and will be arranged at a time and place convenient to the respondent. There may also be a subsequent interview if more information is needed. A subsequent interview will also depend on the respondents' willingness to participate. Although extracts from our conversations may be used in my written work, names will not be used. Nor will I include any information that allows for the identification of respondents.

Since participation in this study is completely voluntary, respondents may withdraw at any point. Also, respondents may refuse to answer questions in the questionnaire or any question during the interview. If a respondent wishes to withdraw from the study at any point, he may do so by calling me or emailing me. No explanation is needed and there will be no reprisals. I will destroy the data as soon as the study is complete.

I agree to take part in one interview with Julia Arndt as a part of the study described above. I agree to provide an additional interview if there is a need for further clarification or information. Each interview will last one hour and a half to two hours, and will be arranged at a time and place of my convenience. I also agree to allow this interview to be audiotaped. If I decide to withdraw, I am aware that all notes and tapes concerning my interview will be destroyed. I am also aware that the information will be kept for two years after the interview in order for Julia Arndt to complete her MA thesis and a possible journal article. After two years all tapes and notes will be destroyed by Julia Arndt.



I give my consent to participate in this study.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participants Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Because we can only learn about people's experiences when they share them with us,  
your assistance is very much appreciated.

**APPENDIX C: Questionnaire****Name of Respondent** \_\_\_\_\_**Address of Respondent** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**Telephone Number** \_\_\_\_\_

To be used for follow up interviews and so I can send out a note of appreciation and a summary of the study findings to the respondents.

**Age**

Please check ✓ the one that best describes your age.

Less than 20 \_\_\_\_\_

20-29 \_\_\_\_\_

30-39 \_\_\_\_\_

39 + \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnic Background**

What is your ethnic or cultural background?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Religious Background -**

What is your religion?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Educational Background**

Please check ✓ the one that best describes your education.

Less than High School Graduate \_\_\_\_\_

High School Graduate \_\_\_\_\_

College Graduate \_\_\_\_\_

University Graduate \_\_\_\_\_

**Financial Background**

Please check ✓ the one that best describes your income range.

0 to 10,000 \_\_\_\_\_

10,000 to 20,000 \_\_\_\_\_

20,000 to 30,000 \_\_\_\_\_

30,000 to 40,000	___
40,000 to 50,000	___
50,000 to 60,000	___
60,000 to 80,000	___
80,000 and above	___

**Relationship**

Please check ☒ the one that best describes your relationship status.

yes      no

Are you married?      \_\_\_      \_\_\_

Are you living common law?      \_\_\_      \_\_\_

Other? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the child born? \_\_\_\_\_

How old is the child? \_\_\_\_\_

How far along in the pregnancy is your partner? \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D: Respondent Histories

Greg is in his early thirties and held a blue-collar job where he worked shift work at a factory. He had experienced two pregnancies with two different partners' in his earlier years. With these children he was not a full-time father. Parenting consisted of visits from the children on the weekend. His current partner, his wife, they had been together a number of years. Originally they did not want children but changed their mind. This was his third pregnancy experience, but his wife's first pregnancy. They lived together, in a common-law union, for seven years prior to marriage. The marriage was to have children and 'do it right' this time. They had started planning a child just before they were married and found out shortly after their honeymoon that they were pregnant. They owned a house and vehicle together. They lived in an area that would be suitable to raise a child in with good schools and the like. He describes himself as a Canadian and not religious. His education consists of two credits short from attaining a high-school diploma. His wife was five months pregnant at the time of the interview. They had a 13lb little girl four months later. The interview occurred at his house and his wife preferred to be present for the interview. The interview lasted an hour and a half long.

Frank is in his early forties and is a stay-at-home father of his two children. He was taking courses in the evening at university. He had experienced two pregnancies with the same partner, his wife. They planned both children. They owned a house together. They lived in an area that would be suitable to raise children. Their parents lived below them in the house. At the time of the interview he had just delivered his second child the night before, a baby girl. He was still 'high' on the excitement of delivering the child with little aid from the midwife. He describes himself as a Canadian (Belgian and Hungarian) and was a non-practicing Catholic. His education consists of a university degree and the income is characteristic of a middle-class earning. The interview occurred at a library. The interview lasted an hour long.

Dalton is in his late thirties and a father of two children. His wife was five months pregnant with their third child at the time of the interview. He worked at a financial corporation and earned an income characteristic of an upper-middle class income. They owned a house and two vehicles. The first pregnancy was unplanned. The second and third pregnancies were planned. He described himself as a German Canadian and is a non-practicing Roman Catholic. His education consists of a university degree. The interview occurred at his work and lasted an hour long.

Dillon is in his early thirties and a father of one child. His daughter was five months old at the time of the interview. He and his wife were married a number of years prior to having a child. He was an engineer and earned an income characteristic of an upper-middle class income. They owned a house and one vehicle. The first pregnancy was planned. The second and third pregnancies were planned. He describes himself as Anglo-Dutch and his religious background is Christian. The interview occurred at his house and his wife watched the little one in another part of the house. The interview

lasted an hour and a half long. He referred me to one man who had been through a pregnancy recently.

Keith is in his late twenties and his wife was six months pregnant at the time of the interview. They lived together, in a common-law union, for ten years prior to marriage. The marriage was to have children and start a family. They started planning a child shortly after they were married. They owned a house together. He was in university and almost at the completion of his degree. The pregnancy was planned. He describes himself as Scottish and nondenominational. The interview occurred at his house and his wife watched television in another room. The interview lasted two hours long. He referred me to one man who had been through a pregnancy recently.

Art is in his late twenties and a father of one child. His daughter was two months old at the time of the interview. He and his wife were married prior to having a child. He was an engineer and earned an income characteristic of an upper-middle class income. They rented a townhouse. The pregnancy was planned. English Canadian and was an Evangelical Christian (Brethren). His education consists of a university degree. The interview occurred at his house and his wife watched the little one in another part of the house. The interview lasted two hours. He referred me to one man who had been through a pregnancy recently. He earned an income characteristic of an upper-middle class income.

Tim is in his late twenties and a father of one child. His daughter was one month old at the time of the interview. He and his wife were married prior to having a child. He has two jobs and was starting his own business. He is African in descent and Christian – Pentecostal in his faith. He graduated from college and makes a wage characteristic of a middle class wage.

Anthony is in his early thirties and describes himself as English in background and Christian in his faith. He graduated from college and works for the police department. He earns an income characteristic of a middle class income. He is married and has two children, a two-year-old and eight months old. He and his wife met in high school and married upon her completion. They lived together for a while before the marriage. They were married three or four years and discussed having children but had a hard time figure out when exactly to do so.

Ed is in his late twenties and describes himself as having a German descent and is Baptist in his affiliation. He graduated from high school and owns a business with his wife. He is married and has one child that is seven months old. He and his wife dated for six months and were married at the completion of six months. They waited five years and part of that was to figure out the relationship and work on certain aspects of the relationship before having a child together. His child was seven months at the time of the interview.

Daniel is in his early forties and describes himself as Canadian in Background and Brethren in his religious affiliation. He is a high-school graduate that owns a business and has middle to upper class income. He is married and has a three-year old and his wife was eight months pregnant at the time of the interview. They had a hard time becoming pregnant. It took them six years and extensive medical procedures and tests.

The second child took two years of trying and extensive tests and procedures as well. Trying to become pregnant for six years was hard on he and his wife.

Jared is in his late twenties and describes himself as Italian and Catholic in his faith, although not practicing. He makes a wage characteristic of middle to upper class. He and his wife were married shortly after they became pregnant with their first child. The first child was unplanned and is two and a half years old. The second child was planned and is seven months old.

Randy is in his mid thirties and is Canadian and Catholic in his religious background. He is a university graduate that earns a middle-class income. He had a three-year-old and his wife was four and a half months pregnant at the time of the interview. They wanted to have their first child before his wife was thirty years old. They were married a few years before having children.

Dale is in his mid thirties and Mennonite in his background. His faith is Christian. He graduated from university and has a wage characteristic of upper class. He and his wife were married almost four years before having a child together. Their child was 10 months old at the time of the interview. His wife's career led her to travel out of the country therefore they had to plan a little more about when they would start having children.

David is in his late twenties and describes himself as Canadian and Protestant – Baptist in his religious affiliation. He is a college graduate and works for the police department. His income is characteristic of a middle-class income. He is married and his child was four and a half months old at the time of the interview. He waited until he was set in his career and the money was coming in before he and his wife had children.

Kyle is in his late twenties, is a British Canadian and is Evangelical Christian. He graduated from university and makes an income characteristic of an upper-middle class status. He is married and has a two year old and a six-month-old child. He and his wife waited four years before they started having children.

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