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A study of the expressed feelings of prepared and unprepared expectant fathers

A STUDY OF THE EXPRESSED FEELINGS

OF PREPARED AND UNPREPARED EXPECTANT FATHERS

By

Dorothy LaVerne Koelbl
(B.S., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1955)

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First Reader: Anne Keener
Anne Keener

Second Reader: Helen Thumm
Helen Thumm

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Education for parenthood is a development of the twentieth century. The Maternity Center Association of New York City instituted a series of classes for expectant mothers in 1920, for expectant fathers in 1938, and combined the groups in 1946.[1] The movement to educate parents for the task of bearing and raising children has spread rapidly throughout the country.

A great deal has been written concerning the effects of pregnancy, childbirth, and the pros and cons of teaching the prospective mother. However, there is a paucity of information regarding the other half of the team: the prospective father.

Some fathers are naturally "good" fathers, or acquire their talent from their own family background. The investigator feels that participation in parents' classes would definitely contribute to the development of latent fatherly characteristics or at least bring fatherliness to a more conscious level. The father, of course, does not undergo any physiological changes, but some of the feelings and attitudes engendered during pregnancy may carry over and affect future parent-child and husband-wife relationships. Fathers who have an opportunity to participate in a preparation-for-parenthood program should be expected to become more aware of

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[1]Gelb, Barbara, The ABC of Natural Childbirth (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1954), p. 97.

their wives' needs for support and understanding. The knowledge they gain should also contribute to their self-confidence and reduce their anxieties about the pregnancy.

Statement of the Problem

The purposes of this study are: first, to compare the expressed feelings of the prepared and unprepared fathers about themselves, their wives, and their expected babies during the prenatal and intrapartal periods; second, to determine the outcomes which fathers themselves believe to have resulted from their attendance at parents' classes; and third, to determine if preparation-for-parenthood classes influence the way a man sees himself as a father.

Justification of the Problem

The investigator feels that the problem of preparing expectant fathers for their role is important to nursing for three reasons. First, there is a current trend in maternal and child health programs in schools of nursing to emphasize the concept of the family as a unit, or the relationship of family members to each other. The father and the mother constitute the foundation for the family unit. While much is known about motherhood, little is known about fatherhood. In order to teach student nurses to function most effectively in maternal and child health areas, it is necessary to learn more about the importance of the father figure in the family constellation.

Second, it is the investigator's opinion, based on observation and personal feeling, that a husband will be strongly influenced to become a "good" or "bad" father depending on his experiences during his

wife's pregnancy. A man's participation in parents' classes should result in greater understanding of his wife's feelings during pregnancy, ability to make a more definite contribution to her comfort, a lessening of his own anxiety, and increased interest in his children from the beginning.

The third reason for interest in a father's preparation is related to maternity departments in hospitals. The investigator has observed on many occasions that graduate nurses seem unaware of the contribution which a husband can make to the well-being of his wife at the time of labor and delivery. Often he is ignored, sent away, and generally made to feel useless and unnecessary. Since one of the greatest fears of a woman in labor is being left alone, who could bolster her courage and give her the emotional support she needs better than her husband? The investigator does not suggest that all husbands and all wives would benefit by close association during the intrapartal period, but for a considerable proportion of parents, such a plan would be a wise and satisfying one. To be together during the labor period and, for selected fathers, delivery too, is a plan of care which is feasible only if both parents have been prepared for the experience. With some exceptions, the unprepared father might feel such concern, through lack of knowledge, that his presence would be of limited help to his wife and a trial for himself.

Scope and Limitations

Ten expectant fathers, divided into two groups, participated in the study. One group had attended a series of five classes in prepara-

tion for parenthood given at St. Margaret's Hospital, Dorchester, Massachusetts. The second group had not received such preparation. All ten fathers were expecting their first babies.

There are many limitations to the study. One of them is the small number of expectant fathers in the study groups. Generalizations are almost impossible to make from such a small sample.

Another is that all of them are Roman Catholics, which no doubt affects their attitudes toward marriage and having children. Several of the couples had attended Pre-Cana conferences, and one couple had attended Cana conferences.[2]

The third limitation is in the varying number of classes which the prepared fathers attended.

Communication is the fourth limitation. Although all the fathers were very cooperative, it was difficult for them to express themselves freely and fully to a stranger on subjects which were very personal in nature.

The fifth limitation is the difficulty in determining the outcomes of the fathers' education. There are no entirely satisfactory methods of evaluating changes in feelings and attitudes.

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[2]Pre-Cana conferences are a series of discussions conducted for Roman Catholic engaged couples who intend to marry within six months. The groups are led by a priest, two doctors, and a married couple. Cana conferences are a series for married couples who did not attend Pre-Canas. Such subjects as husband-wife relationships and parent-child relationships are discussed in these groups. The conferences were begun in the Archdiocese of Chicago about 1947. (Statement by Rev. Fr. Martin Cogavin of St. Cecelia Parish, Boston, Massachusetts, personal interview.)

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions shall be understood:

Prepared fathers shall be defined as those men who had attended preparation-for-parenthood classes at St. Margaret's Hospital, Dorchester, Massachusetts. They are designated in the study as A, B, C, D, and E.

Unprepared fathers shall be defined as those men who had not attended preparation-for-parenthood classes at St. Margaret's Hospital, Dorchester, Massachusetts, or those who had no special help in getting ready to be a father. They are designated in the study as F, G, H, I, and J.

Preview of Methodology

The method selected for investigation of the problem consisted of four steps: first, attendance at parenthood classes for the primary purpose of becoming acquainted with prepared fathers; second, introduction to unprepared fathers by the Director of Nursing Service as they came to visit their wives following delivery, to request their participation in the study; third, a focused interview with each of the ten fathers following the birth of the baby and during the mother's hospital stay; and fourth, a paper and pencil test given at the end of each interview in order to have a specific basis for comparison of the prepared and unprepared fathers.

Sequence of Presentation

Chapter II contains a review of the literature pertinent to the study, and the basis and statement of the hypothesis. Chapter III is a

description of the preparation-for-parenthood classes, the selection and description of the sample, and a discussion of the methodology used in the study. Chapter IV contains a presentation of the findings of the study and a discussion of the data. Chapter V is a summary of the findings with conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Review of the Literature

In America today, a man is made to feel very responsible for providing for his family. This means that he must spend a considerable amount of time at his business and less and less time with his family. The result is that children are subjected to a predominantly female influence; first, with mother; and then, with female teachers. Females assume a disproportionate amount of authority, and children grow up with little knowledge of what an adult male does in the world.

Some of the attitudes toward husbands which are prevalent in the United States are reflected in comic strip characters such as Dagwood and Jiggs, and on the radio by actors like Fibber McGee and Kingfish Stevens, a friend of Amos and Andy. These characters "typify the popularity of the theme that stresses the capable female and the inept, well-meaning but blundering male whom she has to manage."[1] Chic Young, the creator of Blondie, sums up these attitudes succinctly by having Dagwood say frequently, "Husbands are a sorry lot."

A great deal of literature concerning parenthood emphasizes the role of the mother and tends to underestimate the importance of the

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[1]English, Spurgeon O., and Constance J. Foster, Fathers Are Parents Too (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1951), p. ix.

father. On the other hand, some of the recent literature appears to be in defense of the male parent. The authors attempt to show that fathers do have an important role in the family, and that they have needs which are not being met.

English and Foster[2] write: "Father is essential. Homes require him. Mothers need him. Children must have him to round out their development." A father's influence on a family is chiefly through the mother. During infancy, he affects his children by his love for his wife. Of course, fathers love their children directly, but it is through their love for their wives that they in turn are able to give love to their children and develop healthy mother-child relationships.

For the first few years, the child depends solely upon his mother's unconditional love. Indeed, to the infant, mother is the only person, besides himself, who exists. As he grows older, the child broadens his perspective to include his father, who becomes an increasingly important figure. After the age of six, he begins to need a father's love, authority, and guidance. The child usually enters school at about six years of age, and begins to learn about a new, outside world apart from the little sphere which contained himself and his mother. Fromm[3] says that:

> ....while father does not represent the natural world, he represents the other pole of human existence, the world of thought, of man-made things, of law and order, of discipline, of travel and adventure. Father is the one who teaches the child, who shows him the road into the world.

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[2]English and Foster, op. cit., p. xi.

[3]Fromm, Erich, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 42.

Without a father's love, a child is apt to develop an unbalanced view of life. Some fathers expect their children, particularly sons, to follow in their footsteps without showing them the satisfying or exciting elements of their work. The father is seen only in recreation, and children seldom learn to respect his ability, creativity, and authority. Father's love has special implications for a girl. She learns the satisfactions of being a woman through the tenderness and protection she sees her father giving her mother. Also, if a father praises his daughter's first attempts at baking a pie, he will do much toward encouraging her interest in acquiring feminine talents and tastes. Fromm[4] gives an idealized picture of father love when he says:

> Father's love should be guided by principles and expectations; it should be patient and tolerant, rather than threatening and authoritarian. It should give the growing child an increasing sense of competence and eventually permit him to become his own authority and to dispense with that of the father.

Besides helping his children to grow up normally, a man also has the special privilege of giving love and affection to his wife. Another unfortunate aspect of the American culture is the amount of time which some husbands and wives must spend apart. In situations where this is true, it has been said that "the amount of sharing of roles--of real companionship--between a husband and wife comes to be reduced frequently far below the optimum, and the marital pair find themselves driven increasingly apart as their marriage progresses."[5] Under such circum-

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[4]Fromm, op. cit., p. 43.

[5]Kluckhohn, Florence, and John P. Spiegel, "Integration and Conflict in Family Behavior," The Committee on the Family of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, Report No. 27 (Topeka, Kansas: August, 1954), p. 17.

stances, pregnancy may create an even wider gulf between a husband and wife.

Another reason for the loss of unity between couples when pregnancy occurs is that both parents undergo an emotional change. Parenthood brings new responsibilities and problems, but it can be an opportunity for new learning and new growth for both parents.

The mother's problems revolve around herself. Often she becomes moody and introspective. The husband, who is "the most important single influence on his wife," can use his influence to help his wife over the trying periods of pregnancy.[6] His ability to respond to her increased needs for love and affection depends on his awareness and understanding of her emotional state.

Caplan[7] and Genne,[8] who advocate education for parenthood, say that the husband must be taught what to expect from his wife during pregnancy, and given clues on ways to deal with her moods. Most husbands do not possess this knowledge intuitively, but must be helped to understand. Caplan[9] says that it is necessary to inform the husband not only for the sake of future marital happiness, but because "if there is a disordered relationship between the husband and wife, especially around the period

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[6]Genne, William H., Husbands and Pregnancy (New York: Association Press, 1956), p. 15.

[7]Caplan, Gerald, Mental Health Aspects of Social Work in Public Health, based on the proceedings of an institute given by the School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley, June 6-8, 1955, pp. 62-71.

[8]Genne, loc. cit.

[9]Caplan, op. cit., p. 71.

at the end of pregnancy, you get a disordered relationship between the mother and the child."

A third reason for marital discord during pregnancy is the tendency of the mother to deny the father his full share in planning for the baby. "Poor rejected father . . . will first be hurt, then jealous, and finally will build up a protective armor of indifference."[10] The fact that a man does become indifferent if he is excluded shows that a father himself has needs which must be met if he is to develop into a good father.

Genne[11] says, "In a very real sense, husbands are pregnant too." Caplan[12] explains more fully by saying, "Many of them identify with their wives, and this is partly a rivalry situation because little boys have fantasies about having children the same way as little girls." An anthropologist says that this is true in preliterate societies also. The men of a tribe devise elaborate secrets about themselves and their functions because they cannot learn the secret of the woman--how to bear children.[13]

A study done on fifty-five expectant fathers in the Army showed that fathers have definite needs. According to the study, parenthood

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[10]Odlum, Doris M., "The Role of the Father," Nursing Mirror, 102:617-618, December, 1955.

[11]Genne, loc. cit.

[12]Caplan, op. cit., p. 70.

[13]Bettelheim, Bruno, Symbolic Wounds (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1954), p. 228.

expectancy may be a "source of acute emotional stress."[14] Stress and reactions are less if the expectant father has an unconscious image of himself as a capable and loving father figure, or if he can achieve a benign kind of identification with his wife or expected baby. The opportunity to ask questions, obtain factual information, and get support from other expectant fathers in preparation-for-parenthood classes will reduce the amount of anxiety felt during pregnancy, and at the time of delivery. Also, it will aid in the evolution of a concept of fatherhood.[15] Realistic discussions of facts and problems will permit the father to "speak more intelligently with his wife, and share more knowingly and effectively in their experience."[16]

The hypothesis is based on the review of the literature and the labor-room experience of the investigator when it was observed that prepared fathers were more at ease and more helpful to their wives than unprepared fathers. This study was done to show that fathers who have attended preparation-for-parenthood classes are different in some ways from fathers who have not.

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[14]Curtis, James L., "A Psychiatric Study of 55 Expectant Fathers," United States Armed Forces Medical Journal, 6:937-950, July, 1955.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid., p. 948.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Since investigation of the problem necessitated the cooperation of a group of prepared fathers, it was felt that attendance at a series of parenthood classes would be the most effective way to meet them and solicit their help. Furthermore, it was thought that the discussions of the various topics might suggest possible areas for exploration in the interviews.

Description of Expectant Parents' Classes

The classes which the investigator audited were given at St. Margaret's Hospital, Dorchester, Massachusetts, under the leadership of the Director of Nursing Service. St. Margaret's is the only maternity hospital in the Boston area which offers a series of classes in the prenatal period to expectant parents.

The classes, which were held two hours a week for six weeks in January and February, 1957, were taught by a priest, a Sister nurse, two lay nurses, and a doctor. The topics for the classes were marital relationships, preparation for parenthood, human conception and fetal development, hygiene of pregnancy, labor and delivery, infant feeding and formula preparation, preparation of older children to welcome the new baby, and the social and emotional development of the child. The methods of teaching were lecture, discussion, motion pictures, and a guided tour

of the labor and delivery rooms.

The atmosphere was informal, and ample time was allowed for question and answer periods. For one class, the couples were separated in order to give the expectant fathers an opportunity for a man-to-man discussion with a doctor without the inhibiting presence of their wives.

The schedule of topics was very flexible and could be combined or shifted as the need arose. During the series which the investigator attended, it was necessary to combine two classes because a severe snowstorm one evening made the hospital inaccessible due to its location atop a steep hill.

Selection and Description of Sample

The investigator was introduced to expectant fathers at parents' classes. At the fourth class, permission was granted by the Director of Nursing Service to explain the purpose of the study to the parents, and to request the cooperation of the fathers. Only six expectant fathers were enrolled in the series which was being given at the time of the study. Five men were willing to participate, but the sixth refused because of lack of time.

The unprepared fathers were selected at random. On evenings which the investigator had free, arrangements were made with the Director of Nursing Service to visit the maternity department and be introduced to fathers of first babies as they came to visit their wives. An attempt was made to match the unprepared fathers with the prepared fathers as nearly as possible; that is, both groups consisted of Roman Catholic men whose wives had uncomplicated pregnancies and deliveries, apparently

healthy babies, private doctors, and semiprivate accommodations.

A further description of the two groups will be found in the following tables. Table I, which appears below, gives the age, year married, and occupation of each prepared father with the number of classes attended. Table II, page 16, gives the age, year married, and occupation of each unprepared father.

TABLE I

AGE, YEAR MARRIED, AND OCCUPATION OF PREPARED FATHERS, AND NUMBER OF CLASSES ATTENDED

Father	Age	Year Married	Occupation	Number of Classes Attended
A	27	1956	Chemist	5
B	30	1956	Aeronautical Engineer	2
C	24	1956	Engineer (Student)	3
D	27	1956	Sandpaper Shipper	3
E	30	1954	Clothing Manufacturer	4

Average Age -- 27.6 years

TABLE II

AGE, YEAR MARRIED, AND OCCUPATION
OF UNPREPARED FATHERS

Father	Age	Year Married	Occupation
F	30	1952	Supervisor of Inventory
G	23	1956	Tissue Shipper
H	33	1948	Steam Shovel Operator
I	39	1956	Bus Driver
J	19	1956	Window Cleaner
	Average Age -- 30.8 years		

A comparison of Tables I and II shows that the prepared group was the younger with an average age of 27.6 years; while the unprepared group, which contained both the oldest and the youngest father in the study, had an average age of 30.8 years.

The reader will notice also that the occupations of the prepared fathers were of the type which require education beyond high school with the exception of father D. It is speculated that exposure to higher education may have been the stimulus which prompted these men to seek information about their present situations in a classroom setting.

Tables III and IV, on page 17, show the position of the prepared and unprepared fathers in relation to their brothers and sisters.

TABLE III

POSITION OF THE PREPARED FATHERS
IN RELATION TO SIBLINGS

Father	Older Siblings	Younger Siblings	Number of Children in Each Family*
A	3	1	5
B	0	1	2
C	0	0	1
D	2	7	10
E	1	3	5
Total number of children			23
Average number of children per family			4.6

* Includes the men themselves.

TABLE IV

POSITION OF THE UNPREPARED FATHERS
IN RELATION TO SIBLINGS

Father	Older Siblings	Younger Siblings	Number of Children in Each Family*
F	2	11	14
G	5	0	6
H	1	2	4
I	2	4	7
J	2	9	12
Total number of children			43
Average number of children per family			8.6

* Includes the men themselves.

In Table III it may be seen that C was the only expectant father in the study who had no brothers or sisters, and that B was the only father who was the oldest in his family. In Table IV G was the only father in the study who was the youngest in the family.

The principal points of difference in the family backgrounds of the groups were: first, the total number of children in the five families of the prepared fathers (Table III) was twenty less than the number produced by the parents of the unprepared fathers (Table IV); and second, the average number of children per family in the prepared group was 4.6, while in the unprepared group the average number reached 8.6 children per family.

A possible reason for the difference in the two groups with regard to family size may be that four of the unprepared fathers were children of immigrant parents, while most of the prepared fathers were of American or mixed parentage. This is illustrated in Table V, which gives the national origins of the prepared and unprepared fathers.

TABLE V

NATIONAL ORIGINS OF THE PREPARED AND UNPREPARED FATHERS

National Origin	Number	
	Prepared	Unprepared
U. S. born, both parents U. S. born.....	2	1
U. S. born, one parent foreign born*.....	1	0
U. S. born, both parents foreign born*....	1	4
Foreign born**.....	1	0

*The countries of origin of the foreign born parents were:
Canada -- 2
Ireland -- 5
Italy -- 4

**The one foreign-born male was born in Brazil of Belgian parents.

Tools Used to Collect Data

The tools used in the collection of data were a focused interview and a paper and pencil test.

The Interview

A focused interview is one which may be distinguished by four major characteristics. These are:

1. The persons interviewed are known to have been involved in a particular situation,
2. An hypothesis has been predetermined,
3. An interview guide has been developed, and
4. The interview is focused on the subjective experiences of the persons who were involved in the particular situation in an effort to ascertain their definitions of the situation.[1]

An interview of this type was used because it seemed to afford the widest range for the expression of the subjective feelings of the expectant fathers. It also allowed the investigator to obtain a clearer picture of the expectant fathers' feelings through observation of facial expressions, gestures, and manners of speaking.

The questions for the interview were suggested by the situation itself, discussions in the parenthood classes, a survey of the literature, and experiences of the investigator. The interview guide was essentially the same for both the prepared and the unprepared fathers. The only variations were those questions which directly concerned the classes, and the probes which were necessary at times to encourage the fathers to express their opinions. The interview guides are reproduced

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[1]Merton, Robert K., Marjorie Fiske, and Patricia L. Kendall, The Focused Interview (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956), p. 3.

in the Appendix.[2]

The Test

In order to have a specific example of a difference between prepared and unprepared fathers which could be measured, a test was constructed. It consisted of four best answer questions based on material from the class discussions. The subjects of the questions were those which the investigator felt should be familiar to a well-informed father. The complete test will be found in the Appendix.[3]

Procurement of Data

Arrangements were made with the Director of Nursing Service to be notified as the wife of each alumnus of the preparation-for-parenthood classes delivered. The fathers were contacted by telephone and an appointment was made to meet the investigator at the hospital at the end of the evening visiting hours. This time was chosen because it appeared to be the most convenient for the fathers. The parents were not disturbed during visiting hours, except for a brief visit, because it seemed in the best interest of family relationships to permit the husband and wife to be alone at this time.

The Director of Nursing Service introduced the investigator to unprepared fathers during evening visiting hours. The fathers were requested to meet the investigator at the close of visiting hours.

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[2]Appendixes A and B, pp. 43 and 45, respectively.

[3]Appendix C, p. 47.

The interviews were conducted privately at the hospital. An effort was made to create an atmosphere as conducive to free expression as possible. The test was given at the end of the interview.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Presentation and Discussion of Data

This chapter is a presentation and discussion of the data which were collected through an interview, and a paper and pencil test.

The presentation and discussion of the data concern the fathers' feelings about themselves, their wives, and their unborn children during the prenatal and intrapartal periods; their thoughts about their role as new fathers; the outcomes which the prepared fathers said resulted from attendance at parents' classes; and the results of the test which was given to both groups of fathers.

Throughout the chapter, comparisons are drawn in an attempt to point out similarities and differences between the two groups in support of the hypothesis.

Fathers' Feelings During the Prenatal Period

The first interview question about the prenatal period concerned the feelings of the expectant fathers when they first knew of the pregnancy. Seven of the ten fathers used the words "very happy," "felt terrific," "excited," "thrilled," or "glad" to describe their feelings. The three remaining fathers said they were "happy but," and gave the wife's health or finances as reasons for wishing to postpone having a child.

A question was then asked concerning any changes which the expectant fathers had noticed in their reactions to people or situations during the prenatal period. Although the majority of the men reported no particular change, a few told of rather interesting episodes and feelings which may or may not have been related to their expectant fatherhood.

D, a prepared father, said, "I had an argument with my boss." H, an unprepared father, said, "I got nervous and barked at the men. I swung the boom too far and it fell over." Father J, another of the unprepared group, said, "I felt more love and concern for my wife. I just felt a little jumpy."

Father H, who had trouble with his crane, may have been justifiably excited since he and his wife had waited nine years for a child. He said laughingly, during the interview, that he hoped they could remember the combination and have a second child before another nine years had passed.

The foregoing statements point out a similarity rather than a difference between the two groups. Another similarity may be seen in their answers concerning any new problems between themselves and their wives in daily living. The purpose of this question was to learn if the expectant fathers were aware of their wives' mood swings and the reasons for them; and to discover what methods they used to resolve the situations.

The usual response to this question was "no problems" or "nothing unusual." The fathers who conceded that their wives may have been slightly moody handled it either by ignoring the moods, or humoring them.

The ostensible lack of disturbances seemed somewhat incredible. Some variations in relationships or feelings are expected during pregnancy. The investigator feels that either there were problems which could not be revealed to a stranger and therefore were withheld, or the lack of problems was an indication of the husbands' insensitivity or limited awareness of their wives' changed needs. However, most of the participants in the study had been married only a short time before pregnancy ensued. It is reasonable to assume that since they were still in the process of adjusting to marriage, they would probably ascribe all variations in behavior to the newness of the marital state, and fail to recognize the pregnancy as a causative factor of disharmony.

It is questionable that parenthood classes were helpful to the prepared fathers in this area, but B's answer to the question about problems was, "None in particular, probably because I was forewarned of her needs for emotional support, her moods, and so on. Making sure of giving her the affection and encouragement she needed was a gratifying experience."

When asked what, if anything, had worried them during the prenatal period, the expectant fathers gave the health of their wives as the primary concern. Finances and the condition of the baby were rated equally as secondary causes of worry.

The first intimation of a difference between the two groups is discernible in the worries of two unprepared fathers. Father H wondered if "the baby would be a cripple." He also said he "didn't expect to have both his wife and a baby" and wondered "which one would be all right." Father J thought that if his wife were frightened or startled during

pregnancy "it would mark the baby." The prepared fathers expressed no fears of this kind.

These two unprepared fathers may have been less anxious and worried if they could have had the advantage of learning about measures which safeguard the life of both mother and child, and the fallacy of an old wives' tale. They may also have benefited from the experiences and support of other expectant fathers in a group situation.

Fathers' Feelings During the Intrapartal Period

It is believed that the most emphatic differences between prepared and unprepared fathers may be seen in their statements of feelings during this period. The expectant fathers were asked if they had known what to do at the onset of labor.

The prepared fathers said, "Yes, because of preparation and the lectures"; or, "Yes, mainly through the course"; or, "I knew from the classes." The prepared fathers not only knew what to do when labor began, but attributed this knowledge to the classes they had attended.

In contrast, notice the responses of the unprepared fathers. They said, "No, I didn't know"; or, "No, I didn't think it was time"; or, "No, I didn't know, but my wife was well-informed." These fathers had to depend on their wives' information about the onset of labor.

In spite of their knowledge, the prepared fathers as well as the unprepared fathers seemed to express some anxiety in their behavior while their wives were in labor. The following are their comments about what they did and thought as they waited.

Prepared Fathers

A I went home after the examination, went to bed, and slept. I said the rosary for my wife and baby to be all right.

B I waited in the hospital for awhile then had a cup of coffee. I went to classes and came back in the afternoon and waited until the baby was born. I prayed and hoped that the delivery would be easy, so that it would not be an excessively unpleasant experience. I wondered whether to stay or go to work. I felt useless and unneeded.

C I stayed with my mother-in-law and cousin. I worried about the length of time it had been toward the last hour.

D I went to my mother's house, sat in a chair and waited. I played bridge with my brother to calm my nerves. I was afraid something might happen to the baby.

E I hung around the house and watched the ball game. I jumped at every phone call. I wondered if my wife would have an easy time. I didn't want her to be in the labor room too long. I was dying to know about her progress. I called frequently but always heard "mild labor."

Unprepared Fathers

F I talked to the doctor, then went home and read the paper. I was anxious to hear that everything was all right. I concentrated on losing myself in the paper and worried off and on.

G I worked on my boat but I didn't get much done. I had a couple of highballs. I wondered whether my wife and the baby would be all right.

H I ate chicken, drank beer, watched television, and bit my fingernails. (This was not merely a figure of speech, since his fingernails were bitten to the quick and his cuticles were ragged and red.) I thought about my wife and baby. How was my wife and baby? Would the baby be deformed? I expected a phone call asking me to decide which one I wanted them to save.

I I went home to bed and slept though not very well. I just hoped everything would be all right. I got a little concerned as the labor got farther along.

J I waited in the lobby for an hour then went home. I came back in the evening and heard a woman screaming. I took my wife home, and we prayed and talked all night. We went back in the morning. Then I went home to sleep for a while. When I woke up, I called every hour. I didn't get much information and got mad. I finally talked to the doctor and got some news. I worried because my wife was weak and underweight. My mother said the baby might be small and have to go in an incubator. I was afraid if something went wrong they would save the baby before my wife. I thought about my wife losing too much blood. She didn't take her pills regularly. I was afraid the baby would get stuck. My wife gained twenty-four pounds and I thought the baby would be too big. I couldn't get her to stop eating.

All the fathers seemed conscious of a need for distraction, companionship, and support during the waiting period. The investigator feels that all of them would have been less uneasy if they had received more support and information from hospital personnel.

The fathers obtained information about their wives' well-being and progress not from someone directly involved in the situation, but from the switchboard operator. The routine answer to inquiries was "mild labor" regardless of the actual stage of progress. This policy is probably necessary to protect the patients' privacy from curious neighbors, but such limited information is not reassuring to fathers.

Although all ten fathers showed a need for support, a comparison of the comments of the two groups reveals that the prepared fathers on the whole were more comfortable than the unprepared fathers. The prepared fathers thought and worried about their wives and babies, but it was the solicitude which a person feels when a loved one is under stress. On the other hand, some of the unprepared fathers were less realistic in their concern, and harbored morbid fantasies about unfavorable outcomes.

Another distinct difference in the feelings of prepared and un-

prepared fathers is shown in their remarks about labor itself. When asked for their ideas of what takes place during labor, the unprepared fathers again presented a distorted view of reality. They imagined it to be "very painful," "an ordeal," or "moaning and suffering," and in general had either no idea, or a very vague idea, of the actual process of labor and delivery. Father J commented, "I imagined my wife sitting up with her hands strapped over her head and pushing. The doctor would be there with his hand on her stomach and pushing. The nurse would be giving her whiffs of gas and the nun would be counting pains. There would be a rush to the delivery room. She would grip the bars and squeeze and force the baby out."

The prepared fathers responded with a unanimous "Yes" when asked if it had helped to know what was happening. Father B reflected the general feeling of the group in his answer. "I could follow in thought what might be happening. It helped very much to have seen the delivery room, installations, and the people involved."

It is interesting that nearly all the expectant fathers, regardless of preparation, either desired or were willing to stay with their wives during labor, even though hospital policy did not permit it. Most of them gave as their reasons the ideas that they could "cheer them up, give moral support, or hold hands." Those who would rather remain away said that their presence in the labor room might increase either their wives' nervousness or their own. Obviously, there is no relationship between preparation for, and the desire to be together during labor. The decision must be based on the individual feelings of husbands and wives.

Outcomes of Expectant Parents' Classes

The prepared fathers were asked if there were definite ways in which the classes had been helpful, and if attendance had changed any previously held ideas. Some of the outcomes, those pertaining to the intrapartal period, have already been discussed. The topics mentioned were those which were the most valuable to the fathers. Some said they were sure there were others but, at the time of the interview, could not remember specific areas.

The subjects which stood out in their minds were sex education, feeding, knowledge of the hospital and the people involved, the mechanics of the birth process, knowledge of pregnancy and its psychology, and child psychology. In addition, several fathers mentioned that the "cold turkey" talk with the doctor was beneficial. Since the investigator and the expectant mothers were excluded from this session, it can only be assumed that by the expression "cold turkey" the fathers meant that the talk with the doctor was on matters of the most practical nature.

The prepared fathers said that the classes had not changed any of their ideas, but that they had been valuable for clarification and enlightenment in areas such as sex education, child psychology, and the process by which delivery was accomplished.

The unprepared fathers were asked if they would have liked more information about the events of the maternity cycle, and if they would be interested if there were a way of obtaining such information. With the exception of one who said he already knew "pretty much," the unprepared fathers indicated a desire for more knowledge. They said, "Yes, it wouldn't leave a question in my mind"; or, "Are there any classes

about it"; or, "I am interested in the process."

However, in spite of the interest they displayed, the unprepared fathers seemed to have mixed feelings about increasing their awareness. One said, "I feel I might be suffering more if I knew what was happening." In view of the statements of the prepared fathers about the intrapartal period, it is clear that the "suffering" was lessened. Therefore, the statements of the unprepared fathers imply a need for a more thorough interpretation of the classes to expectant parents.

Fathers' Thoughts About Their New Role

The homecoming of the mother and baby and the weeks immediately following are the first situations which the fathers will meet in their new roles. As a practical consideration, the fathers were asked if they expected or would like to assist with the care of the baby. All ten fathers said they expected to help their wives, but the general feeling was that baby care is a "woman's job." They were quite selective about the tasks with which they would assist.

Emphatic "No's" were the answers when asked if they were going to get up at night if the baby cried. Most of them explained that it was necessary to arise early in the morning and go to work.

The two groups were equally divided on the subject of changing diapers. None seemed enthusiastic about it, and a few said it was "unmanly." In addition, two fathers volunteered that men definitely should not wash diapers.

All the fathers were timid about bathing the baby. The prepared fathers were more willing to attempt it, but the consensus was that the

best time for a father to give the bath was after the child became a year old. The size and slipperiness of the infant were the major intimidating factors.

On the question of feeding, the prepared fathers again were the more willing group. Nevertheless, of all the aspects of baby care, feeding, holding, and playing with the baby were anticipated as the most pleasant experiences by both groups. Only one infant in each group was being breast fed.

Though the difference between the groups was slight with regard to feelings about baby care, the prepared fathers were more positive in their interest than the unprepared fathers. Besides learning from the classes, the prepared fathers did more reading about it. Their reasons for wanting to help with the baby stemmed from interest in the baby itself, while the unprepared fathers considered it a matter of convenience for their wives.

In spite of the varying opinions of the fathers about actual care of the baby, all but two fathers felt that they and their wives should share equal responsibility for the baby. Some who did not intend to help with the babies' physical care planned to help in other ways, such as household duties. Of the two dissenting fathers, both unprepared, one (G) wanted no part of the responsibility for the child, and the other (J) thought that the mother should be responsible during infancy, and the father from school age and after.

It cannot definitely be stated that preparation made the difference in the fathers' feelings about baby care, though an increased interest in the child itself is a hoped-for outcome of parent education.

It is a personal choice or an individual arrangement between fathers and mothers as to whether or not the father should give physical care to the baby, or perform other duties which free the mother for more time with the baby. Can one say absolutely which is the better way?

In response to a question regarding fatherhood in general, the fathers attempted to project themselves into the future and to describe what their role might be like. Eight of the fathers said that supporting or providing for the family was the most important duty. One prepared father (B) said he thought this was a "loaded question." He answered it by saying:

> I expect to be the head of the family and bear its responsibilities--legal, financial, spiritual, and emotional--shared with my wife. I want to be sincere and helpful and expect to answer questions in a way appropriate to their respective ages, but no baby talk and foolish nonsense, in not using the right word to express anatomy or natural functions, for instance. I expect to have children ask me about things they don't understand. In general, father should help the children to develop self-reliance, be a guide and somebody of authority but fair whom they can love and respect. Earning a living is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Children should have a reasonably happy childhood, lots of affection, and adequate, moderate discipline. A father's moral obligation is to help them be prepared to face life as good Christians.

This father is idealistic, but not impractical, since he does not propose unattainable goals.

One of the unprepared fathers (J) gave an interesting answer also. He thought that a father's main job was:

> To love and take particular interest in his wife. He should give her lots of things. Men shouldn't ignore their wives. They should have love, affection, clothes, and washing machines.

Father J may have a good point, but his concept of fatherhood seems undeveloped. Since his background includes an alcoholic father

and a great deal of discord in the home, it is not surprising that he is unsure of his fatherhood role. He reflects his background again in his feelings about children. He says:

> Children should not be spoiled but should have as much as other children. They should try in school and should not fail, and the father should help them with their homework. He should be interested in his children's activities, like the Boy Scouts. He should teach his children everything; sports and so on. They should have a car at sixteen. They should have discipline, I didn't have enough. I didn't get much attention at home except from my mother and that made my dad mad at her. They didn't care if I quit school, and it's their fault that I did. My dad and I get along better now but we still don't agree on a lot of things. My father drinks. Children shouldn't see their father drunk and fighting. He should give more attention to his kids like fishing, or going to ball games. He should teach girls to be a lady, help her in school, keep her from bad children and fellows, tell her what's ahead in being a woman, teach her the facts of life. Juvenile delinquency is the parents' fault.

Father B and father J's statements are presented, not as an example of the influence which preparation has on the way a man sees himself as a father, but to stress the significance of the father's background in his development of a philosophy of living and a concept of fatherhood. They were chosen for inclusion in the study because the statements of these two fathers encompassed the ideas of all the other fathers; they seemed to represent the extremes.

The thoughts of the prepared fathers about their future role were of a lofty nature for the most part and, at times, sounded as though they were reciting class material. They did, however, show a greater awareness of the child's need for assistance with personality and character development than the unprepared fathers.

Yet there was no tangible difference between the two groups that could be credited to preparation. Father B, who had such a well-defined

picture of fatherhood, attended only two classes. All the fathers, prepared or unprepared, seemed to take into consideration the good or bad aspects of their own childhood when discussing their ideas of fatherhood. The inference is that the family background and life experiences of a man exert a far more powerful influence on his concept of himself as a father than preparation-for-parenthood classes.

Results of the Test

The prepared fathers said that learning how to teach children about sex had been a valuable outcome of expectant parents' classes. They, as well as the five unprepared fathers, felt that sex education was part of a father's responsibility. It seemed justifiable to test the knowledge they expected to convey to their children.

The test items may not have been the most important facts which fathers should know, but it seemed logical to question their knowledge of where the sperm and ovum meet resulting in conception, which parent is responsible for the child's sex, how the child is nourished in the uterus, and when birth can be expected. In order to answer the questions correctly, the fathers would need to have an understanding of the meanings of the words in the test, as well as an understanding of the relationships between them.

A final concrete difference between prepared and unprepared fathers is seen in the results of the test they were given. Of the prepared fathers, A, B, and C answered all four items correctly, and E answered three. Father D, who explained that he had been absent from the class in which the subject was discussed, knew only one correct answer.

Of the unprepared fathers, F, G, and I gave no correct responses, but H and J each gave one.

The total number of correct answers given by the prepared group was sixteen and the total number given by the unprepared group was only two.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This was a comparative study of five prepared and five unprepared fathers who were expecting their first babies. It was conducted at St. Margaret's Hospital, Dorchester, Massachusetts.

The study was done to determine if there were differences between prepared and unprepared fathers and, if the differences existed, to determine the areas in which they could be found.

A review of the literature revealed the popularity of the notion that husbands and fathers are inconsequential. In contradiction to this idea, the review showed that the existence and love of a father are indispensible for the development of a healthy personality in a child, and that a husband's support and love are vital for his wife's physical and emotional welfare throughout the maternity cycle. It established the fact that fathers themselves have needs which must be recognized and met, not only for the sake of future marital happiness, but for their own emotional health. It was suggested that educating the expectant father for his role would fulfill some of his own needs and increase his awareness of his importance to his wife and child.

The tools used for collecting data were a focused interview, and a paper and pencil test. The interview guides were directed at the feelings of the fathers, and they were encouraged to give their frank

opinions in answer to the questions.

Conclusions

The findings of the study led to the following general conclusions:

1. The time in pregnancy at which the classes are given is too late to be of value in helping fathers learn of their wives' needs, at least for the current pregnancy.
2. The principal worries of the fathers during pregnancy were the health of their wives, finances, and the condition of the baby.
3. Fathers did not receive as much information from hospital personnel as they would have liked during the intrapartal period.
4. The unprepared fathers were interested in learning more about pregnancy, labor, and delivery.
5. The prepared fathers said it had helped to know what was happening during their wives' labor and the birth of the baby.
6. Subjects of preparation-for-parenthood classes which the prepared fathers thought were valuable were sex education, feeding, knowledge of the hospital and the people involved, the mechanics of the birth process, knowledge of pregnancy and its psychology, child psychology, and the conference with the doctor.
7. There is a need for a more thorough interpretation of preparation-for-parenthood classes for prospective candidates with regard to the nature of them and the subjects which are treated.
8. Too little attention is given to fathers in preparation-for-parenthood classes to assist them to begin developing a

philosophy of life as a father.

9. Expectant fathers are chiefly interested in learning the practical facts about subjects of immediate, personal concern.

Similarities

The findings of the study showed that prepared fathers are similar to unprepared fathers in the following ways:

1. Both groups expressed happiness when they first learned of the pregnancy.
2. Neither group had any severe emotional upsets related to the pregnancy.
3. Neither group had interpersonal relationship problems with their wives during pregnancy.
4. Both groups expressed some anxiety in their behavior while their wives were in labor.
5. Both groups showed a need for support, understanding, and information about their wives during labor.
6. Both groups desired or were willing to stay with their wives during labor.
7. Both groups thought that responsibility for the baby should be shared equally by mothers and fathers.
8. Both groups expected to help their wives with the care of the baby.
9. Neither group was enthusiastic about changing the babies' diapers.
10. None of the fathers planned to get up during the night to care

for the baby.

11. Both groups showed that family background and life experiences are very influential in developing a concept of fatherhood.

Differences

The findings of the study showed that prepared fathers are different from unprepared fathers in the following ways:

1. The unprepared fathers had unrealistic worries about the health of their wives and unborn children, and the prepared fathers did not.
2. The prepared fathers themselves knew what to do at the onset of labor, and the unprepared fathers had to depend on their wives' information.
3. The prepared fathers, though concerned, were more confident and less worried about their wives during labor than the unprepared fathers.
4. The prepared fathers had a true picture of the actual process of labor and delivery, and the unprepared fathers had either no ideas, vague ideas, or distorted ideas of what occurred.
5. The prepared fathers showed a more positive interest in their babies than the unprepared fathers.
6. The prepared fathers were more willing to bathe and feed the baby than the unprepared fathers.
7. The prepared fathers were more aware of the needs of children than the unprepared fathers.
8. The prepared fathers had more factual knowledge about child-

bearing than unprepared fathers.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the investigator recommends that:

1. All prepared fathers and selected unprepared fathers be permitted to be present in the labor room if they and their wives desire this arrangement.
2. Further study be done on the time in pregnancy during which classes would be the most profitable for expectant parents.
3. All fathers be permitted to question personnel directly involved in the care of their wives, and that they receive straightforward answers within ethical and tactful limits.
4. More publicity be given to expectant parents' classes with a more complete interpretation of the content to be covered in them.
5. The content of the classes be expanded to give fathers more help with which to begin to develop a philosophy of life as a father.
6. The subjects already being discussed in the classes be continued.
7. Further study be done on expectant fathers in order to gain greater insight concerning the types of information and support they need to become more adequate and secure in their father role.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PREPARED FATHERS

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PREPARED FATHERS

1. What is your age?
2. What is your occupation?
3. What is your religion? Did you attend Pre-Cana or Cana conferences? (If Roman Catholic.)
4. Where were your father and mother born?
5. What year were you married?
6. Do you have any brothers or sisters? Are they older or younger than you?
7. What do you think is an ideal size for a family?
8. You had a boy (girl)? Did you have any preference?
9. How did you feel when you first knew your wife was going to have a baby?
10. Pregnancy sometimes brings up new problems between a husband and wife. Did you notice any?
11. Did you notice any change in the way you reacted to people or situations while your wife was pregnant?
12. Did you worry about anything while your wife was pregnant?
13. Some people think that the baby should be the mother's responsibility. What do you think?
14. How about when labor began, did you know what to do?
15. What did you do while you were waiting for the baby to be born?
16. Do you remember what any of your thoughts were at that time?
17. Did it help to know what was happening?
18. If it had been possible to be with your wife while she was in labor, would you have liked to have been there? Reasons?
19. What do you think is a father's main job?

20. Some men like to help take care of the baby. How do you feel about it?

21. When your wife and baby come home, do you expect to help take care of the baby?

22. Are you going to get up nights? Are you going to help with the feeding, the bath, or change diapers?

23. Have you had any experience in taking care of a baby?

24. Did you do any reading about pregnancy or baby care?

25. When you heard about the classes, how did you feel about it?

26. Do you think the classes helped you? In what way? Number attended?

27. Did going to the classes change any ideas you had before?

28. This question is about fatherhood in general. I would like to hear your ideas about what a father does or ought to do for his family.
    Play?
    Discipline?
    Child's questions?
    Baby care?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR UNPREPARED FATHERS

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR UNPREPARED FATHERS

1. What is your age?
2. What is your occupation?
3. What is your religion? Did you attend Pre-Cana or Cana conferences? (If Roman Catholic.)
4. Where were your father and mother born?
5. What year were you married?
6. Do you have any brothers or sisters? Are they older or younger than you?
7. What do you think is an ideal size for a family?
8. You had a boy (girl)? Did you have any preference?
9. How did you feel when you first knew your wife was going to have a baby?
10. Pregnancy sometimes brings up new problems between a husband and wife. Did you notice any?
11. Did you notice any change in the way you reacted to people or situations while your wife was pregnant?
12. Did you worry about anything while your wife was pregnant?
13. Some people think that the baby should be the mother's responsibility. What do you think?
14. How about when labor began, did you know what to do?
15. What did you do while you were waiting for the baby to be born?
16. Do you remember what any of your thoughts were at that time?
17. Did you have any idea about what was taking place?
18. Would you like to have known what was happening?
19. If it had been possible to be with your wife while she was in labor, would you have liked to have been there? Reasons?

20. If there were a way of finding out more about the actual process of pregnancy, labor, and so on, would you be interested?

21. What do you think is a father's main job?

22. Some men like to help take care of the baby. How do you feel about it?

23. When your wife and baby come home, do you expect to help take care of the baby?

24. Are you going to get up nights? Are you going to help with the feeding, the bath, or change diapers?

25. Have you had any experience in taking care of a baby?

26. Did you do any reading about pregnancy or baby care?

27. This question is about fatherhood in general. I would like to hear your ideas about what a father does or ought to do for his family.
    Play?
    Discipline?
    Child's questions?
    Baby care?

APPENDIX C

TEST

TEST

1. The sperm from the father unites with the ovum from the mother in

   A _____ the uterus.

   B _____ the vagina.

   C _____ the cervix.

   D __X__ the Fallopian tube.

2. The baby is born during the

   A _____ first stage of labor.

   B __X__ second stage of labor.

   C _____ third stage of labor.

   D _____ fourth stage of labor.

3. The sex of the baby is determined by

   A __X__ the sperm.

   B _____ the ovum.

   C _____ an unknown factor.

   D _____ none of the above.

4. The function of the placenta is

   A __X__ to bring nourishment to the baby.

   B _____ to help dilate the cervix.

   C _____ to protect the baby from injury.

   D _____ to connect the mother's and baby's nervous systems.