

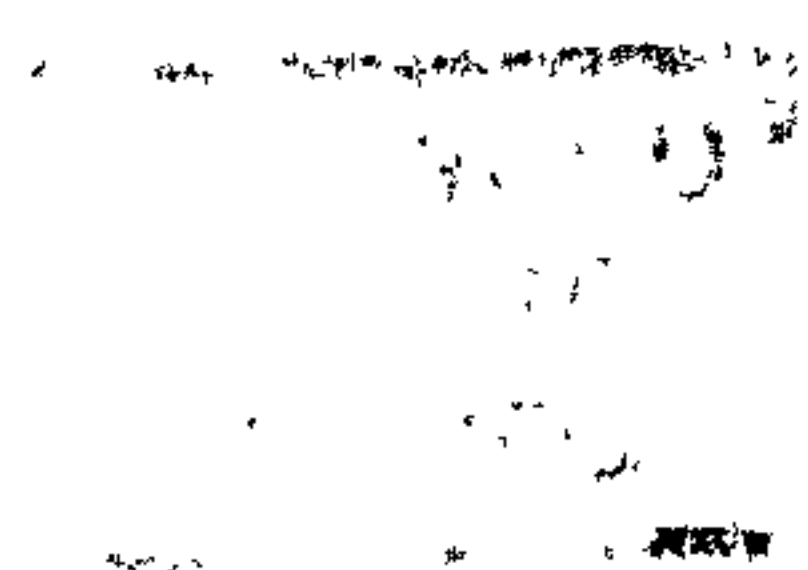
PERCEPTIONS OF FATHERHOOD

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

LORNA MCKEE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



UNIVERSITY OF YORK
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
SEPTEMBER 1985

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has involved the wisdom, patience and cooperation of many people and I wish to express my gratitude to them. I would like to thank particularly the thirteen fathers and mothers who gave me their time and their insights and who generously welcomed me into their homes and lives. I would also like to extend thanks to Dr. Hilary Graham who at the outset coached me in the ways of research and who was an essential support during the collection of my data. A warm thankyou also to Professor Laurie Taylor who has maintained a supervisory role throughout the duration of the project and who has provided positive advice and encouragement at all stages. The thesis could not have been completed without the financial support of the Health Education Council who sponsored the Motherhood Project and also awarded me a personal fellowship (Arthur Dalzell-Ward Memorial Award) for which I am most grateful. The typing of the thesis has been skilfully and impressively undertaken by Monika Chamberlain whose standards of perfection deserve thanks and praise. Every word of the thesis has been critically read by Dr. Maggie O'Brien. Her friendship, creativity and intellectual commitment have made an outstanding contribution to its final shape and content. Again, thanks are due. Professor Colin Bell, as colleague and friend has also sustained my belief that the work could and should be finished and has had a particular influence on my presentation of Chapter 4. Finally, my special appreciation is extended to my husband, Roger Buckland, who has directly helped me to develop my ideas, has given intellectual comment throughout and provided a humane and supportive context for my work. This thesis is dedicated to him.

Part of Chapter 4 has been included in a Chapter "Interviewing Men: Taking Gender Seriously." Published by the British Sociological Association (McKee and O'Brien 1983)

Chapter 7 is an expanded version of a paper "Fathers and Childbirth: Just Hold My Hand" first published in Health Visitor Journal (McKee, 1980).

Chapter 9 draws on material published by Tavistock Publications in The Father Figure (McKee and O'Brien, 1982) and in the Health Visitor Journal (Kerr and McKee 1981).

Permission to reproduce these extracts within the thesis is gratefully acknowledged.

The names of all respondents have been changed to protect their confidentiality. Other details are authentic - and it was felt that other significant changes were not needed because of the passage of time.

ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with men's transition to parenthood and their perceptions of fatherhood. It aims to correct 'mother-centred' approaches to understanding family life and to give fathers a 'hearing'. The investigation emerged from a larger study of women's expectations and experiences of motherhood where husbands' views were frequently sought from wives during interviews and where husbands themselves were often present. The emphasis throughout is on the meanings men attach to becoming and being a father. The issue of gender is taken seriously and it is shown how aspects of male culture fail to incorporate men's affective relationships, especially with their children. A case-study group of thirteen first-time fathers was interviewed in-depth, from the last trimester of pregnancy through to when the child was 12 months old. Men were found to be involved in decisions about family building; deeply affected by the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth and to be an essential part of the familial context in which children were raised, influencing both decisions about child care as well as being directly involved in child care.

It was found that the modern father's role allows considerable flexibility concerning the degree of direct involvement in child care with fathers opting in and out of child care tasks at will. This results in diversity among fathers and creates different patterns within households at different points in time. There appears to be a tension between men's public and private lives where on one level fatherhood is irrelevant and seldom discussed and at another where it is both central and potent. Such tensions are also reflected in

the public management of fathers. - in ante-natal clinics and literature, in organisational features of maternity hospitals and in workplaces and practices.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

The conclusions that 'fathers are forgotten contributors to child development' (Lamb, 1975) and that 'discussion of fathering is becoming fashionable' (Fein, 1978) appear at first glance to be contradictory. However, what they reflect instead is a temporal shift in the state of knowledge and research on the topic of fatherhood. During the mid-sixties and through to the late seventies, the face of family research has witnessed a gentle revolution. Fathers have been rediscovered and studies which focus solely on the mother or mother-child relationship found deficient or incomplete. This inclusion of the father has resulted in an ever-increasing volume of literature both academic and popular and the areas thrown under scrutiny include sex roles in general, men's family roles in particular and men's participation in and perceptions of family building, pregnancy, child-birth and childcare (cf Benson, 1968; Pedersen and Robson, 1969; Howells, 1970; Biller and Meredith, 1974; Fein, 1974; Lynn, 1974; Greenberge and Morris, 1979; Levine, 1976; Morton-Williams and Hindell, 1972; Richman and Goldthorpe, 1978; Cronenwett and Newmark, 1974).

While the data continues to amass a number of writers have paused and tried to order, evaluate and categorise what we now know about fathers. They have attempted to identify certain historical and social contexts in which research is located and to uncover the value

perspectives and assumptions which govern the questions researchers ask and the sense they make of the answers given. By briefly presenting two such reviews of the state of the field it is hoped to provide a backcloth to the research described here and to put the present thesis into context.

Firstly, Robert Fein (1978) subdivides the 'conceptualizations' of fatherhood into three, labelling them the 'traditional', 'modern' and 'emergent' perspectives and signifying for each a specific period in history. The traditional perspective is preoccupied by the segregation of male and female roles and emphasizes the instrumental/expressive split where women take care of the affairs of home and where men take care of the affairs of business and external relations. Fathers are characterized as being 'aloof and distant' and Fein sees this model as best fitting and reflecting 'the social ideals and realities of the 1940s and 1950s'. The sociological proponents of this image of fatherhood include Parsons and Bales (1955), and in psychology, Bowlby (1951) upholds this view.

The 'modern' perspective is a phenomenon of the 1960s and takes a slightly more complex approach to family roles, questioning the efficacy of the instrumental/expressive dichotomy. Instead, the father is awarded some psychological significance for the well being of the family and is seen as especially valuable in the rearing of his sons. Fathers are seen to have a part to play in normal child development, particularly in the transmission of sexual identity, in the instillation of moral values and in the achievement of academic success. The researchers in this period show a concentration or emphasis on the effects of father-absence on the child,

finding these more often than not, to be negative. The works of Henry Biller (1968; 1974) are seminal in this field.

The 'emergent' perspective is a more recent development and

proceeds from the notion that men are psychologically able to participate in a full range of parenting behaviours, and furthermore that it may be good both for parents and children if men take active roles in childcare and childrearing.

(Fein, 1978: 127)

In this model, parenting is androgynous, and the emphasis is not just on influences on the child, but includes experiences of parents themselves and focuses also on the wider family network. Fein describes five ways in which this emergent perspective is advancing and these five research trends include: a) the transition to parenthood, b) father's attachments to newborns and infants, c) 'the development and nature of bonds between young children and fathers, d) fathers in non-traditional childcare arrangements, and e) the effects of parenting experiences on fathers.' (Fein, 1978: 128). His own work falls into the first and last categories, being concerned with men's experiences before and after the birth of their children and reflecting on the impact of fathering on men.

Joseph Pleck (1979) in his investigation of fatherhood research has also come up with three perspectives which in some ways complement, duplicate and extend those of Fein. His classifications differ slightly from Fein's in that he makes the value position of each perspective more explicit. Not only does he point to the existence of a traditional perspective, where men's family work is minimal but

he goes further and claims that in this perspective the low level of father involvement is felt to be both appropriate and desirable. As well as 'role differentiation' being peculiar to the traditional perspective, other concepts such as 'exchange' between husband and wife and 'resource theory' are prominent. In 'exchange' theory husbands swap their provider role for their wives' comforting, home-making role, in 'resource' theory family roles are divided because husbands and wives have access to different resources.

Pleck's second perspective is quite divergent from that of Fein's and he identifies the 'exploitation perspective of family roles'. This perspective concentrates on the conflict between men and women in their family work and sees women as always overburdened and oppressed in their roles as mothers and housewives. This is a pessimistic vision and highly reliant on the quantity of family work performed by each parent. Unlike Fein's modern perspective, it does not account for the qualitative impact of the father on family relationships. This difference in emphasis between fatherhood practices and fatherhood influences, seems to account for the emergence of two distinctive typologies at this stage.

Pleck's third perspective is entitled 'the changing roles perspective' and is fairly close in analysis and conceptualization to Fein's 'emergent perspective'. In 'the changing roles' paradigm men's low family participation is recognized but hope for an increase in their family role is extended and presents a challenge collectively to researchers, parents and policy makers. While Pleck does not necessarily see this as the dominant perspective at present, he feels that five kinds of research are moving in this direction.

These five are not dissimilar from those specified by Fein and in summary they include research on: a) 'non-traditional and innovative types of fatherhood', b) monitoring change in men's family roles, c) 'analysis of the sources of variation in men's family roles', d) impact of increased family roles on men and e) 'evaluation of programs and policies for increasing men's family roles', (Pleck, 1979: 486-7). Although Pleck isolates these five styles of research as typifying on-going work, much of his discussion becomes polemical and argues that this is the way research should be going. He slips from this 'is the way things are' to 'this is the way things should be'.

The present thesis must be seen as fitting into the 'emergent' or 'changing roles perspective', both historically and ideologically. It is concerned both with the transition to parenthood and with men's perceptions of their fathering experiences. It owes much of its inspiration to the shift in paradigms described above and is also indebted to the impact of feminism on sociology where the issue of gender has become central and political. Taking gender as the first discriminator it is immediately apparent there is a discrepancy and contradiction in the state of our knowledge. While in general, sociology is a 'science of male society' or a 'male science of society', (Bernard, 1973) family sociology is dominated by a female perspective and has been summarized as 'wives sociology' (Safilios-Rothschild, 1969). We know much about men as located in 'a cash-nexus world' and of their object relations and their macro-social relations with one another. We know little about men as family members, or of their interpersonal and human interactions. Likewise, we know little about women as workers or of 'the nature, structure

and functions of a female status world,' and even the versions we have had of 'female reality', classify 'women as adjuncts to men'. Feminists have been working hard and fast to change the face of the sociological conceptions of women. There has been less energy spent on the corrections of our knowledge about men as human beings. This thesis moves some way toward this end. It does not dismiss the power inequalities between men and women, but argues that we need to understand more about the oppressor as well as the oppressed, and to expose 'his' human face.

The choice of a methodology to support a research aim is important and controversial. In the current study the emphasis is on the 'communal' or qualitative mode identified by Carlson (1972). Some have argued that this is more in keeping with a feminist research ambition, 'agentic' or qualitative methods being more intent on 'sex as a variable' and 'communal' being more concerned with women and men as 'people'. However, this may be a simplification and as Morgan (1981) argues, there is no reason why 'soft data' should be any less sexist than hard. In Bernard's view a 'masculine bias has been embedded in the structure of inquiry, the most prestigious methods have tended to be those that yielded 'hard' data'. She sees 'agentic' researchers as pursuing a 'machismo' element in their research controlling and manipulating their research realities and remaining at a distance from the objects of their study. She portrays the 'communal' approach as getting closer to its subjects as being more committed to feelings, sensitivities and impressions and as being 'humbler'. The present study aims to get 'close to' men's realities and to adopt a communal or qualitative perspective. It is concerned with processes rather

than patterns, and with exploration rather than generalization.

The findings described, were generated after a series of in-depth interviews with a small group of first-time fathers at a specific point in time, in a specific Northern town (see Chapter 4).

They are only one version of a very complex reality, only one way of seeing and one way of asking. It is hoped that they will both suggest some insights into the hidden side of some men's lives (see Chapter 4) and provide a beam of light to follow in our inquiry into other men's lives. When we call for better methods and 'more scientific enquiry', when we dismiss the existing fatherhood research as 'descriptive' and/or 'anecdotal' we must be clear of the assumptions guiding these declarations and what we are after. At this delicate and expansionist time in fathering research, our research histories, ideologies, aims and methods need to be made explicit and need to be able to adjust to anomalies, contradictions and disjunctures. We also need to develop ways of describing the usual as well as the unusual, and the mundane as well as the exotic. This thesis is located in a particular tradition of interpretative sociology and is informed by an approach which is directed 'less at the full variation of phenomena' but is rather, 'better equipped to explore social processes and social relationships between individuals including the meanings people attribute to the actions of others' (McKee, 1982: 122).

The thesis begins by developing an appreciation of the father's role in former times. Since many of the contemporary questions about fathers refer to the changing face of fatherhood, it was felt that there were large gaps in our knowledge about the past and its imagery.

Without such information it was not possible to address questions about whether fathers today are more democratic, or more benign. A variety of sources have been used to create a historical profile of fatherhood against which the present data can be placed.

In Chapter 3, the social scientific literature, on fathers and fatherhood, briefly alluded to in this introduction, is extended and critically evaluated. The chapter poses two main questions, why have fathers been omitted from social enquiry in the past and why such an expansion of interest in the present? The quality and nature of current knowledge on fathers will be assessed and the implications for this thesis drawn out.

The 'life history' of the investigation which informs the thesis is documented in Chapter 4. It is shown how the research 'problem' emerged and the chapter develops a naturalistic account of the methods selected for the enquiry.

The results of the investigation are presented in a chronological manner in chapters 5 - 11, following both the sequencing of the events of pregnancy, childbirth and parenthood themselves and the research interviews. Men's anticipation of fatherhood and expectations of family life are covered in chapter 5, while chapters 6 and 7 deal with the expectant father's experiences of becoming a father. There is considerable ethnographic detail at each stage describing the interiors of men's lives; their fears and fantasies are made public. In chapters 8 and 9, attention is paid to men's reported involvement in the direct care of their infants. The results are compared with other studies and the range of activities

typically measured is critically evaluated. Chapter 9 suggests alternative and additional index of 'involved' fatherhood - and argues for a shift in emphasis away from measuring what fathers 'do' to an appreciation of the context of childrearing which incorporates an understanding of fathers attitudes, role in decision-making and relationships with their wives.

Chapter 10 explores the social and public profile of men as fathers. It examines how men's networks are affected by parenthood and provides essential insights into aspects of masculinity. The use men make of the official parentcraft literature and information sources forms the basis of Chapter 11. Selected baby care leaflets are also reviewed in this chapter and men's assessment of such literature is compared with the images of fathers portrayed therein.

The overall conclusions of the study and its future prospect are discussed in the final chapter (12).

CHAPTER 2

IMAGES OF FATHERS FROM FORMER TIMES

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The power of fathers has
been difficult to grasp
because it permeates every-
thing, even the language in
which we try to describe it.

(Rich, 1976: 58)

Before turning our vision to the contemporary experience of fatherhood it is useful to begin by trying to unpack the legends, fables, mythology and imagery of fathers as received from the past.

The compilation of such versions of fatherhood will provide a context in which to interpret current findings and preoccupations and perhaps be suggestive as to how parental roles have been shaped and developed over time. Many contemporary beliefs about fathers contain allusions to the past, especially when statements are made concerning social change. One widespread belief for example, refers to the democratization of the father's role, but before we can analyse the validity of this, we need to know more about fathers in former times. Likewise, because most of us are members of family units, and 'know' fathers, the dimensions of such everyday domestic relations elude us and seem curiously commonplace. Here is hoped that these taken-for-granted images will be illuminated and be shown to have a compelling sociological relevance.

The sources which offer themselves to analysis are vast and tempting,

however, the presentation will be selective, isolating only the more dominant and recurrent themes which emerge across texts and time periods. The choice of a thematic organisation of the material is deliberate as it avoids the initial presumption of a linear model of social change, sometimes implicit in a chronological ordering of findings. It also enables the analysis to be cross-cultural and allows for an integration of a mix of evidence both at the level of social fact and allegory. The primary themes to be developed in this chapter concern images of fathers as creators; facets of father-son, father-daughter relationships; the notion of paternal sovereignty and the growth of paternal duties; while the sources used include: the Holy Bible, mythology, legends and sagas; drama; fiction and family history.

It should be said at the outset, that recourse to any of these sources is bedevilled by all the usual and endemic problems of documentary and comparative method: problems of why the evidence/data was collected in the first place and how; problems of how written moral codes and philosophies fitted the social reality; problems of generalisation; problems of social class, occupational and regional variation and the more thorny problem of a greater preponderance of source materials on the upper classes the further back in history one goes (Berkner, 1973; Laslett, 1976). There are too, the problems of forging satisfactory links theoretically and methodologically between disciplines and of relating and comparing different kinds of evidence such as literature and social history (Stedman Jones, 1976; Rock, 1976; Thompson, 1976). It is hoped that throughout this chapter I will show myself to be self-conscious of and alert to these difficulties. For most of the chapter there will

be an especial emphasis on the roots and modifications of Western thought (especially as emanating from Judeo-Christian writings) at the expense of other cultures and traditions. This is justified on the grounds of the accepted widespread influence of Christian principles on domestic morality throughout Western Europe, particularly from the sixteenth century onwards. On the historical power and pervasiveness of Christian philosophy in France, Flandrin comments:

... the interpretation of Christian doctrine by the clergy of a particular historical period - did succeed in structuring the mentality of the faithful. It is known that those Frenchmen, numerous from the end of the eighteenth century, who have rejected the teachings of the Church, have nevertheless remained essentially attached to the principles of its morality, to which they refer, in absolute terms, as 'Morality'.

(Flandrin, 1979: 118)

2.1 Men's Role in Creation

'Male Creation Myths'

It is interesting that one of the fundamental plots in much religious and mythological writing affords men a central place in the act of procreation. Men are portrayed as siring and reproducing children unaided by women, as fashioning the divine rebirth of children, or as having a major and superior part in the creation process vis à vis women. The 'naturalness' of this 'creativity' of fathers is so deep in our consciousness and culture that we almost skip its significance and fail to remark on this essential inversion of reproductive fact.

Beginning with the story of the creation of Adam and Eve and ending with the creation of Christ, Judeo-Christian tradition provides the lasting image of a male God who is able to beget and perpetuate the human race single-handedly. God produces Adam and Christ, and Adam produces Eve. Ultimately, God and Christ will save the world and instigate rebirth for repentants and the redeemed.

And the Lord God formed man
of the dust of the ground and
breathed into his nostrils the
breath of life; and man became
a living soul.

And the Lord God caused a deep
sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept:
and he took one of his ribs, and
closed up the flesh instead thereof;
And the rib, which the Lord had taken
from man, made he a woman, and brought
her unto the man.

(Genesis 2: 7, 21-22)

Similarly, in Egyptian mythology the origin of man and the universe is attributed to a primeval male god, Atum, whose name means 'the whole', 'the complete' and emphasises his reproductive self-sufficiency. It is said that alone and unaided by any feminine counterpart, this god succeeded in fertilising himself and in producing the first divine couple, Shu and Tefnut.

In the Greek myths, even more dramatic, active and frequently heroic acts of 'male creation' can be found. Zeus is informed by the gods that from his union with Metis he is to have two children, the first a daughter, valiant and strong and the second a son, destined to overthrow him. On hearing the news, he swallows the already pregnant Metis to avoid later death. He then asks the god of the forge to fashion him an axe and to split his head in two.

So Atlanta is born from Zeus's head; she is produced by her father and Metis the woman and her delivery functions are annihilated. Twice more, Zeus surfaces and appropriates the act of creation for himself, in the births firstly of Zagreus and secondly, Dionysus. Zeus disguised as a serpent ravishes Persephone and provokes his wife Hera's wrath and jealousy. She finds out where he has hidden the child and instructs the Titans to kill him. Although Zagreus is disguised as a bull they manage to find him, cut him into pieces and devour him half-raw and half-cooked. Curetes and Apollo in whose care Zagreus had been placed, rush to the scene but are too late and only manage to save scattered bits, including the heart which is still beating. On Zeus's arrival at the death scene, he takes the beating heart, absorbs it into his own body and regenerates Zagreus. Zeus as a father thus represents the source of rebirth and immortality. In another act of betrayal to Hera, Zeus has impregnated Semele. Hera's jealousy this time leads her to kill Semele with a thunderbolt. However, Zeus snatches the unborn child from Semele's body, stitches it into his thigh and incubates it until delivery is due. At the right time Dionysus or 'twice-born' emerges. Zeus has again championed reproductively and in spite of woman's early participation in the conception of the child. Sometimes women's role in creation is acknowledged, but is only of secondary importance, as wombs or vessels; the decision to create and the activity of creation is retained by the man or father. Women are the glass retorts of nature and receive and are filled by the life-giving qualities of men. Mary, the mother of Christ can be viewed in this light. Another example comes again from the Egyptian myths where Amun (or Re) the sun-god announces his intention of begetting a prince who will be his noble heir. Acting autonomously, Amun

approaches the potter-god Khnum and asks him to model him a divine and beautiful off-spring. Only then is the queen informed of Amun's intentions and is congratulated for having been chosen for this mission. She is led to the confinement chamber to engage in birth of this divine prince, but has no further part in his evolution or his later future. This is maintained by Amun alone.

Further evidence of this 'reproductive hierarchy', or ranking of men's and women's contributions to creation can be found in the beliefs of Aristotle, Aeschylus and amongst some pre-literate peoples. Together such beliefs which attest to the reproductive supremacy of fathers can be termed male creation myths. Belotti (1975) summarises Aristotle's views on the biological contribution of fathers:

Aristotle affirmed that the human embryo developed from a coagulate of the menstrual flow. This is, woman provided the formless matter while man had the more noble role of giving it form.

(Belotti, 1975: 20)

Continuing, she says:

Even this was an enlightened viewpoint, since most of his contemporaries considered that the woman contributed nothing of her own to the baby's conception and only nourished the seed provided by the man.

(Belotti, 1975: 20)

Of the viewpoint of Aeschylus, Belotti says:

The mother of him who is called her child is not the creator, but merely the nurse of the young life sown in her.

(Belotti, 1975: 20)

Evans-Pritchards (1954) in his description of the creation myths of

the Azande, shows how men and women are accorded unequal parts, with the man's part in biological parenthood emphatically being the greater. In the Azande belief system, two souls, one from the mother and one from the father, are necessary for the birth of a child. If a mbismo (soul) of the man is stronger, a boy will be born, if the mbismo of the woman is stronger a girl will result. Consequently, the Azande father is responsible for the birth of sons. However, unless the Supreme Being, Mboli, has endowed the man with a soul, no conception can take place of either daughters or sons. Translating the Azande principle of creation Evans-Pritchards writes:

Mboli gives a soul to a man to beget a child, if Mboli does not give a man a soul he will not beget children.

(Evans-Pritchard; 1954: 118)

(my emphasis)

As such, Azande fathers initiate life, while Azande mothers only co-operate in its fruition. A corresponding belief about the man's semen feeding the unborn child throughout pregnancy also ensures his control over a successful confinement and birth.

Again in cultures like the Arapesh, men are seen to be working hard in the labour of producing a child. Mead (1962) provides a vivid account of the Arapesh myth whereby the verb 'to bear a child' applies equally to men and women and it is believed that '... the child is built up of steady accretions of semen from the father and blood from the mother ...' (Mead, 1962: 157). Intercourse in pregnancy only ceases when it is felt that the child is fully formed and the father has completed his creative task. In Mead's opinion the Arapesh version of reproduction gives the '... male who has fathered a child a sense that he has accomplished something in his own right'

(Mead, 1965: 157). This is hauntingly close at a symbolic level to our Christian version of the accomplishments of God the Maker, God the Father.

Male Creation Rituals

As well as the preponderance of 'male creation myths' across sources, many examples of practices, which can be termed 'male creation rituals', exist. Through such rituals man's generative and life-giving potential is again endorsed and enacted and there is often a mutuality between creation myths and rituals. It should be stressed however, that the association of such rituals with creation is only one possible and very general level of conceptualisation and is used here primarily as an introductory and organisational device. Other levels of meaning will be developed below.

The three male creation rituals that can be identified are those of sacrifice, initiation and couvade. As we will later see, the image of sacrifice serving to preserve immortality and facilitate renewal and rebirth is one that pervades Christianity and Middle Eastern mythology. The strongest occasion of sacrifice as a means and route to re-creation is contained in the story of the crucifixion of Christ. God through the sacrifice of his own son offers believers external life:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

(St. John 3: 16-17)

Initiation rites occur in many cultures, especially for pubescent boys

and are often linked with boys' emergence or 'birth' into manhood. The shedding of male blood is frequently a part of these rites and has been equated with women's shedding of menstrual blood (Bettleheim, 1955; Chesler, 1978). Initiation acts can be construed as emulating women's reproductive maturation and as endowing men and women with a kind of 'womb equality'. Even more expressly, the couvade practices of pre-industrial society can be viewed as men's attempts to achieve symmetry with women in procreation and childbirth. The word couvade has been derived from the French verb 'couvrir' to brood or hatch and was coined by Sir Edward Tylor in 1865 (Trethowan, 1972). Couvade rites are those organised by men around the events of conception, pregnancy, childbirth and the lying-in period. They vary in range, intensity and complexity across cultures from mild dietary restrictions to full simulation of childbirth by men. As well as the general statement made by such practices concerning men's relationship to the act of creation, specific and alternative levels of meaning can be found in individual cultures and these will be referred to more fully later.

For examples of couvade practices, we can turn again to the Azande and the Arapesh peoples. Evans-Pritchards shows that although the Azande men observe no explicit taboos throughout expectant fatherhood, they do have an imperative responsibility to check on the child's legitimacy through an 'orgy of oracle consultation' (Evans-Pritchard, 1954: 126). This could lead the Zande father into flogging his wife to uncover the identity of an adulterer and subsequently to his taking the life of the illegitimate child. ²

Evans-Pritchards also reports that the Zande father carried additional responsibility for the welfare of his pregnant wife and unborn child and must protect them from witchcraft, provide special foods, select a propitious place for the birth and secure a midwife for the delivery.

Failure in these duties could lead to his punishment by in-laws. The Zande father's place in reproduction then is guaranteed, highly valued and governed. Likewise, the Arapesh father makes an elaborate contribution to the successful evolution and preservation of his child (Mead, 1962; Kitzinger, 1978). We have already referred to his role in the construction of the unborn child but his paternal participation does not end with copulation. His paternity is also realised once the child is born in that it is he who decides whether it should live or die. He waits to hear its sex and if he wishes it to live he commands for it to be washed, if he wishes it to die it remains unwashed. Through such procedures the continuity of the father's life-giving potential is ensured and maintained. If the baby is to live the Arapesh father:

takes a bundle of soft leaves
to his wife so that she can line
the net bag in which the baby is
suspended in a crouching position,
a coconut shell of water for bathing
the baby, and pungent leaves to keep
evil out of her hut.

(Kitzinger, 1978: 122-123)

He also brings a wooden pillow to lie on next to his wife and they remain together in seclusion for five days. In addition, the father must observe dietary and bodily taboos for up to a month and engage in cleansing and magic rites. The Arapesh father and the Azande father, like the Christian 'father-god' and the 'father-gods' of Greece and Egypt collectively confirm an image of men as generators and protectors of human life, on whom depends the formulation and survival of all human off-spring.

Male Creation Myths and Rituals: The Psychological Level of Meaning

Besides noting the pervasiveness of the image of fathers as creators and establishing a general connection between men/fathers and the act of creation, we can ask how else these male creation myths and rituals might be interpreted and what they might mean. Furthermore, are there any other societal representations and expressions which are suggestive of men's relationship to the act of creation?

Chesler (1978), drawing on psychoanalytic literature, makes a direct link between such myths and rituals and the existence of a universal, psychological 'wish for a child in boys' and 'womb envy' at being unable to produce children, in adult men. She comments:

To make something out of 'nothing' the way women seem to make new life out of nothing, naturally, effortlessly .. or so it seems to men. Perhaps men had to invent a mysterious, invisible male sperm-diety to counterbalance the apparent ease with which female deities and/or real women produced children.

(Chesler, 1978: 38)

A substantial body of writing has emerged developing these themes of male 'parturition envy' and the male desire to have children beginning with Freud and his work on male pregnancy fantasies.³ Writers in this mode, are at odds as to whether these concerns are emergent in the pre-oedipal or oedipal stage of the child's development and as to how they are expressed and resolved but are in agreement about their universality (Freud, 1908; Brunswick, 1940; Boehm, 1930; Socanides, 1960). Male creation myths and rituals then are devised by men to represent and encapsulate their failed abilities in real acts of creation. By placing men at the centre of creation dramas,

such myths and rituals usurp women's bodily participation in creation, replace women's bodies by men's bodies and spirits and appropriate the activity of birth for men. At a symbolic level, men's psychological desires are actualised.

In Chesler's opinion 'male uterus envy' and men's yearning for a child have led not just to the formation of these powerful and recurring 'masculine myths' but have also fuelled men's 'creative' activities, prominence and success in many fields. She says:

Male science, male alchemy is partially rooted in male uterus envy, in the desire to be able to create something miraculous out of male inventiveness.

(Chesler, 1978: 38)

Man's relationship to creation emerges not just in the myths he makes but in the 'things' that he makes. In support of this view Einzig comments that male uterus envy can act as a 'springboard for adult creativity and productivity' (Einzig, 1980: 130).

The benign resolution of male womb envy through the manufacture of creation myths or creative scientific endeavours is not the full story, for there are also negative outcomes to its repression. In Chesler's view, the repression of this unconscious desire in men has led to the torture and mutilation of women over the centuries - particularly through the defilement of women's reproductive organs.⁴ The culmination of unresolved male uterus envy is further expressed in test tube babies (the extinction of the womb of women), in male scientific excesses, genetic engineering and in pornographic and erotic art.

Male creation rituals can similarly, in this perspective, be

interpreted as manifestations of men's wish to have a child and envy at being unable to do so (Betteleheim, 1955; Chesler, 1978). They too represent attempts to deprive women of their reproductive supremacy. Earlier, a reference has been made to the parallel between the spilling of male blood in initiation rites (such as circumcision), acts of sacrifice (such as the crucifixion) and women's menstrual blood. Even if male blood does not at the outset create life, its loss redeems life. In the Christian tradition the redemption and re-creation of individual sinners is only ensured through the blood shedding of an adult man, Christ, a blood shedding which vies in status and significance with women's menstrual and delivery blood loss 'Ye must be born again'. So it is through a male Christ that eternal life is achieved and even if Mary conceived and bore the first human life of Christ, this is diminished and secondary when compared with his death and resurrection at the behest of a male God, Saviour and 'midwife'. In Chesler's words:

If female blood is needed to
create human life then male blood
is needed to divinely redeem that
human life.

(Chesler, 1978: 47)

Chesler sees this tendency to rob women of their creative autonomy as resurfacing in the roles and duties of male priests, doctors and scientists, all of whom preside over conception, birth, death, deliverance, rebirth and redemption. She suggests that it is further conveyed in the language of Judeo-Christianity which paradoxically attributes womanly/motherly characteristics to a male god - in concepts such as God's bosom, 'man's maternity', God's deliverance.⁵ The ritual of couvade is, in her eyes, just another express-

organisation of the 'sex-gender system', and tell us how men and women are ranked vis à vis one another. It is possible to view the Judeo-Christian and Greek male creation myths as occasions of men's and father's dominance over women wherein women are superfluous, disposable or secondary. Men can produce babies (both boys and girls) from their ribs, their heads, their thighs and so perpetuate the human race. Such paternal self-sufficiency diminishes both women and their wombs. Men's 'birthing' is loftier both at a physical and social level and their primacy over mothers is biological as well as social. Through male intervention in creation it is possible to view not just women and mothers being kept in their place, but to see women being punished for sinfulness, for being unclean, for being associated with death. Many of the mythical mothers who are exterminated have committed adultery or are associated with the father's mortality, for example Semele and Metis. So male creation myths are not just suggestive of a social order in which men and fathers are hierarchically superior to women and mothers, but of a social order in which men exercise social control over and discipline women's actions, even their reproductive actions. Men lay claim to enter all women's social and physical spheres and to obtain and rule them for themselves. Maternal reproductive authority is challenged and contained. The interpretation of the male creation ritual, couvade, can also be formulated in terms of the social control of women. Mary Douglas (1975) postulates that couvade practices might refer at one level, to the structure of marriage ties in a given culture. Where men's superiority and control over women/wives is strong and well-established it is likely that couvade practices will be scarce. However, in societies where men are frequently absent from their wives, where wives have greater authority and/or where

marriage is under threat, the practice of couvade is likely to be more prevalent and elaborate. Through these male creation rituals fathers assert their part in creation, their paternity and their dominance. Consequently, they manipulate and govern their relations with wives and mothers.

Such symmetry and complimentariness between male creation rituals, myths and real social relations is referenced by Evans-Pritchards in studying the Azande. Again, the association between the hierarchical sexual division of myths and rituals and the hierarchical sexual division of social relations looms large. With the Azande, there is a connection between the system of inheritance, clan solidarity and lineage (patriliney) and the tenor of creation myths and rituals. Azande fathers are assured biological and social ownership of their children and superiority over wives. Evans-Pritchards explains:

The spirit-soul ... is derived from the father, ... and this is what makes all children irrespective of sex, members of their father's clan.

(Evans-Pritchard, 1954: 121)

There is a tendency to emphasise the father's part in procreation beyond that of the mother just as the father's side of the family is stressed socially to a greater extent than the mother's side of the family. There is always a balance and a bias (my emphasis) in such matters in every community in the world.

(Evans-Pritchard, 1954: 122)

This theme of the social superiority of fathers over mothers extends even further, in that frequently in the 'divine triad' (of father, mother, child), the father-child bond takes precedence over those of either mother and father, or mother and child. God, sacrifices and

ultimately saves Christ at the expense of Mary's grief, Zeus kills Metis so that Atlanta will survive and Apollo murders the unfaithful Ceronis but ensures safe delivery of his favourite son Asclepius from her body which is burning on the pyre.

As well as creation myths and rituals revealing something about the nature of the social relations between men and women they can be reviewed secondly, in the light of what they tell us about the relations between adults (especially male adults/fathers) and children. Amongst Azande fathers it has already been shown how creation myths afforded fathers a continuity of the clan through their off-spring. However, these creation myths and rituals can be said to assert more than this, in that they also structure very fundamental and unambiguous age or generational hierarchies. Both the Azande and Arapesh fathers are ascribed, through discrete couvade rites, the powers of life and death over their children. It is they who govern infanticide and survival, so children enter the world in a relationship of basic inequality toward fathers. Fathers have a domain of control not just over living children but also over the unborn, and even their actions at the time of pregnancy, influence whether the baby will live, be healthy or die. Deferring to this absolute dependency of unborn babies on fathers in a variety of contexts Kitzinger says:

If he goes off with another woman, or polishes his spear or goes fishing on the day of the labour, he is putting the baby's life at risk. He must watch his actions and in this way help the birth.

(Kitzinger, 1978: 122)

Thirdly, male creation myths and rituals are interesting for the

evidence they provide about the cultural relationship between the act of creation and parenthood, that is between biological and social parenthood or paternity and child-rearing. In some ways, these male creation myths and rituals help to spell out different meanings of the word 'father' which can be arranged along three axes:

Biological
Fatherhood

- a) the father as inseminator/begetter - sowing the seed.
- b) the father as creator/bearer - feeding the unborn child with his semen, protecting its well-being with his acts and ultimately affecting the conditions of birth or symbolically giving birth himself.

Social
Fatherhood

- c) the father as child-raiser/caretaker - involved in direct rearing of the child and physical caretaking or in the provision of food, money and conditions in which to raise the child.

The first two meanings of 'father' seem to reflect on his role as creator and biological parent while the last meaning, refers to his role as social parent. Many of the myths and rituals seem to emphasise the biological over the social meaning, the acts of begetting and creating themselves conferring status and power and structuring social relations. It is as if 'fathering' and 'to be a father' are confounded at this level of imagery; fathers emerge as the linchpin of genealogies and their siring role is an eminent one:

And unto Enoch was born Irad:
and Irad begat Mehujael: and
Mehujael begat Methusael: and
Methusael begat Lamech.

(Genesis, 4:18)

The father's role in caretaking or provision is subdued and less

visible and to 'father' is to be a father. It might be expected that where societies exaggerate the man's biological part in creation at the level of myths or ritual, this aspect of being a father will also be expressed and respected socially perhaps at the expense of the other 'social' functions of fatherhood. Indeed, this seems to be borne out in the Azande cultures as can be seen in Evans-Pritchards' description of what it means to be a Zande father:

... when people speak of the functions of fatherhood they point to the original act of procreation rather than to any subsequent service which a father may perform. Everybody knows that a woman cannot conceive until a man has had intercourse with her and sent his sperm into her body. This is the main contribution of a father towards his child's existence for he plays a very small part in providing for its nurture and attending to its infant wants.

(Evans-Pritchard, 1954:122)
(my emphasis)

Furthermore, when a Zande father reprimands his son he draws attention to his biological identity, by slapping his thighs, referring to the original act of copulation that begat the child, blowing on his penis and uttering a curse over it. If the people of a man's father's clan wish to remind him of his obligations to them they ask him to remember that 'it is we who begat you,'⁶ (my emphasis) Evidence of the high biological but low social investment of fathers,⁷ can also be found in the Greek myths where the gods, although often heroically creating their offspring, hand over their care to others to centaurs, female deities, surrogate mothers, and real mothers (although they often maintain and supervise this care from afar or have express wishes as to how it should proceed).⁸ A similar image of Christ being cared for by Mary as guardian, 'foster-mother' occurs.

There are few direct examples of men rearing children in the biblical or mythical literature or of the direct physical caretaking of children by men. However, there are some compelling images of single fathers where no central mother-figure exists and of motherless children. The relationship of God and Jesus comes to mind, of Jacob and Joseph (although we know of Mary and Rachel, they have less prominence than the father-figures) and if we stray into literary sources we can find many examples in Shakespeare: Prospero and Miranda, Shylock and Jessica, Lear and Cordelia, Baptiste and Bianca and Katarina.⁹ Many of these images are of 'adult' (children)-parent relationships where to some degree, the children are already 'raised'.

It is noteworthy that in our modern conceptions of fatherhood there is a tendency to stress the 'social' or 'raising' aspects of men as fathers. In much recent social science writing there is a presumption that 'social' and 'biological' fathering are congruent and equal and the relationship between the two is seldom explored. Unlike the mythical, religious imagery that to 'father' is 'to be a father' - we have gone the other way and our presumption is that 'to be a father' is to have 'fathered'. We have moved from an evaluation of the father as a biological parent to the father as a social parent. However, this may be a relatively recent configuration, consequent upon our knowledge of the equal genetic contributions of men and women to the creation of life and upon clarification of the 'relationship between copulation and paternity', (Mead, 1962: 157). The important point emerging from the material on male creation myths and rituals is that the meaning of fatherhood is divisible, fluid and can be ranked. It is only necessary to look at occasions where biological fatherhood is contested, for this point to be underscored further,

and for us to realise that paternity is still largely 'inferential' and separable from social caretaking. The image of a man searching frantically for proof of his paternity is drawn poignantly in Stringberg's play 'The Father' (1976).¹⁰ Here, the Captain is finally driven to insanity by his wife's denial of his paternity. Stringberg successfully fragments man's social and biological fatherhood in the same way that we have seen in creation myths and rituals and suggests that fatherhood is more complex than the mere nurturing of children. The Captain pleads with his wife:

Laura, save me and my sanity.
You don't understand what I am
saying. If the child's not mine,
I have no rights over her and
want none ... to me this child
was my life hereafter. She was
my idea of immortality, perhaps the
only one that has any roots in
reality. Take her away and you cut
short my life.

... I have sacrificed my life and
my career, I have undergone torture,
scourging, sleeplessness, every kind
of torment for you, my hair has turned
grey, all so that you might live free
from care and when you grow old enjoy
new life through your child. All this
I have borne without complaint, because
I believed I was father to this child.
This is the most arrant form of theft, the
most brutal slavery.

(Strindberg , 1976: 58)

In a recent and important attempt to define and delineate the meaning of motherhood, Chodorow has attempted to differentiate between mothers and fathers in terms of the bearing and raising of children. In her view it is the confounding of bearing and raising (tasks largely done by women), that makes women primary parents. She says:

Mothers are women, of course, because a mother is a female parent, and a female who is a parent must be adult, hence must be a woman. Similarly, fathers are male parents, are men. But we mean something different when we say that someone mothered a child than when we say that someone fathered her or him.

... Being a mother then is not only bearing a child - it is being a person who socialises and nurtures. It is being a primary parent or caretaker.

(Chodorow, 1978:11)

She does not go on to identify what 'fathering' or 'to be a father' means. However, from the three axes identified above it would seem that begetting/'creating' may be important and often hidden components of fatherhood which vie in status with women's bearing and nurturing abilities as mothers and which have allowed men at other times and in other societies to be 'primary parents' that is, dominant. In short, men could be ascribed primacy because of their perceived biological contribution and roles during pregnancy and confinement. If a society or culture most values men as begettors and 'creators', it is possible to rewrite Chodorow's thesis for fathers thus:

Being a father, is not only begetting a child - it is being the person who ensures the survival of the foetus and its safe delivery, who pronounces whether the newborn shall live or die and who introduces the mother and child to the social world. It is being a primary parent or begetter and creator.

Taking this more diversified and threefold view of fatherhood, it is possible to speculate that the real lack of interchangeability

between fathers and mothers lies in the father's singular ability to beget/inseminate. Men can 'create', give birth even if only at the level of myth, they can act as 'social mothers', they can beget/'father' and be fathers. Women can create, give birth, they can act as 'social fathers', be mothers but they have no equivalent or reciprocal myths of begetting or creation which make men redundant. Even the Christian story of the 'immaculate conception' figures an active father/begetter in God, although the function of the man, Joseph, is diminished. Chodorow seems accurate when she distinguishes mothering from 'fathering', for 'fathering' includes begetting but she may not be correct in equating bearing and nurturing with primacy, nor in regarding them as an absolute or unchangeable, nor in ranking them above men's biological contributions. As a comment on our times and Western culture she may be right to suggest that child bearers and child caretakers are 'primary' parents but the value of this review of creation myths and rituals is to show that fathers have sometimes claimed a greater part in this, through the act of insemination itself, through couvade practices and through belief systems.

It is not possible here to do justice to the discussion about the differences between mothers and fathers but this section has gone some way toward defining what it might mean 'to father' and 'to be a father' - concepts which have as yet been inadequately broached elsewhere. Fourthly, and finally, male creation myths and rituals can be interpreted in terms of the explanations they provide about the relationship between the individual and her or his environment. Just as rituals, like male initiation or the couvade, may be used to manipulate and express social relations, especially gender relations

at a public level, they might also serve, along with other danger or pollution beliefs, to implicate the physical universe or environment in this exercise of control. Things are not just left to chance or to physical evolution, but man's (or woman's) intervention (or lack of intervention) can affect the weather, the harvest, animal productivity - and as such, the 'cosmos' is used to 'constrain other people' (Douglas, 1975: 62). The environment or social sphere is carved up and there are 'no go areas' and 'prohibited persons' who can bring danger and blight. Such a model forges an explicit link between human growth and production and growth and production in the physical world. Societies which insist through couvade practices that men withdraw from the world and be purified before re-entering it, may be asserting some kind of male scientific autonomy over nature. They may not know how or why crops grow but they know that such ruination can be prevented by containing given groups of individuals and by marking out prohibited space. Initiation rites similarly divide up and confine social and physical spheres and social groups.

As well as the central and all-powerful image of men/fathers as creators, many other compelling images of fathers in discreet relationships with their offspring can be identified. The exact nature and characteristics of these father-child relationships will be detailed in the following sections. Beginning with a profile of father-son and father-daughter relationships, the remaining sections of this chapter will go on to explore some of the more global features of parent-child relations over history, plotting a pattern of social change from when children had limited rights to when they have gained many.

2.2 The Nature and Quality of Father-Child Relations

Fathers and Sons

When biblical and mythological sources are scrutinised with a view to understanding domestic relations, the relationship between fathers and sons emerges as dominant and compelling. What is immediately striking, is the hostility and violence which often marks this relationship and culminates in either the sacrifice of sons (infanticide or cannibalism) or in the slaying of fathers. The earlier example of Zeus swallowing Metis was provoked by a desire to avoid being murdered by a son not yet born. Zeus' father, Cronus, similarly swallowed five of his children in order to prevent his death at their hands. (In fact, they are later reconstituted and band together with Zeus to kill him !!). From the Greek myths come further examples, in one instance a grandson, Perseus kills his grandfather Acrisus, while in the most famous example of all, Oedipus kills his father Laius.¹² The sacrifice of Christ by God has already been referred to above but sacrifice and/or hostility also echoes in the relationships between Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Reuben¹³ and many others. God decrees that Abraham should sacrifice his first-born son Isaac to demonstrate his piety and filial devotion to God. Broken-heartedly Abraham prepares to obey, but God spares Isaac and provides a ram instead, (Genesis 22:1-10).¹⁴

There are images both of 'good' and 'bad' fathers sacrificing/killing sons and images of 'bad' fathers being killed. It is less clear whether 'good' sons ever kill their fathers but certainly, many sons live to be more noble than the 'bad' fathers they extinguished. While fathers' ('good' fathers) sacrifice of their sons is sometimes infused by a 'good' motive and inspires a 'good' outcome (as in the

story of the sacrifice of Christ), it is difficult to deduce whether the killing of fathers is ever inspired by a 'good' motive, is enacted by a 'good' son and/or leads to 'good' results. Whatever the inexact contours of this theme, its horrific circularity and forcefulness cannot be missed. Thomas Mann (1968) expresses this vividly below:

... the father-son relation revolves too, it is not always the son slaying the father, for at any moment the role of sacrifice may fall to the son, who is then slain by the father.

(Mann, 1968: 163)

And again he remarks:

... It revolves, and often they are father and son, the unequal ... and the son unmans the father or the father slays the son.

(Mann, 1968: 165)¹⁵

In many of the tales about father-son violence there is a tension between the lives of the father and the son. A living son may be evidence of the father's immortality; the maintenance of his clan and lineage: a living son may also be the source of his mortality, being destined to exterminate him. In this context, the odds often seem curiously and finally pitted against the father, who despite his initial power and violence is ultimately vanquished and replaced. There is an image of fathers as expendable, avenged and enfeebled - as in the case of Cronus who is usurped and succeeded by Zeus. Sons on the other hand emerge triumphant and victorious.

As well as fathers committing acts of sacrifice in an attempt at self-preservation, other themes of fathers killing sons to please a higher authority (Abraham), to avoid a curse (Cronus), to punish

wives, to ensure purity of the race (as in infanticide of illegitimate sons), and to contain family size, emerge. Fathers are not always portrayed as killing their sons or committing acts of sacrifice willingly or easily but are often shown as experiencing great anguish in the event. This means that we empathise sometimes with the father, the slayer, and sometimes with the son, the slain. This double-edged model of suffering is carried through in the story of the crucifixion of Christ, where the poignancy of the father who gave up his 'only begotten son' so that sinners might be redeemed, is as great as that of the son whose life was actually taken. There are also pathetic examples of fathers being tricked into cannibalism of their own sons by their enemies in acts of vicious retribution. Thyestes is tricked into eating all his three children by his brother Atreus, while Itys served Tereus a meal of his own son. Again, the father's act evokes pity and is as commanding as the death of the son.

In the psychoanalytic mode, the reiteration of the enmity of fathers and sons is representative of the sexual rivalry which they experience sub-consciously toward the wife/mother - love object.¹⁶

Fathers and sons are sexual competitors and harbour murderous desires toward one another at a sub-conscious level, the son wishes to kill his father and become his mother's sexual partner.¹⁷

It is considered a universal psychological phenomenon and must be resolved for healthy psycho-sexual development to proceed, known as 'Oedipal resolution' whereby such brutal urges are curbed. Sons fear castration from angry fathers and part of the 'Oedipal resolution' involves avoiding the father's hostility and eventually identifying with him and winning his approval. In the view of some (Chesler, 1978: 206), this process is never quite complete and fathers and sons form an uneasy alliance for all time. Chesler for example,

believes that there would be much more real father-son violence through inadequate 'Oedipal resolution', if it were not that men place 'small children into the enforced but protective custody of women' (Chesler, 1978: 204). Furthermore, she suggests that an even greater male psychological motive overrides any feelings of sexual rivalry, 'namely men's need to combat death through reproduction', (Chesler, 1978: 204) and consequently real acts of male infanticide are minimised. In her thesis, fathers face a real and not just a symbolic choice between immortality or mortality through their sons. Sons offer a chance for fathers to perpetuate themselves.

An alternative explanation for the persistence and pervasiveness of father-son hostility is founded on more sociological or economic grounds. Flandrin (1979) in his study of French domestic morality in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attributes the animosity prevalent in father-son relationships to the operation of 'ancestral patrimony'.¹⁸ In such contexts, sons are entirely dependent on fathers for their lives and livelihood and it is this very dependency which can lead to hatred and to the desire for the death of one's parents. Heinous intentions toward fathers are bound up with issues of inheritance, freedom, independence, manhood and property settlements. In the biblical context, this can be translated into issues of birthright and blessings which only fathers could confer and often, arbitrarily. The tensions in the relationships between Isaac, Jacob and Esau can be traced to this source, as can those between Jacob and his offspring. A further complication in the exact operation of patrimony, whereby children were treated unequally and one child was favoured, could intensify the degree of hostility between the father and the unfavoured child or children. Again, the example of Jacob and his children illustrates this point

which will be elaborated more fully later.

On the other hand, although patrimony left sons vulnerable to the father's powers and whims, it also left fathers open to social disadvantage, abuse, denigration, hurt and shame, especially by the chosen heir. Excess children or an unsuitable heir could inhibit the father's social advancement or impair the overall material standard of living of the family and this could lead to fathers selecting who should live and who should die.

Flandrin believes that:

... it may not have been without malign intent that, in many bourgeois families, the mother nursed the heir, and the younger children were put out to nurse.

(Flandrin, 1979: 153)

If the heir did not display the qualities or characteristics desired of him and if customary law did not allow the father to choose another heir, this too could lead to pronounced father-son hatred and even death. Flandrin (1979) cites examples of the unsuccessful and tyrannical relations between Charles VII and the future Louis XI; Francis I and the future Henri II; between Frederick William of Prussia and the future Frederick II and the extreme case of Peter the Great who was the 'judge and executioner of his own son', (Flandrin, 1979: 153). The antagonism between fathers and sons then has a potentially symbiotic quality, with sons hating fathers or fathers equally hating sons. It also has a practical quality, being rooted in real social issues of succession, inheritance and lineage. However, it would be misleading to end this review of the imagery of father-son relations by focussing entirely on its negative projection. This tendency prevails in much psychoanalytic writing and Chesler

(1978) for one, neglects to mention the occurrence of 'good' father-son relationships. One of the reasons why the father-son bond commands our attention is precisely that it can also signify an incredibly close relationship and one of intense male/male solidarity. It may be this very polarisation of father-son emotions which gives the relationship its centrality and potency. Certainly, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the images of 'good' father-son relationships are prolific; Isaac and Esau; Jacob and Joseph; God and Jesus; the prodigal son and his father. The themes enacted in instances of father-son love reflect on redemption, forgiveness, salvation, compassion, selflessness, generosity and charity.¹⁹ Indeed, Christianity relies on the ideal type 'good' father-son relationship as its most powerful metaphor and believers should approach God, in the same way that sons approach their fathers, in attitudes of modesty, adoration, obedience and love. In the Old Testament filial piety is a strong underlying theme of many of the relationships whereas in the New Testament, fathers and sons are expected to be shown mutual respect, sons are fathers' ambassadors.

That all men should honour the
son even as they honour the
Father. He that honoureth not
the Son, honoureth not the Father
which hath sent him.

(St John 3: 23)

Furthermore, their actions are mutually accountable and reciprocal:

As the Father knoweth me, even
so know I the Father.

I and my father are one.

I am the true vine, and my
Father is the husbandman.

(St John 10: 15,30; 15:1)

Themes of the mutuality of father-child relations, fathers shaping up sons and of sons emulating fathers, continue to dominate contemporary considerations and are captured in expressions such as 'chip off the old block'; 'like father, like son'; 'cut off the same cloth'; 'the child is the father of the man'; 'hurt my child, hurt me'; 'the black sheep'; and 'bringing shame on the 'house' or 'family name'.'

In the same way that father's favouritism could lead to severe father-child hostility, many examples of father-son love refer to a favoured child. So the father's love does not spread equally across family members but is concentrated on one son. Father-son love and father-son hatred then can co-exist in the one story, the father preferring one child against the others, and the others hating him for this iniquity. Indeed, in a number of cases, fratricide results from such inequitable paternal behaviour²⁰ and many of the most memorable images of father-child love are also images of the uneven treatment of children by fathers - for example: Abraham and Isaac; Isaac and Esau; Jacob and Joseph; Geb and Osiris.²¹

The characteristics which inspire a father to love one child over another appear fairly random at first but can be narrowed down to the following:

a) The father's relationship to the mother -

for example Jacob loves Joseph most because he is the son of Rachel.

b) The child's position in the family -

an excess of love is sometimes shown to the first-born or heir as in the case of Esau who is the elder twin.

c) The age of parents at the time of the child's birth -

favoured children are frequently children of their parents' old age. There are recurrent images of late born sons and old men fathering beloved sons. Abraham begets Isaac when he is a hundred years old.

Joseph is also the son of Jacob's old age.

d) The previous fecundity of parents -

children of long-barren parents often appear as 'special'.

Both Isaac and Joseph are born to previously infertile and aged mothers - Sarah and Rachel, respectively.

e) The characteristics of the child itself -

God favours Cain the Shepherd over the Tiller, Abel. Joseph is loved for his beauty.

f) The external or religious circumstances of the birth -

when children are construed as a 'gift' from God, a 'blessing' their 'specialness' is ensured.

g) The gender of the child -

most examples of favouritism refer to sons especially if the household is made up of sons and daughters. There is little evidence of daughters being preferred over sons, although images of the preferential treatment of one daughter against another daughter does exist, as in Shakespeare's King Lear.

It is not possible to develop the discussion of paternal favouritism here, but the essential point to be underscored is its close association with father-child love. It is interesting to note however, that the loved and favoured child is frequently and ultimately separated from fathers

(Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites), suggesting that there may be something dangerous or profane about loving a child too much. Indeed this concept of love as a threat to healthy family relations, is noted by Flandrin (1979) in his survey of the teachings of sixteenth and seventeenth century French moralists. Flandrin draws attention to the historical and chronological evolution of the meaning of the word 'love' from something negative (an absence of hate) to something positive ('heartfelt affection'), from something that could injure, to something that could enhance. He also suggests that parent-child love became increasingly reciprocal from the eighteenth century onwards and that love moved higher up the hierarchy of filial duties. His evidence is useful not least because it suggests that some caution is necessary in the 'reading' of images of father-child love from the past.

Fathers and Daughters

In contrast to the relationships between men and their sons, the relationships between fathers and daughters appear as less central and less vivid in the sources studied. This is especially true in Judeo-Christian sources but also in some of the Greek, Roman and Egyptian myths. Alongside father-son ties, father-daughter relations seem opaque, lustreless. At the outset, they seem always marked by inequality and lack the circularity of the father-son bond. There is not the same violent, murderous symmetry of the father-son relationship. Although violence and physical repression recur, it is usually father's inflicting pain and death on daughters and not the reverse. Some exceptions exist, like the blinding of Lear by his

daughters, Regan and Goneril, but these occasions of daughters rising up against fathers rarely end in the father's death. The types of violence perpetrated by fathers against daughters falls into three: the physical abandonment of daughters - as in the case of Atlanta whose father wanted a son (or infanticide where sons are valued more); sacrifice - as in the case of the Chivalric legend of St. George where the daughter is offered by her father, the King, to appease the dragon's wrath; and sexual abuse or incest - as in the cases of Lot and his daughters; Myrrha and her father; Thyestes and Pelopia.²² It is interesting, that both the abandonment (infanticide) of daughters and their sacrifice by fathers, seems to be associated with the absence of sons. In the former, fathers express a strong preference for sons (Atlanta's father rejects her for not being a son) while in the latter, a son is acquired through the act of 'daughter-sacrifice' (St. George, in killing the dragon and rescuing the sacrificial daughter, becomes both champion of the kingdom and the King's heir and surrogate son). In other words, the sacrificial daughter is 'instrumental' in putting a 'son' on the throne. There is no equivalent example of sons being used to promote daughters' positions or statuses. The images of daughters uncovered so far suggest that they are more socially benign toward fathers and less socially valued by fathers than sons.

In addition, daughters emerge as under the strict patriarchal control of fathers, especially in the Judeo-Christian sources. They are likened to the father's property and are primarily resources for enhancing his autonomy, lineage and tribe. For example, it is Laban's decision which of his two daughters, Leah or Rachel shall marry Jacob (Genesis, 29: 18-19).

And every daughter that possesseth
an inheritance in any tribe of the
children of Israel, shall be wife
unto one of the family of the tribe
of her father, that the children of
Israel may enjoy every man the inher-
itance of his fathers.

(Numbers, 36: 8)

That fathers still continue to exercise matrimonial rights over
their daughters is contained in the traditions of suitors asking
fathers for their daughter's hand and fathers 'giving' daughters
away. As well as controlling daughters' marriage partners, fathers
are allocated control even over their daughter's virginity and
celibacy. In the words of St. Paul:

So that he that giveth her in
marriage doeth well; but he that
giveth her not in marriage doeth
better.

(Corinthians I, 7: 38)

The image of the unmarried daughter tending to her father in his old
age is reiterated in many modern and literary sources - we can think
of Jane Austen's Emma and George Eliot's Dorothea from the nineteenth
century. In a study of the memoirs of 168 Victorians, Roberts (1978)
also remarks on this theme of daughters acting as attendants to the
'paterfamilias'. Quoting from Sarah Ellis, he refers to one of the
daughter's spheres of responsibility as being 'in the father's
chamber'. One daughter at least, usually single, takes the role as
'the special servant of his old age'.

The proprietorial aspects of the father-daughter relationship
resound in many legends and myths where daughters serve either as wombs
which perpetuate the father's 'House', or as prizes for fathers to
award to heroes or victors. Danae was initially treasured by her

father Acrisius for her ability to produce a son, while many Chivalric legends tell of Kings presenting daughters to conquerors. Again, the dominant impression that daughters have only an indirect or secondary value to fathers is reinforced. Although examples of strong, independent, heroic women exist - such as Atlanta, Athena and the Amazons, these images come from outside the family context - set alongside fathers, they are as 'daughters', dependent and deferential.

Explanations for these negative and repressive relations between fathers and daughters may again be seen to have either a psychological or sociological tenor. At one psychological level of meaning, fathers are construed as repressing their daughters because they 'desire' them and are 'desired' by them. The seductiveness of daughters is avoided by the exercise of real social control over their behaviour, (Chesler, 1978). In more sociological terms, father-daughter repression can be viewed as symptomatic of the wider hierarchical relations between men and women in which wives, sisters and daughters form a social underclass. In short, the control of daughters is an expression of patriarchy, or 'father-rule'.²⁴ In the same way that positive images of father-son relationships could be detected, some more favourable images of fathers and daughters also prevail. Strangely enough, just as father-daughter hostility emerges as more subdued and less symmetrical than that of fathers and sons, father-daughter love is also more temperate and mellow. There is less evidence of fathers expressing a deep and consuming love of daughters, although daughters are expected to love fathers. Relationships between fathers and daughters are more likely to be characterised by 'affection'. While examples of father-son love spring out from the sources reviewed, it is necessary to search more closely for

occasions of fond fathers and daughters. Certainly, no exact parallels for the relationships between Jacob and Joseph, God and Jesus exist in the biblical evidence. Included in those which do present themselves from more literary sources are the relationships between: Prospero and Miranda; Lear and Cordelia; Silas Marner and his 'adopted' daughter Eppie; Mr Tulliver and Maggie; Mr Grey and Nanda.²⁵ However, even these relationships are not without the negative elements of repression and control. Daughters rarely appear as greater than their fathers.

Lastly, fathers and daughters can be found in relationships of sponsorship. This means that fathers act as counsellors, advisors or 'sponsors' to their daughters and back or encourage their careers and ambitions. While still essentially embracing a hierarchical attitude toward their daughters - there are images of fathers assisting daughters in their personal and social advancement. Beatrice Webb's father (Webb, 1971) is recalled as having taught her an interest in eighteenth century humourists and classical literature and also as having introduced her to the world of politics and business. Mary Ellen Peacock's father (Thomas Love Peacock) is quoted as determining that 'she would be educated, free of cant, self-respecting' (Johnson, 1973: 48) while Virginia Woolf's father (Leslie Stephen) is recorded as introducing her to classical novels, teaching her mathematics, drawing, reciting poetry and allowing her free access to his library (Bell, 1973). This image of fathers acting as sponsors/tutors can also be replicated in the father-son relationship - the difference being that daughters are rarely trained to replace their fathers, nor are daughters schooled/sponsored at the expense of sons.

Paternal Sovereignty

Uniting both the relations of sons and daughters with fathers is the over-arching theme of paternal sovereignty. Social relations are divided up not just into sex-gender categories of sons versus daughters, husbands versus wives but also into age-generational hierarchies of parents (especially fathers) versus children. Already it has been suggested that father-rule and patrimony ensured the subordination of sons and daughters. Here this theme will be developed in more detail as paternal sovereignty seems to echo across every level of analysis that we care to undertake. Its classical expression is contained in the Old Testament, in the commandments of Judeo-Christian morality, where parents and children are portrayed as fundamentally unequal, where the primary attitude of children toward their parents is expected to be filial obedience and deference and where the primary means of controlling and raising children is expected to be physical chastisement. Paternal sovereignty asserts the father's authority over his children and other household members and affords fathers the means by which to maintain this authority. Fathers are both licensed to instil obedience by physical rebuke and to use violent means to check any disobedience. The tenets which are supportive of paternal sovereignty are expressed in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus and Proverbs as we see below:

Honour thy father and thy mother:
that thy days may be long upon the
land which the Lord thy God giveth
thee. (Known as the Fifth Commandment
of the Decalogue amongst Protestants and
the Fourth Commandment amongst Catholics)

(Exodus 20: 12)

A wise son heareth his fathers instruction:
but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

(Proverbs, 13: 1)

Chasten thy son while there is
hope and let not thy soul
spare his crying.

(Proverbs, 19: 18)

Withhold not correction from the
child: for if though beatest
him with the rod he shall not
die.
Thou shalt beat him with the rod and
shalt deliver his soul from hell.

(Proverbs, 23: 13-14)

And he that curseth his father
or mother, shall be surely put to
death.

(Exodus, 21: 17)

For everyone that curseth his
father or mother shall be surely
put to death: he hath cursed his
father or his mother; his blood shall
be upon him.

(Leviticus, 20: 9)

The eye that mocketh at his father
and despiseth to obey his mother,
the ravens of the valley shall pick
it out, and the young eagles shall
eat it.

(Proverbs, 30: 17)

Many writers allege that these dictates for hierarchical and repressive parent-child relations were matched in the social reality and were typical of many regions and cultures for long periods of history.²⁶ Indeed, Flandrin (1979) would go further and contest that the existence of patriarchal social relations made the adoption and spread of Christianity more plausible. He asks '... is there any monotheistic religion which has not been born and first triumphed in a patriarchal society?' (Flandrin, 1979: 119). In his view, the

societies in which Christianity first flourished were all marked by hierarchical relations and by the governance of the father, the husband, the master and the lord. There was also a close tie up and resemblance between the rule of the absolute monarch and the absolutism of fathers. The institutions of state and family mirrored and legitimated one another and so the Christian concepts of God, the Father and Universal Lord had immediate social relevance and coinage. Sons, servants, subjects and sinners were unified in an attitude of supplicance.

Making a direct connection between institutional sovereignty and familial sovereignty Flandrin remarks:

The authority of a King over his subjects and that of a father over his children, were of the same nature ... neither authority was based on contract, and both were considered 'natural'. The king and the father were accountable for their governance to God alone.

(Flandrin, 1979: 1)

He further outlines some of the characteristics of paternal authority in sixteenth century France and argues that, if anything, paternal sovereignty intensified in this period due to the vogue of the principles of Roman Law and to the increasing interest of both the church and the monarchy in domestic relations. The following extract from Flandrin identifies some of the domains of paternal power in the past and is suggestive of the fit between domestic relations and wider social relations. It must be remembered that although this power of fathers was not universal, it has been described as widespread throughout Europe during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

Their paternal power covered the person and the property of their children, grandchildren and other descendants. These 'children of the family' were unable to bind themselves by contracts - chiefly those involving loans and marriage - and even with the agreement of their father, they could not make wills. This was because all the property belonged to the father. The latter enjoyed full ownership of all property that they held of him, for he could always undo whatever he had done; similarly he was the full owner of the profits derived from such property; he possessed in addition, the usufruct of their other goods from whatever source they had come, subject to certain exceptions, finally he was responsible for the dowries of his daughters-in-law.

(Flandrin, 1979: 130)

The complementariness of Judeo-Christian teaching and real social relations is also reflected in the evidence on familial morality and child-rearing practices in former times. Fathers appear not just as sovereign but uphold and enact their sovereignty through physical force. The obedience, deference and acquiescence of children is achieved by the rigorous application of paternal punishments. Many examples can be found, again in France and England of the pre-modern period, of fathers maintaining authority over their children through excessive beating and flogging, and although many regional, social class and occupational differences exist - the tyrannical and violent father was a prevalent and recognisable type (Flandrin, 1979; Stone, 1975; Poster, 1978). (This flogging was also often carried out at the hands of school masters, tutors and servants with the father's approval or request). One prominent view of children recorded at this time, was that they needed 'taming' or 'breaking' and their behaviours were likened to those of young animals, 'young horses or

hunting dogs' (Stone, 1975: 36). Similarly, from the nineteenth century come identical portraits of brutal and authoritarian fathers (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969-73; Roberts, 1978; Poster, 1978). One of the most famous fictional fathers in the tyrannical mode is Samuel Butler's, Mr Pontifex who 'thrashed his boys two or three times a week and some weeks a good deal oftener', (Butler, 1960: 23)²⁷. Although no longer equated with animals, children of this period were viewed as essentially evil and sinful and so physical repression was a means of expurgating such nastiness (Butler, 1960). Whatever the ideology of childhood, it led to the same kind of paternal restraint and expression, modes of authority directly prescribed and approved in the biblical extracts above - 'let not thy soul spare his crying'. All these menacing fathers are unified by their adherence to a moral position laid down in the Old Testament and observed by their Old Testament predecessors. Sovereignty is ensured through physical coercion, through the 'natural' superiority of old over young and by social privilege. Examples of parent-child inequality and the operation of paternal sovereignty are contained not just in these extreme examples of discipline and control but can also be found in historical terms of address (for example, sons signing themselves 'your humble servant'), in public and private familial rituals (sons standing or kneeling before fathers), and most importantly in the legal statutes concerning the treatment of children (laws of inheritance and succession, laws of testacy, laws of custody and guardianship, marriage laws and laws governing parental cruelty and abuse) (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969-73). Although paternal sovereignty surfaces as a dominant form of domestic relations across countries and centuries and has a strong moral base in Judeo-Christian philosophy, one of the interesting

things about the application of this sovereignty is that it has been under attack since 'the earliest days of Christianity' (Flandrin, 1979) and there have been fluctuations in its expression. These modifications of paternal sovereignty are the concern of the last section of this chapter, particularly the move from father's rights over children to duties toward them.

This trend is one which has been documented by a number of writers (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969-73; Flandrin, 1979; Newson and Newson, 1974 and Lowe, 1982), and seems to be a significant event in the history of fatherhood. Most accounts refer to the loss of legal sovereignty by fathers, to the increasing intervention of the church and state over father-child (and mother-child) relations and to the enhanced status and position of children and childhood. It will not be possible to outline the precise changes which have promoted children's rights over fathers' rights but only to allude to the tenor of these changes in a very general way.²⁸ Before moving on to the next section however, it is necessary to note that although paternal sovereignty does seem to have declined in a progressive fashion, this change has been by no means uniform or even. The trend has not entirely been one of liberalisation and Flandrin has already been quoted for his belief that father's authority increased between 1500 and 1600 in France. Similar evidence comes from Stone about England during this period (Stone, 1975). Children have been known to gain and lose ground and one area marked by repeated fluctuations has been that of parental consent to marry. Flandrin for example notes the volatility of paternal authority over children's marriages:

In the Middle Ages, the Church
had diminished parental authority

by recognising the validity
of marriages contracted by the
'children of the family' without
their parents consent ... This was
because ... the Church had held
marriage to be a sacrament which the
spouses administered to themselves.

(Flandrin, 1979: 131)

What is interesting once again, is the close inter-relationship between paternal authority and Christian morality, however, on this occasion the relationship is not one of harmony but of conflict. It would seem as we will go on to see, that attempts to strengthen and weaken paternal sovereignty have co-existed across history and that Christianity itself is marked by contradictions and ambiguity. At least since the sixteenth century, 'pure' paternal sovereignty has had its opponents and proponents and both purporting a form of Christian doctrine.

From Paternal Rights to Duties

Having briefly outlined some of the historical facets of paternal sovereignty and its theological and ideological supports it is now necessary to show the way in which this sovereignty has been increasingly contained and imperfectly applied. In the same way that the exercise of sovereignty can be traced back to Judeo-Christianity, its inhibition also lies in Christian texts and is particularly revealed in the shift from the Old Testament to New. While St. Paul still affirms the dominance and all-powerfulness of fathers and recommends filial obedience, for the first time, there is mention not just of children's deference and responsibilities to parents, but also of parent's responsibilities toward children. This call for a reciprocity

in parent-child relations marks a very fundamental move away from the rulings of the Old Testament above, where fathers essentially owed children nothing and were not expected to be self-conscious about their parenting. St Paul's words reflect this substantial change in the expected nature of domestic relations:

Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Honour thy father and thy mother,
(which is the first commandment
with promise).

That it may be well with thee, and
though mayest live long on the
earth.

And ye fathers, provoke not your
children to wrath: but bring them
up in the nurture and admonition
of the Lord.

(Ephesians, 6:1-4)
(my emphasis)

The image of fathers has distorted from one of absolute, non-reciprocal authority to one where they are begged to show responsibility in their handling of children, especially in spiritual matters. As well as evoking the need for a reciprocity of parent-child relations, St. Paul similarly alludes to the need for reciprocity in relations between husbands and wives and masters and servants. This is a marked departure from the stance which endorsed uniform hierarchal relations and probably fitted the reality of social relations less well than 'pure' paternal sovereignty. On the radicalness of the Christian position on reciprocal domestic relations and its likely mismatch with actual social relations, Flandrin comments:

In the world in which Christianity took root, this insistence on the duties of the husband, of the father

and of the mother was probably more original than the enjoining of obedience on the wife, the children and the servants.

(Flandrin, 1979: 119)

Just as Flandrin has argued the appropriateness and symmetry of the Christian view of paternal sovereignty and hierarchal social relations, he shows that it was also paradoxically true, that the exercise of absolute paternal authority could be dysfunctional to the spread of Christianity and its adherence. Put more simply, while the existence of patriarchal relations and the metaphor of the father-child relationship was advantageous to the promotion of Christianity - paternal power could, if carried to excesses, prevent children from becoming Christians - earthly fathers could wield their authority against the Heavenly Father. Flandrin further suggests that the need for the church to curtail the powers of earthly fathers, lords and masters has recurred across history:

From antiquity until our own day - and particularly between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries ... the church has often denounced 'excesses' of marital, paternal and seigneurial power thus sowing the seeds of a questioning of the traditional relationship of subordination.

(Flandrin, 1979: 119)

So in Christianity itself lies the potential for the curtailment of paternal sovereignty, for more equal and democratic parent-child relations and for fathers to be more responsible and reflective in raising their children. However, the new opposition to paternal power can be seen not to refer so much to the rights or needs of children but to the rights or needs of God and what has changed is not so much the position of children but the position of fathers.

Earthly fathers are set against God and in the New Testament there are many examples where children are asked to overrule earthly patriarchs in favour of heavenly devotions. Following the premises of the New Testament, children's relationships towards their parents are no longer those of mere filial obedience but may become problematical and contentious if the will of God is to be realised. Sons and daughters may have to thwart their parents wishes, display active disobedience in the cause of greater devotion and filial respect for the Lord, who is the real father. Adherence to Christianity is presented thus as inherently divisive, setting families at odds and creating a hierarchy of authority and obedience. 'Christian fathers are no longer fathers except by delegation of power', (Flandrin, 1979: 136). The following extracts contrast sharply with those taken from the Old Testament and our image of fathers is roughly shaken:

For I am come to set a man at
variance against his father.

(Matthew 10: 35)

And a man's foes shall they be
of his own household.

(Matthew 10: 36)

He that loveth father or mother
more than me is not worthy of me.

(Matthew 10: 37)

And call no man your father upon
the earth: for one is your Father
which is in heaven.

(Matthew 23: 9)

Flandrin suggests that these precepts for father-child reciprocity, for fathers to be dutiful toward their children, and for fathers to defer to God were slow to be adopted. They had little appeal or relevance in the hierarchical societies in which Christianity first appeared, and in any case, the Church itself was slow to develop an

interest in domestic relations or morality. It was as if the New Testament teachings on morality were ignored and those emanating from the Old Testament which mirrored the social reality, seemed obvious and applicable:

For centuries, commentators remained
unmoved by this absence of reciprocity.

(Flandrin, 1979: 137)

However, increasingly from the sixteenth century onwards and particularly from the Council of Trent onwards, Flandrin contends that the church interfered more in domestic relations and that the New Testament version of domestic and parental relations became more pronounced. Changes came about particularly in the spheres of religious vocations, and marriage. Fathers began to be upbraided for preventing their children from attending services of worship, for leading their children into illegal or criminal activities, and for forcing unsuitable spouses upon their children. The father's position began to resemble that of a 'foster father' or guardian, and children rather than being his property to dispose of at will, became 'trusts which God places' in his care. While always endemic in Christianity, this principle became steadily more apparent in the teachings of the Church and the dutiful position of fathers toward children became accentuated and imperative. In Flandrin's view, the emphasis on fathers' duties has continued progressively until modern times:

According to our present day
mentality ... procreation gives
him more duties towards them
than rights over them.

(Flandrin, 1979: 136)

Supporting the argument that paternal duties became more prominent, Flandrin contrasts the absence of attention paid to responsibilities of parents in the writings of moral confessors between the middle of the fourteenth century and the middle of the sixteenth century with a proliferation of such attention in those texts published between 1574 and 1748. He also notes that as well as the exaggeration of paternal duties over rights, fathers' prescribed duties also became more numerous and diverse in range. At first, their duties referred only to religious and spiritual concerns and to moral education but this developed in France and by the end of the seventeenth century included the duties of providing professional education and settling one's children. This latter trend is indicative of a slight swing in the position of children as well as fathers.

A similar trend in the advancement of fathers' duties has been noted by Pinchbeck and Hewitt in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In their thesis, the encouragement of paternal responsibility seems to come almost a century earlier than that noted by Flandrin in France and can be attributed both to the application of Puritanism and to the impact of formalised education on family organisation and morality. In their account of Tudor education practices, they show how children and parents are thrown more into each other's company and how parents are required to take more direct care of their children. In their opinion, organised education in the Elizabethan period did much to prolong the period of childhood, to protect the child from the demands of the adult world and to extend the period of parental supervision and financial support. Suggesting that parental commitment emanated from a change in the educational system of children they say:

Whereas when a child had been sent away to be bound apprentice, the master of apprentices had been responsible for his food and clothing, when a child was sent away to school his parents had to pay for these themselves.

(Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969:42)

For Pinchbeck and Hewitt, this increased stress on parental responsibility for children led to a new concept of 'the family' and to shift in the status of childhood. They say:

The increased emphasis on the responsibilities of a parent for his own child and the increased contact between parent and child which the new system of education inevitably implied made possible a consciousness of 'family' which was not so easily developed under the old system, where prolonged absence in the house of another whose life the child was expected to absorb had frequently resulted, as we have seen, in his interests and affections being bound up with those of the house in which he had been placed rather than with those of his family.

(Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969:43)

As well as agreeing that a general shift occurred from paternal rights to paternal duties across history, Flandrin and Pinchbeck and Hewitt do provide some fascinating insights about the relationship between the extension of paternal duties and the extension of children's rights. Changes in one sphere did not necessarily flow from the other. As has already been suggested, early constraints on paternal power did not seem to stem from a concern to promote the interests of children but from a concern to ensure deference to God. In other words, the pressures or motives to reform the position of fathers were not necessarily connected or congruent with the pressures

or motives to reform the position of children. Although having a seeming reciprocity or mutuality these two developments have separate histories to some degree. Both researchers, suggest that children's rights developed in an uneven and chequered fashion and often did not keep pace with the extended duties of fathers. Indeed, Pinchbeck and Hewitt argue that children's lot worsened during much of the nineteenth century. Changes in the moral expectations and in the legal expectations of fathers did not always concur and in particular it took a long time in England for legislation to interfere with the enactment of fathers' duties. The moral precepts about the nature of 'good' fatherhood were not translated into legal codes until the end of the nineteenth century, a long time after fathers were acknowledged to have duties toward their offspring. The reluctance of the state to enforce paternal duties has many explanations, too complex to be covered adequately here, however, suffice it to say that the legal sovereignty of fathers was sustained long after their moral sovereignty was challenged and contested. Repressive, tyrannical and irresponsible fathers had lost moral credibility long before they lost legal credibility and authority. Indeed, the first parliamentary act to interfere with a father's legal sovereignty over his children did not occur in England until the beginning of the nineteenth century when a law was passed banning the stealing of children for their clothes and labour (1814). The process to curtail fathers legal rights progressed from this time culminating in the 1948 Children's Act, which finally allowed courts to remove children totally from parental care.

In observing the shift from paternal rights to duties and the advance of children's rights, corresponding changes can be remarked upon.

Firstly, the attack on fathers' rights finally enhanced mothers' rights, especially with regard to the custody and guardianship of children. From a position of inequality and inferiority, mothers eventually acquired equal legal status with fathers in the 1925 Equal Rights of Guardianship Act. Secondly, as fathers became more dutiful and relationships were more reciprocal, children's principal and traditional duties of obedience and deference were affected. Flandrin notes that filial love became more significant and as has been stated earlier, moved up the hierarchy of duties and changed in meaning from 'an absence of hatred' to 'heartfelt affection'. This trend was especially prevalent from the eighteenth century onwards and was visible in the writings of French moralists. Flandrin does not suggest that love of parents was an eighteenth century invention, evidence for such sentiments did exist in earlier writings but he argues that love of one's parents was transformed away from love as a duty, to love as spontaneous and expected. Love also became increasingly acceptable and respectable in the context of family relations and did not have to be suppressed or restricted. Flandrin provides a poignant quote representative of the former ideological stance taken from Benedicti who is berating fathers who are insufficiently strict, comparing them to 'monkeys that kill their little ones through hugging and cherishing them too much' (Flandrin, 1979: 160). Reciprocity in parent-child relations then, left the way open for love as a spontaneous feeling as opposed to a duty to develop and for children to obtain a new status vis a vis parents. Indeed, Newson and Newson (1974), reviewing twentieth century family ideologies, would suggest that parent-child relationships are currently marked by attitudes of 'tender loving care' and that our present society has evolved a 'child centred' as opposed to a 'duty centred' morality.

Furthermore, they go as far as to suggest that children's status as 'love objects' is secure:

...it is hardly conceivable that children will lose their place well at the centre, nor that the movement in 'tender loving care' will for many decades be reversed.

(Newson and Newson, 1974: 80)

These complex alterations in parent-child relations can be finally and best summarised diagrammatically and in some quotes concerning modern children's rights and modern parents duties.

Figure 2.1
Qualitative Changes in Parent-Child Relations
16th Century to the Present Day

		DUTIES TO OTHERS	RIGHTS OVER OTHERS
PARENTS	FATHER	Increase	Diminish
	MOTHER	Increase	Increase
CHILDREN		Diminish	Increase

Of all the vast changes which have taken place in the last two centuries, in our mode of life and in our sense of values, not least is the change in attitude to children. Today there is general recognition of the fact that children are the most valuable asset of the state ... Today the rights of the child (my emphasis) - to adequate food,

clothing, medical care, to appropriate education and relevant training; protection against exploitation, cruelty and neglect, against exposure to any kind of moral or physical danger or unnecessary suffering of any kind - are recognised and safeguarded by statute.

(Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969: 347)

And echoing this:

Mothers and fathers have never in history been more conscious either of the complexity of their responsibilities (my emphasis) or of the splendour of their rewards.

(Newson and Newson, 1974: 80)

The diagram and extracts combine to show that fathers have come a long way, from owing their children nothing and from immunity to outside intervention and control. Their rights have diminished to be replaced by duties and private control has given way to public accountability. Children have come a long way from being items of their fathers' property and from isolation from outside protection and care. They have gained increasing rights and public notice and supervision. Mothers have also experienced changes in the equation of power and both gaining rights and duties vis a vis fathers but also being subject to state surveillance as mothers.

Paternal Benevolence

While the father has emerged from much of the literature reviewed so far as omnipotent, stern, governing, with these powers and aspects slowly being eroded - a final complicating and subterranean imagery

of fathers has dogged our account. Especially in the exploration of fathers and son relationships, fathers have been captured in poses of vulnerability, affection and intimacy. Their remoteness and austerity has been stripped away. Alongside the image of father as life-taker, we uncover an image of the father as life-giver, or benefactor. That the two contrasting understandings of fatherhood should co-exist is not surprising and should not be overlooked, since Hoch (1979) argues that one of the recurrent themes in all Western thought concerns the polarisation of 'villain from hero'. In his thesis, tyrannical, repressive fathers would symbolise the 'villain' or 'black beast', while benevolent, indulgent fathers would represent the championing 'white hero' figure. The two are dialectical, the persistence of the civilised over the barbaric helps to justify the latter and modify its consequences. Fathers can only be excused life-taking and repressive acts because of their life-giving and benign capacities, can dictate and govern only because of their potential for charity and benevolence. The 'moral dichotomy' represented by fathers underlies much of our preoccupations even today as we explore the contours of parental roles. We are concerned to identify 'good' fathers from 'bad' fathers, to isolate 'participant' from 'non-participant' fathers, to separate 'democratic' fathers from 'authoritarian' fathers, to expose 'traditional' from 'non-traditional' fathers. This dual orientation and divisiveness of paternal characteristics cannot be ignored in either contemporary or in the historical imagery and these opposing facets can even be recognised within individual cases - the same father can appear as ruthless and violent or charitable and kind. Jacob's wrath at his son Reuben poses a sharp contrast to the compassion he showed Joseph (Mann, 1968).

Such contradictory tendencies and images are also pervasive across social classes and time periods, with one version outweighing but not precluding the other. This point is made strongly by Roberts (1978) in his study of the Victorian paterfamilias where he shows paternal benevolence and sovereignty to coexist. In his opinion, benevolence flows from sovereignty and the landed peerage of the nineteenth century was most likely to have been characterised in this way. The benevolence of such aristocratic fathers was in Roberts' opinion enhanced by their large incomes, frequent absenteeism and their tendency to be present at 'fun centred occasions' such as holidays or festivals. The kinds of indulgences Roberts attributes to fathers, include: the paying of university fees for sons; arranging seats in parliament and army commissions; and for daughters the provision of dowries; seasons in London; and ponies.

Pinchbeck and Hewitt also show that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, examples of affectionate and benevolent fathers could be found alongside the disciplinarians and the tyrants. They compare the experiences of John Wesley who was fed only 'spoon meats lest he became obstreperous' to those of Charles James Fox who was said to have been allowed to enter his father's dining room astride a saddle of mutton, his feet dangling in the gravy. Similarly, drawing on evidence from the sixteenth century they say:

There are numerous references to fathers such as Sir William Hollens (1507-1590) of whom it was recorded: "His paternall love for his children and grandchildren was exemplary, bearing always to great and tender affection for them all".

(Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973: 43)

In her autobiography Beatrice Webb (1971) also draws attention to the balancing of paternal authority and benevolence, sovereignty and liberalism:

Notwithstanding frequent absence, my father was the central figure of the family life.

... he was the only man I ever knew who genuinely believed that women were superior to men.

... yet in spite of his habitual self-subordination to those he loved ... he controlled the family destinies, mother lived where it suited him to live and he came and went as he chose; his daughters married the sort of men he approved.

(Webb, 1971: 34,35,36)

Thompson's (1977) portrait of Edwardian England again throws up a similarly complex and ambiguous picture of fatherhood. He captures a diversity of fatherhood styles, finding examples of stern and brutal fathers and examples of gentle and loving fathers. He shows that regional variations abound, with physical punishment of children being common in the Industrial Midlands yet rare in the Shetlands, where children were regarded as much more equal and independent. While the most forceful and vivid examples of all, in this polarisation of the imagery of fathers, lie in the Bible itself. Here, God the Father appears as vengeful, unforgiving and merciless, and there, as all-forgiving and all-merciful. In his response to Adam for eating of the forbidden fruit, we see an attitude that is punitive and relentless:

... cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.

Thorns also and Thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field (Genesis 4:17-18)

While on the other hand, God's offering his son's life to sinners, is done in an attitude that is selfless, generous and loving.

For God sent not his son into
the world to condemn the world,
but the world through him might
be saved.

(St. John, 3:17)

Dual images of a father's retribution and a father's largesse. In the contrasting concepts of patriarchy and paternalism, this dichotomy is also captured. Flandrin remarks on this and believes that our modern image of the father figure has been imperceptibly modified away from the father as patriarch to the father as paternalist which accommodates this imagery of paternal munificence. As patriarch, the father rules with absolute authority and through repressive means, as a paternalist, benevolence and consideration are implicit in the exercise of his authority. In Flandrin's words:

to say that an authority is
'paternal' is to claim that
it is benevolent, even indulgent;
that its possessor loves, protects
and only corrects for their own
good those who are subject to him.

(Flandrin, 1979: 120)

These recurrent and polar images of fatherhood can also be illustrated and summarised in tabular form and by drawing on Hoch's analogy of the 'white hero', 'black beast'.

Figure 2.2

The Moral Dichotomy of Fatherhood

	<u>WHITE HERO</u> *	<u>BLACK BEAST</u> *
Father is ...	life-giver	life-taker
Father is ...	benefactor	tyrant
Father is ...	benign/ benevolent	repressive/ punitive
Father is ...	paternalist	patriarch
	the slain, the victim	the slayer, perpetrator

* Hoch (1979)

Expanding his allegory of the hero and beast, by which we have just unravelled the imagery of fathers, Hoch (1979) says:

The conflict between hero and beast becomes a struggle between two understandings of manhood: human versus animal, white versus black, spiritual versus carnal, soul versus flesh, higher versus lower, noble versus base.

(Hoch, 1979: 45)

It would seem that neither version of fatherhood, the hero or the beast has ever been obliterated. However, it may well be that different historical periods and ideologies have emphasised and favoured one or other side of the morality of fatherhood and there is a tendency to compare the repression of the past with the benevolence of today. Nonetheless, it is clear that in the past the repressive model was not perfectly or universally employed and it is possible to expect that modern evidence of democratic

fatherhood is only a comment on one of two styles of fatherhood - styles which may coexist in the one father-figure, may change over the life-cycle or from region to region, group to group. What we need to know is why does one style of fatherhood triumph and predominate, why today is repressive fatherhood popularly and publically berated, what are the cultural conditions necessary for benevolent/benign fatherhood? We need to know more about the components and implications of the 'soft' face of paternalism as well as the 'hard' face of patriarchy. To know whether fathers themselves face this moral dichotomy in carrying out their parental duties, we need now to approach them directly and to see if these images are translated into real parenthood practices and issues. This chapter had attempted to untangle the past, it is necessary now to move on to fathers themselves for current or present versions of fatherhood.

CHAPTER 3

FATHERS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE LITERATURE: A REVIEW

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In contrast to the dominant imagery of fathers or 'father emphasis' in our culture and the primacy of fathers in former times as described in the previous chapter, there has been a marked tendency for social scientists to neglect the study of the male parental role. Instead up until a decade ago there has been a pronounced preoccupation with the parental role of women. Consequently, there is an imbalance in the state of knowledge about mothers and fathers. While the institution of motherhood has been subject to rigorous scrutiny, fatherhood has been, until lately, veiled in secrecy and fathers have carried out their family tasks invisibly and in private. The mystique of fatherhood, unlike the mystique of motherhood which is associated with a particular cultural version of what mothers do and feel, is more associated with the absence of a cultural version of what fathers do and feel. The social science literature would suggest that for long periods of time fathers and fatherhood have been regarded as 'non-problem' areas and as outside the scope of scientific analysis. These observations have been backed up by those writers who have attempted to quantify the volume of research pertaining to mothers and fathers, finding every time that more published articles refer to mothers (Peterson et al, 1959), and that the numbers of mothers interviewed concerning child development, parental attitudes, child rearing and marriage far exceeds the numbers of fathers directly canvassed (Le Masters, 1971; Levine, 1976).¹

However, not only has this omission of fathers from serious academic study at last been recognised but direct steps have been taken to give fathers 'a hearing' (Marsden and Duff, 1975). In Chapter 1 it was noted that 'discussion of fathering is becoming fashionable' (Fein, 1978: 122) and one recent review of family research in the 1970s refers to an article which cites as many as five hundred papers on fatherhood emergent from this period (Walters and Walters, 1980). It would seem then that there has been a shift in research emphasis of a fundamental kind. Some would go so far as to argue that a new 'paradigm' (Rapaport et al, 1977) or 'perspective' on family research is evolving, distinguished not least by the inclusion of fathers and by changes in beliefs about their roles and potential as family members (Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979). This new research trend which pays serious attention to men's family roles is perceived as reflecting both a crisis in the 'conventional research paradigm' and the changed social reality in which fathers are more involved with their children and adult sex roles are more diffuse (Rapaport et al, 1977; Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979).

How far this proliferation of studies on fathers does in fact comprise a new paradigm or is representative of changed social relations is not immediately easy to deduce. Nor is it clear if there are any unifying characteristics in the body of literature which has emerged, while still less evidence exists as to what might be the likely future development of this work. One way of trying to clarify these issues is to explore what is felt to have been the dominant research mode in the past and to ask: Why were fathers excluded from earlier research designs and concerns? As this question has been repeatedly broached by those with a direct interest

in fathers, somewhere in the collective answers might lie clues to the constituents of the new paradigm. It is for this reason that the first part of the chapter (3.1) will concentrate on untangling the sorts of explanations that have been raised to account for the neglect of fathers.

A second and complementary way of appreciating the changed research brief to study fathers as well as mothers is to ask another basic and commonplace question: Why has research on fathers expanded? Again a number of writers have provided tandem accounts for this and it is important to review the context of these. Identifying such reasons may illuminate the current ideological position on families and provide some social facts about parental roles. Besides, answers to this question will suggest some leads as to the nature of research on fathers in the future. The second part of this chapter (3.2) will consequently be devoted to identifying the kind of pressures that have encouraged social scientists to study fathers. The answers to questions of Why so little research on fathers in the past? And Why so much in the present? become more interesting when set alongside a description of what we now know about fathers. The third section of the chapter (3.3) will provide a critical overview of the major types of fatherhood research to date and this will lastly lead on to an assessment of where the present thesis fits in (3.4), to how it is differentiated from other findings and to an identification of the primary issues confronted by this study.

3.1 The Neglect of Fathers

One of the most striking features of the accounts which have discussed the social scientific neglect of fathers is the language used. In presenting their case, analysts have typically contrived a range of concepts to describe what has happened, some referring to the prominence of mothers, others highlighting the absence of fathers. These concepts are revealing because of the construction they place on a past body of literature and because they serve as shorthand labels to a given research tradition which it is felt is being challenged and superseded. Indeed, some of the concepts go even further and implicitly suggest that a 'better' or 'superior' state of knowledge is evolving. Examples of the terms used to stress an orientation to mothers at the expense of fathers include: 'matricentric' 'mother-directed' (Nash, 1965; Howells, 1970); 'mother-centred' (Taconis, 1969); 'mother-focused' (Levine, 1976; Rapaport et al, 1977); 'maternalist' and 'unitary parenting' (by mothers) (Rapaport, et al 1977). There have also been the wider terms which describe studies of child-rearing as 'mothers' child-rearing practices' (Nash, 1965) and family sociology as 'wives' family sociology' (Safilios-Rothschild, 1969). The labels which summarise the absence of attention to fathers have been less precise and in some instances almost perjorative, as if it was unfair that mothers should command all this interest. They allude to the negative features of earlier work and variously suggest that there is a 'bias in research towards mothers' (Levine, 1976) or 'a conspiracy against fathers' (Richman and Goldthorp, 1978), that fathers are generally 'ignored' (LeMasters, 1971), 'undervalued' (Nash, 1965), 'culturally submerged' (Richman and Goldthorpe, 1978), or 'forgotten contributors to child

development' (Lamb, 1975) (my emphasis). Some of these comments do not merely identify a research tendency but also imply a value position that 'matricentrism' and 'father neglect' (Rapaport et al, 1977) have been both deliberate and bad. Yet these claims are rarely made explicit or substantiated (Nash, 1965).

There is also often confusion as to whether these constructs apply to real social relations or to a research or 'intellectual fashion' (Laslett, 1981) and some writers fail to take this as problematic or even confound the two. For example, Nash (1965) takes a very unambiguous view on this, seeing matricentric research literature as a reflection of matricentric child-rearing practices and also accepting the converse, that matricentric literature reinforces matricentrism. He does not develop or illustrate this assertion but, after reviewing psychological and sociological contributions on parenthood, says:

... it would seem reasonable to adopt as a hypothesis the assumption that Western society is matricentric in its child care.
(Nash, 1965: 264)

There is then a danger that such concepts reify cultural and research practice. While not invalid, interpretations of this kind tend to oversimplify many complex epistemological issues and divert attention away from the diverse and alternative processes which lead to the development or modification of a body of knowledge. It is to some of these complex processes that I want to turn now in order to answer why 'matricentrism' in social science? Why 'father neglect'? I will review the sorts of explanations raised by social scientists them-

selves and suggest some additional factors that I believe to be relevant.

Many researchers agree with Nash that the traditional assignment of child-rearing tasks to mothers in Western culture has deeply influenced the research process and concentrated attention on mothers (for example, Taconis, 1969; Parke, 1979; Richards, 1977; Lamb, 1977; Pleck, 1979; Fein, 1978). This division of child care labour by sex is viewed as a social fact which social scientists have accepted and allowed to shape their research reality. At its simplest, it means that more mothers than fathers have been studied because more mothers than fathers serve as primary caretakers of children. In commenting on this naive research tendency, a few reviewers have attempted to analyse why and when this differentiation of parental sex roles came about, attributing its particular form to industrialisation, to the separation of home and workplaces and to conventional beliefs about men's and women's capabilities (Nash, 1965; Parke, 1979; Richman and Goldthorp, 1978). In Pleck's opinion the continued tendency to focus on mothers as childrearsers and fathers as breadwinners reflects not just a dominant pattern of social relations but also a dominant morality about what mothers and fathers should ideally do and was most representative of the social and research reality of the 1940s and 1950s (Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979). In his view, research which is reliant on uncritically describing 'traditional' child-rearing arrangements is also essentially 'traditional' in its underlying assumptions and 'provides a value context in which a limited role for men in family work is viewed as justifiable and appropriate'. (Pleck, 1979: 482).

Many cultural values and myths associated with the rigid segregation of parental sex roles have also been ascribed a part in the inhibition of the academic study of fathers. The myth of motherhood is most commonly indicated (Oakley, 1974; Rapaport et al, 1977; Richman and Goldthorp, 1978). This myth is seen as tying mothers closely to babies and is suggestive of an intimate or 'natural' primacy of mothers as childrearsers. Motherhood is portrayed both as women's universal goal and greatest achievement. By its potency, the myth convinces men and women that they will play unequal parts in parenthood and that the woman's role is largely dictated by biology. It also validates and 'affirms traditional forms of behaviour' (Oakley, 1974). By keeping mothers in the limelight and reiterating their fitness for parenting, the myth of motherhood has effectively deflected attention away from men's family roles.

In Oakley's view, as well as serving as a weapon to keep women in their places, it has functioned as 'technique for evasion of paternal responsibility'. Consequently, she says:

... we do not read in the newspapers of fathers being urged to devote more time to their children for the sake of the next generation's emotional health. Nor do we ever see it said that the working father is a problem ... Nobody has yet studied the impact of the father's employment-workplace on his relationship with his children.

(Oakley, 1974: 209, 210)

The belief that women's maternal role is their chief and most able social role is often presented as fact and is purveyed through a variety of sources; popular fiction; media; newspapers and 'expert' or 'guidance' literature. As a result, the experts themselves are

now being blamed for creating a 'scientific rationale' supportive of the conventional paradigm of child rearing and of an idealised conception of motherhood (Levine, 1976; Rapaport et al, 1977).

The experts' version of parenthood is described as bolstering up the status quo and as responsible for the limitation of work on fathers. In a review of British child care advice manuals of the 1950s and 1960s Rapaport et al, (1977) found fathers to be treated as secondary and, if the father was mentioned 'it was usually in a separate section on father's part ... 'or' ... it was from his wife's point of view, rarely from his child's and until very recently, almost never in terms of his own experience (1977: 47).

In terms of pictorial context, they record that there were few pictures of fathers alone with their infants and those that did display father images were matched by stereotyped captions which referred to masculinity rather than male nurturance. Underneath a picture of a father feeding his baby it read 'The best thing a chap can give another chap' (1977: 48). The same text later referred to male camaraderie as expressed through drinking: 'Start him drinking today'.

Richman and Goldthorp (1978) suggest that the cult of maternity has also received strong commercial backing and that business interests have flourished by treating motherhood as women's 'natural' career. Both the Church and the medical profession have similarly promoted and revered women's mothering activities and, in their opinion, this has led to an exaggeration of the importance of mothers. Howells (1970) likewise cites Christianity and the prominence of the Madonna figure in western culture as major influences on the low level of

interest shown to fathers.³

Rapaport et al (1977) pick up on the medicalisation of childbirth to explain the exclusion of fathers from consideration. They argue that the assumptions that birth is purely a female experience following conception and that birth has to be handled on a technical level by medical experts have together resulted in a lack of reference to fathers. They see medical professionals as having appropriated the birth experience 'it is their birth' taking it away from both mothers and fathers (Rapaport et al, 1977: 352). A legal bias towards mothers has been identified as further reinforcing 'matricentrism' (Richman and Goldthorp, 1978). It is noted that maternal rights usually prevail over paternal rights in custody cases and that mothers and fathers do not have equal employment protection around the time of pregnancy and birth. It is suggested that this accords motherhood more significance than fatherhood (Richman and Goldthorp, 1978). However, this explanation only fits recent legislative experience (as the earlier chapter has shown).⁴

The practice of child care professionals themselves, and not just the advice literature they provide, has been described repeatedly as favouring mothers over fathers. Howells (1970), for example, believes that in child psychiatry a number of trends have conspired against fathers and prevented research on fathers. The fact that more mothers attend clinics has operated against fathers, as has the gender of the child psychiatrist. He says:

The fact that child psychiatrists are frequently women may introduce a bias by her empathy with the female parent.

(Howells, 1970: 53)

He speculates even further that child-care workers in general may come from a population or group who had experienced 'bad' fathering or father absence, especially due to their higher class position and the presence of servants. This is how he perceives it:

Thus selection factors may bring less well-adjusted individuals into the field of child care, who would assume that their anomalous backgrounds are characteristic of family life generally. There may also be selection in terms of social class; child workers may come from backgrounds where servants, and thus less participation by fathers, were common.

(Howells, 1970: 53)

Howell's own value position, that a preoccupation with mothers is bad or misleading, resounds in this extract and it is his intention to show that fathering is just as important as mothering and 'as distinct an entity as mothering' (1970: 53).

Most of the accounts so far have concentrated on explaining the neglect of fathers by demonstrating the primacy of mothers. There have been fewer attempts to approach the question through the alternative angle of vision, through the peripherality of fathers. The thesis proposed by LeMasters (1971) therefore provides an interesting contrast. It is his contention that fathers have received disproportionately less attention than mothers because fathers have been genuinely displaced from the hub of family affairs. He refers to 'the passing of the dominant husband-father' or the 'de-emphasising' of the father's role and dates this trend as occurring from the 1930s onwards in the United States. He concludes

'that the dominant father model is neither practical nor functional in contemporary society' (LeMasters, 1971: 24). Such social changes are for LeMasters reflected in research designs and the fact that there are few studies on fathers relates to the low salience of fathers in modern families. Thus unlike the other commentators, LeMasters does not find the preoccupation with mothers inappropriate, nor does he argue for an upgrading or reevaluation of the father's role. Fathers are disregarded because they are increasingly peripheral and it is likely, in his view, that the role of mothers will also eventually be devalued, with a growing emphasis being placed on outside child care agencies.

Insufficient attention has been given to the detailing of 'fatherhood myths' which correspond to those of motherhood. It is possible to argue that the study of fathers has been deficient because of certain dominant and prevailing beliefs about what fathers do. In particular, one widespread definition of fatherhood concerns the father's economic-provider role (Gronseth, 1970). This embraces the belief that the man's primary family role is to provide the food, shelter and protection for women and children. It suggests that wives depend on husbands' incomes alone, that children are provided for by fathers alone and that fathers are better suited to provider roles than mothers. However, this is a cultural myth which conceals the economic contributions of mothers and fails to show that adult women are increasingly taking financial responsibility for themselves and for their children (Land, 1978; Hamill, 1979). It is just as plausible to suggest that the emphasis on men's economic role has distorted research interests as much as has the emphasis on women's

biological maternity. It would seem that fatherhood and motherhood myths have been operative and potent, although motherhood myths have received most critical attention.

Besides identifying cultural conventions and practices which have led to 'mother focused' research, social scientists have examined their own theories and found them lacking. Most recent writers have consistently linked the works of psychoanalysts and early attachment theorists with an overemphasis on mothers. The theoretical contributions of Freud, Bowlby and Winnicott are variously cited as effecting a 'mother oriented' perspective (Nash, 1965; Taconis, 1969; Parke, 1979; Pleck, 1979; Fein, 1978; Levine, 1976; Lamb, 1977, Rapaport et al, 1977). Taconis (1969), reviewing the influence of Freudian theory on research development, states:

Although one certainly cannot accuse Freud of ignoring the role of the father yet by establishing him as the intruder who triggered off the Oedipus situation, and the authority figure who evoked the child's feeling of guilt and aggression, Freud and his followers created a somewhat restricted picture of the father-child relationship and emphasised the closeness and the pre-eminence of the child's relationship with the mother.

(Taconis, 1969: 83)

Bowlby and Winnicott are similarly criticised for having established a research tradition in which the father is awarded only a secondary or support role and where the father's direct experiences or influences are never considered or considered only to be relevant to the socialisation of older children. Most reviewers argue that these theorists

overestimated the innate 'motherliness' of women, the primacy of the mother-infant bond, the importance of the feeding situation as a context for early social responsiveness in the infant and the impact of the child's earliest as opposed to later, experiences on his or her development (Levine, 1976; Rapaport et al, 1977; Parke, 1979). The uncritical adoption of such theories, it is felt, led to the construction of research models in which men's nurturant potential was persistently denied and the baby's ability to 'attach' to fathers or other caretakers recurrently overlooked.

Sociological theories, particularly those from the 'structural functionalist' tradition, have also been described as restricting the study of fathers (Taconis, 1969; Lamb, 1977; Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979; Parke, 1979). Parsons and Bales (1956) and Zelditch (1956) are most commonly identified with this tradition and their theories of role differentiation are blamed for creating a most unwieldy and misleading version of what parental sex roles are and should be.

Parsons and Bales (1956) view the family as a social system in which social sex roles are differentiated along 'expressive instrumental lines', divisions which are visible in all small groups. The husband-father is designated the 'instrumental leader' of the family as a system and has responsibility for connecting and relating the family to outside systems. His adult sex role 'is primarily anchored in the occupational world, in his job and through it by his status-giving, income-earning functions for the family' (Parsons and Bales, 1956: 14). The wife-mother is the 'expressive leader' of the family being concerned with its 'internal' affairs and serving to integrate members, socialise the children and manage the household. Such role differentiation is fixed and universal and stems largely from:

... the fact that the bearing and early nursing of children establish a strong presumptive primacy of the relation of the mother to the small child, and this in turn establishes a presumption that the man who is exempted from these biological functions should specialise in the alternative instrumental direction.

(Parsons and Bales, 1956: 23)

By uniting women's biological or reproductive roles and social sex roles, it is argued that Parsons and Bales successfully eclipse any appreciation of women's non-childrearing functions or of men's childrearing functions. Pleck (1979) isolates two further dominant sociological theories which he claims have prevented critical study of men's family roles and which have constituted, together with role differentiation, a 'traditional perspective' on family life. He comments on the characteristics and application of 'exchange'⁵ and 'resource theory', seeing both as resulting in a very conventional portrayal of wives-mothers' and husbands-fathers' activities. 'Exchange' theory is criticised because it suggests that husbands always exchange their economic-provider roles for their wives' provision of love, companionship and household services (1979: 482) and this is treated as constant. 'Resource theory' is felt to be flawed for its adherence to the notion that sex roles are divided up 'because people vary in the resources needed to perform these roles' (1979: 483) - women being associated with more mothering and homemaking resources, men with more bread-winning resources. Pleck believes that the continued association of men with economic provision, as contained in these theories, has guided the research exercise away from men's activities in the home toward men's

activities in the workplace. Hence the preponderance of studies which have evolved on male occupations and men as workers. Taconis (1969) not only takes sociological theorists to task, but also remarks on the inhibiting nature of their empirical findings on the study of fatherhood. She provides a useful critique of the community studies of the 1940s and 1950s⁶ and suggests that the conclusions of these studies 'tended to support the stereo-type of a non-participating, authoritarian father, at least as far as English working-class fathers were concerned' (Taconis, 1969: 83). Such studies gave rise to a model of the family in which mothers were the central, affectional characters and where fathers were shadowy wage-earners - psychologically distant from the children. Taconis notes that similar findings of ineffectual, removed fathers and of powerful, over-protective mothers emerged from empirical work in the United States at this time and while she does not contest the validity of these findings she does perceive them as influential in informing future research questions and problem areas. Images of 'powerful mums', 'momism' reinforced conventional beliefs about parental sex roles and encouraged conventional investigations.

The theories of ethologists, physical anthropologists and hormonalists are almost uniformly mentioned by reviewers as ensuring 'matricentrism' or 'father neglect' (Rapaport et al, 1977; Parke, 1979). Parke (1979) argues that many studies of non-human primates have been used to show that sex role demarcations are prevalent among animals and follow the same conventions as among humans, with mothers taking chief responsibility for infant care taking. Such findings are then used to demonstrate that mothering is an 'instinct' in all female primates

and to infer that nurturance is uncharacteristic in males. This has led to a dismissal of the father's role in infancy and to a primary focus on the mother-child relationship. Similarly, Parke suggests that:

Another body of evidence that has been used to limit the father's role in infancy is the literature on the effects of hormones on 'caretaking behaviour'.

(Parke, 1979: 551)

Hormonal theories refer to an association between the hormones of pregnancy and parturition and women's caretaking capabilities. Females are thought to be 'primed' to take care of babies. Again this places females above males in the hierarchy of parental skills and places the mother-child bond before the father-child bond. A number of writers have commented on the close fit between these physiological theories and those of the psychoanalysts and structural-functionalists, noting that they create a consensus about appropriate sex roles and parental differences in childrearing. Women are collectively distinguished by their 'mothering' and men by their bread-winning. Biology and reproductive fact are the primary organising features of the social roles adopted. (Oakley, 1974; Rapaport et al, 1977; Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979).

As well as social 'facts' and social scientific theories serving as barriers to the study of fathers, a number of methodological tendencies can be and have been held responsible. The most obvious methodological explanation for why fathers have been ignored is that researchers frequently conduct their enquiries when fathers are typically absent from home (Rebelsky and Hanks, 1971;

Richards et al, 1977; Bigner, 1979). This has resulted in a reliance on maternal reports of fathering activities and to a failure to elicit fathers' responses directly. A further explanation is needed, however, for why researchers should be so inflexible.⁷ Bigner (1979) casts only part of the blame on the organisation of researchers' time and in addition, accuses fathers themselves of poor cooperation as research subjects. He implies that mothers are a more captive, acquiescent and welcoming research group. He comments:

Getting fathers to cooperate in research studies has presented difficulties because they are away from home during the day, and when at home they want to relax. Fathers as a group are suspicious of researchers and look at behavioural research with a jaundiced eye.

(Bigner, 1979: 60)

While not totally eschewing the study of fathers, research designs which have concentrated on measuring the impact of paternal absence have also been cited as restrictive of a genuine evaluation of the father's role (Nash, 1965; Pedersen, 1976). In 'paternal absence' research father-influences on child development are explored by comparing the experiences of children reared in father-absent families to those reared in father-present families. It is argued that this 'deficit-oriented' methodology has failed fathers and as Pedersen sees it:

It is a research strategy that does not encourage the study and conceptualisation of the father's influence in the nuclear family. The father absence research

model cannot contribute to our knowledge of the father-child relationship any more than research on the effects of institutional environments, called "maternal deprivation", told us about the normal mother-child relationship.

(Pedersen, 1976: 460)

One of the most interesting accounts for why fathers have been overlooked has been formulated by Mathieu (1979) and, although her thesis is addressing wider issues than the paucity of fatherhood research, it has direct relevance here. Mathieu notes that scientific discourse has for a long time failed to develop 'sex' as a specific social dimension and this constitutes a long-standing methodological fault. The recent concept of sex roles she sees as an advance, in that it 'considers the facts of sex as a system implying two categories'. However, it has its dangers and 'runs the risk of confirming the reification of sex categories on the biological ... and it becomes an obstacle to a properly sociological definition of sex' (Mathieu, 1979: 232). She goes on to say:

This reification is especially objectionable from a methodological point of view since the 'scientific' discourse in which we are immersed refers back to biology only the feminine category ... Let's say, it brings in the biological level of explanation only in relation to women, leaving the fullness of culture to men.

(Mathieu, 1979: 232)

In other words, Mathieu identifies a 'scientific blindness' to men's biological role, especially paternity, and a 'scientific' exaggeration

of the biological role of women, especially maternity. She asserts that this methodological flaw can be found in all the social sciences and from her analysis the unequal study of mothers and fathers can be explained by the 'persistent treatment of the two sexes either separately or, in any case, at different levels of analysis - one sex being ascribed directly to the social, the other being considered principally as the focus of mediation between the natural and the societal state', (Mathieu, 1979: 233).

It is because of unconscious assumptions about the sexes that:

There is almost never a symmetrical analysis of the status of the man and woman and of father and mother, since they are in fact considered relevant to different levels of reality. There is a fundamentally biologising 'biosocial' conception of femininity, and a strictly sociological consideration of the masculine category.

(Mathieu, 1979: 239)

The observation by Bell and Encel (1978) that sociologists have tended to 'study down' - to investigate groups placed lower on the social hierarchy than themselves - may also be pertinent here. It could be argued that wives and mothers comprise a less socially powerful group than husbands and fathers. Consequently, being more dominant members of families, husbands and fathers have received less critical scrutiny. Social scientists have again 'looked down' and focused on the oppressed rather than the oppressors.⁸

The reason why sociology in particular has failed to study fathers may be even more deep-seated and relate to a 'sexist bias' in the discipline itself (Bernard, 1973; Morgan, 1981). Such bias can be said to operate in two ways: in 'the kinds of questions the researcher asks' (and as Bernard notes 'so far men, of course, have asked the questions'); and in the research problems and methods selected for study. Bernard (see also Chapter 1) accuses sociologists of having created, by their questions, 'a science of male society'.⁹ This has resulted in a paucity of information about women and an excess of information about the 'male world', meaning the male 'cash nexus world'. When women have been studied, they are treated as 'adjuncts to men' and 'are almost exclusively viewed in their relations to men as daughters, wives and mothers, or simply as sexual partners' (Bernard, 1973: 783). When men have been studied, 'the topics that preoccupy sociologists have been the topics that preoccupy men, power, work, climbing the occupational ladder, conflict and sex ...' (ibid, loc.cit). Bernard's critique of masculinist sociological practice would explain why more is known about wives and mothers than about women more generally and why more is known about mothers than about fathers.

Bernard's second contention is that sexism in sociology also operates as the level of topic and methods selection and she sees the two as mutually influential. Her argument here may also have a bearing on why social science has largely overlooked men's fathering experiences. She identifies the operation of 'machismo' in academic research, especially through the preference and higher prestige for methods which yield 'hard data'. Such methods can be classified as 'agentic'

(following Carlson and Bakan's classification, see also Chapter 1).

In 'agentic' research Bernard states that sex is treated as a variable and 'agentic methods' are associated with 'control', 'mastery', 'objectivity' and 'distance from the subjects of enquiry'. She records that men have been found to prefer 'agentic' methods and to gain more academic status through use of these methods. Consequently, there has been a persistent tendency for sociologists, who are more usually male, to focus on variables rather than people or social collectivities; on sex as a variable rather than as an organising social system; and on quantitative correlates concerning men's and women's behaviour rather than the subtleties of interaction between the sexes. In short, sociologists have created a 'male science of society' (Bernard, 1973: 784). This paradigm as conveyed by Bernard leaves especially little scope for the study of men's direct experiences as family members, 'agentic methods' not being amenable to this kind of investigation and typically orienting away from the experiential or subjective toward objective 'facts'. Treating sex as a variable also obscures differences between fathers as a group and prevents the discovery of similarities between mothers and fathers. The dominance of 'agentic methods' may therefore have inhibited the breakdown of sex-stereotypes, especially parental sex-stereotypes and kept those sociologists who are fathers from reflecting on their own experiences self-consciously and 'scientifically'.

3.2 The Expansion of Fatherhood Research

The demonstration of and explanation for the neglect of fathers by social scientists is usually accompanied by evidence that things are

changing and this, too, has to be accounted for. This section documents and critically examines the principal sorts of reasons identified for this change by reviewers. The two sections are complementary and when read together will perhaps allow for a better evaluation of whether a 'paradigmatic shift' has occurred in the social scientific approach to the family. Both sections clarify what have been perceived as the main lines of attack on the 'old paradigm'.

Most of the commentators reflecting on the shift to inclusion of fathers in social science research are in agreement as to when this trend emerged. There is a consensus about the post-War period being the most 'matricentric' period in social scientific work, with the 1960s displaying traces of this tradition and only the 1970s posing a marked alternative (Nash, 1965; Taconis, 1969; Rapaport et al, 1977; Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979).

As well as identifying a linear shift toward taking fathers more seriously, a number of the reviewers also suggest that social relations and societal values (and researchers' values) have correspondingly changed in a chronological and progressive fashion. Social research and social reality are seen as moving in the same direction, if not at the same pace (Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979) and as being in interaction: 'traditional' social relations are reflected in a 'traditional' research perspective. For example, Fein summarises this symmetry of research and social reality and, as we shall see, his position duplicates that of Pleck noted earlier:

The traditional perspective on fathering generally conformed to social ideals and realities of the late 1940s and 1950s. Relatively

few women were in the paid labour force more than temporarily and of these women only a small percentage were mothers with young children. Mothers stayed home and fathers went out to work. The husband-bread winner/wife - homemaker nuclear family was in the norm, both in a statistical sense and in the social values of the time.

(Fein, 1978: 124)

Similarly, Rapaport et al (1977) refer to the way in which research (in this case, of the 1950s and 1960s) supported a 'conventional model of the conjugal family' and was 'limited in scope to the conventional framework of assumptions'. They note that:

More males than females were found, statistically, to be aggressive for example. More females were found to be nurturant, unambitious and child-centred in their values. More nuclear families with single earning heads were found to be responsive to job opportunities in other locations, and more children were found to suffer if deprived of their mother's care through precipitous institutionalisation.

(Rapaport et al, 1977: 350)

Reviewers are less likely to agree and are less likely to untangle or make explicit how exactly changes in research models come about; and are less united about the direction of effect: do new social 'facts' generate new theories, or do new theories allow new social 'facts' to be described? This itself is a complex and controversial issue in the philosophy of science (Popper, 1972; Kuhn, 1970; Lakatos,

1970) and cannot be developed here.¹⁰ However, it is possible to give an overview of the sorts of factors that have been perceived as 'opening up' fatherhood research and these can again be classified into: first, changes in social 'facts' or relations; second, changes in social scientific theories; and, third, changes in social scientific methods.

Changes in Social Relations

The change most widely associated with the expansion of fatherhood research is the change in conventional child-rearing practice, most notably, the increased tendency for mothers to take up paid employment. This is seen as triggering the new and fundamental question - 'Who will raise the children?' (Levine, 1976) and as casting the spotlight on fathers. The increased numbers of working mothers means that the 'conventional model' of the nuclear conjugal family, where the father is the sole economic provider and the mother is the infant caretaker, is 'no longer the mode statistically' (Rapaport et al, 1977: 350). Other variants exist, including dual worker, dual-career and single-parent families, and it is not possible to assume that women do all the 'mothering' in these contexts. This inevitably draws fathers into the analysis. As well as changes in mothers' participation in the workforce, some changes have been recorded in men's involvement in child care (Newson and Newson, 1965; Gavron, 1966.) (This is discussed more fully in Chapters 8 and 9). Although the evidence on this is less well substantiated, it has come to have some kind of general cultural acceptability as a 'fact' and fathers perceive themselves to be more active child-rearers. Some brief comments are representative of the view that fathers of today are more participant:

At a time when he has more money in his pocket, and more leisure on which to spend it, than ever before, the head of the household chooses to sit at his own fireside, a baby on his knee and a feeding bottle in his hand: the modern father's place is in the home.

(Newson and Newson, 1965)

Men are evidently back in the home. But the door is a revolving one, men coming in, women going out.

(Young and Willmott, 1973: 122)

Although the achievement of sexual equality within the home is still much exaggerated and banners such as 'democratic', 'egalitarian' or 'symmetrical' hoisted optimistically are slogans more of normative expectations than being fulfilled realities, men are becoming more child-centred.

(Richman and Goldthorp, 1978: 159)

.... my guess is that if we had figures for the behaviour of the average father twenty years ago, it would look as though quite a lot of progress had been made, at least in breaking down some of the domestic demarcation lines.

(Frances Cairncross,
The Guardian: August 1981)

Parke and Sawin (1976) suggest that the impact of bottle feeding has facilitated father involvement, while Nash (1965) perceives this increased involvement of fathers in child-rearing to be a consequence of the shortening of the working week and the growth of automation. He comments:

Changes in the economic pattern, such as the five-day working week, have already reduced the father's necessary absence from home, so that he can spend more time with his children.

(Nash, 1965: 266)

However, this seems either an overly optimistic or overly naive explanation for likely father-child involvement as a number of studies have shown: fathers work the longest hours of their working lives when their children are young; certain groups of men are still working long hours (often middle class fathers); and time left over from the job is not necessarily translated into infant care (Moss, 1980; Cohen, 1977; Young and Willmott, 1973; Land, 1982). Whatever the underlying reasons for these alterations in maternal or paternal behaviour are felt to be, the important point is that the 'new' behaviour has to be explained, 'new' social 'facts' exist and need to be described. So analysts are forced to widen their brief.

Reviewers also remark that concomitant changes have occurred in attitudes and values toward parenthood and sex roles more generally (Levine, 1976; Rapaport et al, 1977; Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979). Attitudinal shifts are recorded concerning 'women's place' and motherhood in particular and they are attributed chiefly to the impact of the Women's Movement. It is argued that by exposing the myths of motherhood, the Women's Movement has as a result also brought men's roles critically to the fore, especially their family roles. In short, discontent with conventional motherhood has led to discontent with conventional fatherhood. The old formulations which idealised motherhood and 'assumed a Darwinian fitness' (Rapaport et al, 1977) of women's

'expressive' and home-centred roles and men's. 'instrumental' and work-centred roles are being challenged by the new values, where women now expect to be more than mothers, and 'many men are rejecting the idea of an all-out commitment to work' (Rapaport et al, 1977: 354). Value changes have especially been noted in the arena of the division of domestic labour and issues have been raised as to 'who does what?' both in housework and childcare. Patterns can no longer be assumed and Rapaport et al comment that there is a move toward a notion of 'equity' and toward 'shared' parenting rather than 'unitary parenting'. This they summarise as a 'domestic work-sharing morality' (1977: 355).

It is interesting that Rapaport et al also detect this new parental or sex-role 'morality' in the dictates of the 'baby' experts of this period. Unlike the earlier 1950s and 1960s childcare literature, where they found 'parenting equals mothering', material from the 1970s reveals a changed emphasis. Parenting is portrayed more as a joint enterprise and fathers are expected to be 'involved in the nitty-gritty of parenting chores'. They quote from Spock on this new orientation to fathers and show how in his opinion, fathers have responsibilities both in the sharing of childcare and household tasks. As far as Rapaport et al are concerned, the switch in the experts' position is just one example of a wider 'cultural redefinition' of the father's role and similar indications of change can be found in the media - in newspapers, magazine articles, radio and television discussions. A matching trend to address the father also prevails in the expert guidance literature from the United States and the Rapaports' findings are corroborated by DeFrain (1974). In DeFrain's thesis, certain assumptions are believed to underlie the increased

interest in fathers: that childrearing is too burdensome for mothers alone; that childrearing has positive rewards too great for mothers alone to enjoy; and that children are the joint responsibility of parents. The second assumption could be interpreted as 'anti-mothers' or at least as posing a conflict between mothers and fathers. This is an important issue to consider, because as yet, it has not been made clear in whose interest increased involvement of fathers and increased research interest in fathers might be. Most reviewers implicitly suggest that more childrearing by fathers must be better for fathers, mothers and babies or children and that more research on fathers must be good. However, things may not be that simple: fathers could erode mothers' confidence and autonomy in child-rearing and women could find themselves further oppressed and enfeebled. Too much research on fathers could discredit and devalue mothers' experiences. I do not intend to adopt a firm position here but only to tease out some of the potential dangers in assuming that all changes are good and are for the equal good of all participants.¹¹ Many reviewers seem to err in this optimistic direction.

There have been a number of other structural changes which have been associated with the expansion of interest in fathers. Many of these changes are also connected with the slippage of the idealised model of the conventional nuclear conjugal family. In particular, the increasing numbers of lone parent, step parent, remarried and unmarried families have attracted research attention. They have been poorly served by the conventional research paradigms and models: lone fathers, for example, often do not easily fit into economic-provider roles alone. Rising male unemployment has also severed the obvious connection

between fatherhood and provision, although this is a complex issue with many unemployed men still retaining 'the right to provide' for their families, (McKee, 1983; McKee and Bell, 1985; McKee 1985).

Such variant family patterns have then, of necessity, precipitated variant research approaches, not least those that allow for an incorporation of men's fathering behaviour. Innovative and diverse life-styles have produced innovative and diverse 'ways of seeing'.

As well as changes in the structure of families there have been notable changes in institutional practice toward fathers in recent years, especially in hospital practice. Hospital staff now typically encourage fathers to attend childbirth, both in Britain and in the United States. The direction of social change is not easy to ascertain here: did fathers encourage hospitals to admit them, or did hospitals encourage fathers to attend? There is not space to attempt to answer this question, nor to properly identify the pressures effecting the change. However, Rapaport et al (1977) do suggest that as the psychological meaning of birth became recognised for mothers, fathers were drawn in. Regardless of the exact explanation for the widespread attendance of fathers at birth, the consequences are undeniable and have to be taken seriously. Birth-attending fathers are, in the slightly cryptical words of Levine (1976), 'a new pool of subjects' whose experiences can be investigated. Or, put differently, as fathers intrude into the psycho-social reality of childbirth, ethnographers cannot ignore their presence, nor can those conducting surveys of the woman's experience of birth.

Fathers have become involved not just in attending the birth itself

but sometimes too in formal preparation for the birth in parent-craft classes organised by medical or voluntary personnel. They also get caught up in research designs in exactly the same way.

Some employment procedures have altered regarding fathers and this may have an impact on the sort of research problems identified.

Although the extent of these changes and the nature and quality of paternal leave arrangements has not yet been fully monitored, there is evidence that men's family responsibilities are getting some slight acknowledgement from their employers, (Bell, McKee and Priestly, 1983). Certainly calls have been made for paternity leave to be better implemented and there is now some pressure being exerted to improve the employment position of fathers, particularly around the times of birth, when their children are very young, or when they are sick (Moss and Fonda, 1980; Cousins and Coote, 1981; Cleary and Shepperdson, 1981; Bell, McKee and Priestley, 1983). While legislation is not in force in Britain, fathers' employment rights are protected in Sweden and this country is often held up as a model for Britain to emulate. For some, equal parenthood employment rights and responsibilities as protected by law have become the ideal.

There are pragmatic reasons, too, that are given for alerting social scientists to the study of fathers. Richards (1982) divides the reasons why research has expanded to include fathers into two: 'inside' and 'outside'. 'Inside' reasons or pressures are those that have come from within a research community, while 'outside' reasons or pressures are those that have been generated externally and not because of research developments themselves. In Richards' opinion, fatherhood

research has blossomed mainly in response to 'outside' or 'external' pressures. For example, psychologists have been forced to study fathers because more and more childcare workers are finding existing notions about mothers and babies irrelevant, outdated or outside their clinical experience. There is a mismatch between the social reality of their 'family' work and the concepts provided by psychologists. Fathers are now being studied to provide 'solutions' for these childcare workers. In this view, research is seen both as lagging behind and as responsive to changes in social relations. As an example of this trend Richard remarks: 'Even today popular books for fathers still out-number publications for the professional world'.

Changes in Social Scientific Theories

A number of reviewers have subscribed to a more 'active' rather than 'reactive' view of research and have associated the increased interest in fathers with research and theoretical developments themselves (Taconis, 1969; Oakley, 1974; Rapaport et al, 1977; Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1976 and 1979; Parke, 1979; Einzig, 1980). As well as researchers having the skills to describe social reality they are recognised as having the ability to discover new 'ways of seeing' and to deal with anomalies (Pleck, 1976). Both the attack on or demise of 'old' theories and the growth of 'new' ones have been cited as explanations for the expansion of fatherhood research. Critiques or modifications of Bowlby's 'maternal deprivation' thesis, for example, are said to have played a part in shifting both empirical and theoretical interest towards fathers and other care-givers. Parke(1979) suggests that two findings merited a 'critical turning point' where fathers could no longer

be ignored: firstly, the finding by Harlow (1958) 'that the feeding situation was not the critical context for early social development'; and, secondly, the finding by Schaffer and Emerson (1964) that infants 'attach' to 'noncaretaking socialising agents - including fathers'.

He argues thus:

The stage was set for the re-emergence of the father by the decline of secondary-drive theory ... by the mid-1960s theoretical shifts finally legitimised the active investigation of the father's role in early infant social and cognitive development.

(Parke, 1979: 533)

Indeed, in the same paper he goes on to isolate two further theoretical modifications or conceptualisations which effectively draw attention to fathers: the notion that parent-infant interactions are 'bi-directional'; and that interactions occur in a family context, where influences can be indirect as well as direct - fathers can influence mothers, can influence babies (Lamb, 1976; Parke, 1979).

Psychoanalytic theories of infant development, especially those of Freud, Bowlby and Winnicott, have been critically evaluated by feminists who have been especially damning of the concept of the 'naturalness' of maternity. According to Levine (1976) the search for new feminist theories to explain motherhood and how culture shapes female behaviour 'has inevitably begun to raise questions about the way culture shapes male behaviour, and about the way scientists have neglected father-child relationships' (Levine, 1976: 30).

The connection between feminist theory and an increase in research activity on fathers has also been made by Pleck (1979).

Feminist debates and exposes about the unequal distribution of household and childcare work between mothers and fathers have led to men's family roles being more closely examined. Levine quotes the late 1960s as heralding the onset of a feminist critique of traditional theories, while Pleck refers to the early 1970s.

Feminists have not just concentrated on revealing inadequate psychological theories of mothering and fathering but have also provided a fundamental reassessment of sociological theories of sex roles. The flaws of the 'structural-functionalist' position have been ardently expressed, especially the functionalist assumption that the allocation of social sex roles derives, of necessity, from biology (Bernard, 1973; Oakley, 1974). Feminist sociological theory has broken loose from conceptions which tie women to 'expressive', homemaker roles and men to 'instrumental' provider roles and can incorporate and describe the experiences of women workers and men as family members. Feminist theories, rather than searching for universal characteristics in the content of sex roles, are investigating ways in which these roles are taught, established and maintained; how each sex experiences the role allocated; and how existing role divisions may be amended (Oakley, 1974 and 1980; Rich, 1976; Dinnerstein, 1978; Chodorow, 1978; Barrett, 1980). These emergent theories have allowed for the separation of biological and social parenthood for both mothers and fathers and for men and women to be viewed in both public and private spheres. Workplaces are no longer regarded as male domains, any more than home is regarded as women's confine (Barker and Allen, 1976). Just as the Parsonian dichotomy of sex roles is seen as restricting the study of fathers, its discrediting is seen as promoting

the study of fathers (Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979; Parke, 1979).

As well as the 'advance' of fathers as a substantive topic through feminist theory, the extension of developmental theory to men has been associated with fatherhood research. Both Rapaport et al (1977) and Einzig (1980) forge direct links between the growth of theories concerning adult developmental stages and an accelerated interest in male parental roles. Throughout the life-cycle, individuals go through a number of developmental stages where unresolved conflicts are raised and reviewed from infancy.¹² Parenthood is an important development stage of adulthood for men as well as women and pregnancy and parenthood in this framework are construed as 'maturational' processes for men as well as women. Although a disproportionate amount of work has focussed on the woman's transition to parenthood (Rossi, 1968), the continued emphasis on the parent rather than the child has ultimately led to a consideration of fathers. Some direct attempts to include fathers have come about in this paradigm, particularly throughout the 1970s and some detailed descriptions now exist about the developmental process of 'becoming a father' (Jessner, 1970; Fein, 1974; Einzig, 1980).

Feminist theorists have largely concentrated on critically reviewing 'the sociology of sex roles' (Pleck, 1976); that is, how different adult social responsibilities are assigned to men and women. However, some interesting theoretical trends have also been observed in 'the psychology of sex roles' which may further account for the growth of research on men as fathers. Pleck defines the 'psychology of sex roles' as concerning 'the fostering of different personality traits in men and women'. It is his contention that a 'new' psychology of

sex roles has emerged in which many former assumptions about sex differences, about 'sex identity development' and about the relationship between social sex roles and psychological sex differences 'are challenged and largely discredited'. In the 'traditional' paradigm Pleck identifies a number of interrelated propositions: women and men are viewed as differing substantially on a wide range of personality traits, interests and aptitudes and this is attributed to biology; men and women become different through a process of 'sex identity development' and learn appropriate 'feminine' and 'masculine' behaviour; development of sex identity is hazardous, especially for males; and the psychological differences between men and women explain their adoption of different social roles.

The 'new paradigm' comprises of three bodies of research: that by Macoby and Jacklin (1974) and the nature of the psychological differences and similarities between men and women; that by Money and Ehrhardt (1972) on gender identity development; and that by Bem (1974) on psychological androgyny. Collectively, this work emphasises the similarities between men and women; suggests that gender identity is largely reliant on socialisation, is usually straightforward and occurs in the earliest phase of childhood; shows that men and women have the possibility of displaying 'feminine' and 'masculine' personality traits (androgynous); and concludes that psychological sex differences do not explain the allocation of social sex roles. The impact of the 'new' theory of sex roles is to raise new questions about men's and women's social roles, not least about their parental roles. In this way, 'fatherhood' becomes a topic worthy of review. As Pleck sees it, the 'new psychology of sex roles' leads one to ask if:

Psychology does not impose any limits on the extent to which men and women can develop both masculine and feminine traits and interests, does this mean that women and men can develop new social roles and relationships with each other ?

(Pleck, 1976: 194)

Other theories which highlight the variability of sex roles, such as those proposed by sociobiologists (Trivers, 1972) and 'cultural relativists' (Mead, 1962) have also been seen as influential in encouraging the social scientific study of fathers (Howells, 1970; Levine, 1976; Rapaport et al, 1977; Richards, 1982). Some sociobiologists have moved away from the position where all females are viewed as possessing innate 'motherliness' or as being 'primed' to nurture and show that, in the animal kingdom, a wide diversity of parental arrangements occurs (for a review of studies of paternal behaviour in animal species, see Rypma, 1976). Likewise, those adopting a cultural analysis emphasise that parental norms and values vary according to and across cultures. Variation in behaviour is explained by the cultural context and not by biological or psychological givens and there is just as much evidence of nurturant fathers as of nurturant mothers cross-culturally (Mead, 1962). The caretaking of infants by males in these perspectives is not anomalous but integral and explicable. Male and female parents command and are awarded equal attention. However, unlike feminist theories or the 'new psychology of sex roles' and the upsurge of interest in fathers, the 'cultural relativist' emphasis is not a product of the late 1960s or 1970s but has its origins in the late 1930s and early 1940s. If one were to accept the thesis that social scientific theories embody

the social values and reality of a given period (Fein, 1978; Pleck, 1979) - then there is a puzzle as to why 'cultural relativism' appeared at the same time as the 'structural functionalist' theory of social relations. The latter day emergence of feminist or 'new' sex role theory could be explicable within 'the theory fits the facts' epistemology - but 'cultural relativism' defies such an interpretation.

Changes in Research Methods

Research innovation may come about not just as a result of theoretical sophistication or advance but due to alterations in research methods themselves. Reviewers have typically paid less attention to how methodological shifts have affected the social scientific investigation of fathers but this is one fundamental area that should not be overlooked. New methods can generate new theories and open up new substantive areas. Just as sexism in sociology can be associated with the limitation of research on fathers, the elimination of sexism or 'academic machismo' in sociological methods as well as theories, may be associated with fathers' experiences being taken more seriously. 'Feminist' social scientists have worked hardest to find ways of making gender a central issue in their disciplines (Bernard, 1973; Morgan, 1981), and to establish 'sex' as a significant sociological dimension or category (Oakley, 1974; Barker and Allen, 1976; Matthieu, 1979). By their efforts, women have increasingly come to be studied as 'social collectivities' in their own right and to constitute a sociological category that has more than a 'biological or reproductive' relevance. In bringing women into sociology and making it a science of female and

male society, earlier versions of 'male society' are implicitly criticised and in need of review. The finding of flaws in social scientific methodology for female experience suggests that all is not well in the social scientific methodology for male experience. Consequently, there is a renewed questioning about how social science has categorised male experience and its adequacy. Mathieu's (1979) notion that only the feminine category reverts to 'biology' has its corollary: that the masculine category reverts only to the 'social'. Her call for both sexes to be given a symmetrical level of analysis raises the kind of methodology that could and can bring men's fathering experiences to the fore. In short, feminist critics have made 'gender' a methodological issue which applies to both women and men, to mothers and fathers.

The spread of methods which yield 'soft' data or rely on a 'communal' approach may also be linked with the new trend to include fathers in research designs (Bernard, 1973). These methods have been more associated with women researchers (Carlson, 1972) and with 'naturalistic observation, sensitivity to qualitative patterning, and greater personal participation by the investigator' (Bernard, 1973: 785). They have also tended to concentrate on actors' subjective meanings and perceptions of social reality. In family research, such methods lend themselves to an interest in how family members construct, negotiate, define and sustain their family relationships and realities. As such, the mutuality of family life is underscored and fathers as well as mothers feature as prominent actors. A fuller account of the impact of this methodology and research tradition will be produced in Chapter 4.

There may be some evidence that the methodological preference for sociologists to 'study down' is being challenged and that 'powerful' societal groups are increasingly being scrutinised. For example, Bell and Newby (1976) have tried to account for the power of husbands over wives as involving the 'power of the hand' and the 'power of the purse'. Any tendency for powerful family members to become part of the structure of enquiry will of necessity include a review of fathers' behaviours and beliefs.

Pleck (1979) records that the development of certain methodological techniques as well as methodological traditions may influence the tenor or research theory. Such techniques may serve to contradict earlier data, to discredit earlier theories and ultimately lead to a theoretical transition. For example, he sees the 'traditional' perspective on men's family work as being revised and critically affected by the growth of 'time budget studies'. Time-budget methods provide an inventory of male and female domestic and parental activity and show up the inequity in the distribution of these tasks by sex. In his view, this contributes to a new research value perspective which sees women as 'exploited' by men. As he sees it, the findings:

from the time budget research of the 1960s and early 1970s dramatically undermine the traditional perspective on men's family roles ... new data, collected with a newly rediscovered methodology, provided a research basis for the exploitation perspective on men's family roles.

(Pleck, 1979: 485; 484)

While the explanations for the proliferation of studies on fathers are diffuse, it is interesting that many are united by one common factor - they refer to women. Paradoxically, many studies of fathers have been generated: because of actual changes in the position of women or mothers; because of 'myth busting' about women's nature and women's place, as in the demystification of motherhood; because of innovatory theories about women and maternity; because of the criticism women themselves, especially feminists, have levelled against sexist theories, methods and practices; and because women have typically preferred research methods in which women and men are treated as people, rather than variables.

It is possible to conclude that, in the widest possible sense, women have been instrumental in bringing social scientific attention to fathers, have raised the issue of gender for both mothers and fathers and have made the distinction between biological and social parenthood plausible. For example, the present investigation of fathers grew out of a larger study of women's experiences of motherhood (see Chapter 4). Fathers were drawn in throughout that study of mothers because they were part of the mother's social reality and necessarily formed part of the analysis of the social context of motherhood. The derivative nature of studies of fathers and men is also evidenced in recent texts on masculinity, where the questions about gender-typing, gender roles were originally asked about women (Ingham, 1985; Ford, 1985). More taken-for-granted assumptions have been challenged regarding women's lives and women's place. Slowly questions about men have followed suit and man's nature' has been taken as problematic. It is doubtful if attention would have been drawn to men and to father-

hood without such fundamental questions being asked about womanhood/motherhood. Again, the point made by Bell and Newby (1976) about studying the powerful is valid here: people in powerful positions seldom turn attention upon themselves or expose their mastery. Equally, the limited data that exists on fathers shows mothers wanting greater involvement from their menfolk in domestic chores and child-care (Graham and McKee, 1980) and more women than men wanting fathers to attend childbirth (Oakley, 1979; McKee, 1980). It could be argued therefore that women have pushed their menfold forward for scrutiny. In many such cases it is also women researchers who are the scrutineers (Chesler, 1978; Brown, 1982; O'Brien, 1984; Ingham, 1985; Ford, 1985).

The varying accounts of why fatherhood has become a popular substantive and theoretical issue become even more meaningful against an examination of how research on fathers has progressed. The following section will be devoted to an overview of the types and styles of work that reflect on fathers in social science. Only those studies with a direct, rather than an oblique, reference to fathers will be considered, with the emphasis on a selection of material from psychology and sociology. The present work will consequently and finally be placed into context.

3.3 Fatherhood Research: Major Styles and Characteristics

Much of the research on fathers to date can be heuristically classified into 'adult'/'parent' and 'child centred'.¹³ Studies which are 'child centred' are primarily concerned with fathering behaviour insofar as it affects the child. There is an emphasis on fathers' influences in regard to the total care environment of the child. Such studies may use adult or parental informants/subjects but the evidence gained has its essential relevance in relation to the child's development, growth and experience. Mothers' and fathers' parental actions are frequently compared in this framework but with the child as a reference point. Their behaviours are evaluated from the child's perspective rather than from their own. 'Parent centred' studies on the other hand, are chiefly concerned with how the mother or father views, experiences and enacts parental roles. The focus is on how parenthood affects men, the marital relationship and the 'family' more generally. The issues explored concern the content of the adult sex role - 'father'. When mothers' and fathers' parenting is compared, it is in relation to themselves: which parental conditions are more favourable for adults? What unifies the 'parent centred' approach is that the parent's perspective is paramount and the parent's testimony is valued for its own sake. Each of these dominant styles of fatherhood research will be reviewed here and the major conclusions from each tradition summarised. However, it should be noted at the outset that an equivalent amount of information has not been forthcoming from the two bodies of literature. 'Child centred' studies on fathers have been far more numerous and extensive in range. This imbalance in emphasis has also been noted by Taconis (1969) and Rapoport et al (1977), both of whom observe:

The significance to the father himself of his own role ... has received little attention.

(Taconis, 1969: 88)

Most of the available research on fathering focusses on paternal behaviour in terms of its effects on children, rather than its possible meaning in the marital relationship or to fathers themselves.

(Rapoport et al, 1977: 239)

'Child Centred' Studies: (1) Children's Perceptions of Fathers

Until recently, interest in the father's role beyond infancy has always been greater than interest in the father-infant relationship (Erikson, 1963). Consequently, a body of literature exists in which attempts have been made to assess fatherhood from the older child's perspective. The nature and quality of father influences on the child's development are measured by approaching children directly and asking them to differentiate their parents' behaviours.¹⁴

Children may be asked to indicate which parent they prefer; which parental style is more influential; with which parent they most identify; and what functions each parent serves (Gardner, 1947; Ammons and Ammons, 1949; Sears, Maccoby and Levin, 1957; Kagan, 1956; Mussen and Distler, 1960; Eron et al, 1961; Schvaneveldt et al, 1970).

Many of the conclusions of these studies are supportive of a traditional imagery of the male parent, the father being perceived in a control function or as a material provider. Mothers figure as more understanding (Gardner, 1947; Kagan, 1956); as friendlier; as less 'bossy'; and less dominant. The child's age and sex have been found to affect the

child's parental preference and experience. For example, Gardner (1947) noted that girl children reported spending more recreational time with their fathers, while Ammons and Ammons (1949) found that three and four year old boys preferred their father and five year old boys preferred their mother. Three year old girls showed a slight preference for their fathers.

By emphasising the differences between parents as perceived by their children, these studies imply not just that adult sex roles are distinctive per se but that this distinctiveness is 'felt' by children. There is an assumption that parental preference is linked with critical aspects of the child's behaviour and development; the 'preferred' parent especially affecting the child in terms of modelling and identification. One study by Eron et al (1961), for example, associated fathers with the provision of models of aggression in children. The different qualities in parents' behaviour are connected with the emergence of different qualities in children. The model of socialisation advanced by these studies is one in which children are construed as passive, 'blank-sheet' recipients of parental influences; in which parental influences are seen as more salient than external effects and as divorced from a wider familial or social context; in which children are tied to a 'two parent', conjugal unit; and in which parental effects are perceived both as moving downwards towards children and in a direct fashion. Many of these assumptions about how children learn and develop have since been questioned and this model of socialisation deemed simplistic (Lewis, 1982). Furthermore, these types of studies fail to discriminate between different types of fathers and their differential effects. Some fathers may be more like mothers than like each other. It might be fruitful for this

work to incorporate a more interactive and developmental approach to child socialisation and to focus on children's perceptions of the constituents of good 'fathering'. The study by Schaneveldt et al (1970) moves some way in this direction and produced less stereotypical results. 'Good' fathers from this investigation were described as affectionate, involved, playful and as singing and reading stories to children. 'Bad' fathers were uninvolved with the children, and ignored them or their mother. They were disciplinarian and used physical punishment. 'Good' fathers were associated with material provision. This provides a more complex picture than a mere ranking of parents or their qualities.

'Child Centred' Studies: (2)

Paternal Absence and Faulty Father-Child Relationships

A substantial body of work, in which the dimension of fatherhood has retained a prominence, is represented by a series of studies of families where the father is absent. The earlier allegation that the work on paternal absence restricted the development of direct studies of fatherhood in no way demeans its epistemological significance. The methodology of paternal absence studies as stated above, is usually to compare families where children have access to a father to those where no regular father-figure exists. Alternatively, there are those studies where father absence is not the crucial variable but poor or faulty father-child relationships are identified. In both paternal absence research designs and in those where ineffectual fathers are reported, the lack or poor quality of fathering is associated with a variety of behaviours or characteristics in children.

There is an inference that fathers by their presence or absence and by their effectiveness influence child development in substantial ways, particularly in the areas of: personality (Sears, Pintler and Sears, 1946); cognitive and intellectual development (Deutsch and Brown, 1964; Barclay and Cusumano, 1967); sex-role identification (Bitler, 1968 and 1974); sexual maturity (Winch, 1950); sociability (Stolz, 1954); and conscience and morality (Andry, 1960a and 1960b; Hoffman, 1971). Differences are noted in these areas for children reared in father-absent and father-present families and the differences are attributed to 'the unavailability of the father as a socialisation influence or identification figure' (Pedersen, 1976). Father absence is described as especially damaging in the early years of the child's life and for boys in particular at this time. Boys' sex-role development is hampered and father absence has been associated with homosexuality (see Nash (1965) for a review). There is a general assumption that sex-role identification in boys is directly affected by fathers, is affected from an early age and at a critical developmental period, and is fragile and hazardous. Girls are believed to be less handicapped by 'bad' or non-existent fathering when they are young but associations have been found between father separation and women's later alcoholism, drug addiction, frequency of suicide attempts and lesbianism (see Bigner (1979) for an overview).

The literature within the father-absent paradigm is too extensive to be competently reviewed here. However, important reviews include those by Nash (1965), Biller (1971; 1974), Hetherington and Deur (1971), Herzog and Sudia (1973) and Pedersen (1976). Some reviewers have been more critical about the substantive contributions of the paternal

absence findings than others. Most of the criticisms that have been levelled concern the simplistic causal model inherent in many of the conclusions from father-absent studies. Critics question whether the negative outcomes such as delinquency, criminality, or social immaturity can be blamed on father-absence alone. McCord et al (1962), for example, suggest that the 'general instability' of a broken home may be more influential than father absence per se. Pedersen (1976) and Bigner (1979) similarly point to the detrimental and complicating effects of environmental factors such as poverty and marital instability on child developmental outcomes, while Lamb and Lamb (1976) argue that it is impossible to decide whether children are more handicapped by the withdrawal of the father's income or by withdrawal of his direct interaction.

A number of methodological flaws in father-absent research have also been commented upon. Herzog and Sudia (1973) criticise the tendency to overgeneralise from research findings on father absence drawn from samples of father-absent and father-present families which themselves have been poorly matched. Bigner (1979) regrets the over-emphasis on boys. Pedersen (1976) is especially damning about the applicability of a 'deficit-oriented approach' in generating direct information about father influences. In his view father-absent and father-present families are not just differentiated in terms of the father-figure but also in terms of maternal input and altered mother-child interactions. In his opinion this confounds and thwarts any direct or meaningful comparisons.

Pedersen (1976) also faults paternal absence research for its inability to view fathers' influences as indirect as well as direct,

and as flowing from child to parent as well as from parent to child. He says:

In the reality of family functioning, of course, both direct and mediated father influences are bi-directional or multidirectional.

(Pedersen, 1976: 461)

The complex ways in which father-absence influences the child directly, influences the mother, and influences the mother-infant relationship are difficult to untangle and discriminate. Pedersen further suggests that such direct and mediated effects may have a different salience at different developmental stages of the child. Indeed, a major part of his critique concerns the fact that father-absence research cannot be incorporated into a developmental framework. He goes so far as to say that, not least for this reason, the father-absence research mode has 'outlived its usefulness'. It is his preference that research should instead be directed to 'the study and conceptualisation of the more specific components of experience in the father-child and husband-wife relationships within the nuclear family' (Pedersen, 1976: 463).

'Child Centred' Studies: (3) Father-Child Interaction Studies

Studies grouped under this heading are chronologically the most recent in this section with a 'child-centred' emphasis and constitute part of the 'expansion' of fatherhood research documented and discussed earlier. Most have been conducted in the last decade and have as their aetiology many of the factors identified earlier in the chapter. So

far, direct studies of father-child interaction have largely concerned fathers and newborns and fathers of infants or toddlers. The work on fathers and newborns focuses primarily on the nature of father-newborn 'attachment' and replicates much of the work on mother-infant 'attachment' in its methodology and ambition. The aim is to explore whether fathers are responsive to newborn infants in the same way as mothers and whether this father-newborn interaction is predictive of later behaviour. Fathers and newborns are typically observed for given periods of time and the fathers' 'exploratory' behaviour, vocalisation, responsiveness to infant cues, ways of feeding and handling the infant (touching and holding) are monitored (Parke, O'Leary and West, 1972; Greenberg and Morris, 1974; Parke and Sawin, 1975; Parke and O'Leary, 1976). The findings of these studies suggest that fathers are just as involved as mothers; that fathers' and mothers' interactions with newborns are of a similar kind and quality; and that fathers as well as mothers establish an early 'bond' with their infants. Indeed, this 'bond' has been described as 'engrossment' and likened to an innate characteristic in men, similar to maternal instinct, which is 'released' when a father greets his newborn (Greenberg and Morris, 1974).

Although the emphasis was originally on how infant behaviour elicited responses in fathers, some of these research investigations have also considered the impact of the fathers' vocalisations on the infant's behaviour, finding that father-infant interaction is 'bi-directional' or 'reciprocal' (Parke and Sawin, 1977). There has been a further interest in whether the mother's presence affects the father's interactions and the general conclusion is that in the newborn

period the father is an equally active interactor in dyadic and triadic contexts and in triadic settings is even more likely to engage in holding and looking at the baby (Parke, et al 1972; Parke and Sawin, 1975; Parke and O'Leary, 1976).

Most of the behaviours observed are collectively described as 'nurturant' and the findings rate mothers and fathers as being equally 'nurturant'. The 'nurturant' activities are distinguished from those classed as 'caretaking': 'caretaking' activities related specifically to the feeding context and include tasks such as wiping the baby's face. On caretaking alone, mothers display more participation and this has led one group of researchers to conclude that 'role allocation begins in the earliest days of life' (Parke, 1979). The father's behaviour with newborns has also been analysed in terms of whether birth attendance is influential (Greenberg and Morris, 1974). The findings here are preliminary and mixed. By their subjective accounts fathers perceive birth attendance to be influential (Greenberg and Morris, 1974), yet elsewhere even those fathers who did not attend childbirth were found to be lively interactors with their babies (Parke and O'Leary 1976).

The reasons these studies have been classified as 'child centred' even though the predominant interest seems to be on infants as elicitors of parental response is because of the underlying assumption that parents matter because they are infant socialisers and caregivers. The effect of the child on the father is mainly of import because of how the 'attachment' to the father influences the total care environment of the child. The child as a stimulus to the father is not monitored for its own sake nor for how it affects the quality of the father's experience. Lewis (1982) in a very comprehensive review of these studies, shows that their commonality lies not just in their

adherence to a 'child centred' perspective, but also in their adherence to and historical growth from 'attachment' theory itself. He finds this strangely ironic since 'attachment' theory has its origins in the work of Freud and Bowlby who whole-heartedly accept and support the primacy of 'the symbiotic relationship between mother and child' (Lewis, 1982). For Lewis it is a puzzle that father-infant research should emerge unproblematically from this historical background and tradition and that many of the traditional assumptions about infant development and the characteristics of caregiving should remain unchallenged. He is critical of this literal application of attachment theory to fathers because it fails to take account of the cultural factors governing parent-child and husband-wife relations and relies on some biological thesis about the 'innateness' of parenting which is implicit and unsubstantiated. He also concludes that acceptance of an innate or biological predisposition to 'parenting' does not explain the 'facts': for example, that parents respond differently according to the sex and ordinal position of the infant in the family (Parke and O'Leary 1976). These 'facts' in his view imply that the innate mechanism for 'bonding' works neither universally nor uniformly for mothers and fathers. Parke(1979) on the other hand, believes that father-newborn interaction studies have amended and moved beyond classical attachment theory. In particular, he suggests that the changed emphasis is twofold: firstly, classical attachment theory 'largely ignored' the first six months, whereas now the very earliest parent-child interactions are observed and recorded; secondly, the old 'attachment' paradigm did not construe parent-infant effects as mutual at this very early period, whereas now this mutual early responsiveness is acknowledged.

Parke takes a more optimistic view of the 'advance' made by father-newborn interaction studies than does Lewis. He also contends that the incorporation of a developmental perspective into father-infant research has yielded positive results, allowing the 'family' to be viewed as an 'interactive network'.

Beyond the newborn period, the studies of fathers' interactions with their infants reveal similar preoccupations. The nature and extent of father-infant 'attachment' is of focal concern, as is the question of whether infants display more 'attachment' to mothers or fathers. One popular and recurrent research design used to test this thesis of 'preferential attachment' is known as the 'strange situation' experiment, and is usually conducted in laboratory conditions (see Lewis, 1982). Infants, parents and strangers are typically left with each other in various combinations: infant-stranger, infant-father-stranger: infant-mother-stranger. The child's reactions to the stranger and to parental absence or presence is monitored. The interest is in which parental absence provokes most distress or provides most comfort and at what age distress is most visible in the infant (Kotelchuck, 1972; Cohen and Campos, 1974). As well as signs of anxiety or distress, observers have also been interested to find out when infants discriminate between social agents and when they develop preferences (Yogman et al, 1977). The findings from this approach have not been unanimous, especially in detailing whether infants prefer mothers or fathers - some investigators finding a symmetry of preference for mothers and fathers (Kotelchuck, 1972) - and others finding mothers to be more favoured than fathers (Cohen and Campos, 1974). The two consistent - although unsurprising -

findings here are that infants prefer parents to strangers and that fathers as well as mothers are salient figures in the infant's social world (Kotelchuck, 1972; Spelke et al, 1973). This preference for parents over strangers is even more exaggerated in stressful and unfamiliar settings (Cohen and Campos, 1974). Some attempts have been made to assess the effects of paternal involvement in caretaking on the infant's attachment behaviour and preferences (Spelke et al, 1973). Most separation distress has been recorded in families where paternal involvement is lowest, suggesting that infants who have caretaking fathers can handle separation more competently (Kotelchuck, 1972). However, even here the findings are controversial and evidence has been provided to show that the level of parental involvement does not affect the amount of separation protest per se, but rather affects the age at which separation protest is initiated (Spelke et al, 1973).

A number of reviewers have faulted these laboratory studies of father-infant interaction and have been especially dissatisfied with the research methods themselves (Parke, 1979; Lewis, 1982). Lewis (1982) finds the nature of these experiments 'bizarre' and feels they fail to reproduce a realistic social situation (for example, the adults are instructed not to elicit or initiate any interaction with the infant). Standardisation of settings is impossible, with the child's behaviour being vulnerable to the personality/style of the stranger, to the toys presented, to the number of separation episodes and to the number of visits to the laboratory. Parke (1979) holds a similar view and is particularly dismayed by the neglect of 'the type of activity available in the laboratory setting' and of the behaviour of the 'social agent'. The fact that mothers and fathers typically engage in a dissimilar amount of caretaking will, in his opinion,

influence the infant's parental selection, as will the laboratory behaviour of mothers, fathers and strangers. Both Lewis and Parke suggest that the limitations of these studies are revealed in the inconclusiveness of their results. To overcome the drawbacks of the laboratory approach to father-infant interaction and to build on some new emphases in developmental psychology, researchers are now conducting their investigations in the more naturalist setting of the home. Again, observational methods of parent-child interaction are the dominant mode, although supplementary self-report scales and interviews are sometimes used. The researchers' interests have continued the earlier theme of discriminating between mothers' and fathers' contributions to infant development. They are set on exploring which parent is the more salient, which is more influential for which particular aspect of development (cognitive, sociability), and how parent-infant interaction is affected by characteristics of the child - such as age, sex or ordinal position - or by characteristics of the parent - such as high caretaking involvement, birth attendance, preparation for fatherhood or the tenor of the marital relationship. Questions are raised about how these interaction patterns affect later development and how they concur with wider male and female social sex roles. The findings from home investigations concentrate on both the quality and the quantity of parent-infant interactions and on identifying parental styles of interaction (Parke, 1979). Two new 'facts' from developmental psychology have been assimilated into this orientation: firstly, the finding that infants affect caregivers (Lewis and Rosenblum, 1974); and secondly, that children experience indirect or 'mediated' parental influences as well as direct (Parke, 1979).

The earlier commitment to discovering the extent of infants' 'attachments' to fathers is carried through in this framework, with home replacing the laboratory setting but with similar techniques of separation and 'stranger effects' being employed and monitored (Lamb, 1977; Clarke-Stewart, 1978). Once more, the findings are equivocal but with the significance of the fathers as a social agent being forcibly underscored.

Most studies from this perspective show mothers and fathers to vary markedly in the amount of interaction they engage in with their infants - fathers spending relatively little time in direct interaction when compared with mothers (Richards, et al 1977; Rendina and Dickerscheid, 1976). Estimates vary from the very minimal record of Rebelsky and Hanks (1971) - who found that fathers verbalised to their infants (aged two weeks to three months) 2.7 times per day for an average of 37.7 seconds - to the more generous report of Pedersen and Robson (1969), who found that fathers were available for twenty-six hours a week during the baby's waking period (babies aged nine months and estimates based on maternal report). Differences are recorded too concerning the types of activities performed - mothers being typically associated with caretaking and fathers with social involvement or recreation (Rendina and Dickerscheid, 1976; Lamb, 1977). This differentiation has been shown to be subject to development shifts across the first three months of infancy and in one study, while fathers stimulated newborns more through play than mothers, at three months mothers engaged slightly more in stimulatory play than fathers. Similarly mothers engaged more in routine caretaking activities in the earlier period, while fathers increased their caretaking behaviour by three months (Parke and Sawin, 1977). The interpretation placed

on these findings by the authors is that parental interaction with small infants already embraces distinctive social sex-roles, although parents do 'provide a model for each other's learning' (Parke, 1979).

The sex-role differentiation between parental interaction styles has been further reinforced by a series of findings on the quality and type of play initiated by mothers and fathers with children at different ages. Fathers have been identified with more 'rough and tumble', 'roughhouse play', with shorter, more intense play episodes, with more physical or tactile stimulation and with more arousing or unusual play activities (Yogman et al, 1977; Lamb, 1977; Clarke-Stewart, 1978). Mothers, however are said to play in more 'intellectual' ways, involving toys and reading, and to engage in more verbal and repetitive activities. Such findings are used to draw conclusions that mothers and fathers both make unique contributions to the child's development; that they are not interchangeable; and that the different interactional styles of mothers and fathers correspond with wider male and female social sex-roles.

Although there is disagreement about when parental interaction styles become distinguished, there is some consensus about the aspects of development most likely to be affected by the stylistic differences in mothers' and fathers' interactions. Researchers have shown a particular interest in the interplay between parental interaction styles and infant sex-role and cognitive development. Even with very young infants, fathers' interactions have been found to alter according to the sex of the infant. Summarising the findings to date (for a

fuller account see Parke, 1979) it seems that parents interact more with the same-sex infant (Parke and Sawin, 1977); that fathers may show more tolerance for 'difficult' male infants (Rebelsky and Hanks, 1971); that sex-typing of infants begins early (Lynn, 1974); that fathers 'play a more intrusive and paramount role in the sex-typing process' than mothers (Parke, 1979: 568); and that fathers press sons more than daughters (and at an earlier age) toward 'appropriate' sex role adoption (Lansky, 1967). With regard to cognitive development, the findings here are less well-documented, stemming originally from studies of older children and from paternal absence research designs. They are also more complex, suggesting that same-sex interactions do not work in any straightforward way. For example, one study found mothers' play and physical contact to be influential in boys' cognitive development (Clarke-Stewart, 1978). Despite the paucity of hard evidence on the differential effects of mothers and fathers on cognitive development, Lewis (1982) notes that many writers create 'a general feeling that fathers' and mothers' interactional styles harness different aspects of the infant's intellectual growth'.

Just as Lewis (1982) has subjected the 'newborn' and laboratory studies of father-child interaction to rigorous scrutiny, conclusions from naturalistic settings can be critically reviewed. Once again, Lewis suggests that these studies display weaknesses in both their underlying assumptions, theoretical allegiances and methods. They are too closely and uncritically tied to theories which purport early developmental experiences to be more important than later ones and mothers to be more important than fathers. They are overly reliant on observational methods, which are by themselves flawed or inadequate.

They also fail to take account of the cultural context in which parenting occurs. There is an adherence to an outmoded concept that parents 'induce development into their infants' and not enough stress is put on the infant's competence. Too little attention is paid to questions about why parents develop different interactional styles and why they develop particular styles and there is a tendency to revert to biological explanations that parents are 'programmed' to interact in given/fixed ways. By reverting to an unspoken biological explanation for the diversification of interactional styles, and by concentrating chiefly on behaviour, researchers have tended to confound or miss the complex meanings individuals bring to each family situation. This has resulted in a failure to discriminate between fathers themselves or to reveal similarities between mothers and fathers (Pedersen et al, 1979). It has led to researchers overlooking the value of actors' own perceptions and values (Lewis, 1982).

Accepting Lewis' dissatisfaction with these father-infant interaction studies, they also suffer in general from over-concentration on fathers' 'mothering' behaviour.¹⁵ There is disproportionate emphasis on men's participation in direct nurturance as opposed to other aspects of the father's role (see also Chapters 4, 8 and 9 here): it is as if men's other activities as fathers are unimportant and unrelated. The impact of men's jobs on fathers' interactions, for example, is infrequently considered. Researchers of father-infant interaction, in demonstrating that fathers have no biological constraints on their role as infant socialisers, have neglected the more sociological or cultural constraints that may be operative. Additionally, the tendency is for studies conducted in laboratory settings to fail to address the

social context in which behaviour arises and to be ahistorical. For example, in moving away from the image of father as provider, towards father as nurturer, there is little discussion of the relationship between these cultural models. Richards (1982) makes a similar point about the common and recent research habit of treating fathers as if they were mothers.

The drive to show that fathers can nurture competently has had another unfortunate side-effect and some of the studies of father-infant interaction resound with an 'anti-mother' ring. It is as if mothers have grabbed all the 'kudos' for themselves and at last fathers are bursting the maternal mystique, laying bare maternal duplicity. Some of the studies - in their tone or in their excitement at 'discovering' father's influences - by implication diminish the role of mothers. In discussing the symmetry in 'competence' levels of mothers and fathers Parke (1979), for example, confounds men's and women's potential to respond to infant cues and their 'experience' at responding to infant cues: he treats competence as the former and underestimates the value of the latter. His deduction, that fathers are as 'competent' at nurturance as mothers, diminishes the mothers' greater and more frequent performance of 'nurturance'.

The model of the 'family' employed in many of the father-interaction studies can also be criticised. Although the 'over-idealised model of the conventional nuclear conjugal family' has been shown to be no longer the mode statistically, this has not percolated through to these studies. Infant development is still construed as occurring in a two-parent, two-gender nuclear family - the other 'family' variations are given a low priority for study and the application of a 'social systems

approach' has only proceeded with regard to conventional triadic relations of mother-father-infant. Wider kin and other caretakers have been consistently excluded from examination.

Lastly, despite the acknowledgement that infants trigger responses in parents, these studies have primarily maintained a child centred emphasis. This is rarely made explicit or justified yet it seems to be a handicap if a genuine 'reciprocal' model of social relations is to be developed. By building in a better appreciation of how infants modify parents' or adults' behaviours these studies could have moved nearer to an interactive and family systems view of family relations. The cultural conditions affecting parental behaviours could also be better demonstrated in this way.

'Parent Centred' Studies: (1) Theoretical Accounts of What is a Father

Earlier, certain theories of fatherhood were alleged to have restricted the empirical study of fathers or, alternatively, to have contributed to its expansion. Some of these theories can be labelled 'parent centred' insofar as their main preoccupation is with the delineation of fatherhood as an adult sex role. In these theories the emphasis is more on the implications of fatherhood for the man himself, for the family and for the social system more generally, and less on the effects of fatherhood on the child's development.

The three theories most suitably placed here include: those of the 'structural-functionalist' school; those proposed by cultural relativists'; and those of 'developmentalists'. We have already seen that Parsons and Bales (1956) are key exponents of the 'structural-functionalist' position on fathers, placing fathers firmly in the

occupational role and linking father with 'instrumental' and external family functions. We have also seen that this version of role differentiation has come under serious attack, particularly from feminists - being found to be primarily flawed for its inherent acceptance of a biological as well as social division of sex roles, for its failure to account for the experiences and functions of large numbers of working women, and for its 'androcentrism' (Oakley, 1974).

The work of Margaret Mead (1962), an example of the 'cultural relativists' has also been alluded to above. Here, the theory of fatherhood is more ambiguous and has been less systematically scrutinised. While, on the one hand, Mead underscores the immense variability of human sex roles and their cultural specificity, on the other she notes that fatherhood is endowed with certain universal characteristics, the common factor being the provision of food for women and children by men (this she calls 'nurturance'). It is this male nurturance that distinguishes humans from the animal world. She comments:

When we survey all known human societies, we find everywhere some form of the family, some set of permanent arrangements by which males assist females in caring for children when they are young ... It's distinctiveness lies in the nurturing behaviour of the male, who among human beings everywhere helps provide food for women and children.

(1962: 181)

In Mead's analysis, the tendency for human males to provide nurture for wives and children is an evolutionary 'invention' which may or

may not have a link with physical paternity. She speculates that the creation of the role of 'father' among humans could be the male's reward which he offers the female if she is constant to him in her sexual favours. Whatever the complexion or form that the father's sex role otherwise takes, the constant factor is his 'fending' or provision role. Men learn this fatherhood role and only in rare circumstances (such as monasteries) do men evade it: '... every human society rests firmly on the learned nurturing behaviour of men'; '...men have to learn to want to provide for others' (Mead, 1962: 182, 184). The fact that fatherhood has a 'social' origin makes it easy to break up biological and social parenthood. Although Mead does note a general tendency to provide for the woman who is the sexual partner, many exceptions exist and the link between male provision and provision for men's own biological offspring is often tenuous. In Mead's account, mothers are differentiated from fathers in that mothers and children form not just a social but a biological unit and while it is possible to divide up biological and social motherhood, this is less usual or easy. The primary unit is not biologically one of fathers and children, this connection has to be learned socially, therefore it is fragile and can disappear easily. Women, however, Mead suggests: 'may be said to be mothers unless they are taught to deny their childbearing qualities' (Mead, 1962: 184).

The Meadian theory of fatherhood has not been very rigorously tackled nor empirically tried although its implications are fascinating. The first issue it raises concerns the contemporary preoccupation with men's 'nurturance', meaning men's direct care-taking of infants. Mead's definition of 'nurturance' as provision of food lends another

meaning and suggests that a full appreciation of the social role of fathers must include an analysis of the 'provider' role. If this is the great constant that Mead claims it is, evidence of social change in men's family role may be more easily detected through changes in male provision behaviour than in changes in male care-taking behaviour. Such a conclusion could fundamentally affect the kinds of questions researchers ask fathers and direct more attention to feelings about work and provision rather than feelings about family involvement. Mead's model could also have an interesting relevance in social contexts where men are denied or refused the 'provision' role - where wives are providing for themselves and for their children. This line of analysis could also result in men's 'fatherhood' role as providers being shown to be a fiction. The 'cultural relativist' position on fathers remains as yet undeveloped and is ripe for further elaboration. There is not scope to further expand or do justice to its possibilities here.

The 'developmental' theory of fatherhood is distinguished by a central concept that parenthood is a developmental process for adults. Like other life-cycle developmental stages, theorists here see parenthood as reviving and raising unresolved conflicts of infancy and early childhood (Duvall and Hill, 1948; Benedek, 1959 and Erikson, 1963). The reworking of such issues is a key maturational task and leads to entry into a new stage of development. Parenthood itself presents different life-cycle changes; for example, becoming a parent and becoming a grandparent involve specific transitions and challenges. Much debate hinges around whether such transitions, especially that of becoming a parent, have a 'normal' or 'critical' character and this differentiation refers to the degree of stress and

emotional upheaval experienced during the transition (for a summary and review of this literature see Rapaport et al, 1977; Einzig, 1980). In this perspective, the impact of pregnancy and early parenthood on men is frequently reviewed and in Benedek's analysis, fathers achieve their potential for parenthood from their own childhood experiences, especially in the 'oral dependent stage' (Benedek, 1959). For her, adults obtain their parental tendencies through similar processes. While this is a very abridged version of 'developmental' theory, it does serve to underscore the orientation that parents, mothers and fathers, develop as well as their children. One of the drawbacks frequently associated with 'developmental' theory is its heavy reliance on psychological explanations for behaviour and its neglect of more structural or sociological considerations. The emphasis is on the individual's (or family's) 'psychic' resources in navigating the status change rather than on the 'social' resources.

In approaching an analysis of fatherhood and fathering these three 'parent centred' theoretical traditions compete for attention. In each case there are areas of dissatisfaction either where theories have been cogently criticised (as with the feminist critique of 'structural-functionalism') or where they have been applied primarily in psychological rather than in sociological analysis (as in 'developmental' theory). In addition there is still a paucity of empirical work which might provide us with a guide to a 'proper' or 'appropriate' tradition. Thus, the hypothetico-deductive route to an analysis of fatherhood has pitfalls: not only has it been rarely trodden empirically but there are several equally appealing roads down which the sociologist could travel. This reinforces the scepticism towards using the method-

ology of hypothesis and deduction as an entree to the sociological analysis of fatherhood and indicates the advantages of a more grounded approach where findings and theories are emerged at from described experience and uncoloured by preconceptions of framework and model. The present thesis adopts this approach and a full description of its methodology will follow in Chapter 4. This 'emergent' research style can be categorised as 'parent centred' in this instance because of its focal interest in the experiences of fathers themselves.

'Parent Centred' Studies: (2)

Men's Experiences of Pregnancy, Birth and the Post-Partum Period

The literature on expectant and new fathers is the most extensive of that subsumed under the 'parent centred' grouping. Much research activity has been taken up with attempting to describe men's reactions and behaviour during their wives' pregnancy, at and/or immediately after childbirth. There is rich cross-cultural evidence on male practices at this time, particularly through the practice of 'couvade' discussed in the previous chapter (for reviews on the 'couvade' see Lomas, 1966; Paige and Paige, 1973; Fein, 1974 and Wapner, 1975). It would seem that, although the exact definition of 'couvade' is difficult and its meaning complex, male pregnancy and birth rituals are widespread and significant. Pregnancy and childbirth have a social and psychological salience for men as well as women in many cultures.

Studies of expectant fathers in contemporary Western cultures have reiterated this theme and whether clinical or non-clinical samples of fathers have been surveyed the findings concur that husbands as well

as wives are deeply affected by pregnancy and birth. Indeed, many studies go further and suggest that men are negatively affected by pregnancy and birth. The sorts of negative outcomes identified range from the psychological reactions of depression, denial of paternity, psychosis, sexual offenses, neurosis or 'psychic distress' and personality problems (for example, Zilboorg, 1931; Freeman, 1951; Curtis, 1955; Towne and Afterman, 1955; Wainwright, 1966; Hartman and Nicolay, 1966) to the physiological reactions of fatigue, nausea, backache, vomiting, tarsal cysts, toothache, headache and appetite loss (for example, Inman, 1941; Rolleston, 1945; Munroe, 1964; Trethowan and Conlon, 1965; and Liebenberg, 1969). (This literature has been competently reviewed by Fein, 1974; Wagner, 1975 and Einzig, 1980. Fein's review pays most attention to detailing these studies). Many of the studies presenting these findings have attempted to interpret why men should develop these extreme or 'pregnancy-mimicking' symptoms and the explanations fall into those who support a psychological aetiology and those who support a social aetiology. Psychological explanations refer to unconscious processes in the male, perhaps relating to his infantile experiences and to his 'envy' of the female childbearing function, while social explanations refer to social mechanisms whereby men claim their paternity, mark out their relationships with women, and ensure their position as fathers more generally in society. (These competing explanations were discussed more fully in Chapter 2).

The criticisms levelled at these studies of expectant fatherhood largely refer to imperfections in their methodology. Firstly, many of the early studies detailing severe psychological reactions to pregnancy have been faulted for their reliance on clinical populations and on small numbers of cases (Fein, 1974; Wagner, 1975). Reviewers

have found this unsatisfactory because the small sample size (sometimes as few as four cases) does not allow for generalisability to other clinical populations and does not allow for conclusions to be drawn about 'normal' populations. Secondly, the later studies, having amended their research designs and included 'normal populations' are criticised for their continued emphasis on the difficulties or stresses of expectant fatherhood rather than on its positive, developmental aspects. The shift from clinical to non-clinical samples is not seen as fundamentally altering the pre-occupation with pathology (Fein, 1974; Einzig, 1980).

Furthermore, the tendency to focus on the unfavourable aspects of pregnancy for men is advanced by another body of literature. Here the emphasis is not just on the impact of becoming a parent on the man, but on the impact of parenthood on the couple, on the marriage. Studies with this orientation have adhered to the processual or developmental approach outlined above but once again have underscored the traumatic or 'critical' nature of the transition to parenthood (LeMasters, 1957; Dyer, 1963; Hobbs, 1965; Meyerowitz and Feldman, 1966; for a review of this literature see Smith Russell, 1974). The central interest of these sociological studies is with what happens when a dyad becomes a triad: what happens to the partners' feelings about each other, to their feelings about the baby and to their sex-roles. All the studies agree that parenthood is a major life-change for men and women and disagreement only occurs over the radicalness or disruptiveness of the life-change. Researchers within this tradition are intent on uncovering factors which influence the degree of 'crisis' experienced by couples and some of those associated with reduced levels of crisis include: the wife's confidence in their

husbands; wife's support of their husbands in the fatherhood role; level of maternal involvement or absorption with the baby; sexual adjustment of the father during pregnancy; and the strength of the marital bond (LeMasters 1957; Meyerowitz and Feldman, 1966).

Fein (1974) believes that this continued over-emphasis on pregnancy as a precipitant of negative outcomes for couples has led to a poor appreciation of the maturational or developmental features of becoming a parent. In his own study of thirty middle class couples he attempts to divert attention away from the purely adverse effects of parenthood and toward concepts of family adaptation and development (Fein, 1974: 36). A number of other studies have attempted to incorporate a more balanced developmental model, finding that both personal and relational 'growth' are associated with parenthood (Rapaport and Rapaport, 1968; Rossi, 1968; Jessner, Weigert and Foy, 1970; Fein, 1974; Einzig, 1980). Summing up the distinctiveness of the developmental orientation to parenthood Fein says:

This formulation highlights the possibilities inherent in the perinatal period for positive change and growth in men, in women, and in their relationships ... (It) suggests attention to processes of 'adaptive maneuvering' (1968: 38) rather than to efforts to ward off anxiety or remove stress.

(Fein, 1974: 36)

Some of the findings emergent from the development approach to expectant fatherhood suggest: that men's adjustment to fatherhood is affected by their adopting a coherent role in the post-partum period

(Fein, 1974); that the man's ability to 'attune' or 'emphathise' with his wife during pregnancy influences his own development (Herzog, 1978 as cited by Einzig, 1980); that husbands and wives affect each others parental adjustment especially according to the degree of 'marital sharing' (Fein, 1974); that the development of paternal feelings may be related to man's identification with his own father (Jessner, Weigert and Roy, 1970); and that expectant fatherhood initiates a reexamination or reviewing of men's own childhood and parenting (Einzig, 1980).

In the attempt to establish fatherhood as a developmental process these studies suffer from a number of limitations. The most glaring is the over-concentration on fatherhood as a psychological phase which can be divorced from the complex social role of father. Terms such as 'adjustment' and 'adaptation' refer to psychological processes, suggest that there is some normative model of behaviour and often turn back to the man's infantile experiences. This results in less attention being paid to the social or even marital context in which the man becomes a father. It means that there is less consideration of how being a father fits with men's other social roles, identities and preoccupations. These studies, in attempting to find universal and fixed meanings in the transition to parenthood, also often overlook the meaning the father himself attaches to his role. There is, too, almost always an excess of interest paid to transition to fatherhood or the early phase of being a father. The developmental approach has less commonly considered fathers at other points in the life-cycle. This leads to the impression that the most significant developmental change in fathers occurs at the time of the birth of

their first child.

The growing trend for fathers to attend childbirth has attracted recent research attention and the literature on this is slowly amassing.¹⁶ It has been noted above how 'child centred' studies have tried to establish a link between later paternal involvement with the child and fathers' attendance at the birth. 'Parent centred' studies of childbirth attendance also often test out this connection but in addition are chiefly interested in how men experience the event. The sorts of issues explored concern: what motivates fathers to attend childbirth (Fein, 1974; Richman et al, 1975; Brown, 1977; Richards, 1980; Brown, 1982); the level of paternal participation in childbirth preparation and education and its effects (Fein, 1974; Cronenwett and Newmark, 1974; Wente and Crockenberg, 1976; Manion, 1977); and the nature and quality of the experience of childbirth (or labour only) attendance for men (Fein, 1974; Richman et al, 1975 and 1976; Perkins, 1980; Brown, 1982). Some of the studies of childbirth attendance and preparation apply an essentially developmental framework and are interested in how the father's involvement in childbirth training and the birth affects his later 'adjustment' to parenthood, or affects the marital relationship (Fein, 1974 and 1976; Cronenwett and Newmark, 1974; Wente and Crockenberg, 1976). As yet the findings are mixed, some concluding that formal preparation and information does aid the successful adaptation to fatherhood (Cronenwett and Newmark, 1974), others suggesting that Lamaze training for fathers has little effect on later paternal adjustment, but that this might just reflect on the quality of Lamaze training (Wente and Crockenberg, 1976).

The studies of fathers and childbirth which provide an ethnography of

fathers' experiences and which do not apply a strict preconceived theoretical framework are more rare (Richman et al, 1975, Richman and Goldthorp, 1978; Perkins, 1980; Brown, 1982). So far these studies refer largely to the medical routines that men face in the maternity hospital settings, to their feelings about their handling by medical staff, to their reactions to the labour and birth itself, to their disposition toward and perceptions of their 'labouring' wives and to their response to the newborn baby. There is a consensus that hospitals may fail to make the experience a positive one for men, although there are variations within and across studies about this. This inability to integrate fathers is linked more with medical models of pregnancy than with the ideology or practice of individual hospitals (Brown, 1982) and medical staff have been variously reported as contributing to both the father's active inclusion in the event (Perkins 1980; Brown, 1982) and his exclusion from it (Richman and Goldthorp, 1978). The reactions recorded concerning the birth itself suggest that fathers respond in emotionally heightened ways and find it hard to find words to describe their feelings of 'elation' and wonderment (Richman and Goldthorpe, 1978; Brown, 1982). Only one study to date, that by Brown (1982), has explored the medical viewpoint concerning fathers' attendance. Further investigation of this kind might help to explain the discrepancies that occur across studies. The main shortcoming of the existing descriptive studies of fathers and childbirth is that they are too few and too localised: a greater and wider body of empirical knowledge is needed. The findings presented by the current study will add to this body of knowledge, and provide detailed information about yet another locale. The studies also often stop short and fail to provide an account of men's experiences in the post-partum period. Little attention is

paid to how the father spends the time when his partner and baby are hospitalised, how the news of the birth is communicated, or how male work roles are affected. Again, this thesis will overcome these limitations.

'Parent Centred' Studies: (3)

Fathers and the Sex-Role Division of Child Care

A fairly substantial body of empirical evidence reflecting on what fathers 'do' with their children (in particular their infants) now exists. The five main types of research contributing to this body of knowledge include: studies of infant or child rearing practices (for example, see Newson and Newson, 1965; Gallagher, 1978); community studies (for example, see Young and Willmott, 1962 and 1973); studies of women's experiences of motherhood (for example see Gavron, 1966; Oakley, 1974, 1979 and 1980); ethnographies of marital and family relationships (for example see Bott, 1957; Bell, 1966, Edgell, 1980); and direct studies of fathers (for early examples, see Gardner, 1943; Elder, 1949; Tasch, 1952; and for later examples, see Russell, 1979; Pleck, 1979). Whilst these investigations all display different aims, emphases and methods, their one common factor is that they provide information about the 'content' of the adult sex role 'father' and about 'who does what' within the family. In short, all these studies take the father's 'involvement' or 'participation' in child care as a dimension for consideration. Sometimes this is coupled with an exploration of the husband's contribution to housework and is collectively referred to as the division of domestic labour or 'domestic politics' (Oakley, 1979). By focussing on fathers' participation in child rearing researchers have been able to comment on a number of

central sociological issues: on the nature and character of contemporary sex roles (Young and Willmott, 1973) and definitions of masculinity and femininity (Russell, 1978); on the jointness/ segregation of couple relationships (Bott, 1957); on the social or working conditions of full-time mothers and fathers (Gavron, 1966; Oakley, 1979; Young and Willmott, 1973; Hughes et al, 1980); and on the general and cultural meaning of parenthood (Backett, 1980). One of the usual ways of finding out what fathers do for their children is to count up the father's participation in a given number and range of tasks. This approach has been more frequently employed in studies of fathers with very young children and the sorts of tasks identified and quantified refer to paternal involvement in caretaking activities (feeding, bathing, nappy-changing, soothing the crying baby or attending the baby at night); participation in domestic baby care duties (washing nappies, preparing bottles) and performance of social or recreational activities (walking out with the baby and play), (Newson and Newson, 1965; Gavron, 1966; Richards et al, 1975; Gallagher, 1978).

On the basis of the findings, fathers are classified and ranked from 'high' to 'low' according to the degree of reported regular participation. The father's reported child care performance is taken as an indication of his sex role orientation more generally, whether 'traditional' or 'egalitarian' and also to be suggestive of social change or a lack of social change.¹⁸ Information about the father's involvement in child rearing together with insights about his domestic involvement is also used to make statements about the character of the marriage/couple relationship, whether joint or segregated, and about the likely trend for all marriages (Young and Willmott, 1973). Indeed, a number of

studies imply a simple equation: high paternal participation in child rearing equals a move away from a conventional sex role position, equals evidence of social advancement; high husband involvement in domestic matters equals a break from conventional marriage patterns, equals a move forward to sex role symmetry in marriage, equals the trend for all marriages (Young and Willmott, 1962 and 1973; Newson and Newson, 1965).

The findings as yet are too equivocal to allow for such sweeping conclusions. When compared to mothers and wives, fathers' child caretaking and husbands' housework performance still remain minimal (see Russell, 1979; and Pleck's review (1979) of the time budget studies on this); wives'/mothers' employment may or may not affect this but certainly the effect is rarely great enough to tip the balance entirely (see Hoffman's review (1977) on the effect of maternal employment on household division of labour). Fathers work the longest hours of their working lives when their children are young (Young and Willmott, 1973; Hughes et al, 1980; Moss, 1980). Certain groups of middle class fathers have few opportunities for involvement with their young children and retain a very conventional division of labour (Cohen, 1977). Fathers' participation in child rearing displays immense variations which cannot be accounted for simply in terms of social class, age, ethnic background or regional factors (Russell, 1979). Fathers continue to be very attached to their occupational roles, although some are expressing dissatisfaction about this and men's work and family roles may not fit easily together (Russell, 1979; Moss, 1980; Rapaport and Rapaport, 1980). Some fathers certainly appear to be highly interested in their children, display competence

and wish to be more involved than their jobs permit (Russell, 1979a and 1979b); and certain kinds of male occupations may either enhance or inhibit paternal involvement: for example, shift work may inhibit the father's family involvement (Young and Willmott, 1973), as may jobs requiring heavy manual labour, frequent absences from the home or irregular working hours (Graham and McKee, 1978).

Besides both the conflicting evidence and mixed interpretations of the evidence on the father's role, a number of the above five styles of investigation show methodological failings. In the first place, many of the child rearing studies have relied entirely on maternal reports of fathers' behaviour: these need to be complemented by fathers' direct accounts. In the second place, comparability within child rearing studies and between child rearing and community studies, studies of mothers' experiences, ethnographies and direct studies of fathers is made difficult by the fact that:

- i) different activities or tasks are measured;
- ii) different composite or aggregate measures of participation are used;
- iii) the age of the child varies from anything from one year (Richards et al, 1975) to a general category of under five years (Gavron, 1966);
- iv) some studies measure 'actual' behaviour and some 'normative' (Oakley, 1974)

In the third place, a number of the child rearing studies have used the survey method to investigate reported behaviour and have failed to explore fathers' ideals and beliefs and how these match behavioural indices. Low paternal participation is taken to represent a conventional ideology, but things may be more complex. The simple recording

or enumerating of the quantity of involvement may miss the complex processes by which this division of labour is worked out between couples (for a more detailed critique of how the survey method has been applied to fathers see McKee, 1982; and Chapter 9 of this thesis). In the fourth place, the child-rearing studies have typically applied too literal and narrow a definition both of 'participation' and of 'child care'. Participation is typically taken as 'direct' participation in the life of the infant and the father's 'indirect' support is overlooked. Likewise, child care is often interpreted as 'physical' caretaking and many 'non-physical' paternal contributions are excluded (for example, involvement in decision-making). Again, this leads to an over emphasis on fathers' 'mothering' behaviour and to researching fathers 'as if' they were mothers. It precludes an analysis of fathers' other responsibilities or an appreciation of how fathers' child rearing activities fit with their work activities. In some ways this approach suppresses the issue of the relationship between work and the family and confines the issue of fatherhood to the home (just from where 'motherhood' has been traditionally reviewed and has had to break loose).

It might be hoped that the direct studies of fathers could overcome some of these limitations, but as yet those studies with a 'parent centred' emphasis are too few, have concentrated too extensively on the period of early fatherhood, have focussed too intently on behaviour without matching it with paternal attitudes and ideals and have typically failed to take a longitudinal perspective. In fact, the studies which have most influenced the approach in this thesis have been ethnographies of marital and family relations, where processes of

marital negotiation and decision making have been shown to be relevant and complex; and studies of women's experiences of motherhood, where inequalities between mothers and fathers and marital power relationships have been exposed. Such studies impress upon us that 'parent centred' studies need to show not just what mothers and fathers 'do', but how this arrangement was achieved or can be changed, what it means to the couple and what it means in a cultural context.

'Parent Centred' Studies: (4) Fathers and Alternative Family Patterns

Some of the most exciting and recent work on fathers, taking a 'parent centred' perspective, has succeeded in shifting the emphasis away from the conventional nuclear family mode. Instead, an attempt has been made to capture the diversity of parenting arrangements and consideration has been given to lone fathers (Mendes, 1976; O'Brien, 1978, 1980a and 1980b; (for a comprehensive review of this literature see Hipgrave, 1982), to step fathers (Rallings, 1976; Burgoyne and Clark, 1982), to adoptive fathers (Levine, 1976); to single or divorced fathers (Hetherington et al, 1976; Orthner et al, 1976) and to families where parental roles are shared (Russell, 1979c; for an overview of the American empirical work on 'non traditional family forms' in the last decade, see Macklin, 1980). The aims and methods of these studies are varied and so exact comparability is difficult. However, the studies are united by their interest in how men experience fatherhood outside the conventional two-parent, first-time married, conjugal unit. The sorts of issues raised by the various investigations centre on: whether men are becoming more 'child centred'

(O'Brien, 1982); whether the task of being a father fits with other male roles and responsibilities (see Mendes, 1976; Hipgrave, 1982); how compatible are notions of masculinity and the performance of child care by men; what are the structural limitations to being a full-time male parent (O'Brien, 1980b); and whether there are problems which are specific to lone fathers or fathers in reconstituted families and whether these problems are gender-specific (Hipgrave, 1982; Burgoyne and Clark, 1982). The work to date has also been valuable in the decoding and clarification of the concepts 'lone father', showing that these are not homogeneous categories but comprise diverse groups of men whose experiences are unique and whose 'arrival' at lone or stepfatherhood has involved complex processes and 'trajectories' (O'Brien, 1982; Burgoyne and Clark, 1982). The delineation of such processes helps to convey the complexity of what it means 'to father' and 'to be a father' and to draw attention to some of the cultural stereotypes and prescriptions for this task and identity.

So far the results of the various studies suggest that in the case of lone fathers there are difficulties of finance, employers often being unsympathetic to the demands of child rearing; of feelings, lone fathers finding it hard to corroborate their parenting experiences with other men; and of time, lone fathers being torn between occupational, leisure and child rearing demands and having few or poorly organised support networks (Hipgrave, 1982). O'Brien (1980a) makes the case that many lone fathers face greater problems accepting their 'single' or 'divorced' marital status after divorce than they do in meeting the needs and demands of lone fatherhood. However, her study suggests that certain groups of lone fathers are better equipped emotionally to succeed at lone fatherhood and higher satisfaction

with this position was expressed by those fathers who mutually negotiated with their wives to take care of the children after divorce. Burgoyne and Clark (1982) make the point that the experience of stepfatherhood is heavily coloured by the man's previous (if any) experience of fatherhood and is grounded in more general expectations about what is an appropriate role for fathers and what is an appropriate sexual division of labour. In their study, stepfathers frequently referred to their 'support' role, particularly their economic support role which could often be burdensome and often involved maintenance of 'two' families. Stepfathers also had to contend with cultural beliefs and media images which impinged on their lives and carried with them negative and distorted expectations and ideologies. It is apparent that the exploration of fathers in various 'family' arrangements will grow. This is a welcome advance and many of the insights raised will aid our understanding of the social sex role system. It will provide information about the construction and enactment of sex-role identity and will make available better baseline data for the formulation of social policies in recognition of the changed 'family' composition.

At the moment, the main criticisms of the existing empirical work are, again, that it is still scarce; that such studies are still regarded as dealing with 'minority' or 'deviant' groups and seen as separate from mainstream family sociology or psychology; and that studies are tied to discrete regions and groups. These ethnographies could be complemented by more extensive national data. The work on alternative family patterns could also be improved by the inclusion and comparison with cross-cultural material on fathers, and by widening the range of 'alternatives' for consideration: for example, no studies

exist in Britain on 'role reversal' couples, on fathers' in ethnic minority groups, on 'fathers' in communal or cohabiting units. Equally, there is very little work with a longitudinal focus. Chapter 2 demonstrates the value of using documentary and historical sources to explore aspects of family life. Oral historians, family lawyers, can contribute to an understanding of fatherhood in other periods (Lummis, 1982; Lowe, 1982). Such work has great scope and the sources have been under-utilised.

3.4 Perceptions of Fatherhood - Its Place in the Literature

Having widely surveyed the literature on fathers and the epistemological characteristics of fatherhood research, it now remains to place the current thesis in its context and to expose its origins. It is possible to summarise the background and aims of the present study as follows:

1. My interest in fathers was stimulated by the popular and academic debates of the early 1970s about the construction of women's sex role and in particular the role of 'mother', and about the sustained inequality between men and women. It was encouraged by the Women's Movement and by feminist writing. This was complemented by an awareness of the feminist critique of sociology and the pressure by feminists to make women's experiences 'public' and central to the academic exercise which led directly to my engagement in research on women's experiences of becoming a mother (see Graham and McKee, 1980). This further led me to notice the 'exclusion' of fathers from my own and other research designs and to observe the preponderance of 'wives'

family sociology (Safilios-Rothschild, 1969). This absence of fathers fitted curiously with my personal experience of family policy when living in Sweden in 1974, where the male parental role and the critique of male sex roles was a dominant concern at that time and where progressive policies to 'equalise' parental roles were being implemented (Millgardh and Rollen 1974). This ultimately encouraged me to research the literature as to why fathers had been omitted from academic interest and to discover ways of meeting this gap. I concluded from my original review of the literature that very little was known about the construction of male sex roles, about the experiences of men as fathers and that much could be discovered about sex roles and sex role inequality by studying those who have been traditionally assigned dominant and powerful positions in families and in the wider society. Having already begun a study of mothers, I was able to recruit their spouses (this will be elaborated more fully in Chapter 4) and thus the present study was initiated (These biographical details are included because they relate so closely to the discussion at the beginning of this chapter about the expansion of fatherhood research).

2. In the existing literature on fathers I found recurrent theoretical and methodological weaknesses, backed up by a poverty of empirical 'fact' on the experience of becoming and being a father. This prompted my primary aim which is to use a 'parent centred' emphasis to find out what 'fathering' and 'fatherhood' means to men and what are the different meanings men attach to their behaviour. It is my intention to explore the various expectations and experiences of fathers at their

entry to this 'role' and to use their own subjective accounts to generate an understanding of early months of fatherhood. A case study approach is preferred to meet this aim again, (this will be expanded in the next chapter).

3. Being concerned with the processes of becoming and being a father, this led me to construct a framework with a longitudinal emphasis: so that men's perceptions are canvassed in pregnancy and throughout the first year of the infant's life. This balances those studies which have only explored the period of expectant fatherhood and/or the immediate months after birth.
4. Unlike other previous studies, I am not solely concerned with men's 'nurturance', but allow men to describe the relevance of fatherhood to the rest of their lives. This study therefore includes an analysis of the 'public' or social face of being a father, how fatherhood fits with work and leisure, and the nature of men's family and social networks (see Chapter 10).
5. The study also incorporates wives' views on parenthood, motherhood and fatherhood. Although the fathers' accounts are more dominant in the thesis, the wives' perspective is seen as central and potent and, where possible, comparisons between mothers' and fathers' orientations and perceptions will be made. Much of the existing literature on fathers ignores this marital context of parenting.
6. This study allows men not just to comment on the nature of fatherhood but also to express what they perceive to be the

features of motherhood and childhood. This will help to elaborate some of the cultural ideologies about parent-child relations and expose some of the widely held norms about what constructing and being a 'family' means to men and women. Men's beliefs about fertility and infertility and adoption will be covered.

7. The study will additionally reveal, through fathers accounts, how men as parents are affected by structural and institutional factors: such as hospital routines and regimes, work, health service provision, the media and parenthood education schemes. In this way it will have policy implications and some concrete suggestions for change will be based on men's assessments.

CHAPTER 4

A NATURALISTIC ACCOUNT OF STUDYING MOTHERS AND FATHERS

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The root sources of all significant theorising is the sensitive insights of the observer ... As everyone knows, these can come in the morning or at night, suddenly or with slow dawning, while at work or at play ...

(Glaser and Strauss, 1968: 251)

In a recent review of his own research work David Morgan (1981:86)

argues the case:

for a critical examination of the social context of sociological research, the assumptions that arise out of this context and the way in which these assumptions (by their silences and omissions as much as by their more obvious statements) shape the more detailed process of enquiry.

In addition, he suggests that sociologists consider the 'sociological mode of production' rather than particular methods of data collection, (Morgan, 1981:87).

I have taken his invocations seriously and in this chapter aim to provide a reflexive¹ account of my involvement in two related research projects which formed the basis of this thesis. The two studies were conducted simultaneously and were mutually influential. They will be referred to throughout as the Motherhood Project and the Fatherhood Project. I will comment on the relationship between the two and,

where relevant, compare my different research experiences. The detailed areas I intend to cover include: the formulation of a research problem; research design - methods selection and usage; the research context and relationships; the experience of interviewing; data analysis and interpretations; and presentation of results and findings. However, it should be said at the outset that the act of ordering my account in this way betrays the complexity of the research process and is suggestive of a linear development. In reality, events and progress were more chequered and uneven and I hope that within the rigid presentation of my material I can convey this sense of research fluidity and even untidiness.

Central to my account will be the issue of gender and its research implications from the perspective both of the researched and the researcher. Here my concern has been influenced, again by David Morgan who calls for gender to be 'taken seriously' in sociological practice, by feminist critiques of sociology and sociological methods (see for example Bernard, 1973; Roberts, 1981 and Oakley, 1981) and by my own lived experience. As the research story unfolds I hope to expose and explain the paradox of how my original commitment to making women 'visible' in sociology led ultimately to me studying men.

4.1 The History of the Research Problem

My interest in studying mothers and, later, fathers has a circuitous aetiology deeply shaped by both biographical and intellectual circumstance. In the previous chapter, in attempting to answer the question why the study of fathers has become fashionable, I gave an abbreviated version of my own discovery of this topic. Here I wish to retrace the source of my interest in fathers in more detail and to place the thesis better in context. Strangely enough my present research

involvement has its origins in my following another career path - that of social work. It was during a student placement in a psychiatric hospital in Dublin that I stumbled upon my first research idea - in the form of an Irish woman who had been to England to have an abortion and had returned home to be faced by hostility, prejudice, social isolation and guilt for what she had done. The weight of social condemnation she faced resulted in her having a breakdown and it was at this point we met. The poignancy of her situation inspired my rage, empathy and determination to find out more about what happened to Irish women who travelled to England for abortions in the early 1970s. At the time I was a final year undergraduate heading for further training in social work but this one-off experience diverted my intentions. I became more and more curious to 'know' about this hidden and penalised group of women and, without a doubt, more and more compelled to use by 'knowing' to effect an eventual change in their lot. So it was with this 'problem' area foremost in my mind that I came to York University in 1973 to do a sociology Masters degree. It could be said then that my initiation into the research mode was fired by social and political motives - a sympathy with women and a resentment against Catholic Ireland. I arrived in England on a 'campaigning ticket', having no formal knowledge of the abortion research field but having indirectly 'felt' the stigma and trauma of Irish 'abortionees'.

Initiation of a Research Worker

What happened next as a Masters student forms the basis of another account and cannot be detailed here. Suffice it to say that it took me two terms to get my research on abortion off the ground and I

ended up by doing case studies of four women who had had abortions - none of whom were Irish. However, although it may appear as if my original research impetus was relinquished and lost, the 'abortion project' had much wider and long-lasting repercussions, for it was during this time that I made contact with Hilary Graham. I see Hilary Graham as a key figure at this stage in recruiting and encouraging me to do further research work and in guiding me toward the study of mothers. Hilary Graham was herself engaged on a doctoral study of women's experiences of pregnancy which involved her interviewing fifty pregnant women in-depth. She and I had many talks about our research, finding that our orientation, which was largely to allow women to define the meanings of abortion and pregnancy for themselves, and our commitment to women and the Women's Movement, were closely aligned. This triggered the idea that we should like to do some work jointly at a later date. At this stage in the discussions all we were sure about was that we wanted to work collaboratively, that we wanted to adopt an interactionist perspective, that we wanted to reveal aspects of women's experience and aspects of their reproductive experience. I had shifted my research curiosity from the abortion experience, essentially a 'deviance' or 'social problem' category, to the more global notion of women's reproduction with no necessary connotations of marginality or minority status.

The next sequence in the research process is difficult for me to document for here we would also need Hilary Graham's testimony. After writing up my abortion study I defected from the University for a year to work in Sweden. However, I left holding onto the idea that Hilary and I would develop our work together and that I would return to pursue some joint project. We corresponded regularly and somewhere

amid these letters the research project 'The First Months of Motherhood' began to evolve. Re-reading the letters I realise that Hilary Graham's role was the pioneering one in formulating the idea, and mine the support. With my full (but geographically distant) approval and enthusiasm Hilary Graham and Laurie Taylor put in all the ground work of shaping up the research problem area, making research contacts, gaining access to do the study and, most importantly, acquiring funds to support the work. In comparison to the amount of effort and time they gave at this stage, my situation was an easy one - in a sense someone else was setting up a research project, with all the heartaches and headaches that this entails, for me. I mention all this in such detail because I feel that how one 'arrives' in a research setting has structural and lasting implications or consequences both for internal research relationships (relationships between research workers) and external research relationships (relationships with the grant-funding agency; university administration, research institute, university departments, colleagues, supervisors and others). I feel that because I did not participate in the nitty-gritty of writing the motherhood project proposal, securing the funds and sharing of the initial worries I retained a 'guest' status throughout which was never properly resolved. Looking back this cannot be attributed to either the behaviour of Hilary Graham or Laurie Taylor as 'hosts' but was more an intrinsic feature of my relationship to the 'money' - 'who got the grant and in whose name is it?', and to the 'job' - 'who helped to create and promote you to this post?' This 'guest' status later manifested itself in a variety of ways - in those both trivial and less trivial - letters to mothers which only Hilary Graham signed, invitations from the funding body to report on the study addressed only to Hilary Graham,

visits from the SSRC to meet all sociology researchers where the department 'forgot' to include me and so on. All this was compounded by my physical/geographical separation from the sociology department, that is, Hilary Graham and Laurie Taylor's place of work, and by Hilary's 'insider' status in the sociology department as an ex-undergraduate and postgraduate student. It was further complicated by the fact that both Hilary and I wanted to work in a way that was non-hierarchical and which recognised that we had equal contributions to make. I will return to these issues concerning research relationships later on - not to comment on their personal contours but again to discuss their structural effect on the research process. It would seem that a sense of 'belongingness' in a research programme and 'ownership' of the research are fundamental issues that have to be raised, however painful.

To pick up the story again - a gap exists in my account as to how the exact form of the motherhood study evolved. Undoubtedly it emerged naturally from Hilary Graham's earlier work and concerns and was grounded in her research experience. The intention, in short, was to devise a study which would explore women's perceptions of becoming a mother and their experiences of the early months of motherhood - expectations and reality - particularly in relation to the nature of the advice and support women receive at this time. As the idea was expressed and contrived it caught my imagination and I felt excited at the prospect of our joint task. While in Sweden I began preparing intellectually for my return and engagement on the project, collecting and collating what comparative information I could on pregnancy and motherhood in the Swedish context. I relied on personal contacts and at the same time assembled a wide range of information including

newspaper clippings, official ante-natal advice literature, and academic writings. I visited nursery schools and maternity hospitals and kept my eyes and ears open - watching how mothers were treated by bus drivers and shop assistants, how they managed their prams and buggies and the presence and role of partners. Being unmarried and childless this was my first deliberate orientation to motherhood and to the culture of mothers. I realise now that when I returned from Sweden I had already done some 'work' on the motherhood project, but I did not identify it as such at that time or even consciously or formally utilise much of that information throughout the course of the study. In my own mind I classified it then as a 'warming up' or induction process, extraneous to the real business of doing research.

However, the centrality and forcefulness of my invasion into the world of mothers during my stay in Sweden hit home much later. I can now properly chart my current interest in fathers back to that time, for I collected information not only about mothers but about their partners. During 1974 and 1975, the period I lived there, Swedish public attention and policy was directed at fathers, especially in relation to new legislation about parenthood insurance and paternity leave. The newspapers carried intense debates about the suitability and eligibility of men as child caretakers and there were official documents describing the content of the new legislation. Even the Prime Minister, Olaf Palme, had issued statements concerning the need for greater equality between men and women in the domestic as well as the work arena. Fatherhood was therefore a dominant and commanding political issue and was unknowingly embedded at the heart of my informal data collection. It was only when I was well advanced in the mother-

hood project, having immersed myself in the academic literature on pregnancy and motherhood for three months, designed, piloted the research instrument and begun proper interviewing that the subject of fathers surfaced again. This time, unlike the Swedish experience, fathers as a research group were not in the headlines, but tucked away in the 'small print' or in the space between the lines - 'Do you think your husband/boyfriend has always wanted a family?' 'Would you say that your husband/boyfriend is very interested/quite interested/not interested in your pregnancy and how the baby is doing?' 'Does your husband/boyfriend ever feed the baby?' As I had played an equal part (with Hilary Graham) in devising the questions, how had I allowed fathers to 'slip' my mind? And why ask wives about husbands? These questions quickly spiralled and the more I talked to wives about husbands, the more I questioned this strategy. The practice of using wives as informants about husbands, the wives' replies, a few chance meetings with husbands themselves, my continued interest in gender relations and the shadows of the Swedish 'fatherhood context' conspired together and made me increasingly anxious to go to fathers directly and canvass their experiences.

I had been trying to decide on some aspect of the motherhood project to carve out as 'my' PhD 'problem area' and slowly things began to take shape. Notions such as the 'neglect' of fathers, the power of fathers, fathers and social change rushed to my mind long before I knew that these were also becoming the intellectual preoccupations of other social scientists. Whereas I had come to the study of 'abortion' with a political consciousness and with a prescribed position, and similarly to the study of mothers with an overt stand of being for women and mothers (see Finch, 1984: 86 on 'creating a sociology for

women') I came to 'fathers' as a research topic more in an aspect of 'agnosticism' but with a preparedness to give them a 'hearing'. Accepting that opportunities are not equal for men and women, (mothers and fathers) I took the position, which I still hold, that in assymmetrical social relations, it might be just as possible to understand the mechanisms of these relationships by studying the powerful, as by studying the powerless. It seemed (and seems) to me that to switch my research interests from studying women and bringing women into sociology toward studying men and bringing fathers into sociological accounts required no ideological upheaval. Rather, my very deep-seated interest in gender as related to women and mothers suddenly seemed very relevant in connection to men and fathers. Nonetheless, the intellectual realisation of men as fathers and a potential research group was an arduous process and I firmly believe that I would never have found them (or at least would have taken longer) had I not been a woman, a woman naive to pregnancy and parenthood generally, had I not been confronted by the public issue in Sweden, had I not listened to mothers talking about their lives, had I not run into fathers in their own homes and had I not realised that gender relations are dialectical. In some sense, 'fathers' were the 'exotica', they were the aliens and oppressors, and they were 'the other half'. Immediately, I wanted to know more about them, what did pregnancy mean to men, what were men's perceptions of becoming a father, how did men prepare for parenthood and how was being a father distinguished from being a mother? These questions inspired this thesis.

4.2 Research Design - Methods, Selection and Usage

The Motherhood Project

When I arrived back in York to take up my research post on the Motherhood Project, certain fundamental changes in the original research design had already occurred which were to deeply affect our research future. At the outset, Hilary Graham and I had hoped to employ qualitative methods and to build up an in-depth and longitudinal profile of (about) eighty mothers, dividing the work load down the middle and engaging no outside research workers. In keeping with our aims, to uncover the meanings women attach to early pregnancy and motherhood, and to capture the processual aspects of becoming a parent, we had envisaged using a mixture of in-depth interviews before and after the birth of the baby and carried out in women's own homes; observations of ante-natal and child-health clinics; and a review of the official advice literature and media coverage on parenthood. In short, we had planned an ethnography of women's reproductive and parental experiences. However, during the negotiation of the research funds this 'model' of the study got transformed, with a sample size of two hundred mothers eventually being agreed. This shift in sample size (as I understand it) was chiefly a result of the position adopted by the funding body, the Health Education Council, and their concern for sample representativeness, randomness, replicability and so on. In our case, the larger population meant that the study would no longer be manageable by only two people and we found ourselves 'accidentally' agreeing to conduct a more extensive project than at first planned, with the prospect of employing additional research workers. From 'graduate' researchers we had in one sense become potential research 'managers'/'bosses'. From planning to take

responsibility for a total of about two hundred and forty interviews (three with each respondent) we were faced with the prospect of organising and/or carrying out six hundred interviews. This early modification of the research proposal, in line with the intentions of the funding body, had profound implications not just for the entire shape of the resultant project but for our own experience as researchers. It was to involve us in the selection, employment, training and supervising of others - tasks we ourselves had to learn 'on the job'. It was also to raise, however implicitly, issues of hierarchy, and who had ultimate responsibility for their getting the work done - and well done. Again, these problems will be aired later in the chapter.

The fact that we could not handle six hundred interviews by ourselves was one problem and was solved by the decision to employ two interviewers, one full-time for fifteen months and one part-time for twelve months. The second and less easily resolved problem was that the interview format would have to be amenable to being used by four people - and used in some fairly standardised way if the results were to have any meaningful comparability. For this reason we rejected the use of an unstructured interview and instead opted for a semi-structured interview schedule. Our interest was still in uncovering the complexities of women's feelings about motherhood, but in some ways our target population of two hundred made us more like a social survey and less like an ethnographic or case study mode. (For an account of the use of the survey and the use of narratives relating to the Motherhood Project see Graham, (1984).) So we reached a compromise: we still intended to carry out three interviews with each mother and we decided that if the questions were fixed at each stage, but we

encouraged the women to develop their own accounts, we could obtain a rich mix of qualitative and quantitative information. The quantitative data would be manageable in terms of conventional, statistical and computational procedures and the qualitative data would give us scope for our original grounded skills, preferences and aptitudes. The tension between our qualitative ambition and the quantitative reality dogged the whole project and we were continually torn between meanings and patterns, processes and variables.

My first task then as newly recruited research worker was to design a research instrument, usable by four people, and with all our aims and constraints in mind. Interviews were to take place during the last trimester of pregnancy and at one and five months post partum. These times had already been decided upon in the initial research proposal and were in keeping with critical stages identified by Hilary Graham in her previous work and by other family researchers. The schedule was to be applicable to mothers having either their first or second babies, as we hoped to recruit equal numbers from each group. The split into primiparous and multiparous again was established in the original proposal and reflected Hilary Graham's rightful concern that too many studies concentrated on first births and that little was known about the experience of having a subsequent child. In fact, what was needed was three phase-specific research instruments focussed on two parental populations - first and second-time mothers. The schedules had to be related, complementary, sequential, building in a sense of time-progression, and comprehensive.

I had four months in which to tackle this job; Hilary Graham was to join the project in the third month. In the fifth, we aimed to be

ready to pilot the study and train the interviewers; and March (month 6) was our appointed month for commencement of the study proper. For the first three months, I spent a great deal of time familiarising myself with the literature on reproduction, the sociology of fertility, research methods and general 'handbooks' on pregnancy, birth and child-rearing. This again helped me to orientate to the world of mothers, to the world of reproductive medicine and to the institutions of child-bearing, child-rearing: ante-natal and post-natal clinics; and child health clinics. I had to learn an entirely new language: - words such as 'parity', 'episiotomy', 'Caesarian', 'epidural', 'Pethidine', 'trimester', I also had to build upon my physiological knowledge of the events of pregnancy and child-birth and brush up by knowledge about foetal development, the likely side-effects and hazards of pregnancy, the 'unknowns' of delivery. I had to overcome my initial squeamishness and discomfort at hearing about childbirth and my own fear of it; and harness both personal and medical accounts. Without this voluntary process of 'flooding' I could not have formulated 'appropriate' or indeed 'any' questions for mothers. Just being a woman did not qualify me for the job and at this early stage my childlessness had to be amended by intensive study. Having slowly absorbed the culture of mothers and filled the information gap, I did not find my childless status a handicap at any other time in the research. In a sense, I became familiar with the style and ways of motherhood: I felt that I became an honorary mother; I gained maternal citizenship. Learning the social ways of mothers overcame my lack of biological qualifications.

Devising the 'appropriate' questions was hard, hindered by my 'outsider' position, but not insuperable. Although Hilary Graham was not

yet formally employed on the project she and I had many late-night discussions on the intentions, content and style of the interview schedules, the relevant topic areas, ways of asking questions, length and coding. The research instrument depended on this collaborative effort and was shaped by it (for a summary of the content of the interviews see Appendix X; Appendix XI contains the research instruments themselves). Hilary Graham was also a very crucial informant on the geography of child-bearing and child-rearing - being a mother of two young children herself - and I think she was the first person ever to relate her own birth experiences to me - an essential part of my later training. I would suggest that the process of designing the interview schedules was not unlike a piece of considered and careful wood-carving. I produced enormously long and detailed lists of questions, using all my intuition and newly-found intellectual insights about pregnancy and motherhood. Hilary Graham read, revised and passed these back to me. I added more questions, subtracted some, rewrote others. Hilary Graham did likewise. It took a long time for our 'raw' material to have an acceptable form and we invited comments from Laurie Taylor and other members of the Department of Sociology before anything was viewed permanent. This process eventually led us to the piloting stage. Here the 'ideal' and the 'actual' research worlds diverge. Ideally each research instrument should have been piloted but the problems of time, resources and the absence of a sampling frame for mothers with one and five month old babies whom we had also interviewed in pregnancy defeated us. We were forced to pilot only the 'pregnancy' research instrument and hoped that this would instruct us about the tenor of the other two, their relevance, 'appropriateness'. This was a research 'act of faith' dictated by the chronology of pregnancy and childbirth itself.

and by the formidable awareness that we would sometimes have to cut corners. I feel retrospectively that this failure to pilot the second and third interview schedules was not as damaging as might be expected for we kept a close check on how questions were working throughout the entire study and were prepared to discard or ignore the findings if any one question was proving persistently difficult - either for women to answer, or for us to code, or make sense of. We tried to build a sense of relexivity, especially by holding review meetings and re-coding meetings where joint problems were raised and joint decisions taken. This included a reconsideration of questions and their validity. With four interviewers and later three, this was certainly possible and viable - but not easy, as conflict sometimes broke out when one of us was more 'attached' to a question than the others. When a consensus could not be reached, we had an agreed rule that Hilary Graham's word was final. While piloting was one way of getting the questions right, we felt we had constructed other 'checks' of a dynamic kind. This process of questionnaire review, coding and re-coding will be developed more fully later.

As I see it, the piloting of the 'pregnancy' research instrument served most usefully in the training of myself as interviewer and the two employed interviewers. It allowed for the standards and style of interviewing to be established and conveyed to the others. The month of February 1976 was spent in this way - piloting, familiarising ourselves with the questions, setting the pace of the interview schedule and contriving accompanying probes to questions - explaining and re-explaining the aims of the study to ourselves and our two new workers. We studied each question closely to ascertain and attempt to standardise our interpretation of it and its intended meaning. The two

new workers had diverse backgrounds: one was a highly experienced research interviewer and mother of two grown-up children; and the other had a social studies degree, hoped to train as a social worker and had three children under the age of ten. I was now the only unmarried and 'non-mother' in the research team and was able to rely even more on the motherhood expertise of my colleagues. Training and getting to know the interviewers enhanced my orientation to the subject matter even further. It was also my initiation into team work.

The piloting and training phase was also the time when the mechanics of contacting the sample, interviewing, assembling and recording the data were formally laid out. As explained above, access had already been granted by the local maternity hospital and there had been a prior agreement, secured by Hilary Graham, for us to be given during the months of March, April, June and July, the names and addresses of fifty women who had booked a hospital bed in the consultant unit and were approaching the last trimester of their pregnancies. This sampling procedure meant that our study excluded those women having home confinements, those delivering in the General Practitioner's Unit and those who had made no contact with the medical services at all. The hospital also agreed to supply us with details about the woman's occupation, the occupation of her partner, her parity and the expected date of delivery. In addition, we were given permission to consult the hospital delivery charts so we should know when the woman had delivered her baby and could then arrange our follow-up interviews at four weeks post-partum. The five month interview was then to be fixed up at four weeks.

The procedure for collecting the names and delivery details involved

Hilary Graham visiting the hospital on a weekly basis. As the names arrived, each expectant mother was allocated to an interviewer on the grounds of where the mother lived, her parity and occupational status. We were aiming for each interviewer to have a fairly balanced group of first and second-time mothers, and a mixed social class group. We also considered the travelling needs of one of the interviewers who lived quite some distance from York and she was offered, where possible, those mothers on 'her side of town'. The actual numerical division of interviewing labour was into a sample of fifty for me, eighty for the full-time interviewer, forty for the part-time interviewer and thirty for Hilary Graham. Hilary Graham hoped to put more time in observational work and so opted for a smaller interview load. She also had the responsibility of visiting the hospital and collecting the names and birth information so it was felt that our design was equitable. As the names and addresses arrived from the maternity hospital a letter was sent to each woman explaining the nature of the study, how we had acquired her name and inviting her participation (see Appendix I. for a copy of this). We stressed the confidential nature of the study, named the proposed interviewer, gave a brief biography of the interviewer, confirmed that the study had the backing of the maternity hospital and said that we would call in the next few days.

These procedural decisions were very self-conscious and explicit and the staggering of the collection of names and proposed interviews was the only way we could see for avoiding massive overlap of the phase-specific interviews. Over-lap obviously did occur and it later transpired that we were conducting pregnancy and post-partum interviews with different women, but simultaneously.

It should be said that at this early design and training stage we had also envisaged a fourth interview with mothers, called the 'pop-in' interview and to be dated immediately after the mother's hospital discharge. This was to be an informal and unstructured visit, to congratulate the mother on the arrival of her new baby and gather information about the labour and delivery. However, this intention and interview foundered in the course of the study, as interviewers commonly experienced either difficulties in setting it up or in carrying it through when they got there. Hospital stays varied, as did the degree of well-being women experienced in the post-natal time. For some women, our hasty post-natal call was without doubt an intrusion on privacy and we had to be fitted in around the very real demands of a new baby and those of the wider circle of family and friends. While some mothers could and did welcome us into their homes and networks at this time, for others we could be an added stress. Soon after beginning these interviews we reassessed our collective experience and because of mutual disquiet, interviewers were told to rely on their own discretion and preferences. The 'pop-in' interview became optional. For myself, I 'interviewed' approximately half of my sample of fifty at this stage. Where labour and delivery details could not be collected at a 'pop-in' they were carried over to the four weeks interview and prefaced the questions at this stage. In other words, regardless of when the mother was approached, she was encouraged to tell of her labour and delivery experiences in a naturalistic and unstructured way.

In piloting and training a further research task was executed: and this was induction into the use of tape-recorders. Hilary Graham and I agreed that, to be consistent with out initial interactionist

preoccupation and search for individual meanings, we needed to record verbatim what women said. Only Hilary Graham had extensive experience in this and we relied on her for guidance about how to introduce it to mothers and how to use it as our own teaching aid. Listening to each others' taped interviews was an essential and early part of training, evaluation and self-education. It helped to iron out the obvious inconsistencies in our interviewing styles. However, I regret now that through later pressures of the data collection we did not keep to our early monitoring of our own and everyone else's performance. I am sure I for one adopted lazy habits, not where I avoided questions but perhaps where through familiarity I did not ask them with sufficient eagerness to 'know' - and may have cut off rich sources of data. The idea of research workers acting as each other's scrutineers is appealing, but difficult perhaps to sustain over time: especially where the volume of work is such that you only pass colleagues as you pick up new batteries or tapes for the tape-recorder, or to beg tapes from one another.

As well as having responsibility for the full taping of interviews each interviewer was expected to code their own interviews. Some short-hand method of recording 'key' data had to be found in advance and piloting was therefore further used to establish 'virgin' coding categories: all of which were reviewed (and many revised), both during the course of interviewing and when it was over. Each interviewer took responsibility for noting those codes that were deemed inadequate or inappropriate as they went along. We aimed to record the exact nature of the discrepancy or problem, which was then dealt with at the collective meetings as indicated above. So there was much amending

and appending of codes, but not all questions and replies offered the same perceived amount of ambiguity or 'trouble'. I kept notes on the questions and answers provoking most difficulty for me and sometimes of the decisions we took and these notes could arguably represent data in themselves. However, for the purposes and clarity of this account I will just give one brief example of where categorisation was highly problematical and how we handled it. In the interview at five months post-partum mothers were asked (Q.53, See Appendix XI)

Some wome say that they have
bouts of depression for some
time after the baby's born.
Have you felt this way at all ?

The original or 'virgin' code was a simple, 'yes', 'no', 'other', but in one of the subsequent coding meetings the meaninglessness and the full range of interpretation of the replies to this question became obvious. It transpired that one interviewer was classifying only those who could be said to have a current and lasting depression as 'yes'; those who had intermittent blues or depressed moods now or in the past as 'other'; while I was classifying anyone who had expressed any degree of depression, depressed moods, or blues as 'yes'. In other words, I had a highly inflated 'yes' category (50% compared to 10%), while she had a highly inflated 'other' category: and in my system I could not discriminate between the presently and 'seriously' depressed and those with fluctuating but minor low moods. It was therefore necessary for us to return to our qualitative data, to listen to the variations in the accounts and to devise a more sensitive and refined schema. In the end, we still did not come up with a very sophisticated framework and in the later analysis I trusted the verbatim accounts more than the crude summation of women's

experiences. Our new categories were 'depressed continuously', 'depressed in the past', 'other negative mood change', 'other'.

Besides doing the coding, all of us had to ensure the transcription of our taped material. With six hundred interviews, promising interviews of an average expected length of two hours, this posed a daunting organisational and time-consuming chore. It also raised extraordinary problems concerning the quantity of tapes and tape-recorder batteries needed, as against the quantity budgeted for. In short, we had to find a way of recycling two hundred and fifty tapes each of sixty minutes in length across approximately one thousand interview hours. To accomplish this task we had to agree upon 'selected transcription' and, at the outset, to identify 'key' topic areas. Hilary Graham and I did this in consultation and in tandem with constructing the interview schedules. These topic areas were discussed in-depth with the interviewers during training and so they had some prescriptions and guides for the sorts of crucial data we sought. Transcription sheets were provided. At the same time everyone was encouraged to note, record and transcribe emergent areas of interest at their own discretion. The 'voluntaristic' transcription was certainly undertaken by all of us and at great length. (For topic lists and sample transcription sheet - see Appendices III and IV). In addition, we each selected 'typical' and 'atypical' cases where we transcribed the woman's account in full for each interview. No rigid guidelines were given on the selection of the case-studies and for myself, the choice was influenced by a number of factors: one highly educated middle class mother seemed to express well the feelings of a number of others with a like background; one mother lost her baby through still-birth and highlighted issues of a unique kind; one mother

lived in exceptionally deprived circumstances. A mix of social and reproductive criteria were operative. Secretarial help was available for transcription but we found it quicker and easier to do the shorter pieces ourselves. Transcribing proved to be no easy task for our secretaries. The mother's voice was sometimes indistinct or overlaid by a strong accent; the quality of tapes from continued re-usage was poor; and, as all the secretaries were at that time unmarried and childless, the terminology of reproduction was unfamiliar. We often felt very apologetic about asking them to do this onerous work, but some assured us that it was compensated or softened by the fact that the subject matter was interesting and of more immediate appeal than the 'economic' papers they typed daily.

As interviews were coded and transcribed the tapes had to be immediately re-used. Even this system failed and tape-shortage was one intrinsic and persistent feature of the field work. Many of my favourite musical tapes are now overlaid with interviews with mothers and I bought numerous, cheap, emergency tapes from local stores. Despite these organisational hazards of taping we felt it was an excellent research aid - generally rapport was enhanced by the interviewer's individual attention, we had exact records of the verbal interactions, we had 'access' to each other's respondents and we had an immediate way of checking on the 'adequacy' of questions. Only two respondents in fact refused to be taped.

Having designed the research instrument, worked out the way to reach mothers and how to codify their stories, it now remained to get out into the field, to become interviewers. At this point, the research design looked both operable and straightforward, only dependent on

women's co-operation and our success at interviewing. While we anticipated the sample size being affected by refusals, families moving or being untraceable, I think we were unprepared for the full range of dramatic sampling modifications that were to occur at each interview stage - for example, a phantom pregnancy, or a wife murdered by her husband when her new baby was five days old. (The full fluctuations in sample size are explained in the Appendix V). Certainly, despite our intellectual grasp of the likelihood of perinatal or neonatal death we were unprepared for the experience of two babies dying. Furthermore, we failed to anticipate or show any awareness of interviewer/researcher fallibility in our original research design - yet during the interviewing one interviewer left for good and I found myself trapped in hospital after an accident. Although these crises and eventualities cannot be rehearsed they do seem to suggest that a certain degree of elasticity should be built into research designs and sampling procedures, especially in longitudinal studies, to take account not just of respondent commitment/availability but also of researcher commitment/availability. In a sense I am advocating a kind of 'shock absorber' approach to research modelling. The loss of one interviewer (in fact the 'chief' interviewer responsible for interviewing eighty mothers) occurred three-quarters of the way through stage two of the interviewing process. In other words, the fieldworker had carried out eighty interviews at stage one (in pregnancy) and sixty at stage two (at four weeks post-partum). We were at once faced with the traumatic decisions of: how best to continue the research, minus a member of the team; how to reassure the respondents (eighty) that their contributions had been important and would continue to be so; how to handle the data collected by this fieldworker; and how to relate this partially collected data to the

rest ? Our first decision, taken after consultation with Laurie Taylor and others, was not to bring in a new interviewer at this advanced stage of fieldwork. There was simply not time to integrate and train a new interviewer and besides, it was feared that a new worker might further disrupt an already shaky and shaken research team equilibrium. So the problem had to be solved 'in-house'. The remaining twenty stage two interviews were shared out between the three of us and for the final stage three interview, we devised a postal questionnaire to be delivered in person to the group of eighty mothers. At this visit, the interviewer explained to mothers why the research format had changed and apologised for the absence of the original interviewer. For analysis purposes and again in consultation with others, especially our statistical advisor, we decided that the sample size should continue as two hundred - but that a sub-group of one hundred and twenty should provide our in-depth focus. Although no statistical discrepancy could be found between the two groups in respect to any of the major demographic or socio-economic variables, we felt more confident with the continuity and comparability of the one hundred and twenty cases. In writing up the final report of the study, the data on two hundred mothers was used primarily as background and summary data, while the qualitative and analytical findings referred only to the sub-group of mothers. (A complementary account of our balancing of the data is contained in Graham and McKee, 1980; see also Appendix IV for an overview of the changes in research design in tabular form).

So far I have mentioned only the progress of the research - through interviewing methods. It must be remembered that we had also envisaged some observational work at clinics. Sadly, this part of the design

somehow disappeared throughout the course of the study. I can recall no active or deliberate decision to abandon observational work but I think as we became more and more reconciled to being a 'survey' and not an ethnography, and to the sheer demands and time-span of the fieldwork, which was fourteen months in all - our observational intentions got lost. This is an illustration of how research designs get modified by omission and are shaped by the way nature and momentum of the research process itself. Our research methods and process had a chronology constructed by us, but were also governed by the 'natural' chronology and pace of having a baby, which takes time.

As for the third aim of the study - to provide a concurrent review of the sources of information given to expectant and new mothers - we were both more diligent and successful. For the duration of the project I compiled a detailed diary of the television and radio coverage on the topics of pregnancy, childbearing and childrearing and recorded, with the assistance of the University audio-visual department, selected programmes. Transcripts of given programmes were also forwarded to us by the BBC. In addition, copies of the weekly magazines 'Woman' and 'Woman's Own', were provided free to us for the three years by their editors, as were copies of the monthly specialist magazines 'Mother' and 'Mother and Baby'. We also subscribed to the monthly magazine 'Parents' which was first issued in 1976. This stock-pile of data was later used in a content analysis. Our emphasis was finally narrowed down into the provision of a critique of selected television and radio programmes and presented in tandem with an analysis of women's usage of and attitudes toward the information sources.

The Fatherhood Project

This lengthy and painstaking account of the research design and methods of the Motherhood Project is a necessary preface to the Fatherhood Project. This is because the Fatherhood Project was a slow, natural outgrowth of the Motherhood Project and in many ways parasitic upon it. I have already discussed how the Motherhood Project alerted me to the existence of fathers. However, it did more than just divert my attention to fathers, it provided the opportunity for me to recruit a population of fathers. Knowing only that I wanted to investigate fathers as a target group and with only a number of very general questions in my head (those cited earlier), I decided to approach the partners of women already taking part in the larger survey. This could be called research 'opportunism'. I see now that I readily adopted aspects of the primary methods of the Motherhood Project and translated them into the fatherhood context. At the outset I accepted that the design should be longitudinal involving three interviews over time; that the two sets of data should be related or comparable in some ways; and that my main approach would be through focussed interviewing in parents' own homes. My rationale for making the two projects symmetrical at that time was both ideological and pragmatic, based on the realisation that I would be conducting both simultaneously; that I would be identifying a population of 'couples'; that I would have duplicated interests in their parental and marital experiences; and that I would be interested in the relationship between the male and female parental members and especially their processes of negotiation, decision-making, division of domestic and childcare labour. In other words, the areas of experience both for me as researcher and for mothers and fathers as researched would

overlap as would any involvement in their lives.

So I took the mothers engaged in the Motherhood Project and the research instruments employed in the Motherhood Project as my starting point. Mothers were my point of access to fathers - an observation which underscores the continued lack of a sampling frame for fathers. (Although as more fathers attend ante-natal classes and childbirth, this is changing. I will return to this point later.) While the research instruments forged for the Motherhood Project had grown out of informed reading and a wide literature search and through active immersion in the culture of mothers, the choice that faced me in the Fatherhood Project was either to suspend a 'ready-made' research group in favour of a similar induction into the literature and culture of fathers, or to go naively into the field and read later. I chose the latter path and for this reason, too, my reliance on the Motherhood Project instruments in formulating my questions to fathers was greater than it might have been, especially in the first interview. In retrospect I believe that the direction of the relationship between the two projects resulted in my concentrating too emphatically on men's childrearing or caretaking responsibilities and not enough on their provider and work lives. In my care not to make gender assumptions and in my tendency to apply universalistic questions to both mothers and fathers I feel that at times I 'forced' an inappropriate androgyny on the questioning. This led me to exclude more 'gender specific' issues in my direct questions about notions of masculinity and male identity. Fortunately, I feel that I asked the questions with sufficient flexibility and open-endedness and increasingly in an unstructured way, as to allow these features of male experience to emerge despite the research instrument. Furthermore,

as the study progressed. I was able to amend my ignorance about fathers and to research the literature in conjunction with doing the interviews. The first research instrument was therefore the most 'primitive' and the most dependent on the Motherhood Project.

The disadvantages of one project spawning another and running concurrently can be seen therefore in that it is hard to break from a prescribed format and time-schedule and that it is unlikely that the researcher will possess an equality of knowledge or resources. In addition, one researcher serves two masters and two research groups; and priorities have to be established. In my case, it was a tension between my job and my leisure activity - my PhD; work for myself and work for a team; work that was inspired by a considered research motive and ambition and work that emerged in an ad hoc and intrinsic way; work that had a prescribed end-point and work that was not financially supported; work that had to be done by day (interviewing mothers most often) and work that had to be done by night (interviewing fathers most often); work that had an identifiable research reference group (the BSA Human Reproduction Study Group; The Fertility Study Group) and work that was done in isolation, not attached.

I have given the impression so far that the Motherhood Project stymied the Fatherhood Project - but this is false. In spite of all the above constraints I was able to adapt the Fatherhood Project and gradually to mark out its distinctiveness. The research instruments were not adopted literally; and original and particularistic questions were inserted. I quickly became aware that I was unencumbered by any 'survey' requirements and that as my numbers were going to be small I could veer back to my initial preference for a case study approach.

This made my research instruments much more adaptable and my usage of them much more flexible. As well as actual open-ended questions I compiled a list of topic headings and used a combination of the two styles in my interviews with fathers. In the last interview with fathers I used the least structured style of all and used no set questions, relying only on topic headings. Fathers were progressively encouraged to talk more freely to me about their family lives and to raise issues untapped by me at each stage. Each interview was able to inform the next and I was able to implement a grounded analysis as I went along. (Both sets of instruments are contained in Appendices IX and XI). I was also able to build-in some observations of couples made at the 'pop-in' interviews and to become more deeply involved in the lives of the small number of couples who were taking part in the two projects. This involved attendance at two christenings and social visits both to and from a number of the parents. Although I had accepted the notion of three interviews with each father, I had some degree of freedom as to the 'timing' of these interviews - choosing to interview again in the last trimester in pregnancy, but always at some date after the wife had been interviewed; at, on average, the eleventh week after birth (although this ranged from nine weeks to sixteen weeks) and at twelve months after the birth. In setting these times I was more responsive to the wishes of parents, noting when they could reasonably be expected to talk to me again. However, I did have to take account of the practical considerations of when I could 'fit them in', due to other 'maternal' interviewing pressures.

One other major departure from the Motherhood Project was that I was able to refine my research population to include only first-time fathers

and to dispense with prospective coding or 'selective transcription' (I tape-recorded and transcribed all interviews with fathers in full and will discuss this later). The restriction of my interest to first-time fathers only had both positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, selecting only new recruits to fatherhood allowed me to concentrate on the notion of 'becoming' a father and men's perceptions of this transition. On the negative side, it severely curtailed the 'pool' of cases or potential respondents for my study. I decided only to use my personal' sample of fifty mothers as a point of access. I felt that if I was to appreciate the 'mutuality' of parenthood and the context of the 'couple' then I needed to 'know' both the mother and father and to have established a rapport with each. Taking out the second-time fathers left me a case study group of twenty-seven which seemed ideal for my exploratory and ethnographic purposes. However, this gradually whittled down to thirteen fathers. (The reasons for this drop in case study group size is given in Appendix VI).

The Fatherhood Project consists then of thirteen fathers interviewed in-depth on three occasions. (For biographical details of fathers and their wives see Appendices VII, VIII and XII - details are included of their occupations, ages, parity and social class positions). Their wives were also interviewed in-depth three times and with twelve of the thirteen couples a 'pop-in' interview was also carried out. This totals an average of seven visits to these homes in a period of twelve-fourteen months. There was also informal and social contact with some of these parents. While in the Motherhood Project we were always left with the feeling that we had had to include too many mothers and that we had collected too much data, the Fatherhood

Project has left me with the residual feeling - did I include too few fathers and collect too little data ? A curious irony - but strangely enough it is only the latter problem which provokes any popular or public questioning, suspicion or call for justification.

In addressing the question about too few fathers, too little data and the research consequences of small-scale research, I can only offer the thesis in reply. In the main, I feel that concentration on the small number of cases over a considerable length of time offered me an intimacy and insight into the research problem that I could not otherwise have gained. It allowed me to develop a truly grounded approach to my data and was consistent with my original research orientation. It encouraged me to approach fathers in a way that was inductive and exploratory. As such, I was able to develop an 'interactionist' approach to fathers which developed their subjective meanings and attended to the processes of becoming a parent. My research naivety about the phenomenon of fathers forced me to trust my eyes, my ears, my feelings and, most of all, my respondents. I had to take fathers seriously, their perceptions, their subjective meanings, the integrity of their everyday experiences - I had no other pegs. The few a priori assumptions that were operative related primarily to mothers and I found I approached fathers with a deficit of recognisable beliefs. My questions and areas of interest had to be formulated largely on the basis of conventional wisdom and folk lore and because of the small numbers were able to serve more as research 'cues' than 'things I needed to know?' I doubt if I could have treated my questions in this 'casual' and flexible way had my numbers been too large. Being close to a small group showed up the

irrelevance or folly of some of my 'early working notions' about fathers. For example, I was soon able to discard my 'folk' pre-occupation with 'paternal jealousy' - fathers seemed to have more important things to talk about. A large number of cases does not prevent researcher sensitivity or reflexivity but must make it less manageable on a day to day basis - one's attention and/or attentiveness is spread more thinly.

Focussing on a small group also had other advantages, it gave me the privileged opportunity to spend a good deal of time getting to 'know' couples well and their babies. I was able to watch, enjoy and appreciate the baby's development over time and I feel I was often drawn into aspects of domestic and familial life most precious and private. Again this degree of 'familiarity' would have been harder if the number had been greater. Given that I was also conducting in-depth interviews with thirty-seven other mothers I think I would have had to set up boundaries about time and personal commitment if my work-load had been heavier or larger. On a rough calculation I carried out a total of two hundred and thirty-four interviews during the fieldwork duration. I was able to devote my research stamina to thirteen, where I would have found fifty depleting my resources. With small numbers and qualitative methods it is possible to concentrate on family processes and relationships and to detect, in this exercise, the implicit ordering and patterning of these processes and relationships across families. I found that while I was building up a profile of one father and his unique orientation to parenthood I was at the same time able to translate some of this very specific information into the context of any father. A single case told me that a phenomenon 'could' occur (Piotrowski, 1979).

Further advantages of the case study approach will be raised in a later section in connection with data analysis and interpretation. The gnawing disadvantages of concentrating on small numbers correspond more generally with some of the overall disadvantages of the interactionist or grounded perspective. One is reliant on description as opposed to explanation; statistical generalisations, validations, or 'proof' of theory are not possible; it is difficult to assess frequencies of phenomena; the relevance of conventional sociological variables such as age, social class, occupation or marital status are hard to deduce; the typicality of cases or experiences cannot easily be judged; sampling requirements are seldom met in terms of randomness and representativeness; checks of interviewer/ethnographer reliability are seldom made and replication is denied. However, all these disadvantages are only handicapping if one forces small numbers of cases into the methods and aims of studies using large samples. In this thesis the case study approach is used for its own strengths and does not attempt to approach those problems better served by large samples. My continued emphasis is on: the generation of analytic concepts appropriate to the experience of being a father; the articulation of men's perceptions of fatherhood; the identification of fatherhood 'styles' or typologies; the discovery of appropriate questions to ask fathers; the uncovering of what fatherhood means to men; relating what fathers say to what mothers say; and drawing attention to issue of gender in sociological practice.

4.3 The Experience of Interviewing

Interviewing Women

Ann Oakley has lucidly highlighted the shortcomings of the conventional social scientific paradigm on interviewing where calls are made for objectivity, value-freedom, distance and interviewer control (Oakley, 1981). She suggests that this is an essentially 'masculinist' perspective on interviewing, derived from a masculinist model of social science and particularly inappropriate where women or feminists are interviewing other women and are conducting in-depth and repeated interviews. She shows through an honest and analytic account of her own interviewing practice with mothers how the prescribed text-book style broke-down and would have been 'morally indefensible' (Oakley, 1981:41). Oakley felt that one of her main research ambitions, to make women visible in sociology, would have been defeated had she applied a hierarchical, non-reciprocal, detached research relationship with her interviewees. In her case, it was both 'politically' and morally necessary to enter into a responsive and intimate relationship with mothers and she cites examples of how she achieved this: by answering women's questions; by referring mothers to the 'appropriate medical or non-medical authority'; by helping with the work that had to be done' (Oakley, 1981: 47); and by adopting an attitude of 'sisterhood' toward mothers.

Oakley's critique of interviewing fits my own experience in talking to mothers and her approach and posture toward mothers very much mirrors our own orientation in the Motherhood Project. Very early on we found ourselves being drawn into the lives of women and into the intimacies of their everyday experiences. This after all was

central to our research brief. We soon found ourselves confronted by the question of the nature of the interviewer/interviewee relationship, particularly the issues of reciprocity and hierarchy. In some early notes from this time I find myself asking:

Can the interviewer reciprocate with ?

- a) information
- b) practical aid. (ranging from a lift to the doctors, to the provision of nappies)
- c) mobilisation of social services
- d) mobilisation of medical aid
- e) advice

Hilary Graham and I had to take active decisions on these issues and, like Ann Oakley, decided that we would answer requests for information as fully as possible ourselves, at the same time identifying what were the limitations to our knowledge and pointing women in the direction of additional information sources. We also produced a brief guide to the maternity rights and services available and gave these to mothers. Our response to advice questions followed the same general principle. We did not systematically record the qualitative nature of these questions in the way that Ann Oakley did and many of the questions are now lost to us - they came sometimes before or after the interview, often when the tape-recorder was not switched on. In recollection, I did not receive many questions about 'proper' motherhood practice, or about the exact experience of childbirth. My childlessness did not allow women to attribute this 'expert' or 'insider' knowledge to me and in many ways they could put themselves in the role of 'instructor' or 'expert' vis-a-vis me as interviewer. I have often felt in retrospect, that although my childlessness could

have been a disadvantage I was able to turn it to my advantage in the research context. Some element of balance or equality was introduced into the interviewer/interviewee relationship and I could genuinely ask naive questions where women's testimony was superior, and could not be checked or contradicted by me. This 'innocence' often meant that in telling their childbirth accounts women did not have to 'hold back' or 'keep up a brave front'. They could not dismissively say 'well you know how it is - you've been through it yourself' - reproductively I was a 'blank sheet'. In general, I felt I was able to employ my 'reproductive distance' to enhance my curiosity while at the same time being a woman and a 'gender insider' gave me the opportunity to empathise with their experiences 'as women'. I was an 'outsider/insider'.

In handling questions about my personal life I always tried to be honest and it was here that I think I mostly communicated my feelings of commonality with women. I tried to make sure that each woman knew something about me. Having a noticeable regional accent I believed it was important to say where I came from, how long I had lived in the town, told a little about my family background and my own marital status. I got married during the course of interviewing and I told all my respondents about this. Indeed many respondents knew of my marriage intentions when my friends did not. This had the lovely but unintended consequence of my receiving several wedding presents and cards. It is interesting that in my original list of questions about reciprocity I do not include 'personal questions'. I think this is because I did not find handling such questions problematical. I must have acted on instinct, intuition and this probably reflects that I do not find self-disclosure difficult. In addition, I was quickly

aware that the research relationship could not operate on investment from the interviewee alone. I think my social work training may have been useful here in that I had had experience of client-social worker relationships and found notions such as 'non-involvement', 'objectivity', woefully inept. My commitment to the Women's Movement and attention to the validity of women's experiences encouraged me to take the position that women had the right to ask, the right to know and that in some way the offering of some biographical pegs would enhance our relationship and rapport, our 'sisterhood'. One instance of how women often used what they knew about me to better clarify or articulate their own feelings or experience is contained in an exchange where a mother is describing having a low interest in sexual intercourse. She comments:

I suppose you know what I mean -
having only got married yourself -
does your husband want it a lot too ?

Here the woman is attending not just to the fact that she knows about my recent marriage, she is also affirming that we share a common gender and marital status and potentially a 'common' marital problem. I shall not disclose my reply to her question but I did answer it as openly as possible - again believing that this sharing was integral to the research process and to my potential beliefs.

The one most persistent and universal question that mothers did ask and which I found hardest to handle was about my own future family intentions. This had the effect of making me consciously work out my own 'stance' on having children. I was forced to explore my own life-plan and to discover the place of children within it. Frequently women asked if they had 'put me off' and I think they did - but I

never had the courage to tell them so. I slowly developed a stock reply which was less than honest and tinged with some defensiveness and some sense of self-protectiveness. I felt if I said I did not think I wanted children, this would be too brutal and I would be disqualified from the world of mothers, I would be stripped of my borrowed citizenship. My half-honest and cautious answer was usually that: 'I was undecided' or 'not in the short-term'. I am still childless and would still give the same reply.

Obviously, not all women wanted to know equal amounts about me and differential levels of self-disclosure, intimacy and self-revelation were demanded. Indeed in the main I am surprised how seldom interviewees did ask me to trade 'personal' secrets. I would suggest that this shows that they too may apply a 'scientific' paradigm as interviewees and that certain implicit rules are obeyed in interviewing interactions by interviewees, however close and 'friendly' the relationship appears. The fact is, the boundaries of 'intimacy' or 'rapport' were negotiated in every single interview and with each individual mother and in some cases relationships went 'closer' or 'deeper' than others. Women retained the right to 'draw back' and to 'objectify' me. This would partly explain why five years later I have sustained close contact with only three mothers although a number of other mothers do send occasional greetings cards or letters, especially to announce the birth of another baby (moving away from the area has also complicated this issue). However, the point I am trying to establish is that interviewees are active in the interviewing process and have the power to establish not just how much information they offer up, but also to effect the degree of personal involvement they prefer. This is not fixed by the interviewer alone but is shaped up in interaction and is fluid. Certainly, I experienced one instance

of where I fully expected the mother or the father (who was a member of the Fatherhood Project) to refuse to co-operate at each interview and approached their home in apprehension. Yet their loyalty to the study was sustained.

While handling the giving of advice, information and personal 'secrets' were difficult aspects of the interviewing relationship, they were not irresolvable and some rule of thumb solutions, either 'individual' or 'team' solutions, could be prescribed. What I found more difficult was coping with the social context and the stresses or crises of pregnancy and motherhood. It was in response to these situations that the questions about mobilising practical aid, medical and social services became acute and problematical. It was here that I found my own role as interviewer/researcher most uncharted, blurred, inappropriate, intrusive and sometimes 'politically' questionable. Not just because of my background in social work, but clearly influenced by it, I found myself slipping between roles of researcher, social worker, housing officer, counsellor and therapist. Getting drawn into the lives of women, means sometimes getting drawn into their problems, the problems of their husbands and their families (housing, neighbours, financial, marital, physical and/or emotional). This is unavoidable when interviews take place in women's homes and the interviewer is reliant on knocking on doors and penetrating behind them. Interviewing mothers involved not just chocolate cake and sherry, but draughty rooms, sick babies, depressed mothers, violent husbands, death and mourning, unemployment, poverty, loneliness and sadness. I found myself face to face with all these issues and there were no ad hoc solutions or ready made prescriptions. I was unprepared and deeply affected (for an account of how similar life-events affect

the interviewing of unemployed families see McKee and Bell, 1985 and McKee and Bell, in press).

In my sub-group of mothers there were two single mothers experiencing difficulties with the baby's father: one denied paternity and in this case claimed the father was the mother's brother, this mother being fifteen years old; the other father refused maintenance. Nine mothers had experienced a threatened miscarriage during pregnancy and five of these experienced a stay in hospital. One mother suffered a serious epileptic fit one week before labour started and had to be rushed to hospital. One unmarried mother was prevented from continuing her participation in the study by her father. Two mothers lost their own fathers during pregnancy and experienced a great deal of grief and distress, while in another case, an elderly father-in-law moved into the couples' home just before the birth of the baby. Two husbands were made unemployed and two were off work due to sickness. One mother lived in one room without access to her own toilet and with no separate kitchen. The window in this room was broken and unrepaired for the whole time I knew her and her landlord was uncooperative and refused to do anything about it. Two marriages broke up and one mother left her husband and moved temporarily to a refuge for battered wives (see Appendix XVI). One mother lost her baby through still-birth, another was (as already mentioned) murdered by her husband when the baby was five days old. One couple were homeless and living in a one-roomed flat with a relative, and were awaiting re-housing. Ten babies required extra medical attention, although none had 'serious' abnormalities, one had a congenital hip dislocation and squint, and one very bad eczema.

This catalogue of 'problems' is presented not to exaggerate the problems I faced per se - but more to reveal the structural context in which interviewing takes place and to convey the day to day distress that interviewers might encounter. Methods which ask interviewers to get 'close' to interviewees and their everyday lives require the interviewer to develop strategies for 'coping' with everyday life. I was not armed with these strategies and had to rely on my 'wits'. Pregnancy and motherhood cannot be bracketed off from real life or placed at the top of the hierarchy of life-events. The research act must also sometimes come second and interviewers may be faced with situations where they have to establish priorities and where the choice may be whether to 'help' the mother or conduct the interview? (See Appendix XVI). In my own case I had to suspend my interviewer/research loyalties when I arrived to find a wife, Mandy Richards in great distress, having just been beaten by her husband. He was upstairs at the time. Her immediate need as she conveyed it to me was to get out of the house as quickly as possible. In this setting there was not time to consider the 'appropriate' research role - we fled taking the baby, toddler, bottles and nappies. The outcome of this visit was my eventually taking Mandy and her two children, fourteen months and one month, at her request, to the local refuge where it transpired she had been three times before and once during late pregnancy. I had had no idea that she was being subjected to his violence until this time, so despite what I previously perceived as a 'successful' interview she had managed to conceal this fundamental feature of her marriage from me. I had earlier met her husband, but they had kept their marital 'secret' intact. I had even commented to Mandy about how involved he seemed to be with the children and she later confided that her immediate thought was: 'if only she knew'. The lessons of

this case study for the interviewer are two-fold: the interview may have to be sacrificed in the face of larger survival issues; and marital privacy is a fairly impenetratable thing (See Appendix XVI).

A wider concern also raised by this case is the theme of violence in the domain of researcher and researched. Both this example and the murder of one of my interviewees, brought home dramatically to me the extreme vulnerability of wives and mothers to physical violence. Once again I was reminded of my own gender and of my potential vulnerability as a woman interviewer. Mandy and I had to return to her home before going to the refuge. Her husband was still there upstairs. When we left for a second time he pursued her and I was left literally 'holding the baby'. The departure was menacing, noisy and emotional as we sped off in my car. I returned to their home some four months later to conduct another interview after they were reconciled - so I had to face John Richards again having been instrumental in conveying Mandy from the home to the refuge. My position was surely a delicate, if not a dangerous one? Are interviewers prepared for this? I have never heard violence against women talked about out loud at any research methods gathering - yet it is ever imminent and pervasive in terms of both interviewees and interviewers. This is part of what I call 'taking gender seriously'. If women are 'made visible' in sociology (Oakley, 1981) it means exposing the problems of their gender and the extremeness of their oppression by men. Women interviewers can do a lot to publicise their case.

Acting 'for' or on 'behalf' of women posed one set of dilemmas. However, we also faced a decision over what to do in a case of suspected maternal

'child abuse'. The choice here was to break confidentiality with the mother and notify the appropriate agencies or to 'opt' out and hope it was detected by somebody else. In the end we reached a compromise and because our evidence was slender and inferential, Hilary Graham ensured that the mother, who was one of 'hers', had contact with the health visitor. When she mentioned wanting to attend the clinic, Hilary Graham offered to drive her there. In this way, we tacitly mobilised professional involvement and at the same time remained faithful to the mother. Fortunately, there were no repercussions and our suspicions were probably unfounded. I cite this case as a counter-point to the one above to show that 'gender' alone or even feminist principles cannot always inform research decisions or provide 'appropriate' research guidelines.

Interviewing Men

I found a number of essential and remarkable differences in the experience of interviewing women and men. Firstly, fathers almost uniformly had less to say and took less time to say it. While the average length of interviews with mothers lasted two to two and a half hours and once up to four hours, interviews with fathers averaged one to one and a half hours, although this did increase toward the last interview. Secondly, I found my initial interview with men more formal and less 'conversational' than those with women although again this style altered over time and became more relaxed. Thirdly, I was far less engaged in and far less likely to be made aware of men's social and familial problems and the context of fatherhood whereas, as I have argued above, the social contours of motherhood and 'wife-

hood' were omnipresent.

I will try to untangle what might lie behind these differences.

Some of the explanations might refer to me, my gender; professional status; age; marital and reproductive status; interviewing style; adequacy of the research instrument; competence at interviewing men; and research relationship to their wives. Some might relate to them: their gender; point of entry into the study through wives; presence of others, especially wives during the interview; orientation to being interviewed; experience as fathers and familiarity with talking about feelings. Or some might be related to external conditions unconnected with the interpersonal dynamics of the interview: the character of wider social relations between men and women; prescriptions of masculinity and femininity and qualitative differences between being a mother and being a father.

Firstly, in trying to make sense of why fathers' interviews, especially first interviews, were shorter and less 'conversational' than those with mothers, I find it useful to raise the concept of 'legitimacy of the topic' (I refer more fully to this in Chapter 10). Here, I am alluding to the fact that a number of fathers were unused to or unfamiliar with talking about the subject matter of pregnancy and babies - particularly to a non-family member. This was made very clear to me in their early comments where they mentioned an inability to rehearse or anticipate what I might want to know or what they might want to tell. Methodologically this is an acute problem, for it is a case of a researcher labelling a research phenomenon and expecting her respondents both to recognise the label and to be able

to talk about it out loud. This is where some systematic observational work might have enhanced my approach and in a future study I would anticipate watching men 'do' fathering as well as expecting them to verbalise about it. Nonetheless, while I accept this limitation of my own work I am prepared to use it as a finding rather than as a stumbling block. The fact that some men find it as difficult to talk about pregnancy and/or babies may be a clue to wider cultural prescriptions of masculinity and male socialisation and suggest some boundaries of male pre-occupations and orientations. At the end of each interview I asked men how they had felt about talking to me and some of their replies may better capture and clarify this issue of masculine inhibition in connection with pregnancy and birth:

I. Can I ask you how you have felt talking about these things to me ?

Len Kerr: Mm. I must be frank, fairly difficult you know, but yet I wanted to. But I didn't quite know what there was to talk about. There was one or two things that I didn't realise you can talk about. I can't remember what they are but there was one or two.

I. Is there anything else you can think of that I haven't touched on ?
(in the course of the interview ?)

Tim Streetly: No, not really. I was just trying to visualise the things you would ask but I couldn't say I could do that even, you know, what sort of questions can you ask on it, you know ?
You've surprised me !
(This father dropped out of the project after this interview.)

As both these comments are taken from the first interview with men,

conducted during pregnancy, it may well be that it is the nature of pregnancy or birth itself which sets men apart from the topic and attributes to them only a secondary or indirect relevance. Men are at one remove from the active processes and drama (See Chapter 6). Expectant fathers' experiences are not unique but have to be related to those of the expectant mother. Hence in drawing up a research instrument for expectant fathers there always has to be some cross-reference to the expectant mother or the unborn child. Researchers investigating pregnant women do not face a symmetrical problem. Expectant fatherhood therefore is both 'inferential' and 'distant', while expectant motherhood is 'actual' and 'close'. This kind of speculation about the qualitatively peculiar characteristics of becoming a father would also seem to fit as one explanation for why later interviews with the same fathers were longer. The comments of Pete Mitchell and Tommy Hooper capture men's perceived distance from pregnancy and birth:

Let's be honest about it, the father doesn't do a lot does he ?
I mean he doesn't have any, he doesn't have the aches and pains and all the trouble 'n doesn't have to go through with childbirth. I mean he goes out 'n has a good time while 't poor mother's in hospital having to look after 't baby and having to give birth and what have you so we can't say we're badly done to cos we're not.

Pete Mitchell

It's a subject (pregnancy) men never really talk about isn't it ?
I mean women, it's always in a woman's mind but never in a man's mind, so I mean, I talk about anything but.

Tommy Hooper

Another reason for the brevity of men's interviews when compared to mothers is again contained in their own accounts, where several men refer to being unaccustomed to talking about family matters or feelings more generally especially to an outsider. This issue of self-disclosure kept recurring in a number of interviews and men explained to me that when they did exchange 'personal/marital' feelings then wives were likely to be the only or main confidants. On the other hand, close and confiding relationships with men were more often built around 'non-family' affairs and self-disclosure outside the family context was more likely to be related to work or leisure concerns. Male exchanges typically had a non-familial, non-domestic tenor and took place away from home (this debate is expanded in Chapter 10). Consequently, my role as an interviewer talking to men about their feelings and family details in their own homes was a complex one. I was contravening both the rules of domestic/familial privacy and of 'marital primacy' and in a sense in what I wanted to know/discuss I was becoming more like their wives. This was complicated in the cases of those men who did not talk to anybody about feelings or found self-revelation difficult in all circumstances and even to their wives. Various labels have been raised to capture men's inability to share feelings by other researchers, such as 'trained incapacity to share' or 'male inexpressiveness' (Komarovsky, 1962; Balswick and Peck, 1971) and this masculine tendency did seem to be operative in some of my interviews where men themselves remarked on their repeated failure to find the right words. The Men's Movement and writers on men and masculinity have also picked up on this gender characteristic. Some comments from men themselves reveal this sense of emotional inhibition and show how gender of the interviewee may be influential in how much

is disclosed and the ease of disclosure:

I. How would you say you've felt talking about these issues to me ?

Difficult, difficult yes, I find it hard to put my feelings into words.

Chris Hill

I. How would you say you've felt talking about these things to me ?

I suppose I am a quiet type but I don't mind.

Terry Shapiro

I. Do you find it difficult to talk about pregnancy and being a father to me ?

Em, I find it difficult because I can't, it's not usual that I can be interviewed, you know. I usually just blank off and I can't think of what to say.

Tommy Hooper

The last comment from Tommy Hooper also hints at a secondary theme, the ease and familiarity with being interviewed. The un-naturalness of the interview situation is also picked up by another father who classes it as restricting. In the Motherhood Project women were also asked how they felt about taking part in the interview yet in their replies there is much less emphasis on either problems with self-disclosure or problems of being an interviewee. Instead, women often considered the interview therapeutic and expressed relief at being able to share their experiences with me, noting sometimes a lack of sympathetic listening from spouses, friends and kin (Ann Oakley, 1981 also found this). None of the fathers identified talking to me as therapeutic although some did find it enjoyable (again this is discussed in Chapter 10). Women themselves also picked up on this

theme of 'male inexpressiveness', and noted the masculine tendency to shy away from 'talk as therapy'. A number of wives described their husbands as 'deep', 'reserved', 'quiet' - indeed as fitting the stereotype of 'the strong, silent male figure' - or the 'sturdy oak ideal'. Interviews were put then to much less personal use by men in terms of 'getting things off their chest'.

The fact that some men seemed to operate strict demarcations about to whom they confided about family matters and feelings and the tying of this talk to wives and homes has a bearing on my own gender as interviewer. At first I believed I might have got 'deeper' and 'closer' to men had I shared their gender. However, I slowly realised that being a woman had unmistakable advantages. As I have already suggested, by raising family matters and feelings and being in their homes I more closely resembled a wife, further, there were those men who suggested that cross-gender talk about pregnancy and parenthood was easier, more appropriate and less-threatening. The 'girls at work' were sympathetic, concerned, while all-male audiences were described not just as disinterested but often as punitive and with a lust for ridicule. Joking and teasing were frequent and essential parts of male dialogue concerning pregnancy and fatherhood (See Chapter 10). Talking to a woman interviewer did not pose these risks for the men, they did not have to be wary in my presence or guard their self-esteem. I was both more 'like' their wives and other women, and by my gender in a 'closer' and less hostile relationship to the topics of pregnancy and babies. I would suggest that while in general I did not get 'as close' to fathers as mothers, I got closer than I could have done had I been a man - their defenses were lowered and the legitimacy of the subject matter raised.

That some men felt able to relax in my company rings through in the following extracts:

I haven't been embarrassed talking to you cos you've made me feel at ease with your questions. It's been nice talkin' to you about it. And the questions you've asked have been straightforward and sensible and no beatin' round the bush sort of thing. (Pause) Cos when you came first (he and his wife didn't want to take part) and said you wanted to ask questions and there's no questions we haven't wanted to answer ya (laughs).

Derek Morris

Well I've enjoyed it (the interview). Now and then I've felt slightly inadequate when I've not been able to remember things but you know I'm like that generally anyway.

Simon Shaw

(See his remarks about talking to his unsympathetic peers in Chapter 10).

I do feel that the research instrument and my focus primarily on men's child-rearing role also effectively abbreviated and to some extent, handicapped my exchanges with men. In a sense, to talk about their work lives and selves men had to 'overrule' my research brief. Fortunately, as I said before, some did feel able to do this but I feel in retrospect I should have created more natural space for this to occur. The interviewees had to work extra hard to get the talk 'round' to work. I think much fatherhood research is guilty of this over-emphasis on child-rearing and of treating fathers as if they were mothers (the issue has been raised in Chapter 3) but this is a research immaturity which has come about due to the long standing neglect of men as fathers and a desire to over-compensate. It is also

coloured by our ignorance about fathers - what they are and do. Again, I see my methodological flaw here as a finding which could inform a future project. I also see it as one which did not fundamentally damage what I was able to learn about fathers, I learnt despite myself and my research tools. The fact that men may talk more readily about work and about work-related feelings as opposed to family or marital issues is raised by Piotrokowski. She found women more able to talk openly about marriages, men, about their 'workday life' (Piotrokowski, 1979: 298). She speculated that it might just be that men are more satisfied with their marriages than women. Certainly, in my own context I would suggest that men seemed to confront fewer problems with parenthood than women. This leads me on to why I encountered few social or familial problems connected with fatherhood and why the context of fatherhood remained elusive to me while the context of motherhood was often painful and ever visible.

Just as I have argued that the immediacy of pregnancy was asymmetrical for men and women, I would suggest that the experience of parenthood also differed and that this affected what was uncovered or brought to me in the interviewing context. In my case-study group of thirteen, only two mothers were working by the time the baby was twelve months, so many of the adjustments of parenthood were adjustments to being a 'housewife', to being at home, with its associated loss of income, loss of status, severing of networks and social contacts. None of the fathers experienced a similar social dislocation in connection with parenthood. The upheaval of parenthood for men is usually less 'socially' dramatic and networks and jobs can be sustained. This alone must influence what there is to 'tell'. Besides, although fathers varied in their degree of involvement in caretaking of the child (as

will be seen later in Chapters 8 and 9), mothers' involvement in caretaking was more or less invariant and seldom optional. This meant that mothers were potentially at risk of facing more problems than fathers vis-a-vis the direct care of the child and had fewer diversions to these problems or 'ways out'. Motherhood had more adhesiveness and usually also brought 'housewifery'. The distinctiveness of the 'problems' faced by new mothers and new fathers in caring for the child is repeated by men themselves where they pinpoint the structural differences between being a mother and being a father. They suggest that this creates differential needs in mothers and fathers and distinguishes the way they use their networks (again for a fuller discussion see Chapter 10). I would suggest it also affects how they use the interview context. Keith Anderson is explaining why he thinks his wife talks more about basics than he does:

I think this is because of the situation where Angela is involved totally. Again, I go off to work and there's a helluva lot of things going on and uh the talk about babies'll maybe span one hundredth or one thousandth of the day's conversation. But obviously when Joan comes across with Faith (neighbour and baby) then the conversation totally revolves around what they're doing, what they're buying from Mothercare, what they're feeding them on.

I am not suggesting that parenthood brings no problems for men - but rather that the dominant 'fatherhood' problems mentioned were of a less tangible kind, concerning issues of responsibility, breadwinning, financial pressure - again centred away from the home, from the day to day care of the child and from the context of the interview. I had to reach out for them. The complexity of this issue of fathers and problems is highlighted in a paper which compares the expansiveness

of lone father research respondents and the present case study group (see McKee and O'Brien, 1983).

As well as shorter, less familiar and less 'messy' interviewing I faced a few additional difficulties in talking to men which cannot again be separated off from my gender or theirs. Mirroring the conjugal relationship had its advantages in terms of encouraging male self-disclosure but it had its disadvantages when boundaries became blurred and I was perceived by men not just as a confidant but as sexual prey. (This theme of sexism in the research context is discussed further in McKee and O'Brien, 1983). Only one man was overtly flirtatious and invited me to drink his home-made beer in the garden. This social gesture, innocuous in itself, coupled with his flippancy and very casual manner made it hard for me to relax during the very first interview. This was a feeling that never left me and although he never 'pounced' I always suspected that he might. The fact that he was studying sociology for an Open University qualification also complicated this relationship and I always felt he was slightly cynical and derisory of the research exercise. I would suggest that he flaunted his gender and tried to assert dominance both by hanging on to the male symbol - 'the glass of beer' - and by 'eyeing me up'. Talking about his sexual relationship with his wife proved very difficult for me, especially as I was unmarried at the first interview and felt very vulnerable in my singlehood. The only other occasion when I was aware of any sexual 'innuendo' in the interviewing context was in the case of the one father who reminded me of my then boyfriend, later husband. It would need an observer to say who then was culpable of sexual flirtatiousness but I certainly

remember feeling 'warmer' towards him.

A few other episodes surrounding my interviews with men also reminded me of our gender identities and prescribed social roles. At one interview the fan-belt of my car broke and the father rushed to the rescue. At another, the tape recorder broke down and again the man came to my aid with his tool-kit at the ready. In both cases, the men took on the active, instrumental roles and I the passive, helpless female role and at once a wider social gender hierarchy was established to which I acquiesced. The dominance of these men in fixing the car or the tape-recorder was not intended but a function of our training in different 'gender' skills, their eagerness to 'help' and mine 'to be helped'. Feminist interviewers have a part to play in breaking this cycle but they need to be of sterner stuff than me and good at mending cars and tape-recorders ! (I now can fix a fan-belt, as I was determined to learn immediately after this; but take the tape-recorder to the tape-recorder shop !) I also found difficulty in handling men's comments that were directly sexist - references to 'fat women' (see later in this chapter) or to women's inability to be racing car drivers. In my 'accepting' interviewer role I let these things slide by and never confronted men. Again, I perhaps took the easy way out.

Interviewing Couples

Most of the other hazards I faced in interviewing men are related to the fact that I was also interviewing their wives and I think it is worth discussing some of the problems that I met in talking to couples.

It must be stressed that I was involved in repeated interviews with both husbands and wives and it was in my interests to keep on good terms with each and to establish a good 'rapport' with each. To lose a couples' confidence was to sabotage two studies. Due to my point of access to husbands via wives, my feminist orientation to women and my larger 'paid' commitment to the Motherhood Project, I was especially anxious to retain wives' loyalty to the study and I had to take care not to jeopardize their commitment and involvement. When I originally approached my potential 'pool' of husbands/fathers I had firstly to 'win' wives over to the idea so that they would give me permission to approach their husbands. If they agreed, I sent fathers a letter direct explaining my study (see Appendix I and II for copies of the invitation letters sent to mothers and fathers). Arguably, this could have contaminated the entire exercise with only those with 'good' marriages or highly involved 'husbands' selecting or being 'selected' by their wives to come forward for the Fatherhood Project. However, I am confident that this did not occur to any large extent and if we explore why fourteen fathers out of twenty-seven couples approached did not take part in the Fatherhood Project the reasons are more complex, relating not just to the selection process or the state of the marriage, but to my and their availability/eligibility.

Out of the fourteen who did not cooperate in the Fatherhood Project there were three unmarried fathers, none of whom were going to be involved in rearing the child (and one of whom denied paternity/one of whom refused maintenance) - so mothers clearly did not want me to involve these men; one father was not a first-time father; one father had agreed to take part but his baby was born prematurely before

I could get to interview him; four fathers had agreed to be interviewed but I had to cancel these interviews when I was hospitalised due to an accident - by the time I left hospital their babies had been born; four fathers refused through their wives, although their wives seemed disappointed about this and seemed to have tried to recruit their interest; and one father took part for the first interview only (Tim Streetly). His withdrawal was conveyed to me by his wife and she said that he 'had felt silly'. She continued to participate in the Motherhood Project and I felt very hurt and awkward about his drop-out. Some aspects of the marital biography may explain this particular couples' orientation to the two studies, for Julianne Streetly feared that Tim was very jealous of the baby. She also insisted in staying when I interviewed him, sitting close by him on the sofa and making remarks throughout his interview. It was also at this interview that the tape-recorder broke, all of which did not add to Tim's ease, comfort or conviction to the exercise. However, in contrast another couple, the Hoopers, stayed with the two projects despite marital troubles and their marriage breaking up; nor were the other twelve marriages distinguished by being uniformly harmonious or united. As for attracting a more committed or egalitarian group of fathers, this is less easy to counter. I can only say that my data suggests that the thirteen fathers were considerably differentiated on this - ranging from the highly involved, to the scarcely involved, as will later be seen. Nevertheless, the methodological drawbacks of using wives to recruit husbands/fathers cannot be overlooked and need to be taken seriously as it still remains a common feature of fatherhood research. Perhaps it is time researchers began to explore 'father-centred' routes of entry to their research - using workplaces, unions, pubs and working men's clubs. I know one researcher who has successfully located lone

fathers in this way and she did not resort to the 'convenience' of a sampling frame of mothers (O'Brien, 1984). The largest limitation of the 'father-centred' routes of access is time and hence expense.

'Keeping in with' wives was also a consideration in how I structured my interviews and affected my decision of whether to insist on seeing husbands alone. I had rejected joint interviews for two main reasons, firstly wives had had 'their' interviews to conform with the Motherhood Project brief and secondly, my research interest in fathers was inspired by their continued neglect as research subjects. Fathers' accounts were seldom heard and I wanted to reverse this pattern and give them a platform too. This led me to choose separate interviews but it presented me with an organisational problem as to whether fathers should be interviewed alone or in the presence of their wives. In the end I decided to make it very clear that I wanted to talk to fathers and that the interview was theirs - after that I left it up to individual couples to decide on whether the wife should stay or leave (In Appendix XV I produce a profile of who stayed and who left). I believe that this very open-ended but unambiguous emphasis on the ownership of the interview incidentally produced some interesting insights about the couples' relationship. There were those couples, typically but not always the more highly-educated and middle-class, where the wife made a point of absenting herself (the Shaws; the Hoopers; the Banks; the Mitchells; the Andersons; the Prices; the Elliotts; the Hills); those where the wife created a distance between herself and the interview - by sitting physically apart, knitting, ironing and never speaking (the Owens); and those where the wife established herself in the midst of the interview and

did or did not attempt to contribute (the Crowleys; the Shapiros; the Morrises; the Streetleys). Where the wife absented herself, it is possible to speculate that these marriages were characterized by norms of mutual privacy and even, trust. On the other hand, in many of these cases there were other rooms to go to or wives had use of the family car so they could go out shopping. In these cases, the wife often stayed to greet me and then left, with the husband and myself looking after the baby. Night interviews were more complicated, some wives mentioned they had nowhere to go or that they did not go out on their own. Neither the Crowleys nor the Shapiros had separate downstairs rooms to retreat to.

Again, in taking decisions about separate/joint interviews and as to whether to allow non-respondents to stay, the issue of gender intrudes and consideration had to be given to the fact that I could have been perceived as a 'sexual interloper' in marriages. Being childless, unmarried; noticeably not pregnant and in some cases chronologically the same age as wives made my position potentially ambiguous and disruptive. I include this reference to my being 'noticeably non-pregnant' because of the disparaging comments made by one father toward pregnant women's lack of sexual appeal and their divergence from the socially-approved and masculine norm of 'slimness' (see the following exchange):

I. Do you find Jean more or less attractive when she's pregnant ?

Less. I don't like fat women you know (laughs) ... but you sort of look at other women, you know, you see a lovely slim woman walking down the road you look at her and then you look at your big fat wife you see and you think, ugh (laughs) but you know that she'll go back to being slim once it's done with.

Tommy Hooper

I remember being very aware of these dangers and taking consideration primarily of wives' feelings and preferences. Again, my commitment to the women, infused by feminist beliefs, and to the Motherhood Project, meant that I respected wives preferences first and if they were more comfortable staying then I had to adapt my interview to accommodate their presence. This is what happened and I never insisted on a wife leaving but I did sometimes find her presence hard to handle. A few symmetrical problems of management of 'husbands as non-respondents' also occurred in the Motherhood Project, but it was usually easier to organise interviews when husbands were likely to be absent than vice versa. This again reflects on the structural differences of motherhood and fatherhood - with mothers' interviews typically taking place in mother's 'workplace' and during mother's working hours - usually day-time when fathers were likely to be at their workplaces. Interviews with fathers took place in their 'non-workplaces', that is homes, and typically during 'non-work' or leisure hours. These leisure hours were also often the couples' only leisure hours together. 'Fathers as non-respondents' were absent from mothers' interviews by default. 'Mothers as non-respondents' were absent from fathers' interviews by design.

Again as the volume of work on fathers increases these methodological decisions - about where to interview; in whose presence; and whether joint or separate interviews are preferred - will have to be faced squarely. It might be that interviews with fathers alone will have to be arranged outside the home from time to time - so that mothers are not pushed into spare rooms or bedrooms or out of their homes at night when they have nowhere to go, all in the name of research. There will have to be more systematic evaluation of the effects of a partner's

presence on the account given: does it contaminate, inhibit, discolour, prejudice the quality or tenor of the replies? In my own case study group, there was one couple, the Morrises, who were adamant that separate interviews/or interviews without the other partner present would be a distortion of reality! They insisted on arranging to be together for both Motherhood and Fatherhood interviews and although I directed/focused my questions on the respective parent they often spoke for one another or in unison. At the conclusion of my first Motherhood interview I asked Cathy Morris to summarise her feelings about the time of pregnancy and she replied: 'Oh we have enjoyed being pregnant'. This couple had been married for a year, were delighted with each other and felt they had 'no secrets'. They used to arrange the interviews on a Tuesday night which coincided with their favourite television programme, 'Mastermind', so we would stop the interview to watch this and then continue. My visits and interviews were a 'joint' experience for them and I knew them as a couple and not as individuals. Had I forced separate and solitary interviews, I might have missed this insight into their relationship and constructed something false and meaningless. In contrast, I think Tim Streetly might have stayed the course of the project had he been 'allowed' to see me alone. There seems no easy methodological way forward in family research and a danger lies in rigid prescriptions. Again, I relied on my instincts and 'wits' sometimes I think this meant I got it right (the Morrises) and sometimes I got it wrong (the Streetlys). It would seem that a partner's presence may 'bias' the interview, but their absence might also introduce a 'bias'. I took the risks in my methods in favour of retaining a long term 'rapport' with both mothers and fathers and I trusted respondents to tell me what was the 'best' interview context. It is possible to envisage where this

'responsive' approach of mine could fall down, such as in cases where husbands especially exert dominance over wives and assert the 'right' to stay. This did not happen but is a persistent danger of this interactive or 'democratic' methodology and such 'self-determined interviews' could just mirror family and gender inequalities.

Managing the presence of the 'non-respondent wives' proved most difficult when asking questions about sexuality. My handling of this was not always consistent but again was tailored to my perception of individual couples. Sometimes it was possible to ask about sexual relations when wives were out of the room making coffee or at the end of the interview. Again, I was very conscious, not so much of men's feelings, but of wives' feelings and so asked these questions out of earshot where possible for their protection.

In one case (the Shapiros) this was not possible and Terry Shapiro's reply about their sex lives directly contradicted what Lesley Shapiro had told me some weeks before. She had felt their sexual relationship had deteriorated in pregnancy and he felt it had improved. When Terry made this statement Lesley flounced into the adjoining kitchen and started noisily banging pots and pans about. This was a very tense interviewing moment when my role in stirring up 'marital trouble' surfaced most acutely. These dangers of exposing contradictions, and opening marital sores are exaggerated if the non-respondent partner is present. The importance of the home as a 'locale' shows up in this instance for Lesley was able to exert some control over the interview by withdrawing to the kitchen and in fact she returned later calmed and presented us with tea.

Piotrowski has noted how many of her interviewees engaged in similar

'domestic' tasks (making tea, putting in the laundry, shaving) to overcome the anxiety or distress raised by the interview. In this way, she sees home as more advantageous than formal research settings - where fewer props belong to the interviewee and distress may be handled only by terminating the interview (Piotrokowski, 1979: 295). The making of coffee/tea by wives during interviews was much less often observed amongst husbands during wives' interviews. However, it is dangerous to make too much of this because as I have already said husbands were much less commonly present during wives' interviews and comparisons are not that equal.

A number of family researchers have commented on the personal 'use' that couples make of the interview and 'interviewer'. While I have suggested above that fathers typically used the interviews in less therapeutic ways compared to mothers, this is not to say that fathers made no direct personal use of the interview. Indeed, because some fathers rarely aired their feelings and views about pregnancy and parenthood they sometimes used the interview to clarify and identify what were their feelings. The interviews were a kind of consciousness raising and fathers explored feelings about the baby, their wives, their own parents and child-rearing. These were not feelings that men had been itching to share but feelings prompted by the interview itself. Fathers also used it in some instances as a vehicle for achieving a sense of solidarity with other fathers and asked me if other men had said or experienced the same thing. Two men said they felt neglected until the interview and that the interview gave them a wider sense of social recognition as fathers (Simon Shaw and Nigel Owens). A number of wives expressed relief at this too and were glad that their husbands were brought forward for attention. They hoped the

interviews might help to overcome the father's sense of exclusion - which was often not so much an 'actual' problem but one that they feared as a 'potential' problem. The interview with fathers was seen as redressing the balance and giving fathers some limelight. It was almost certainly the reason why the Morrises, who were very opposed to 'mother centred' ante-natal care and literature, agreed to cooperate in the two studies - it affirmed their sense of 'togetherness'.

In terms of drawing me into their struggles or disputes as couples or attempting to get me to take sides, I experienced only a slight amount of this in the Fatherhood Project. Evan Crowley tried to get me to see how unreasonable it was that his wife's mother should visit so regularly and Lesley Shapiro tried to win my support for getting Terry to give up his Saturday football so he could share Saturday with her and the baby. Both Evan and Sheila Crowley tried to convince me that their respective roles as breadwinner and mother were hardest while the other partner had an easy deal. In these sorts of situations I remained very non-committal or non-judgmental and refused to take a stand. The most dramatic example of where a couple wanted to 'triangle' me was when the Hoopers split up and Tommy wanted me to act as an informant about Jean and the baby whom I had seen more recently than he had. I gave him a factual and honest report of how they seemed to me but did not break Jean's confidences. During this visit Tommy became very emotional and sad in talking about his daughter and wife. A reconciliation was planned before this interview and I think Tommy used the interview to see all the 'good' things about his marriage and fatherhood. Again in the interview context my unspoken role as 'counsellor' was implied, and in a number

of exchanges interviewees forced themselves to face painful things and, sometimes, to resolve them. Simon Shaw kept bringing up his own unhappy relationship with his father and was trying to develop a new perspective on it. Through listening and being non-directive, the interview could have positive emotional side-effects. Interviewers cannot shirk these facts of interviewing, or these responsibilities.

The interviewing of mothers and fathers also had a profound effect on me. As I commented earlier, it encouraged me to take a stand on my own family intentions and to articulate my life plan vis-a-vis having children. At twenty-one I wanted six children, at twenty-five, midway through interviewing, I wanted none. Now at thirty-four I am agnostic and if anything still preferring childlessness. My close and deep 'entry' into the culture of parenthood caused me to 'back off', to see the flaws and imperfections of the social conditions of motherhood and housewifery and I am especially haunted by the memory of those many, tired, exhausted, lonely, housebound women I met. I know too there was and is joy in parenthood but it was less confronting and its impression less lasting. I am also aware that I saw only a snapshot of parenthood - the early months - and that I caught no glimpse of lasting family satisfaction. Talking to mothers and fathers has at least made me cautious and my honorary 'parental membership' has made me delay and think very hard before I take out a full, irreversible subscription. My intellectual knowledge about pregnancy, childbirth and babies has made me an 'expert' amongst childless friends and an 'ally' to my friends with children. Those friends with recent babies feel they can talk in a limitless and uninhibited way to me (noting 'you're different') unlike their other childless friends. I am seen as having an 'objective' or academic

interest in the subject and am often found in a corner at parties talking babies. The trouble is - both mothers and fathers seek me out. As for my poor partner - he is also long-sufferingly knowledgeable about parenthood by proxy, but his patience at parties does sometimes wear thin and he has moved into an even more 'anti-parenthood' position than me. The research process has far-reaching and multiple repercussions.

4.4 The Research Context and Relationships

Just as the Motherhood Project strongly influenced the prescriptions of the Fatherhood Project it also provided the research context and relationships in which this thesis was created and developed. I have explained early in the chapter how I 'arrived' in the Motherhood Project and consequently, the Fatherhood Project. I have shown how I moved from a position as graduate sociologist to member of a research team with managerial responsibilities. This transition was a difficult one and one which Hilary Graham and I never fully resolved between ourselves. Our formal titles were research fellows and suggested an equality of status, we had both taken York Masters degrees in sociology, we were of the same age and gender and we both preferred to work in a way that was non-hierarchical. The difference lay in Hilary Graham's relationship to the research idea; 'she thought of it'; and to the research money; 'she got it'. It also lay in Hilary Graham's relationship to the York sociology department - she had built up a relationship over some five or six years and had already spent two of those as a York doctoral student when I arrived. She was an insider; I was a relative outsider (although I had spent

one year there as a Masters' student). Hilary Graham's knowledge of the subject matter, of the maternity hospital system, network of contacts, closeness to the research process, and status as a mother of two children under five years placed her intellectually far in advance of me. She was the 'expert' and I the 'novitiate'. Taken together these factors made a non-hierarchical approach difficult and they created structural inequalities which were too big for either Hilary Graham or I ever to overcome successfully. They resulted in my perceiving and resenting the existence of a 'hidden hierarchy' and I think led to Hilary Graham feeling she ultimately 'had to carry the can'. Even if we had managed to overcome these feelings for ourselves, they were not helped by outside agencies and individuals, who treated me as if I was the 'research assistant' and Hilary Graham as if she was the 'research boss'. The earlier examples of letters and invitations to speak addressed only Hilary Graham, or of the funding body's lack of a relationship to me all compounded my sense of invisibility and, I should think, Hilary's sense of onerous responsibility. Looking back, I feel that this structural invisibility could have been tackled at the outset, especially the relationship to the funding body, with a quick letter insisting on joint correspondence and ownership. Establishing ownership/authorship clearly from the beginning seems important, if only symbolically. With hindsight, it is also apparent to me that my need for equality was unfair to Hilary Graham, whose reputation had been carefully built up over several years. We did not have, and I should not have, expected to have an equality of networks.

Getting the research locale right seems the next most important feature of a successful project. For us, all the above issues were exaggerated

by my geographical isolation from the Sociology Department and from Hilary Graham and Laurie Taylor. For the three years duration of the project I was housed in what is known as the Institute of Social and Economic Research. I was the 'Social' in the title and was a minority in both my academic background and gender. All my immediate colleagues were economists and all save one were men. This ratio altered over the three years with the arrival of a political science project and two more women. All the contact I had with Hilary Graham and Laurie Taylor and with fellow sociologists had to be premeditated and arranged and for my day-to-day interactions I was reliant on contact with non-sociologists who at first poorly appreciated my research intentions and with men who poorly appreciated my gender isolation. Hilary had to act very much as a 'go-between' relating the doings of the Sociology Department to me and the doings of my research work to them. She also often served this function between Laurie Taylor and myself. Again in retrospect, a lot of pressure could have been taken off us both had my access to members of the Sociology Department been more immediate and had lines of communication been direct. Research institutes seem to spawn these problems and it is not individual personalities who are at fault but rather physical distance which breeds psychological distance (Diana Woodward and Lynne Chisolm (1981), experienced almost identical problems of being 'out of sight and out of mind').

The research institute also presented its own peculiar problems connected with being a sociologist and a woman. For example, there was some initial difficulty in getting myself taken seriously. The project, being concerned with mothers and babies, was labelled by some as 'soft' and occasionally it was lonely and tiresome having to justify

sociology and qualitative methods. However, allies were found in time and fruitful interdisciplinary links were forged.

My awareness of the divide between myself and my male economist colleagues was most acute in social gatherings. The people from the institute were those I drank coffee with, ate with, played squash and table tennis with. Lunch time typically involved discussions about the daily page three newspaper displays of nudity and there was considerable sexual innuendo. I found myself forced to ignore such comments or to take the guise of the angry young woman. Many of the postures I adopted to handle these situations were 'stereotypes' and one male colleague reported that I was seen as 'formidable'. Furthermore in at least three of my colleagues' offices there were semi-pornographic pictures and calendars which I found offensive and despite my protest no change came about. There was also one incident of direct sexual harassment by a senior male member of the staff which I brushed off. Later, I discovered that I was not the only victim.

Within the Institute there was a strict hierarchy between the research staff and the 'girls' (secretarial and librarian staff). I found this split between academic and non-academic effectively divided the staff into male/female groups and left me in a marginal gender position. The question of where my allegiances lay arose in many small ways. For example, only the 'girls' were asked to bake for the institute Christmas party. Only the research staff played table-tennis at coffee breaks. The question about where I fitted in was relevant to me and others' perceptions of me and at times I passed as an 'honorary' male, being excluded from domestic tasks (making the tea) and included in male pursuits (squash, table-tennis, pub trips, etc). Many academic women must face dilemmas of this kind in dealing

with what Morgan (1981) calls 'male sociability'.

My employment as research fellow on the Motherhood Project deeply affected my experience as a PhD student on the Fatherhood Project. In fact, I would say that it has made me feel as if I have never been a research student. I developed a sense of research autonomy and self-sufficiency during the Motherhood Project which has continued to some extent in my approach to my PhD. At times, I have felt like I wanted to begin again as a student and a novice as a 'blank sheet'; to carve out a research student identity; and a research student peer group. However, there is no going back. Through the Motherhood Project I became an 'experienced' researcher. The Motherhood Project gave me a chance to collect my data for the Fatherhood Project and to get some general sense of the fatherhood literature. Apart from that, my thesis involvement was entirely suspended until the completion of the Motherhood Project Report in 1978. Since 1978 I have been a part-time PhD student, funded initially by the Health Education Council for two years and unfunded thereafter. My relationship to the Sociology Department has more resembled that of an ex-research fellow than an on-going research student. I now live physically distant from York and this too has separated me off from the graduate student body. Consequently, in my relationship to the work and to my supervisor I feel more like a freelance researcher with all the advantages of independence, self-determination and self-motivation and all the disadvantages of isolation, self-doubt, lack of a reference group and sliding deadlines. This is the context of this chapter and this thesis.

4.5 Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation

The data analysis and interpretation associated with the Motherhood Project required me to learn a number of new skills, in many ways antithetical to the experience of in-depth interviewing, such as coding and computation. From a highly interpersonal and expansive research setting, the quantitative analysis in particular led me to focus on 'variables and not people', frequencies and not processes; 'facts' and not perceptions; correlates and not relationships or connections. This was a sharp intellectual switch of emphasis and style and it was not easy. It was ameliorated only by the fact that we relied heavily on our qualitative findings to guide the quantitative direction and that each 'slice' of data was used in cross-reference to other (see Graham and McKee, 1980 for a further account of this). In making sense of the data from the Fatherhood Project, this kind of analytical tension and dilemma has not been apparent. With handling only a small number of fathers and their partners, quantitative expectations can be dropped, for the case study approach is poorly equipped to provide meaningful survey-like results. Instead it is possible to attend genuinely to the subjective meanings fathers and their partners' attach to parenthood. It is more appropriate to focus on how fathers perceive and construct their parental roles; how they negotiate, achieve, reformulate their behaviours in relation to their wives and children; and how they shape up their family realities. The analysis then is highly reliant on an interactionist emphasis and on insights taken from both phenomenological sociology and symbolic interactionism. It begins with the assumptions that the meanings of parenthood and fatherhood are fluid; are continually open to redefinition and are influenced, but not determined

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by, wider institutional structures, for there is always scope for tension and variance between the individual actor's meanings and wider cultural constraints. As Ken Plummer (1979: 92) points out, in the interactionist perspective:

The human being is both subject and object. The importance is stressed of the localised setting and context, the uncertainty of knowledge and the ambiguity and fragility of meaning - as well as the inexorable tension between the shapeless stream of human life and the shaping structures of the wider society.

This perspective requires a mode of analysis where the data, or the fathers, are 'allowed to speak for themselves' and where cues are taken firstly from father's accounts. For this reason, I chose to use my transcription of men's verbatim interviews as an integral part of the analytical procedure. This was my first orientation and it took almost six months to achieve. By listening and 'getting to know' the fathers again I found I was already developing 'conceptual schema' and at first assimilating and organising data along thematic lines. My initial preference was to follow the chronology of both the interviewing and of the processes of pregnancy, birth and becoming a father. In some ways, this meant I was being responsive to the data and in others, it showed that I was imposing an order - a ready reckoner of events. This tension between their and my formulations persisted throughout the analysis and could only be solved by my doing the same thing again in different ways. For example, as well as trying to understand men's experiences in accordance with the flow of events, I devised a variety of ways to

cross-check and review the significance of the event for the one individual in toto. So I built up a profile of the experience of pregnancy for all expectant fathers, then I built-up a profile of the experience of pregnancy for a particular expectant father and so on.

The 'conceptual schema' that emerged during transcription can be classified as topic headings or 'descriptive labels' (these headings closely followed those identified in the original checklist of questions - see Appendix IX). These were not fixed for each or any interview but sometimes a new 'topic' or theme would be generated by only one case and I would have to look back at my earlier transcriptions to assess its relevance there. I tried to be as 'sensitive' and 'intuitive' as possible - evoking in my mind the man's voice, inflection, interview setting, marital interaction and all shreds of him that I knew as I went along. Throughout the transcribing I felt like a witness on an identity parade (but hopefully more accurate) scratching up all the evidence I could, all the innuendo, the humour, the sarcasm, the laughter, the enthusiasm - wordless and sometimes unintended clues to the 'right' person. These people are now 'inside' me and I could tell you at a stroke what Tommy Hooper or Len Kerr said about breast-feeding or working mothers or his ideal family size. This process of intensive familiarisation with my case study group has been central to my analysis and has given me confidence to speak on 'their' behalf.

As 'themes' or 'topics' gathered across the case study group they became part of an analytical framework and I began to get a sense of how different and how similar fathers were. I also began to learn

how central or peripheral were my/their original conceptual schema. To help me appreciate both the frequency and weight of the experiences subsumed by the 'topic headings', I devised a way of counting reports and comments. This quantitative system was useful as a sifting device and again allowed me to see if the 'topic headings' were functioning as signposts to the data. In the final writing up, these quantitative skeletons have served as summaries to the case study group, but have little relevance to fathers as cases. I have found them a useful backstage analytical prop but no more - for even if an experience was only recorded once or by one father only, it has been taken seriously throughout.

In order to break away from the thematic organisation of data, the counting of experience, the chronology of becoming a father, I moved, after transcription and quantification, to develop what I call 'case profiles' of fathers. I then produced similar profiles of their partners and lastly of them as a couple, where I stressed the quality and character of their networks. (Network profiles of the 13 couples can be found in Appendix XII.) This concentration on network support was prompted both by fathers' own references to wider family relations and by my wider reading of family sociology where the qualitative effects of networkedness have been stressed (Bott, 1957; Bell, 1968; Edgell, 1979). Finally, I moved back again to individual fathers to produce some kind of 'value/attitudinal map' where I tried to explore the relationship between their reported behaviours and reported beliefs (an example is contained in Appendix XIV).

At the same time as building up an analysis of men's experiences as fathers, I tried to keep a sense of the wider context in which the

study was located. I compared their accounts with those of their wives in the belief that the experience of parenthood was a mutually negotiated reality and that parental behaviours in a two-parent family make sense only in relation to the other parent and the child. I also compared wives' accounts with those of the larger group of mothers in the Motherhood Project looking for points of convergence and divergence. I continually tried to off-set the couples' experiences against this larger backcloth. Throughout the analysis the Motherhood Project then has served as a reference point and an anchor. It might be noted that I have not yet placed my observational data in an analytic context. This is where my inferential work is hardest to convey. The observations were done largely in conjunction with the 'pop-in' interview when I was collecting information about labour and delivery from wives, and husbands were usually present. I focussed mainly on observing the quality of the marital interaction, parent-child interaction and on the general 'well-being' of both parents. This is recorded in the form of 'case notes' and it involved me 'surmising meanings, feelings and structures from observable behaviours' (Piotrowski, 1979: 315). These 'case notes' reveal the sorts of inferences I made (see an example in Appendix XIII). I did not cross-check my interpretations of the observed behaviour with the respondents or with external observers. They are therefore restricted by my personal perspective and judgments. For this reason I have not given them as much weight in the total interpretation of the data and have relied more heavily on the interview data. While I similarly did not subject my thematic analysis of the taped interviews to outside scrutiny, at least the verbal reports and transcription do remain and could be re-opened for a fresh interpretation or for new enquiry. The observed behaviours were seen and can be seen only by myself.

I would say in summary that the 'case notes' have been used un-systematically as footnotes to the main text. I feel that the observational work in this project could have been much improved and should have been taken as a 'data slice' both operationally and analytically. In a future study I would hope to be more circumspect about this.

In writing up the thesis it will emerge that I have reverted to a chronological presentation of the findings, moving through men's experience of pregnancy to the actualisation of fatherhood. The process and momentum of those events is so powerful that I found, despite my attempts to break loose from its naturalistic course, the thematic analysis kept recurring within a sequential or linear model. Furthermore, each interview with the same man was unique yet related and interdependent and in order to capture the dynamic flavour of repeated interviewing this chronological model is also appropriate. The longitudinal design itself, in its recognition of temporal change and process, also imposes a pattern. The men I was studying were at first non-fathers and then fathers. The shift between these two identities is itself central to the research ambitions. All these constraints gave the analysis and eventual thesis a fairly determined 'shape' but I have set out to treat this 'shape' self-consciously and problematically. The main limitations to my qualitative analysis are the invisibility and individuality of my inferences and interpretations. My 'conceptual schema' or 'thematic analysis' is highly personalised and grounded mainly in verbal reports, and as Piotrowski (1979: 314) notes:

... the researcher is not merely
an empty vessel through which the

structure inherent in the data is carried into public discourse. Such an analysis involves a dialectical tension between the processes of accommodation, whereby the conceptual schemas are created and modified by the data, and assimilation, whereby the data are fit into the emerging conceptual framework.

I have tried to make this interpretative process as public as possible throughout the thesis but in the end without 'interjudge' evaluation the researcher asks the audience to engage in an act of faith.

Some would also argue that just providing an ethnography of people's meanings is not enough. Sociologists should aim to discover why individuals attribute those meanings and how they come to see and represent the world in the way they do. In this model, accounts are not taken at face value but more interpretive work is invested in making sense of how the accounts are constructed. This pattern of the use of accounts in analysis is borne in mind throughout the thesis.

4.6 Summary and Conclusions

This thesis has a complex history influenced chiefly by my interest in women's reproductive experience and gender relations more generally. It grew out of an attempt to make women 'more visible' in sociology where women themselves played a large part in drawing my attention to their husbands and to the marital and parental context in which they did their mothering. Women were essential in recruiting their husbands to take part in the study and the questions I asked mothers and the methods employed in the Motherhood Project deeply affected how I approached fathers and what I was able to learn about men as

fathers. The Fatherhood Project has been both enhanced and inhibited by its evolutionary relationship to the Motherhood Project and in the main, the advantages have overtaken the disadvantages. The disadvantages have been its small pool or group of fathers who could have been accessed in a more representative and independent way. A different selection procedure would however have meant delaying or postponing the study and neglecting a ready-made research group. A larger 'pool' or group of fathers would have provided more opportunity to determine some frequencies in addition to the qualitative material and although frequencies do not ensure the significance of a phenomenon it would at times have been helpful to have some base-line data for a larger number. Still, such an extension or expansion of the numbers of fathers would have again caused postponements, or would have meant interviewing husbands whose wives were unknown. It was felt essential to study couples. A bigger case study group would have certainly caused researcher 'overload' and again risked jeopardising the entire research exercise. Clearly in the existing research context, it would have been hard to establish and maintain a meaningful rapport with a very much larger group. The thirteen families became part of my life. This 'closeness' itself is open to criticism and in the analysis some benefits perhaps could have been gained by either collaboration with respondents or outsiders - time and resources restrained this possibility. The formal observational work has not been adequate and in a subsequent study minus the constraints of conducting two projects, could be improved and developed.

The foremost advantage of this study is that it has brought 'fathers

out of the shadows' (Derek Morris) and shifted the perspective away from 'wives' family sociology' (Safilios - Rothschild, 1969). In other words, it has highlighted fatherhood as sociological phenomenon and drawn attention to an earlier and persistent bias in family sociology where only wives are given a 'hearing'. It has opened up the issue of gender relations in the family and especially impinged upon concepts of masculinity and the male sex role. By talking to a few fathers it may provide clues and guides to those who wish to talk to many and provide some conceptual hooks for further work. For those working with families (especially families with young children) - health visitors, midwives, social workers or consultant obstetricians - it should serve to clarify and underscore the male family perspective and serve as an aid to their practice. For policy makers, it could be suggestive of one group of under-served consumers and contribute to the whole debate about maternity and paternity leave. For researchers, it may add to a body of knowledge about the influence of gender in the research process. It will also contribute to the larger debates about how to conduct family research and research with couples. For myself, it has led to a book collecting recent British work on fatherhood (McKee and O'Brien, 1982) and two research projects: one concerning men's leave-taking behaviour from work around the time of child-birth and perceived need for parental leave (funded by the Equal Opportunities Commission and conducted with Colin Bell, see Bell, McKee and Priestley, 1983); and one concerned with the impact of unemployment on marital and family relations (funded by the Social Science Research Council and conducted with Colin Bell). The research ripples are ever-widening and the research process is unabated.

CHAPTER 5

THE MAKING OF A FAMILY MAN:
MEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD FAMILY LIFE AND
ANTICIPATION OF FATHERHOOD



A SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Postcard (Date Unknown)

' Once you're married it's a natural, sort of thing, a mutual sort of thing to have children. Um once I decided we would get married I wanted children. I didn't sort of visualize life without them.'

Nigel Owens

CHAPTER 5

THE MAKING OF A FAMILY MAN:

MEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD FAMILY LIFE AND ANTICIPATION OF FATHERHOOD

The achievement of fatherhood establishes fertility and in the popular stereotype, by implication virility. It alters a man's image, emphasizing respectability in terms of ideologies of family life but it is not held to establish the credentials of personal fulfilment as in the case of women.

(Oakley, 1980: 182-83)

The literature review above (see Chapter 3) has established a gap in our knowledge concerning the meaning of fatherhood to men. In particular, it revealed that little attention has been paid to men's own accounts of why and how fatherhood is achieved. This chapter scans men's own biographies in an attempt to identify when family desires emerged and were articulated. It aims to clarify both the significance of fathering and fatherhood to men and to pinpoint when and how men construct their social roles vis a vis reproduction and childrearing. The whole thesis echoes the ambition to uncover what being a father means to men however, this early chapter specifically focuses on when notions of family, children and parenthood were first formulated and describes the particular circumstances of the conception of a first child.

The data reviewed in this chapter is of course retrospective

as the first child had already been conceived before research contact was made. This meant that the men had to be asked about former as well as current attitudes toward babies, children and parenthood. Despite the fact that the decision to become a father was irrevocable when the first interview occurred, a number of men did admit to a contradiction between former and current attitudes. This reassures the researcher that their comments in the main were not mere post-hoc rationalizations but instead contained the essence of their familial ideologies.

The questions raised to investigate how men construe and anticipate family life were largely posed during pregnancy and included questions about whether the men had always wanted children and how this fitted with their wives' expectations. The men were asked their reasons for having children; their attitudes to infertility, voluntary childlessness and adoption; their part in the planning of this baby; their reactions to this conception and its timing. In addition, they were encouraged to talk about their own experiences with children, such as degree of involvement and contact, and to express their vision of the future as a father. Family composition, size and gender preference of children were also discussed. They were given an opportunity at each interview to talk generally about their conceptions of mother's and father's roles and about actual as well as ideal parental behaviour. Their replies and shared reflections introduce us to the 13 men in this study where they begin their stories as fathers-to-be.

5.1 The Desire to Have Children

Much has been written, elsewhere about reproductive ideologies to

suggest that 'in the natural order' most married adults want children; that marriage and having a family are inextricably linked in our culture; and that parenthood is a valued and esteemed adult status for both men and women. (Busfield, 1974; Busfield and Paddon, 1977; Macintyre, 1976; Owen, 1982). The findings from this study of 13 expectant fathers do not contest these general observations. When asked 'would you say that you have always wanted children?' only one father, Chris Hill, a librarian, expressed an active objection to the idea of having children while a second father admitted to a sustained ambivalence, being on the one hand, 'anti-children' and on the other, fully recognizing that children were 'part of an inevitable future'. Most men expected to become fathers and supported the connection between the attainment of adulthood, marriage and parenthood. They were only differentiated in terms of when having children became an expected reality. There were two men who could not identify the time when the idea of having a family first emerged and became real and thus presumed it always to have existed.¹ Looking back over their life histories there was no point when they explicitly countered having or not having children. For other fathers, the desire to have children became concrete at given moments, most usually at or after marriage; in one case when marriage plans were being made,² and in two others, after conception of the baby.³ The majority of fathers then reflected on the possibility of having children only as adults and more commonly when marriage partners had been found. It was not a usual part of their boyhood or adolescent ambition but nor was it rejected. Although it seems that they engaged in very little rehearsal of the 'natural' adult status of being a father, they were not resistant to it. It could, however, only be properly

anticipated when a 'mother-figure' was identified.

It therefore appears that most men's desires for children are only activated through their close association with women/wives. The men's reports show that the precise time when family desires are articulated can vary, and that it is not so much the marriage which legitimates having a family as the existence of a 'marital context'. It seems that for the majority of the case study group 'it takes two to make a baby' and until partners are discovered family plans and aspirations are held in abeyance. The following mixed responses show how closely men connect wives/mothers and babies/children and how 'husbandhood' and 'fatherhood' go together.

(Asked if talked about having children before marriage ?)

At that age you don't start talkin' about prams 'n things like that do ya ? ... Suppose once you're married it's the thing to be thought about then.

Tommy Hooper

I. Have you always wanted children Nigel ?

Um yes I suppose I have done really. It's kind of a difficult question to answer really cos it's something you may not ever get married. But uh once you're married it's a natural, sort of thing, a mutual sort of thing to have children. Um once I decided we would get married I wanted children. I didn't sort of visualize life without them.

Nigel Owens

We discussed children when we were making, you know, solid arrangements for the wedding. And then uh after we had the honeymoon we more or less decided how long Cathy was going to work before we started a family.

Derek Morris

I. Would you say you've always wanted children ?

I think the seeds are there possibly before you marry although you're obviously not gonna marry a person who you think's not fit to bring up kids (laughs) and the two are possibly linked. ... When you're a bloke there are more important things to do when you are younger. You know there's the whole aspect of sex and as a younger fella the last thing in your mind is kids. You know it's a dread (pause) and then it changes, I suppose.

Keith Anderson

The remarks from Keith Anderson capture another subterranean theme in men's lives - the relationship between sexual activity and fertility. He depicts young single men as typically disassociating sex from family life. There is a suggestion from his experience that it is marriage, or at least finding a marriageable partner, that makes the link between sex and reproduction. It is as if the meaning of sex for men can be transformed by the transition to a 'steady' relationship or to 'couplehood'. Finding a wife here, embodies finding a potential 'mother' or someone who is 'eligible' to reproduce. This in turn initiates men's own anticipation of parenthood. In the two cases where having children did not fit readily into the couple's life plan, or at least where the link between marriage and fatherhood was not firm, it is interesting that the men described only properly and primarily anticipating having children after conception was discovered. Here husbandhood was not perceived as indelibly tied to reproduction. These two men, Chris Hill and Simon Shaw both saw fit to explain or justify why having a family and marriage could be separated and adhered to an 'anti-children' position. None of the other fathers explained why they should be connected - again drawing attention to the potency of beliefs concerning 'the naturalness' of having children within

marriage. Chris Hill reported: 'I've never been a great family man' and continued: 'For a long time I'd been one of these people that preaches the gospel of zero population growth and that we shouldn't have children in any circumstances.'

The 'taken-for-granted' nature of having children is revealed again by the fact that very few men reported talking seriously about children with their wives prior to marriage. Only five fathers recalled such conversations and in the case of Chris Hill it was to express his resistance toward having a family. Stephen Banks raised the subject also with negative connotations, reflecting on his fears of infertility. Such pre-marital conversations did not seem to depend on the father's level of education or occupation. Evan Crowley (a rail guard) had mentioned it to his future wife, while Keith Anderson (a school teacher) had not. In the three other instances where the subject did crop up, the fathers interestingly wanted children straightaway upon marrying. It would seem that the topic of having babies is more likely to be made explicit between couples before marriage either if there is an active hostility toward children, or a fear of not being able to have children, or, alternatively, an urgency to have them.

While it was uncommon for earnest discussion about the place of children to occur, light-hearted references to children had been made by a number of couples before they were married. Joking conversations were remembered by fathers where allusions were made to 'when we have children', 'when we have one of our own'. These casual comments were often tossed about between couples and may have served to underscore the 'normality' of parenthood and to test out

any objection or resistance to 'normal, married family life'. So although most couples married without making explicit plans to have children or without a full rehearsal of the place of children in their lives - they took each other on 'trust' believing that children were likely to be a part of the marriage package. The onus was on the partner who objected to having children to make his/her feelings known.

5.2 The 'Right' Time to Start a Family

Despite the widespread appeal of having children to most men in this study and its almost universal 'naturalness' within a marital framework, men had very discrete and fixed ideas about when the process of child rearing should occur. Being married was not enough for all of the men and other circumstances and conditions were prescribed. It was as if marriage was a prerequisite but it did not fashion the exact contours of when couples were 'ready' to start a family. Readiness for parenthood rather than being assumed had to be achieved and it was within this framework that husbands and wives were able to differ, as were men one from the other. This is where the monolithic 'naturalness' of having children breaks down, where individuals and individual couples try to exert their own peculiar preferences and where the process of negotiation about parenthood begins. Some husbands recognized that even if it was not the 'right' time for them it was the 'right' time for their wives and some 'marital altruism' occurred. The fathers in this study expressed a mix of cultural beliefs about the appropriate context and stage in the life-cycle in which child-rearing should occur, beliefs, which seemed to be highly circumscribed and repetitious. The absolute choice presenting itself seemed to be whether to 'wait' or have

children straightaway. The men variously emphasized themes concerning themselves, their wives and their material environment which together determined whether or not it was the 'right time' to have children. For themselves and their wives the factors of personal maturity; mental preparedness; age; stage and duration of marriage and occupational standing all figured as important and each factor could have a different weighting and interpretation for different individuals. One father could be concerned that he was too young, another too old, while another disregarded his own age and felt duration and stability of the marriage to be more significant. The men's reports suggest that couples did not necessarily concur on these issues and that much juggling and negotiation was possible. Material security and 'suitable' family accommodation were also identified as important in discussions about when it was appropriate to start a family and the roles of fathers as economic providers and homemakers emerged here.

This is not to say that all the couples achieved children at the 'right' time, but rather to suggest that men as prospective fathers adhere to an 'ideal' time in their lives for childrearing. This 'ideal' or 'right' time seems highly personalized and can even cause contention between couples despite the overarching dictate that having babies is natural and parenthood inevitable. In other words, most of the couples in this study accepted that their life plan incorporated parenthood but at the same time they tried to shape this life plan by having what they perceived as particularistic and flexible expectations. Fathers could differ from mothers, could differ from each other about when they were 'ready' for children. They could also change their minds over time. They differed too in

how far they felt the timing of children needed an active decision and as to which partner took the lead in this. Some of the following extracts contain men's notions of the preferred and 'correct' time to have children:

... It wasn't a planned one, it was just the off-chance, you know, it just happened, and we were hoping for another year or so yet before we got a bit square in here you see. I didn't want to be a father yet, but er, it's coming now so I'd better prepare myself to be one... We worked to get everything done so it had a nice place to come to but it's not so bad is it? (laughs).

Tommy Hooper

I. Would you say you've always wanted a family?

Yes, in time, but I never thought it'd be this time of life. I'd have left it a bit, er, I'd have liked to have got married a bit later in life but as it happens we've met earlier and that's it ...

Terry Shapiro

I. Would you say you've always wanted a family?

Well it's funny, um when I got married I was only 19, sorry 20, uh and I did then. And then Marjorie didn't at that time so I sort of pushed it to the back of me mind, cos I went off the idea for a while. And then after we got settled down and got this house I changed me mind again. And we both wanted family then, so we thought it was the right time really (my emphasis).

... I think it's just the right time for us, um, we wouldn't have been able to afford it, well I say afford it. We wouldn't have been able to look after it as well. We've got all we want for the house and if it'd been any later we'd have been getting a bit too old ...

Pete Mitchell

The Relationship Between Planning and Timing

Although the majority of the case study fathers retained a concept of the 'ideal' time to have children this did not always work out in reality. Indeed, 'ideal' timing, 'actual' timing and 'planning'⁴ of the conception did not always fit together in any easy fashion. Ten fathers described their babies as actively planned/intended but only half of these felt the actual timing to be right. The majority of the fathers would have therefore have preferred to start their families at a different time either earlier (3 men) or later (4 men) than when conception occurred. This tension between planning and timing underscores the uncertainties that govern human fertility where conception cannot always be summoned at will. The Prices, the Owens' and the Elliotts had to wait to conceive for 12 months, 3 months and 13 months respectively. As Bill Elliott says: 'After two years (of marriage) we just said "right, we'll have one". But it wasn't as simple as that.' When eventually Joan Elliott did conceive Bill found his reaction much less enthusiastic than imagined, commenting 'I was quite pleased but I wasn't doing cartwheels.' It is as if men (and most likely women) have to construct an alternative framework of parenthood expectations which runs alongside the ideal and can be modified, remodelled and renegotiated to accommodate any contingencies. This can function both for 'premature' and delayed conceptions and may allow couples to rationalize and 'come to terms' with eventualities.

To complicate matters further, mothers and fathers could differ in their assessment of the timing of conception, in their aspirations about 'ideal' timing, and in their definition of whether the pregnancy was intended or unintended. Their desires for children

could also be unequal. The Crowleys and Hoopers for example differed in their accounts here, with Evan Crowley actively trying for a baby and his wife wishing to delay and vice versa in the case of the Hoopers. Such discrepancies between spouses over desires for children, timing and planning only serve to show the complex and sophisticated processes that occur in relation to family building. Three brief case studies help to display the delicacy surrounding starting a family, its tentativeness and ambiguity, in short, its lack of 'naturalness'.

The Hoopers. (Milkman and Manageress in Small Office)

Tommy and Jean Hooper found themselves becoming parents at the age of 23 and 24 years old respectively. They had been married 3 years. Jean Hooper had experienced a miscarriage one year earlier. She had been trying to conceive again ever since and was not using any contraceptive method. She had had extensive and continual contact with children as a young girl and it was very important to her to become a mother. Her account suggests that she was actively intending to get pregnant, she had stopped using the pill, while her husband's account suggests the converse. They had recently moved to a new semi-detached house on an estate and in his mind he wanted to 'get square', 'get straight' before starting a family. While he admitted to always wanting a family it was his preference to delay until the accommodation was sorted out. He also referred to outstanding debts that he would have preferred to have cleared. His initial reaction to the news of the pregnancy in his own words was 'rotten' and he 'shouted at' his wife and 'upset her'. As he put it 'she just came out with it one night in bed'. Jean and Tommy were unequal in their planning of the conception, discrepant in their beliefs about timing although united in their ultimate desire to have a family.

The Banks (Accountant and Midwife)

Stephen and Beth Banks are aged 28 and 29 years and had been married 5 years. They both expected and hoped to have children but decided to have some years alone as a married pair. Beth Banks went back to college to train as a teacher deliberately choosing a future career that she felt would fit with child rearing. Toward the end of her course she and husband decided the time was appropriate to consider having children thinking 'about now is the time to start'. They stopped using contraceptives and Beth conceived on the first attempt. They had expected it to take a few months and were surprised at the ease with which Beth conceived. Stephen described it as 'a miracle'. In this case Stephen and Beth had not only the mutual ambition of having children, they also were in agreement about the 'ideal' timing and the 'actual' timing matched their aspirations. They used words like 'smug' 'proud' and 'chuffed' to describe their family building achievement.

The Hills (Librarian and Social Security Benefit Officer)

Chris and Jenny Hill faced prospective parenthood for the first time at the mutual ages of 29. They had been married 4 years. Chris had no desires to have a family and indeed had strong views against the principle of having children. He had little interest in children and had fairly fixed ideas about his future life-style which excluded children. A few months earlier Jenny came off the pill for medical reasons and they tried but found all other contraceptive methods 'objectionable'. Although not actively intending pregnancy Jenny was described as being more favourably disposed toward children and as experiencing fairly 'strong maternal feelings'. No decision was taken to have children but in Chris' words 'I just played along and let nature take its course'. The pregnancy was

something that occurred 'passively', it was a 'surprise' and Chris grew slowly to accept it. 'Letting things take their course' meant that the timing of the pregnancy was less than ideal. Chris regretted that the house was not yet 'straight' and feared his lack of financial security. Jenny's reactions to the pregnancy were more positive and in time Chris was glad that he'd 'altered his sights'.

5.3 Reasons for Having Children

A number of researchers have commented ably on why couples have children and on why childbearing is desirable in industrial societies (Busfield, 1974; Busfield and Paddon, 1977; Owens, 1982). Together they have identified a number of common themes connected with having children and conclude that 'children are conceived of primarily in expressive terms' (Busfield, 1974: 21). These themes can be summarized as follows:

family equals children; children make a family

children bring 'emotional satisfaction' to adults/
are rewarding

children enhance a marriage/make a marriage

children offer adults a 'second chance'

children provide a 'reason for living'/give purpose
to life

children create continuity/immortality

children are an insurance against loneliness/
provide lasting companionship

children increase the adult's status, particularly
women's status

children offer adult women a 'career' through the
role of mother

'children strengthen familial bonds' (Busfield, 1974)

having children indicates the achievement of maturity

children give pleasure/are "fun" (Owens, 1982)

having children is 'natural'

The fathers interviewed in the present study unsurprisingly reiterated some or all of the above reasons for having children although the emphasis differed between individual cases. However, in offering reasons for why they wanted (or did not want) a family (as in Chris Hill's case) it is important to note that the fathers in this study commented not just on their image of children, but also on their image of themselves, of their wives and of the 'marriage pair'. For some fathers their image of children was overriding and they stressed the intrinsic value of children noting that children are 'likeable', 'lovable', fun, 'they keep you perky and alert'. In this image, children are active and responsive. Their very attractiveness makes for a sufficient reason to have them. Terry Shapiro, Bill Elliott and Len Kerr variously remark: 'I like kids', 'I love kids', 'kids keep you young'.

Some men however identified qualities or a potential in themselves which encouraged parenthood. Here they were upholding an image of what it takes to make a 'good father'. Being liked by children, being able 'to get on with kids', being able to establish a rapport with younger people, having interests or skills which they could pass on to children, being interested in children, or having experience in handling children all figured as important criteria. These were talents that either existed or could be developed.

The concept of 'the family man' was raised in this context and seemed to embrace a mixture of homecentredness, a sense of

responsibility, experience with children, liking for children and a commitment to their interests. Notions of increased responsibility accruing from fatherhood showed through in men's comments about the need to stick with one job, (Chris Hill), the need for regular attendance at work, 'no odd days off' (Evan Crowley) and coming to terms with being 'no longer footloose' (Simon Shaw). Simon Shaw sums up the restraints of impending fatherhood and its weighty implications: 'I can't sort of pack my sleeping bag and vanish to Paris or whatever'. Although these personal qualities were not so much reasons for having children, many men saw them as pre-conditions. It was as if they embodied a 'paternal aspect'... Men were able to evaluate their own dispositions against these cultural pre-conditions of parenthood and conclude if they had at least a 'proper' orientation toward children. In short, in assessing and explaining why they were having children a number of men reflected on their own eligibility for fatherhood - did they have the "making" of a father?

In addition, some men had strong beliefs about the meaning and significance of 'family life' and their place within a family. They saw themselves encompassed within 'a family' and having children facilitated 'family life' with its meaning of a close group of loving and affective relationships. These men saw themselves drawing an identity and social status from being members of a family, or 'heading' a family. They also saw that they had a contribution to make as a family head. Having children was instrumental to creating both a family and their own social roles as fathers or family men.

That having children is bound up with men's images of themselves can be seen from the short extracts below:

Len Kerr is asked why he wants children:

We're very family-minded, we're family people.

Simon Shaw is asked how many children he would like:

Em, well emotionally I suppose, lots of them.

I. Why is that ?

I just like children, er, and I like the idea of having a family and it's sort of a nice situation having lots of people ... I'd like to think I'd spend the time with children, teaching them, speaking with them and being with them.

Conversely, Chris Hill reflects on why he might fall short of being a 'family man' and why he may have been disqualified from wanting children:

I've never been a great family man ... As I said I wasn't really interested in children. I didn't particularly want one and I had I suppose fairly definite ideas of what we should have been doing over the next few years, but uh, I've just altered by sights. I wouldn't say I've lowered them just changed my aims. I'm aiming in a different direction now.

Men's vision of themselves as genitors and representatives of a larger family network also emerged here. The theme of lineage and self-perpetuation was raised by both Simon Shaw and Stephen Banks. This was separate from the issue of virility and imbued with a more romantic flavour where children (notably sons) were seen as providing their fathers with something greater and more long-lasting than themselves.

Stephen Banks speaks eloquently of these feelings:

... I've always wanted children, Um - I think - on a selfish basis that it's nice when you get older, having kids, having grandchildren and I can see that with my parents, you know,

both have enjoyed it. I think it's also a nice feeling to think that when all my family leave this earth (sighs) well, at least there is somebody else that is me ... It's probably the only thing that I will leave on this earth which will be remembered. So that's from that point of view, that's one reason for having children.'

The issue of virility and fertility was of importance to some men and affected their image of themselves. Becoming a father did provide confirmation of their reproductive competence and to some this mattered. Most usually, the issue of 'fathering' a child only cropped up in specific conversations with men about their attitudes to infertility, childlessness and adoption. It was seldom raised in the context of justifying why they wanted children, or in connection with their desires for children. Only one father, Nigel Owens described his reasons for having children in terms of masculine physical maturation. He had become anxious when conception had not been immediate and questioned his own potency. For him, the pregnancy represented a relief and was an indication that 'your human sort of function is completed ... you've completed your sort of cycle in life.' Asked about how he would have felt had he not been able to have children he replied: 'Not good at all'.

In fact, six men thought they would have been very upset by infertility, three felt its effects could be softened by adoption, three felt it would have been more devastating for their wives, while only Chris Hill felt his life and marriage would have been unaffected. Many of the men's reactions to the news of the conception were couched in terms of pride and elation 'over the moon', 'right chuffed' which were not unconnected with the fact that it was proof of their

fertility. Stephan Banks was emphatic that sterility is 'psychologically stressful to a man'.

However, in general, the biological act of fathering seemed to carry less significance for men than achievement of the social role of father. It was never directly cited as a reason for having children, nor was any explicit link made between attainment of manhood and fathering, or between masculinity, manliness and fertility. Reproductive success did matter to most but it was not defined as the absolute essence of masculinity. It must be remembered that when the interviews occurred all the men had had proof⁵ of their 'siring' abilities and so the issue may well have been resolved in most of their minds. Some methodological features of cross-gender interviewing may also have been operative here - silencing men's presentation of themselves. It is possible to speculate that men display more 'stud-like' behaviour before one another. Or it may well be that the image of men as 'super stud' is a myth and/or outdated stereotype.

As well as self-interest in having children, several men reported having a family primarily for their wives. This theme of 'babies for wives' was a dominant one in Owens' (1982) study of infertile, working class men in Cardiff. He found that his sample were especially distressed by their inability to provide their wives with the social role of mother. It is as if there is an inequality between men's and women's needs and desires for children and that different cultural meanings attach to having children in relation to parental gender.

Five men in the present study believed that their wives would be

more distressed by childlessness than they themselves and that children mattered more to women than men. They identified an unequal desire for children between themselves and their wives, with wives wanting children more urgently and eagerly. Both the Elliotts and Prices experienced a considerable delay prior to conception when they were actively 'trying' for a baby and in each case it was the women who were recorded as especially upset. These two men spoke of having children as rounding off their wives' lives, providing fulfilment for wives, and completing women's 'natural' function. In their beliefs, these men draw attention to the centrality and forcefulness of motherhood as a social role and in so doing play down the significance of fatherhood. As Owens (1982: 82) comments: 'fatherhood could be viewed as a status, instrumental to the creation of the status of motherhood.'

However, the tendency to stress the importance of parenthood to wives as opposed to husbands also contains another element. It is an indication of a 'masculine' frame of mind, where husbands present themselves as more 'philosophical', more 'fatalist', when compared to wives. We see this theme recur in a later chapter when the fathers talk about their fears of foetal abnormality and anxieties over child health. Men reported taking up the 'rational', 'sturdy oak' posture, where they seem to represent balanced or temperate counsel in the face of deep-felt emotion. Men's constructions of the meaning of having children to wives suggest that women are more 'extreme' in their desires for children than men. For example, each father is asked about how he felt during the months trying for a baby, Bill Elliott replies:

I was just going to take it as ...
(it comes), you know. It hasn't

bothered us, well it hasn't
bothered me anyway. I think she
was worried a bit, er but, er well
I don't think it bothered me.
I'm a bit of a fatalist.

Ralph Price similarly remarks:

I felt a bit anxious but I was
trying to look at it more
philosophically really cos I think
it was important to me but
probably more important to her.
I'd sort of thought if you can't
have children, you can't have them
then there's nothing you can do
about it. You can adopt children
or foster children but she seemed
to think that she wanted her own
and that something wouldn't be
complete if she couldn't have her
own.

Following on from this when asked explicitly if they wanted children more strongly than wives, the normative position taken up by most fathers was to want children equally much, or less than wives. Evan Crowley admitted to wanting children earlier in the marriage and Pete Mitchell likewise, although he modified his position as time went on and when conception finally occurred, felt their desires for children to have equalized. There seems to be little evidence from this study of men pressuring women to have babies or cultural support for the position where wives have babies primarily to enable husbands to become fathers. However, if we were to compare wives' accounts and there is not scope to do this properly here, we might find contra-indications. Some wives remarked that they wanted 'to give' their husbands a baby (often a son) and pointed out reasons why their husbands would make 'ideal' fathers, being 'good with children', a 'softie' and so on. There is also scope in our culture to comment on men's suitability for the social role of father - in

sayings like: 'he's cut out to be a father', 'he'd make such a good father'. It may well be that it is chiefly men who underplay the role of fatherhood and in so doing upgrade the role of motherhood.

Certain views of marriage and of 'proper' married life emerged in men's replies about why they wanted children. Having children, was in the view of some, an ultimate expression of marital 'jointness'. Producing a family was a 'joint' project and was something that ensured conjugal unity and selflessness. It was also a guard against material greed and self-aggrandisement. Having children was seen as preventing marriages from becoming instrumental contracts and instead brought to marriages a degree of otherness or altruism, 'something to work for'. These themes are picked up in a number of instances:

I think isn't it just, (having children), uh, cements a happy marriage, brings everything closer together and gives you something to work for. You can divert a lot of your love towards your children throughout the rest of your life'.

Nigel Owens

I think uh children uh make a marriage, they make a family. I should think really it's the way you look at it. I've never really looked at it of having no children at all, you know, no family ... (Goes on to describe cousin's wife who has no children) She's a, she's one of these girls that likes plenty of time to herself and likes going out partying and socializing. Not the one to sit down at home and bring a child up.'

Derek Morris

Very few of the men interviewed in the present study could appreciate why some couples chose to remain childless although they

varied in how strongly they felt on this issue. There were those who felt it was 'against nature', that such women were not 'proper' women; 'it's a decision most regret in later life', through to those whose positions were more mild and less judgmental - 'just not fond of children', 'there's a different nature in people'. Typically the fathers most able to understand childlessness by choice were more highly educated and holding middle class occupations such as Ralph Price, Chris Hill, Simon Shaw but this was not uniformly true and Stephen Banks perceived voluntarily childless couples as 'stupid'. For the majority of fathers in this project, it appears that children provide a 'marital theme', tying husbands and wives together in a common purpose. The 'teamwork' of marriage is highlighted as is the symmetry of the role of husband/father and wife/mother.

5.4. Family Composition and Gender Preferences

Men's vision of family life and their expectations of the social role of father can be gleaned by asking not just why they want children but by also asking about how many children; boys or girls; and how they see themselves spending time when the baby is born? In answering questions about family size, gender composition of the 'ideal' family, and anticipation of fatherhood men themselves made recurrent links between the three issues and drew on cultural beliefs about children's needs, good childrearing practice and family provision. Nine of the thirteen fathers reported during the pregnancy that they would ideally like two children, and to have 'one of each' sex, a girl and a boy. This backs up findings elsewhere on ideal family size and composition where the range (usually based on interviews with women) falls between 2 and 4 children (Woolf, 1971:

Busfield, 1974) and where a balance of the sexes or the 'pigeon pair' is the most usually desired sex composition.⁶

Fathers deviating from the above pattern in this study⁷, either refused or were unable to put a numeric value of "how many" children (Simon Shaw remarked: 'emotionally lots'), or answered such questions in a way that left their options open, 'see it how it goes', 'as many as practical', 'as many as we can afford to bring up properly'. Indeed, even in those cases where fathers fixed an exact and 'conventional' preference they often added qualifying remarks which allowed for flexibility and a change of heart. The realities of family finances, accommodation space, and emotional resources were set alongside the 'ideal' family size and a number of men recognized that it was necessary to keep an open mind. In devising an 'ideal family' they seemed to juggle issues relating to the material world - distribution of money and space; issues relating to the principles of 'good' parenting - distribution of love and attention; and issues relating to the real needs of children - distribution of sibling affection, companionship. Two of the middle class fathers, Stephen Banks and Chris Hill, also raised issues of morality or social conscience, referring to the world population explosion and the imperative to keep their own families small. Parental resources, both practical and emotional, were felt to be finite and children's needs and dispositions culturally predictable.

Where one child of each sex was wanted, it was usual for a boy to be preferred as a first-born, although this was not uniformly true as we shall see later. In wanting a child of each sex, fathers variously drew attention to: beliefs about the 'uniqueness' of

rearing each sex; the complementariness of the sexes - each bringing its own complementary advantages; the need for a same-sex child for each parent - girls for mothers and boys for fathers; or conversely, an opposite sex child for each parent, 'daddy's girl' and 'mummy's boy'. Most of the remarks about having 'one of each' reflected chiefly on the 'ideal' parent-child relationship rather than the 'ideal' sibling relationship, with parents not wanting to miss out on bringing up children of 'different' sexes, although in some cases where boys were preferred as first-borns, there was a suggestion of older boys 'protecting' younger sisters.

As well as being asked about their general hopes concerning family composition, the men were specifically asked about their preferences concerning the sex of the forthcoming baby. A single direct question on this provided few revealing insights and men tended to 'cover' their answers first in terms of the baby's well-being and normality. There were a few notable exceptions where men such as Tommy Hooper and Derek Morris were prepared to give unambiguous and unguarded replies. In most cases, the final composition of the family, 'one of each' and the healthiness of the baby were paramount and parents allowed themselves a 'get out clause', saying 'as long as it's all right', 'but I wouldn't be disappointed if it was a boy'. The data points in general to the need to construct additional ways of identifying men's preferences and begs caution in the interpretation of their replies. There is a danger in fixing their preferences too exclusively to fit our own sociological categories and on relying on superficial reasons for why one sex is preferred over another.

Nonetheless, in spite of these reservations, it is possible to make

the data on men's gender preferences more interesting and meaningful by combining it with similar data from their wives and by linking it to their anticipation of fatherhood. In general, it was possible to tabulate husbands' and wives' wishes for boys and girls as follows:

Table 5.1

Boy or Girl ?
Fathers' and Mothers' Preferences

<u>Respondent</u> ^{8.}	<u>Boy</u>	<u>Girl</u>	<u>Don't Mind/Know</u>
Fathers	7	4	2
Mothers	5	4	4

It is apparent immediately that boys are more desired than girls and by more fathers than mothers. This matches the cultural stereotype that fathers want sons and academic evidence elsewhere which suggests that both parents value boy children more. For example, Oakley (1980) reported that 54% of her sample of first-time mothers wanted sons. However, the difference between mothers' and fathers' desires in the present study is not as great as might be expected nor indeed is the desirability of girl children as low as might be expected. The explanations elsewhere for why boys are preferred to girls usually refer to the 'male bias' in society, to patrilineal traditions, and to issues of male control and dominance (Busfield, 1974; Oakley, 1980). However, these are structural explanations and not ones that couples can readily articulate in the context of their everyday lives. They also do not help to explain why some parents deviate from the norm and opt for daughters in preference to sons.

The existing data in contrast, affords an opportunity to explore the complexity of men's and women's personal beliefs about sex differences which derive from larger cultural ideologies and influence couples' own actual choices and preferences. By marrying the question about sex preference with a question concerning men's vision of family life it becomes clear that boys and girls are desired and valued in accordance with differing parental expectations and because of beliefs about what boys and girls can 'do'.

For example, when husbands were asked in pregnancy 'when you look ahead what can you see yourself doing with the baby?' their replies could be seen to differ in relation to whether they wanted a boy child or a girl child. In general, the question itself was quite leading and the emphasis could be seen to structure an 'activity-centred' response. However, it is striking that despite this emphasis, men's replies divided in three - there were those men whose vision was primarily (although not exclusively): a) practical - they emphasized aspects of primary childcare such as feeding and changing the baby; b) social or affective - they stressed the importance of holding the baby, loving it, sharing its upbringing with wives, and c) recreational/occupational - these fathers looked forward to fatherhood in terms of playing with the child, engaging in sport or in transmitting personal skills and interests.

There were seven fathers whose vision of the future stressed an active father-child relationship, centering around recreation and traditionally masculine or 'gender-typed' interests and it comes as no surprise that these same seven fathers wanted sons. The parental activities that fathers looked forward to sharing included playing football; flying a kite; having a Scalextric and driving a racing

car and all were identified as exclusively masculine pursuits. By desiring a son, these men envisaged a continuity of masculine interests and they maintained a vision of fatherhood in which their own male identity and status were transmittable to the child. They also upheld an image of boy children as 'lively', and active. The close tie-up between valuing a son and valuing and perpetuating masculine interests is passionately expressed by Tommy Hooper: First of all he remarks:

It's a boy when it comes.

- I. Hm. You've wanted a boy have you ?
- I want a boy. I'm not bothered like but I'd prefer a boy.

Later:

- I. When you look ahead what can you see yourself doing in your mind's eye ?

Well as you know, he's going to be a racing driver, so we'll be all equipped to go racing and everything he gets will be to do with cars. I suppose I'll be bathing him and washing him, feeding him and all the rest ...

Two men, Stephen Banks and Simon Shaw, were quoted earlier in this chapter in relation to their desires for immortality through their children. These men both expressed a strong desire for a son to enable continuation of the family line or name. Again, it is as if the 'masculine heritage' whether it be playing football or passing on family traditions, can only be maintained by sons. Boys are perceived as providing a unique generational link both in terms of immediate interaction - 'a son's more you know, on my side ain't it, it takes an interest in what I do' (Evan Crowley) and in terms of

structural bonds - 'at the beginning, I was very chauvinistic about wanting a son, you know, son and heir because I am sort of romantic, I'm interested in history and following the family tree and for those reasons I wanted a son' (Simon Shaw).

Men who desired daughters did not identify common parent-child recreational expectations but instead, in their anticipation of family life, underscored the practical and/or relational aspects of being a parent. They answered in terms of wanting a daughter to be like their wives (Stephen Banks); coming from an unbroken line of sons and missing contact with girls (Stephen Banks, Ralph Price and Len Kerr), or wanting to establish a special father-daughter relationship 'daddy's girl' (Derek Morris). In some of their replies, 'girls' are desired for their very 'mystique' or unfamiliarity. Several of these men have only had brothers and male cousins. As Stephen Banks says:

I haven't got a sister, so I've never grown up with a girl and it sort of interests me from that point of view. The idea of having a smaller version of my wife appeals to me.

The men did not raise any gender-typed activities associated with 'girl' children, nor refer to any traditional 'feminine' pre-occupations. Wanting a daughter was bound up with wanting a particular kind of affective or expressive relationship but this did not focus around 'doing things together' or sharing interests. In this sense, the men who desired daughters were more vague about the future father-child relationship than were those wanting sons. They were also vague about the nature of girls and feminine potential. While little boys were desired for their 'activeness',

little girls were desired for their 'attractiveness'. The 'appeal' of little girls comes across in the comments of Ralph Price:

I think I'd like a daughter.
Well, I think it's a very stupid reason really. I think little girls about two or three (years) look far nicer than little boys.

Asked about how he anticipates the future he replies:

(I. 'What can you see yourself doing with the baby in your mind's eye ?)

Um, I think to start with, I think just the novelty of it will be holding it and looking at it. I can see myself having to bath it and change it but uh I don't know really, just the holding.

When men talked about wanting daughters, the issues of lineage and the transmission of masculine bonds and culture were of low salience. In contrast, girls seemed to have a 'novelty' value to fathers and to offer immediate gratification by being 'interesting' and 'nicer'.

As well as men's preferences being influenced by definite ideas about the 'nature' of boys and girls, some men mentioned the influence of their own family experiences. However, this did not seem to operate in any straightforward way. Relationships with siblings or an absence of siblings could be equally influential on whether a son or daughter was desired. Similarly, parent-child relationships were evoked to explain given preferences but outcomes were not predictable or patterned. For example, Tommy Hooper explained that his desire for a son was reinforced by his own close relationship with his father, while Simon Shaw on the other hand, wanted a son despite having a very flawed relationship with his father. He saw himself

correcting the poor father-son relationships that had dominated his family history. Men do seem to review their own family biographies when constructing ideal sex preferences of their own children but this seems to be done in conjunction with other beliefs concerning the value of boy and girl children, characteristics of the sexes and their vision of the father-child relationship.

Boy or Girl? Wives' Preferences

In comparing wives' preferences with husbands' in relation to desired sex of the baby and in relation to how each anticipates the future, some interesting findings emerge. Firstly, more wives were likely to be undecided about whether they preferred a son or a daughter. Secondly, wives' vision of the future with the baby was only two dimensional referring to either practical expectations or social/affective expectations. Apart from taking the baby for walks, which was usually couched in an 'affective' context, (and includes showing the baby off), none of the mothers alluded to recreational/occupational activities which they aimed to share with the baby. There was a marked lack of symmetry quite often between women's vision of what they would 'do' with their babies and that of their husbands. No mention was made of equivalent gender-typed pastimes or interests, dolls or prams, and the emphasis was away from fun and games and toward nurturance and caretaking.

It would seem, even at this anticipatory stage, that women and men rehearse their adult parental roles, with the 'mother-figures' focusing on day to day care and the 'father-figures' on fun and recreation. Furthermore, it would seem that women's expectation of

the nurturing/caretaking role leaves much more flexibility over desired sex of the child. Boys and girls could be equally loved and held and the link between vision of the future and sex preference was not as clear cut as in the case of men. Women did not express a desire to have daughters in order to pass on female culture or to create female solidarity, although some did express beliefs about girls being 'closer' to mothers, staying 'closer' to parents throughout their lives, being 'easier' and being fun to 'dress up'. Most of these beliefs about the value of girls over boys again stressed relational qualities. Daughters were not overtly desired for their ability to follow women's interests, pastimes, preoccupations - or to 'do' things with. Women's emphasis on the relational and practical aspects of becoming a mother comes across in the following extracts: (All are answering the question 'when you look ahead what can you see yourself doing with the baby ?')

I know that we will have a good relationship or I hope that we shall have a good relationship. I'm not the type of person that would want to go and leave it very often. I would do my housework as it grows. I'd do my housework in the morning and play in the afternoon and that we would develop a relationship ...

Judy Price (no strong sex preferred)

I think of loving it, holding it. I look forward to watching it develop and all the stages it'll go through.

Marjorie Mitchell (wants a boy)

You know, dress it up, wheeling it out, all clean and lovely, all in white ... you know, I think I'll have so many white pillow cases, embroidered pillow-cases and I'll

go out, so many washed (laughs).
You know, I'll have it all organised.

Joan Elliott (no strong sex
preference)

dressin' it, 'n' nursing it 'n' that.

Susan Crowley (wants a girl)

The following dialogue between the Morrises continues this theme and shows how the male and female vision of the future can diverge.

Wife: Oh, going for walks, bathing and feeding and that sort of thing which you'd share wouldn't you ?

Husband: Oh yes and playing with electric train sets (smiles).

Wife: Aw well, that's in the future (laughs)
It won't be like that right from the start.

Husband: Oh no. But you know, the question was what can you see yourselves doing ?

The comments from the Morrises pick up on an additional factor about the time-scale of looking ahead. It may well be that prospective mothers are more likely to look to the short-term, and prospective fathers to the long-term and this might further explain women's concentration on caretaking and relationships and men's on recreation.

The third interesting observation that comes from comparing men's and women's desires for sons or daughters, is that some women seem to defer to their husbands' preferences. Three of the five wives (Marjorie Mitchell, Jean Hooper and Lesley Shapiro) who wanted a boy said they did so for their 'husband's sake'. Husbands did not report wanting sons or daughters to please their wives. Equally,

no wives mentioned wanting a daughter for their 'husband's sake'. These same three women described wanting to 'give' their husbands a son and believed that sons mattered more to husbands than daughters, and mattered more to husbands than to wives. From their accounts, it was almost as if producing a male child was a form of gift-giving or a privileging, whereby husbands were served well by wives. The dominance of husbands' desires over wives', appears less strong where husbands want a daughter or have no fixed preference.

Fourthly, wives were even more likely to perceive their husbands as wanting sons, than the men's own accounts suggested. In other words, they were likely to exaggerate men's preference for sons. They echoed the same sorts of reasons for why sons were valued by men and emphasized the potential for shared masculine recreation, 'he wants a boy to go fishing'. Many women also believed strongly that men just 'like' and prefer boys 'he says he'd like a boy, men do'. Beth Banks also recognized the status that accrues to boys in this society and saw the value of having a son to carry on her husband's name.

I feel one should have a son to carry the family name. It sounds a bit crummy, you know what I mean, it's their foundation isn't it? I'm no follower of Women's Lib or anything but boys are still more important than girls in the way of things.

In fact, nine women described their husbands as wanting a boy compared to seven men who expressed this preference. Two women perceived their husbands as wanting girls and this concurred with the men's own assessments. Two other women reported that their husbands had no strong preferences when by the men's accounts, a

girl was in fact desired. The data can be simplified by the following table, where father's actual preference is run alongside his wife's assessment of his preference.

TABLE 5.2

Comparing Men's Desires For a Son or a Daughter
With their Wives' Perceptions

Father's Desires Wife's assessment of his desires	Boy	Girl	Not Fixed	All
Boy	7	0	2 Hills Owens	9
Girl	0	2 Banks Morrises	0	2
Not fixed	0	2 Prices Kerrs	0	2
All	7	4	2	13

In summary, it would seem that women are likely to know and to be accurate about their husbands' gender preferences, if a son is strongly favoured. Most expect their husbands to want a son as a first born. Some wives are likely to be persuaded into wanting a son for 'his' sake. Many believe that sons are more precious to fathers than daughters and that this constitutes the natural and 'proper' order of things. While all of the wives' whose husbands wanted sons knew of this preference, only half of the wives of men who wanted daughters were aware of this.

5.5 Responsibility and Fatherhood

It has already been argued that for many men, prospective fatherhood

means a chance to share masculine recreational activities with their sons and that these 'leisure' expectations are strong when they are asked during pregnancy to look ahead to the time after the birth. However, it would be misleading to represent men's cases, as if they intend to adopt only the roles of 'playmate' and 'entertainer'. The evidence earlier in the chapter drew attention to issues of financial and material provision which men approaching fatherhood took very seriously, reflecting on their own adequacy and competence.

It should be pointed out that all of the men interviewed in this study expected to take on chief breadwinner/economic provider roles after the birth of the baby. The one student father, Simon Shaw, felt compelled to find a job and all those who had jobs felt that their attachment to the labour market was necessarily strengthened by forthcoming parental responsibilities. Different fathers made different adjustments in the light of impending fatherhood, with some making savings and cutting down on their own recreation. Most men seemed to report that becoming a father and a primary breadwinner had implications for how they conducted their own lives, particularly in relation to marriage and to work. Evan Crowley, whose work was unskilled, mentioned the need to keep regular attendance in the face of family responsibilities. He also described cutting down his intake of beer and drinking nearer home.

That managing money and providing material security for wives and babies are the recurrent concerns of many expectant fathers, can be seen from the following typical reflections. It is clear that occupational background is no guarantee against these worries.

I'm the money man in the house.
I sort all the money out, you know.

I like to know everything's going to be all right. . . . and I've been thinking how are we going to get through with money like, cos I've got a couple of bills to pay at the moment. We've got somebody breathing down our necks for quite a bit of money which we don't owe.

Tommy Hooper

I feel that, and it's a peculiar feeling, you know, this, you have a real responsibility and its difficult to put into words. You tend to sort of think of it, financial and in all aspects. But you worry a bit whether you are gonna be able to look after them, through life. It is quite a responsibility.

Nigel Owens

When you don't have a baby you're two separate individuals really and you basically could almost live a separate existence. But with a child which needs both, it does involve responsibility for a unit and you do become a unit rather than individuals. So I think you've got to show a more responsible attitude.

Ralph Price

The expected loss of wives' earnings had a differential impact across families according to the size of these earnings and their part in the family budget. Some wives had been on low incomes and overall standards were not essentially diminished by their leaving work (the Elliotts, the Kerrs, the Banks). In other cases, household incomes were virtually halved (the Morrises, the Hills, the Andersons). The size of wives' earlier income was not unrelated to the degree of anxiety men felt about becoming breadwinners and while Bill Elliott felt confident about managing on one income, Chris Hill was dogged by uncertainties. Families varied in how

farsighted. they were about loss of the wife's income, some had made advance savings and contingency plans, others were faced with finding day to day solutions.

5.6 Previous Contact with Children and Expected Level of Involvement in Infant Care

Despite the tendency to anticipate fatherhood in 'recreational' terms and the intention to adopt a primary breadwinning role, the majority of those interviewed were also aware of the practical aspects of childrearing and of their own paternal roles as caretakers. As well as spontaneously alluding to this, the majority (12 out of 13) made a verbal commitment to some direct involvement in infant care when asked about their future intentions. Only one man was undecided about his potential involvement - Terry Shapiro - seeing this as highly dependent on his wife's preferences and disposition. Men variously remarked: 'Share the jobs', 'you're supposed to muck in', 'I'll play my part', 'I'll join in all the chores', 'I think we're more in need of having to', 'We'll have a night each'. In short, they upheld a principle of 'jointness' in relation to infant care and read within their brief as prospective fathers, an imperative to cooperate with wives over direct care of the infant. Men's uniformity over this issue suggests that cultural beliefs now exist which encourage and legitimate father's direct caretaking and that it is normative for men to at least 'intend' to help out with the baby. Men's preparedness to take on direct care of the baby seems to be culturally approved and to be a desired part of 'responsible fatherhood' as can be seen from Tommy Hooper's position:

They (fathers) should be more involved. I would say, you know. But em, like I say there's a lot of blokes about who, like I say, they are just sky-larkers. They do it and then they're off and they couldn't care less about the baby so the mother's got to look after it ... These sort of people shouldn't, I mean these people want locking up really. I mean if they've given, a woman a child they should be made to look after it with her and not do what they do.

Although most men recognized and respected that fatherhood ideally would involve them in direct caretaking they were able to raise qualifications or conditions which would ultimately affect their own actual degree of involvement. So on the one hand, while they supported the necessity and morality of shared caretaking, they also tempered their own intentions with reasons why they might fall short of the ideal. They presented the case for paternal involvement in general terms and then argued the specifics of their own situation. They would engage in infant care: if they were 'at home'; if their wives' consented; if they proved themselves competent 'it just depends how my first efforts go'; if the task did not prove too distasteful; if work demands were amenable and so on. Both the range and degree of involvement was therefore viewed as negotiable and arbitrary in accordance with personal tastes and circumstances. The themes of 'jointness' and 'sharing' were open to varied interpretations and did not necessarily mean 'equal' participation with wives nor indeed 'obligatory' participation. Some expected to perform all the baby care tasks with regularity, while others gave the vague answer 'as and when necessary' and still others drew the line at particular baby care chores - nappy changing and bathing being cited as least popular. These differing value positions will

be explored in more detail in Chapter 8. For the moment it is enough to recognize that modern fatherhood contains contradictory elements: 'you're supposed to muck in' in infant care but you are also allowed to opt out. In addition, the expected degree of paternal involvement is not rule-bound but has infinite elasticity and can be shaped up by individual preference and desire.

Responsible fathers play a part in direct infant care but there are few measurements of 'good' performance and fathers have an enormous scope in their role.

Very few of the men had actually had any direct experience of caring for babies so when discussing their intended involvement, it was with an air of ignorance and speculation. Evan Crowley was the only father who reported extensive experience with young children and had taken direct care of his four younger brothers and sisters. Other fathers had only interacted socially with children, most usually toddlers and older children and had limited exposure to babies and/or knowledge of physical caretaking. In general, for most men in this study, babies were an unfamiliar species, often inspiring awe and apprehension. Small babies were generally expected to cry and produce dirty nappies. Half the men anticipated 'broken nights' and wondered how they would cope with this and how it would affect their job performance. Beyond this, men could not rehearse how else the baby would behave or affect their immediate lives. Frequent references were made to looking forward to 'holding', 'looking at' and 'talking to' the baby but most were not entirely sure how they would cope. These themes of men's unfamiliarity with babies and their inability to envisage the facts of parenthood are illustrated below:

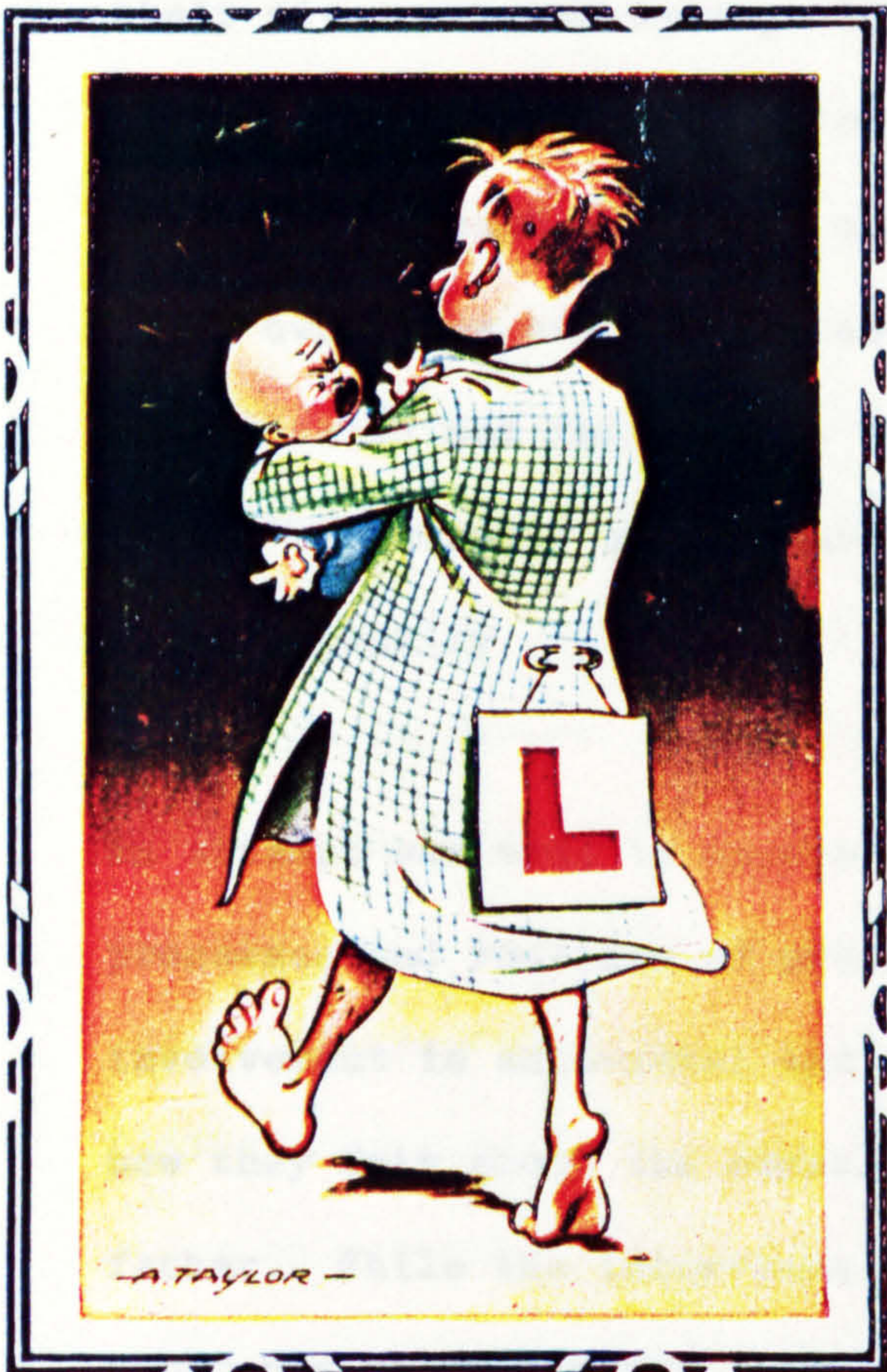
When I am with them (children)
I don't know what to say, you know,
I find I pitch the conversation
too high expecting the child to
understand. Or I just appear to be
an oaf because I can't talk in terms
the child enjoys, you know. I don't
know what to say really about balls and
bats and toys.

Simon Shaw

The nine months of pregnancy were thus a mixture of speculation and
anticipation for all the expectant fathers. We now turn more
closely to review their day to day experiences of pregnancy.

IT'S LIKE WAITING FOR CHRISTMAS;
MEN'S EXPERIENCES OF PREGNANCY

THIS IS A REAL TEST!



LOVE'S PENALTY
MORAL—IF YOU CAN'T BE GOOD,
BE CAREFUL!



Postcards circa 1936 and 1928

' You think about the good times you're going to have, you don't think about the bad times ! I mean people say 'aw you'll suffer when the baby's born, you won't get any sleep on a night'. It's like memories, you always think of the good things never the bad.'

Pete Mitchell

CHAPTER 6

"IT'S LIKE WAITING FOR CHRISTMAS": MEN'S EXPERIENCES OF PREGNANCY

The Chapter takes as its main concern, men's entry into parenthood and relies on data gleaned in the last trimester of pregnancy, when their wives were on average 30 weeks pregnant. Men were asked about their reactions to the news of the pregnancy, about their perceptions of their pregnant partners, about the impact of the pregnancy on their own lives and experiences and about their orientation to the unborn child and fatherhood. They were also asked to describe the effect of pregnancy on the marital relationship and its influence on their sexuality.

An attempt was made to uncover how knowledgeable they felt about the processes and routines of pregnancy, to measure actual levels of involvement in ante-natal and childbirth preparations and to assess how they felt about the social and personal status of the expectant father. While the interviews provide much additional material about how men anticipate and orientate to the birth itself - this chapter only glances briefly at this information. It does not detail men's actual experiences of labour and delivery. That is another story (see Chapter 7). So many authors ostensibly claim to deal with men's experiences of pregnancy and unself-consciously move hastily on to an account of the event of childbirth. By doing this, they perpetuate or collude with the notion that fatherhood begins at birth and that pregnancy is only a prelude. This chapter at the outset suspends this assumption.

6.1 Men's Constructions of Pregnancy

The first striking impression given by the data is that men's generalized responses to pregnancy divide into two, those for whom 'pregnancy is as normal' and those for whom 'pregnancy is upheaval'. In the 'pregnancy as normal'/'pregnancy as upheaval' dichotomy men are separated not so much by their desire to share or participate in the pregnancy but by the perceived impact of the pregnancy on their own lives and the lives of their partners,¹ (Richman and Goldthorp, 1978).

In the 'pregnancy as normal' group, (Bill Elliott, Evan Crowley, Pete Mitchell and Keith Anderson) fathers were likely to observe that pregnancy had effected few changes in their wife's mood or behaviour, few changes in the marital relationship, few changes in their external social relations and social life and few changes in their own psychology or orientation. These men tended to concentrate on the future and pregnancy was felt to be primarily a time of waiting. They devoted their emotional energy not to the present, nor to the facticity of the pregnancy but instead looked to the eventual outcome. Bill Elliott comments on the impact of pregnancy on their lives: 'We just carry on normally'.

On the other hand, when asked about the future and their hopes and aspirations, their vision was very blurred. They seemed to have only a shadowy idea of what fatherhood would entail, what role they would adopt or how they themselves would respond or adapt to a small baby. It was as if the pregnancy reality was suspended and at the same time the potential experience of fatherhood was veiled or curtailed off. .

Pregnancy was seen as something essentially happening to their wives,

external to them and to some degree exclusive. For this group of interviewees (4), the pregnancy itself was held to have little intrinsic value and it was birth that would herald the rewards. Endurance of the experience was a more typical reaction, than engagement in it. The rehearsal for fatherhood was similarly limited and such men undertook little 'psychological work'² as they waited to become parents. This is not to say that these expectant fathers were disinterested in the pregnancy, or unsympathetic to their wives but their part in the pregnancy was felt to be indirect and lacking in immediacy.

The strategy of focussing on the temporary or transitional nature of pregnancy reduces the potency of the experience and any deviations that do occur can be neutralised in the long-term perspective. The changes in the woman's physical shape, moods, and health appear trivial and manageable in the light of the drama that is still to come. The very time specificity of pregnancy allows it to be reviewed as a prelude or an interlude. Fathers can stay in the wings. Interestingly, this notion of 'pregnancy as normal' for men and of fatherhood beginning at birth, was also expressed by some mothers taking part in a complementary study. As the spouse of one case study father said:

... the baby to all men is something that happens nine months after it's been conceived.

In keeping with the concept of pregnancy as an ordinary event a time of 'promise' but not actuality, these expectant fathers also adhered to another, if slightly contradictory view of pregnancy. While playing down the crisis aspect of pregnancy and conveying it 'as nothing unusual', they also attended to the model of 'pregnancy

as illness' or at least pregnancy as a medical/physical condition. This again exonerated their involvement and meant that they could abrogate responsibility for the pregnancy to the medical professionals. This interpretation of pregnancy as physical event carved out a minimal role for the father and removed the rituals and routines of pregnancy from the home and family context to the medical and institutional setting. For these men the legitimate way of expressing interest in the pregnancy was to ask how the antenatal checks were progressing and to mark time by acknowledging medical reportage and prognosis. Most of the men in the 'pregnancy as normal' group remarked that they would be glad when the pregnancy was over, again reinforcing the idea of pregnancy as time of anticipation rather than realization. However, contradictions abound and while emphasizing the usualness of pregnancy, they looked forward to getting back to 'normal' - pregnancy a 'normal aberration'.

The second and more dominant response to pregnancy was to present pregnancy as a time of emotional and interpersonal 'upheaval'. The intensity of this 'upheaval' varied from individual to individual - some men claiming that their lives had only made slight and passing adjustments, others describing the pregnancy as creating large and irrevocable changes. By 'upheaval' is meant both positive and negative change, an alternative concept might be 'pregnancy as awakening, 'meaning that past identities, relationships and activities' have had to be altered and reviewed. In the 'pregnancy as upheaval' group (9 fathers) the changes reported include changes in the man's own feelings, emotions and aspirations, changes in his behaviour toward his wife and perceptions of her, changes in the couple's

relationship and wider familial relationships. For example, Stephen Banks speaks of these changes thus:

I feel more gentle towards
her I think, more protective ...
out in public crowds or anything
like that ... I tend to want her
to do less than she's prepared to.

Similarly, Ralph Price observes changes in his relationship with his wife

It's (the relationship)
changed in a way that things
are working out as we both want
them to. We feel more together
really 'cos you're planning
things not just the two of you -
when you're both working you
almost lead separate lives and
you just come together in the
evenings and weekends. When
you're planning now you're more
as a unit.

For these men the pregnancy was imbued with some reality of its own and its influences on the man as well as the woman were direct and apparent. Typically, whole new areas of interest and preoccupations were enlivened, babies and children were noticed and observed, other parents were talked to and their experiences eagerly researched, and male life philosophies were made more concrete and explicit. Men characterized themselves not just as partners to a pregnant woman, but as part of a changing and enveloping reality. They admitted to much rehearsal and preparation for their fatherhood role and had fairly express plans for shaping up the future. The dominant changes in their own feelings (discussed earlier in Chapter 5) were increased feelings of responsibility, where they described being less 'free', less 'foot-loose', more tied to their jobs and provider roles, and

more bound to their partners as a 'unit'.

These fathers were more likely to see pregnancy as a time of human growth and change, effecting the whole dynamics, structure and future of the family group. The medical/physical aspects of pregnancy were less prominent and more likely to be subdued by the social and psychological features of becoming a parent. Nonetheless, this group of fathers also judged and evaluated the progress of the pregnancy by asking about the outcome of ante-natal routines. In addition, however, they felt able to devise other direct ways of assessing the pregnancy reality - through the baby's movements, through deliberate household preparations for the baby's arrival, and in a number of other ways which will be described later in the chapter.

What appears to differentiate men into 'pregnancy as normal'/ 'pregnancy as upheaval' groupings is not immediately clear and is rather complex. It may have something to do with the nature and quality of the marital relationship, whether traditional or equalitarian, segregated or joint and with open or closed communication patterns. This is an interpretation offered by Richman and Goldthorp, the 'pregnancy as usual' mode being seen as more characteristic of working class or absentee middle class families with 'segmental roles'³ (in the present study the couple with most segmental roles, the Crowleys, did fall into 'pregnancy as normal' category). Similarly, it may be associated with a conservative view of women, where pregnancy is viewed as the ultimate expression of femininity,⁴ and as such debars men from any total identification with the process.

Certainly, in the case study group one father (in the 'pregnancy as normal' group) summarizing pregnancy says: 'it's just womanhood'. However, it would seem that there is no single divisive factor and other influences include: the timing or planning of the pregnancy; (two pregnancies were unexpected/unplanned and both fit into 'pregnancy as upheaval' group), the 'normality' or unproblematic nature of the pregnancy itself;⁵ the wife's construction and image of pregnancy; individual living and social circumstances; the man's personality and life philosophy;⁶ his earlier orientation to child-bearing and childrearing;⁷ and the couples' status as parents amongst their peer/friendship group.⁸

The way that pregnancy can trigger a personal and interpersonal revolution or can be accommodated into 'life as before' is best captured in the words of two fathers themselves: (In between these two extremes there are many shades and variations)

Simon Shaw says:

... We are having to think very hard about our lives and about where we are going and about as it were the physical manifestations of beliefs which are airy-fairy but when a baby comes you've got to crystallise them, views on education, political and religious views and so on ... I am finding out about me. I'm finding out a lot about me and also about Sally and how we behave and also I'm learning about pregnancy as such because it's a subject I've no knowledge of.

Keith Anderson, working with deprived children says:

I would say there hasn't been any

change. (with pregnancy) ...
everything's carried on
reasonably normally ... I think
the best analogy I can draw is
something like if you're going
to see a film or a football match,
um there's an anticipation about
going but the excitement is when
you get there and I think it's
going to be the same with the baby ..
It's (the pregnancy) not something
that's filled our lives. We've just
sort of carried on as before.

(Another father compares pregnancy to ... "Waiting for Christmas")

6.2 Reactions to the Pregnancy News and Telling Others

Leaving aside these very generalized representations of pregnancy, it is interesting to turn now to men's more detailed and particularistic experiences and to explore the context in which men learned of the pregnancy and their reactions to the news. This is the stuff of many myths and subject to much romanticization, our imagery leads us to think of candlelight dinners and soft music, surprise and jubilation. The fathers in this study would suggest that the reality is much different. Most of the fathers described the knowledge of pregnancy as a gradual awareness which began with the missed period and led to a suspicion of pregnancy. All the men, except one,⁹ (see Chapter 5) were included at this pre-confirmatory stage, and two fathers were actually present with their wives when the pregnancy test results were declared positive. Many of the others could not actually remember or isolate the moment of confirmation and acceptance of the pregnancy news was a cumulative task, rather than a spectacular or dramatic episode.

This is not to say that expectant fathers did not react with pleasure or joy on hearing of the pregnancy, but that their celebration of the news was not tied to a single occasion, nor enacted on a particular stage. For these couples, this would suggest that there was a closer approximation between male and female cultures than is commonly allowed. The men were privy to their partners menstrual and biological processes and confidants or allies in family building. Exploding the myth of the magic moment and emphasizing the mundanity of having the pregnancy news relayed, Stephen Banks reports: (he is asked how he felt when told of the pregnancy)

Um, no great shock, I suppose. We both wanted her to be pregnant. I suppose in the very beginning when she first missed her period I didn't sort of think, oh well she must be, but as time went on, one became more and more sure, so I suppose it wasn't a sudden realization. Uh, I suppose one often sees in films, you know, she walks along and tells you after about 3 months (laughs), but anyway I had an idea that very first day, which, it was a 1% certainty and as time went by it grew and therefore there was no sudden realizations. So I don't suppose, it didn't really cause any great excitement in me.

Qualitatively, the men's immediate reactions varied from delight to displeasure and the relationship between reaction and planning the pregnancy was not a straightforward one.¹⁰ (See Chapter 5). Two fathers who described actually trying for a child felt ambivalent at first and another reacted very flatly and matter-of-factly. Feelings of

pleasure were often overlaid by feelings of anxiety and uncertainty and fathers felt forced to simultaneously review the past and envisage the future. Other fathers recalled feeling a mixture of elation and relief, in one instance the wife was fearing infertility and had been trying to conceive for a year. Her anxiety but not his, was described as high. In another, the husband was concerned about his fertility after three months of trying for conception. Pride was also an emotion expressed by some fathers and to some degree seemed to reflect on the pregnancy as proof of their manhood or virility. This theme of men responding to expectant fatherhood with pride has also been identified by mothers and one spouse in this study, Sally Shaw commented: 'Men tend to be proud - women practical'.

From recognizing and sharing the news of pregnancy between themselves, one of the next important sequels in the pregnancy career was communicating the news to others. Some common and implicit rules seemed to guide this process and husbands and wives accepted a clear division of responsibility for telling. Typically, the expectant father described telling 'his' parents while the expectant mother transferred the news to her own family. Couples seemed to follow an unspoken code on this and deciding who should tell and when they should be told, was unproblematical. Parents were felt to have the prerogative to know first and to be told by their immediate blood kin. There were two exceptions to parents being told by the expectant father himself alone and in these cases the husband and wife broke the news together. There were also two exceptions of parents being the first to hear and in both instances fathers felt they had to justify and apologise for this, one said: 'I leaked it out to a mate' (Nigel Owens), and the other: 'I just had to tell somebody'.

While for most couples relaying the news of the pregnancy to parents was spontaneous and uninhibited, spreading the news further abroad, especially to mates or colleagues seemed to generate some difficulties. Men found they could introduce the subject to their parents in a direct way 'I'm going to be a father' but with their friends/workmates there was a hesitancy, a hiatus, a lack of entry or initiation. Men found it did not fit naturally into conversations, that there were no opening gambits and that there was a paucity of language or ritual through which to announce their pending status. They also explained that they could not readily admit to the pregnancy because of a fear of ridicule or teasing from their male colleagues; because disclosure of private or intimate news did not fit with the general tone of their work relationships, which were more impersonal and business like; because men do not build friendships on their reproductive status; and because pregnancy/babies was not congruent with areas of male interest and conversation. These reservations and timidities conspire to produce a fairly traditional image of men's friendship and work relationships and reinforce the notion that pregnancy has a fairly marginal status in male culture and a blurred public face. (In Chapter 10 this complex area is discussed in more detail.) The problems men face in communicating that they are going to be fathers are revealed in the following short extracts:

I didn't sort of explain (to me mates), it's funny that, I didn't openly tell them. I don't know (pause), I didn't say 'the wife's pregnant', I put it in a roundabout way sort of.

Len Kerr .

... There was no way to introduce it, I mean when you are discussing the nature of reality or Marxism you can't

suddenly say "Oh by the way,
my wife's pregnant".

Simon Shaw

I expect a woman to go round telling everybody you know. But it didn't seem, if it was - brought up naturally in conversation fair enough, but not just to blurt it out. It didn't seem right.

Chris Hill

6.3 The Pregnancy Gathers Meaning

As time passes the pregnancy gathers meaning and men distinguished a number of symbolic or significant features which shaped up the reality of the experience for them. It has already been shown that the force of pregnancy on men's reality differed, nevertheless some recurrent themes could be identified for all of the expectant fathers.

'Feeling the Baby Kick'

For the majority, one of the most poignant and impressionable aspects of the pregnancy was when they felt the baby's movements. Men found it difficult to express how they felt on receiving the first kick and the words they used included 'magical', 'exciting', 'frightening', 'a lovely sensation'. For some it seemed to initiate the reality of the unborn baby while for others it was described as reinforcing their feelings of ownership or 'belongingness', 'the baby was yours'. For still others, it seemed to remind them of their pending social role as fathers and even gave them a chance to act out their future roles and relationships vis a vis the unborn child. Wives played a very important part in alerting husbands to these early movements and men often described a considerable delay or lag

before the movements were realized. Just as they would approach the baby would stop kicking - this caused both frustration and some degree of fantasy. Couples began to talk about the baby being aware of it's father's authority, being calmed by it's father's presence or being contrary or unco-operative. These were highly intimate and often fairly elaborate fantasies and one unborn baby was instructed to take care of it's mother in the father's absence. While in some cases the baby's movements built a direct link between the father and child,¹¹ in others they affirmed the unity of the couple, 'the yoursness' of the baby was established. The movements also helped to reassure the father as well as the mother, that 'all was well' with the baby. As the pregnancy advanced fathers became less dependent on the mother's definitions and signals of movements, and could see the unborn baby move for themselves, especially in bed it's kicking became something that could not be ignored or denied. However, at the early stages at least, wives can encourage or enlist their husbands involvement in the pregnancy, and foster the father-child attachment.

Naming the Unborn Child

As well as the father-baby relationship being enhanced by foetal movements, some couples also devised a very private rite of the naming of the baby. In one instance the baby was referred to by it's preferred 'real' name - Rachel, but for over half the group of fathers, the baby was addressed by a 'pet' or 'fun' name. At least two fathers admitted being responsible for inventing the name used. The attribution of a name allowed couples to bring the baby into present company, to ask after it's welfare, and to explain features of the mother's mood or behaviour.¹² The names selected were usually sexless, fictitious and often coloured by the woman's

shape or size, or characteristics of the unborn baby itself - for example 'Bungy' and 'Fidget'. Interestingly three of the fathers in the 'pregnancy as normal' group did not name the baby (Pete Mitchell, Bill Elliott and Evan Crowley).

Domestic Routines

Changes in the men's domestic role was another way that fathers reported taking cognizance of the pregnancy reality. Fathers acknowledged the presence of the unborn child and orientated to their future paternal role by either augmenting their participation in household chores, by performing different or specific household tasks (such as cleaning windows, vacuuming, moving beds, lifting) or by embarking on new and child-related routines, such as decorating or preparation of the nursery or baby's room. Only two fathers¹³ reported no alteration of their performance in this sphere and amongst the rest, there was considerable variation from those who wanted to assume total responsibility for the home, to those whose main gesture was to help with the shopping. Whatever the degree of change in the male domestic role, there seemed to be an overwhelming desire to make the environment for the mother and unborn child as stressfree and unhazardous as possible. Fathers took on tasks which were perceived as especially threatening or damaging to maternal or foetal health, those including reaching, lifting and carrying heavy weights.

The knowledge of what is likely to endanger the mother or unborn child seemed to be formed by common sense or folklore and none of the fathers revealed the source of their information, nor saw it as problematic. The protective stance adopted by expectant fathers was

not always appreciated by expectant mothers and there was some evidence of a conflict over what women could safely do. In some cases husbands took on a supervisory, chiding, monitoring role and wives were portrayed as resisters, renegades, recalcitrants. This may reflect a clash in maternal and paternal models of pregnancy, it may also represent a clash over the authority and autonomy of pregnancy.¹⁴

The desires of men to shield their women folk and unborn babies during pregnancy is consistent with the advice they are given in many parentcraft manuals, however, it has a greater significance than these texts allow, and is not just a kindness or a helpfulness, but a fully-blown statement about the man's desires to participate directly in the pregnancy and to assert his claim and concern over the unborn baby. It can be an expression both of the man's commitment to paternity and of his perceived ineffectuality in directly influencing the foetal environment. Fathers have to guide and protect the baby through the mother, and to make 'carrying' as comfortable as possible. Some invest more energy in this than others, and for some it is dynamic - their feelings of protectiveness increasing as the pregnancy increases in size. The following two quotes demonstrate the way in which fathers exert their influence on pregnancy:¹⁵

Tommy Hooper is asked if the pregnancy has made him feel differently toward his wife:

O yes, you look after her that bit more you know, you stop her from doing things and you help her shopping-wise and cleaning and washing n'things like that. I normally do it but I do more now. Like vacuuming and things like this, stretching up, you know. I do that a lot more and

shopping, I carry the things about more than I usually do. Actually, she's got something of mine in her hasn't she, so I suppose you, er well, you just look after her more because she's part of you and she's got part of you in her, so.

Ralph Price, asked the same question, replies:

I don't think so basically, you feel more protective I think. You have to help more. You feel slightly different but not too different really. I have to help her round the house and try and make her sit down which isn't always easy ... I tried my hand at most things before but I probably do them more regularly for her now if she'll let me. I think it's difficult really. I try and do as much as I can but she wants to do things. I suppose it's pride really that she doesn't want me to do everything.

Pregnant Sexuality

The diminution in sexual activity is frequently mentioned in association with pregnancy and the case study group were no exception. All the men, except one, reported that they were making love less often in the last trimester of pregnancy. (Terry Shapiro briefly said that 'sex had been enhanced' but did not elaborate on this. His wife flounced out of the room. See Chapter 4). Many studies assume that this may have a damaging effect on the marital relationship and one study has found an association between pregnancy and sexual deviation in men.¹⁶ However, contrary to this picture the largest group of fathers in this study described their marital relationships

as growing closer during pregnancy and the decrease in sexual intercourse as being unbothersome or bearable. In addition half the group of men interviewed felt that the alteration in the frequency of sexual intercourse was as much due to their responses and inclinations as to those of their wives. Just as men felt able to show their respect for the foetus and mother through changing their domestic role, some felt that they could display their concern by abstaining from sex. Not making love was a way of both protecting and honouring the unborn child. Again a number of fathers feared foetal injury and fantasized that they could directly cause damage through intercourse. Two whose wives had experienced threatened miscarriages had been expressly advised that they could do so, and gave up sex because of medical dictates (Pete Mitchell and Ralph Price). For some of the men, sex was seen as an 'aggressive' act and their instincts told them to behave more gently. For others, pregnancy had a dampening or non-erotic imagery and their pregnant wives became temporarily 'non-sexual'. Men found that these feelings varied over the course of the pregnancy and were often tied to the women's size or physical feelings of comfort. In general, most of the men found their wives as attractive and four fathers attributed a special beauty to pregnancy. Two men (Evan Crowley and Ralph Price) found their wives less attractive, emphasizing their 'fatness' and their deviation from the cultural stereo type of beauty. Husbands often found themselves having to reassure wives about their physical appearance and shape. In talking about the 'beauty' of pregnancy there was a tendency to differentiate between facial and bodily beauty, emotional and physical attractiveness and temporary or permanent bodily shapes. Wives were often described as emotionally

calmer, this leading to a certain radiance, or the pregnant body as having a novelty, or transitory attractiveness. One father (Keith Anderson) was concerned that his wife should 'get her figure back'.

In much of the literature on pregnant sexuality, there is an assumption that women withdraw from sexual activity and that if men do 'relinquish' sexual intercourse it represents a 'sacrifice' (Richman and Goldthorp 1978). This is based on a wider assumption that men have insatiable sexual appetites and their appetites/needs are disproportionate to those of women. This current data contests both these conventional premises. There is an even more pervasive assumption throughout much of the writings that sexuality equals sexual intercourse or penetration and further that sexual relationships can be evaluated by the quantity of sexual intercourse. (A notable exception to this model is provided in the sensitive and thoughtful writings of Macy and Falkner, 1979, where the status of 'cuddling' and holding close are acknowledged). However, the men interviewed - again challenge this commonplace view, and for many pregnancy just meant that they changed their expressions of sexuality, they made 'love differently' or showed their affection in other ways. Pregnancy could have positive as well as negative effects on sexual relationships and several found that sex could be 'for' as well as 'against' the baby.

From the view that sexual continence is hard on men, comes the view that sexual continence is deprivation, leading to the possible conclusion that deprivation can lead to depravity. A simple and sexist reasoning, but one which discounts woman's sexual needs and the

subtleties of sexual expression, and one which emphasizes sex as quantifiable and exaggerates the part that sex (especially penetration) can play in marriage. Several fathers said that sex was only a part of their couple relationships and by no means the dominant part. This view that 'male sexual deprivation' can lead to bizarre forms of sexual activity or to extra-marital affairs is not just a feature of academic paradigms but is deeply rooted in our commonsense view of heterosexuality and one interviewee referred to men who philander in pregnancy as 'skylarkers'. He was very aware of them as existing 'out there'.¹⁷ The complex sexual feelings of men during their wives pregnancies can best be explained by themselves and by contrasting - 'traditional' and non-traditional responses:

Again Tommy Hooper speaks; he is replying to the question if his sexual relations have changed:

Hm ... yes (pause)
(Interviewer probes - any reason ?)
Um uh, I mean I'm a big bloke and she's got the baby there, so just now and again.

Tommy's wife at a separate interview describes the changes thus:

We don't count our, you know, we don't say you know Tuesday and Friday but you know it's been a lot different - I can't explain why. He is not rough or anything anyway, but he's been a lot different, you know, sort of afterwards he'll say you know, cuddle me and say well we're all right aren't we ? Sometimes he will say well our baby's got a friend now - you know - silly things. But I know that his attitude not towards making love but towards me while we're making love not for me but for the baby has changed.

Evan Crowley supports the conventional view when asked about the effects of pregnancy on their sexual relationship:

(It has) just a bit.

(Interviewer probes - 'why'?)

'Cos she don't wantit.

(Interviewer probes, 'And how do you feel about that?')

Er it's a bit upsetting really.

(Interviewer: Have you talked about it together at all?)

No, not really like. She says no and that's it. I just turn over and go to sleep like.

Stephen Banks is talking about his general feelings of protectiveness and says:

I think sexually as well I want to be more gentle with her, you know, I feel I want to be less aggressive than the male usually is. I'm sure she's frustrated - in fact when she was first pregnant I went off the idea totally for a while, I think it was purely, Oh heavens, you know, I can't touch her, I have to be careful, which has sort of dropped away now we've got used to the idea.

Simon Shaw sums up his feelings:

In the sexual sense our relationship has altered considerably because my, I seem to have felt towards, how can I explain it - I adopted a rather more protective, fatherly, brotherly kind of relationship which affected our sex life almost immediately, em, I can't explain it any further than that.

Preparation for Parenthood

Men could prepare for fatherhood and attempt to 'experience' the pregnancy in concrete or practical ways as well as in emotional or interpersonal domains. One way of demonstrating an interest in the pregnancy, and an acceptance of its reality was to read and research about pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. Most of the men interviewed acknowledged their status as fathers-to-be and prepared for the social role of fatherhood in this way - to a lesser or greater degree (a later Chapter develops this theme). The general impression however, is that the literature and reading about childbearing and childrearing had a lower status than the other symbolic features for men and that much of the reading and information-gathering was hasty, sketchy and superficial. Men described themselves as 'glancing', 'skimming' or 'flicking' through the advice and factual books and handouts, most of which were obtained by wives. Two fathers did not read anything at all, one claiming never to read, and the other claiming to have sufficient knowledge, through his position of being the eldest child in a large family. At the other extreme, was a father (Simon Shaw) who was collecting all the material he could find, filing and classifying it and treating it as a personal and academic exercise. Only a minority had seen some material directly relating to fathers and the general criticisms of this was that it was 'patronising', 'stereo-typed' and 'banal' according men only a minimal or support role and not attending to their direct experiences or influences. Just under a half of the case study group (5 men) would have liked more information to have been directed at the father and felt that their role as fathers-to-be had been either neglected or abused by the media and society in general. The largest group felt

happy to take 'second place' and to be awarded a minimum of attention - seeing the pregnant woman as deserving a primary and special status. At this stage, it is not obvious what discriminates men into the satisfied/dissatisfied categories - the distinctions of occupations, education, age, 'pregnancy as normal', 'pregnancy as upheaval', and the quality of role relationships not being sufficient explanations.

Men's involvement in ante-natal routines and childbirth preparation classes was similarly low and not identified with the man's commitment to the pregnancy or parenthood. Only one man (Derek Morris) accompanied his wife for her ante-natal care on one occasion, and no others wanted to go. More important was felt to be an expression of interest in the outcome of the ante-natal care routines and all the couples except two seemed to discuss these in detail.

Likewise, only one father, Derek Morris, attended for childbirth preparation (National Childbirth Trust classes) and he had to drop out after one class when his wife was hospitalized. There was slightly more interest in attending childbirth or parentcraft classes than participating in ante-natal care, and again just under half the fathers displayed some interest in the idea. They emphasized the positive aspects that such classes could provide: such as allowing for the expression of parental feelings and problems; of learning how to support wives in pregnancy and childbirth and teaching parental skills.

Disinterest in such classes hinged around men's inability to see their purpose or value the dislike of 'group' events and the reliance on the wife's instruction and the primacy of her knowledge and role. The desire to participate in child birth or parentcraft preparation seemed much more typical of middle-class fathers.

Fathers could display and accept the reality of pregnancy without engagement in formal or external relations and events, although some felt that involvement in such activities could sharpen the reality better and make them more adequately prepared.

6.4 Male Anxieties in Pregnancy and Orientation to Labour and Delivery

So far it has been suggested that pregnancy has a reality for men as well as women, and that in many ways this can be a positive and enriching reality. However, pregnancy also brought it's moments of anxiety and fearfulness and it is to some of these fears that we turn briefly and finally. In presenting these fears it must be stressed that they were neither disruptive of normal functioning, nor were they ever present. More typically, pregnancy was construed as a favourable and valued transition to parenthood, and crises, stresses and anxieties were subdued or moderated. The fear of complications at birth was a universal one, with two central strands, a fear of something being wrong with the baby, and a fear of something affecting the health and well being of their wives.¹⁸ Husbands usually referred to these anxieties in discussions about their anticipations of labour and delivery, however they were also reflected in their remarks about the expectant father's domestic and sexual roles. They were often heightened by real events during the course of the pregnancy, such as threatened miscarriage, kidney infection or medical comment that

the 'baby wasn't growing'. The fear of foetal abnormality or damage was described as initiating often early in pregnancy and as persisting throughout the confinement. It was often tacit and something husbands preferred to conceal even from their wives.¹⁹

Birth was seen not so much as the time of injury but as the time of reckoning. Men's earlier efforts to protect their wives and unborn children from danger would be tested and there was always the likelihood that their efforts had not been good enough. On the other hand, fears for their wives' safety was much more tied to the birth itself and for some fathers the possibility of maternal death remained a real bogey. A number of fathers perceived this in terms of there being potential choice between the life of the mother and the life of the baby and emphasized a very clear and unambiguous hierarchy of importance. Mothers were felt to be irreplaceable, while babies it was felt could be reproduced in every sense of the word. That some fathers perceive childbirth as potentially life-threatening and posing stark choices is illustrated in the words of Evan Crowley:

(I: Have you ever worried about your wife's health and safety ?)

Yeh, that always comes first dunnit ?
I mean you can always have another young 'un but not another wife like, not t' same anyway.

Fathers tempered their statements about the possible negative outcomes of childbirth by citing ways in which their minds had been eased, their fears kept in abeyance. Most important were seen to be aspects of the mother's ante-natal care where she was regularly screened and prescribed fit; her stature ('she's a big girl'); concern for diet and exercise; personal family history indicating no abnormality;

societal improvements in medical care and standards of living; and the statistical reduction in maternal mortality rates. Fathers also involved features of their own personality and common-sense approach to life to dilute or modify the extent of such fears, claiming variously not to be worriers; to live in the present; to deal with the troubles of today; and to resist from tempting fate. A few husbands found themselves in the role of reassuring their wives about such issues and as such tended to minimize or conceal their own uncertainties. The degree of discussion of these matters was varied. One father, Simon Shaw, responded to his wife's fear of foetal abnormality by 'pulling her leg.' While another, Pete Mitchell, tells his wife that their worries are unproductive. (See Chapter 7).

It is interesting to note that in describing their concern for the baby, fathers accounts closely matched those of mothers - (excepting that mothers rarely described playing the role of 'anxiety - allayer' to fathers and qualitatively they invoke some different modifications for their fears). However, in the area of maternal health and safety, great differences appear. While almost all fathers, 11 out of 13, feared for their wives health and safety, less than a quarter of the expectant mothers in the parallel study worried about themselves. There is not time to explore why this large perceptual and experiential difference should occur - but some speculative explanations could be:; that at the time of birth men feel they sacrifice their 'control' over maternal and foetal environments - there is nothing more they can do; that women as childbearers feel a greater confidence and control over birth processes; that women can identify with other successful 'survivors of childbirth' and their own mothers; that women place more trust in medical professionals and caretakers; that

women place priority on the well being of the baby; that women are better physically and emotionally prepared for birth. Another possibility suggested to me by Janet Askham, is that by conceptualizing birth as a choice of lives, the male 'heroic' role is emphasized, men are still an 'essential' part of the scenario. In the psychoanalytic view, men's fears of losing their wives may be interpreted as "his fear of losing her exclusive love" (Pincus and Dare, 1978: 48).

The most final and deliberate act that a number of men feel they can do to respect the pregnancy and to consolidate their commitment to fatherhood is to be present at the birth itself. Birth is the culmination of the nine months of waiting and anticipation and can be the time when fathers come out of the shadows. As Ralph Price sees it the father's birth attendance is an explicit and definitive act, and where the father's involvement is direct and immediate:

Yes I want to be there (at the delivery) and I think you can be at Fulford. I think the father doesn't play any part apart from at the beginning really, it's all support the whole way through and I think it's a good thing to be there at the big event.

Other reasons why men want to attend and what happens to them in the delivery ward are detailed in the next chapter. Birth may be the end of one saga but it is the beginning of another.

6.5 Summary and Conclusions

Summarizing the material presented in this Chapter it would seem firstly that there are two generalized male constructions of pregnancy,

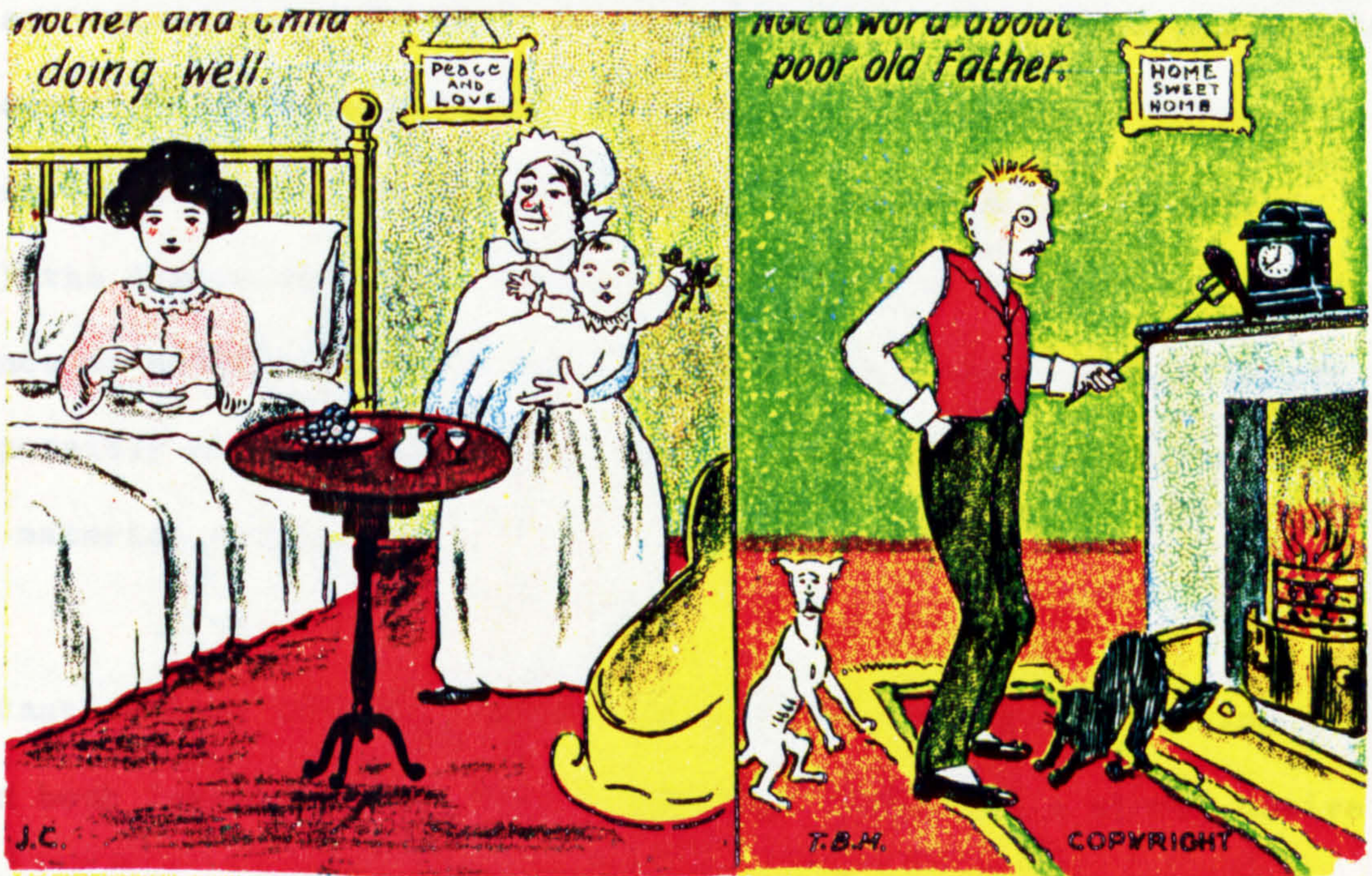
categorized according to the degree of change wrought by the pregnancy. While some men portrayed pregnancy as little different from everyday life, the more dominant response was to represent pregnancy as a time of flux and renewal. The course of the pregnancy was realized and marked out by a number of identifiable and momentous features for men - by the baby's quickening, by an increase in men's household/domestic roles, by an alteration in couple's marital and sexual relationships, and by specific practical preparations - such as reading and investigating information sources on pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. The latter seemed to have a lower significance than the other features of pregnancy. In general, men's entry into parenthood was not characterized by stress or crisis - but was a fairly positive and rewarding experience. The common fears were for the baby's and mother's safety and welfare but these were more vague or intermittent concerns, rather than ones that were disruptive or handicapping.

The fact that men are not physically involved in pregnancy should not lead to the simplistic assumption that they are necessarily excluded from its reality and meaning. Men could be deeply affected by the experience of their wives' pregnancies, could develop strategies for participating in expectant parenthood jointly with wives, and themselves rehearsed private anxieties, doubts and fears. However, there seems to be little recognition that expectant fathers have peculiar needs or feelings and fathers identified this oversight and neglect in the ante-natal literature and services.

At a public level the 'pregnant' father seems to be regarded at the one extreme as a joke and at the other, as an appendage to the mother-to-be. His unique experiences are typically unshared and unexpressed. This chapter, in line with the overall objective of the thesis, has attempted to break the silence.

FATHERS AND CHILDBIRTH: JUST HOLD MY HAND

“Well, believe it or not,—
you’re a father!”



Postcards circa 1948 and 1902

' I noticed it very soon after arriving (at maternity hospital) I soon became aware that my role had been shed at the door and we'd been working through pregnancy together and relying upon each other so much and I was just left like a spare part without any clear instructions as to how I could help ...'

Simon Shaw

CHAPTER 7

FATHERS AND CHILDBIRTH: JUST HOLD MY HAND¹.

FATHERS' INTENTIONS, EXPECTATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING LABOUR AND DELIVERY

Looking firstly at the data concerning men's intentions to attend labour and delivery it appears that the majority of fathers (9) wish to be present at this time. Three men are undecided,² two of whom are committed to attending labour but are hesitant in their decision regarding the birth itself. Only one father, Bill Elliott, is opposed to attending either the labour or birth, expressing a strong dislike of hospitals and hospital procedures and characterizing himself as 'squeamish'. Slightly lower percentages of fathers wishing to attend childbirth have been recorded elsewhere - in the Motherhood Project 52% wanted to be present and in Ann Oakley's recent study (1979) the figure was 43%. However, in the latter studies there is a reliance on maternal reports and the samples are considerably larger (and possibly more random) making direct comparability with the case study material difficult.

Expectant fathers offered a number of varying reasons for wishing to attend both labour and delivery. For some, there was a strong desire to support and share the experience with their partners. For these men, attending the birth represented an opportunity to express and demonstrate a joint commitment and responsibility toward the child

and parenthood in general. They saw themselves as personally implicated in the decision to have a family (as noted in a previous chapter) and their presence at the birth was construed as a logical statement or consequence of this mutual decision-taking. A few of the fathers saw themselves as having a more specific role at this time in guiding and comforting their wives through the experience and in providing protection and familiarity in the alien environment of the hospital. Other fathers emphasized a desire to be present due to a curiosity 'to see what happens' and to witness the unique event of birth for themselves. Interestingly, none of the fathers mentioned wanting to attend the birth in order to consolidate the father-child relationship, although investigators and fathers themselves often retrospectively make this observation and connection.

The fathers who were undecided about attending the birth again, gave a mix of reasons. In one instance, the father, Stephen Banks, was frightened that attendance at birth would damage his sexual relationship with his wife. This theme of husbands being 'put off' by the sight of birth is reiterated in Ann Oakley's findings. Another father, Evan Crowley, distrusted his own reactions to the birth and feared 'passing out'. His feelings closely mirror the one man who is determined to absent himself. The third father, Simon Shaw, gives a more peculiar explanation for his indecision. He has had prior experience of hospitals and has attended several births. His fear is that this knowledge could be detrimental and lead him to panic or interfere - should things appear to go wrong or his wife appear to be mishandled. (The way that insight into the processes of birth can negatively influence the father's decision to attend is similarly described in 'Becoming a Mother' where Ann Oakley, 1979, quotes from a G.P. who wishes to be absent.)

There is some suggestion in the fathers' accounts that mothers' wishes are highly influential in the father's option to attend or not attend labour and delivery. Four of the nine fathers planning to be birth-attenders specifically mention the strong preferences of their partners for them to be present. One reports that his wife initiated the idea, while another directly attributes his planned participation to his wife's desires saying:

Uh, Marjorie wants me to (be there).
I'm not dead keen on it actually.
I will be if I can. If I can make
it I will be there but I'm not dead
set (pause) . I think I will be there
if I can possibly be, if I can make
it I'll be there. But um, mainly
because Marjorie wants me to be there.
I think if Marjorie didn't want me to be
there I wouldn't.

Pete Mitchell

This finding that wives prefer and encourage their husbands to attend the birth is consistent with other studies where the trend is such that the number of women reporting that they want their husbands to attend is always greater than the number of husbands who are seen themselves as wanting to attend. In the Motherhood Project the comparisons are 64% of women want their husbands to attend the birth compared with 52% of husbands who are described as wanting to attend. In Ann Oakley's study the divergence is even greater, 77% of wives wanted husbands to be present at birth compared with 43% of husbands who wanted to be there. Strangely enough, in the case study material there is an equivalence, 9 mothers and 9 fathers supporting the idea of birth-attendance. However, the couples are not necessarily congruent, highlighting the complexity of this whole area of decision-taking. In fact 5 couples do not give matching expectations about birth-attendance, the key distinction being not

between attending or not attending but between attendance and indecision or ambivalence about attendance. This is an area which may merit much more detailed and widespread exploration, and tell us more about the meanings men and women attach to the act of birth. Two women out of this specific group for example, feel that producing babies is 'woman's work' while none of the fathers express such a belief. It is only by exposing these beliefs and processes that intentions and practices can be made intelligible. It may well be that wives also defer to their husbands' preferences and adjust their own expectations of birth-attendance accordingly. The observation that birth-attendance is negotiable becomes apparent where discrepancies between intentions and actual levels of participation occur.

7.1 Expectations of Childbirth

In talking about their expectations of labour and delivery fathers reiterated a number of related themes. They focused in particular, on the potentially unattractive or distressing aspects of childbirth such as seeing their wives in pain and the fear of complications, 'something going wrong'. Their accounts suggest that they felt that some amount of pain was inevitable but as men, they found it hard to assess the nature or extent of this pain. A couple of fathers suggested that as birth was a natural process and repeatable, its effects must therefore be 'bearable' or tolerable. Another father felt that the pain of childbirth was purposeful, and consequently, endurable. Two fathers wished that they could be the ones to suffer or at least share the expected pain of birth with their wives. Most felt that they had a role to play in comforting their wives when in

pain, and perhaps by their very presence - alleviate its impact.

Physical contact and 'hand-holding' was seen as very important.

(Mothers also identify the importance of having a 'hand to hold').

The way that fathers construe the pain of childbirth is revealed in two contrasting accounts. The first father plays down the painful aspect of birth while the second feels personally responsible for the pain.

I don't say it is painful.
It must hurt, like, but it's
facts o' life isn't it ?
So it can't be that bad, like.
But I mean it's meant to happen
so it can't be that bad. That's
how I would see it anyway.

Evan Crowley

I suppose it's in the back of me
mind that it's partially our
(men's), well not to blame, but
you know that it's a joint affair,
that it, that we (men) should share
the pain or whatever (pause). It's
got a lot to do with me.

Nigel Owens

The fear that something might go wrong at birth was a fairly universal one and was discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

The intensity of these fears needs reemphasizing here and it is possible to see from the comments that childbirth can pose a stark choice for fathers, if only hypothetically.

Um I suppose firstly (I'm worried)
that anything should go wrong with
my wife - uh I suppose I feel she's
more important than the baby. One
sort of reads continually, I dunno
people have adopted this sort of
attitude that it should be the child
rather than the mother and my
attitude is - if I had anything to do
with it I'd decide for the mother without
any hesitation whatsoever. Stephen Banks

As was shown in the last chapter fathers had to often deal with their partners' fears as well as their own and typically found themselves cast in the role of reassuring their partners about the safety and normality of childbirth. A few did this by attempting to dismiss such fears as unproductive or invalid while others were more prepared to acknowledge and share the worries in open discussion. A couple of transcripts demonstrate the differing ways in which expectant fathers orientate to the possibility of foetal abnormality. Both underscore the perceived value of a realistic and 'rational' approach to the possibility of handicap and the first one hints of certain degree of fatalism. Both also show how husbands respond to their partners' expressions of anxiety:

(I: Has it ever crossed your mind if everything's all right with the baby ?)

It does, it, well it has done. But I suppose I'm an optimist really, cos, I think well if it isn't going to be all right well why worry about it now, cos I ain't gonna alter it. Uh, so I don't worry about these things. I let them take their course. I mean Marjorie, well, I think she does worry about it. Uh which I tell her is daft cos she can't alter it, she just makes things worse. Well if there's goin' to be something wrong with it we'll have to deal with it when we come to it, - n' you know, you just keep your fingers crossed that it isn't.

Pete Mitchell

Er, it has crossed my mind but er I don't know, I feel sure, you know Sally's done all she has done and there's no reason she should, and there's no history or anything in any of our family, and we've lived fairly sensible lives .. and so I think the chances of having a deformed baby are

fairly slim. But having said that, I mean, I'm bearing in mind that we might do, so be prepared.

Simon Shaw

(This same father asked if his wife expressed this fear replies: 'Yes and I sort of pull her leg'.)

Bound up with the dislike of witnessing their wives in pain and the likelihood of things going wrong, all the fathers expected to feel nervous at the time of childbirth, save one who said he was 'not a nervous person' (Tommy Hooper). The extent of expected nervousness ranged from 'completely a wreck' to 'a bit'. Four fathers specifically mentioned that they would feel it essential to conceal this nervousness from their wives and again felt it important to adopt the role of reassurer and anxiety-allayer, 'the sturdy oak idea' (Benson, 1968), seeing their own role as much easier. Fathers associated their anticipated nervousness also with their levels of knowledge about labour and delivery and there was a strong impression of fathers fearing the unknown.

7.2 Knowledge about Childbirth

Eight of the men felt that they had a fairly clear, if general, idea of what labour and delivery would entail, while five fathers felt their knowledge to be limited or vague.² In both groups there were one or two fathers who felt that they knew a sufficient amount about how labour would commence and delivery proceed. Others described wanting to cram up on more information nearer to the time of birth. Most of the fathers identified labour as starting either with pains

or the 'waters' breaking, and many relied on their partners' having superior knowledge of and insight into the birth process. Only one father, Evan Crowley, said he had 'not a clue' as to how labour would start.

In discussing the onset of labour fathers frequently referred to the urgency which they saw as surrounding this time, seeing their role as, speedily and without delay, conveying their wives to hospital. Fathers feared cars not starting, not getting to hospital on time, or having to deliver the baby themselves. Indeed, as we will later see the labours of the wives in this group were at first difficult to identify and slow to proceed and the expected crashing hurry of birth is not actualized. The comments of two fathers show the kinds of fantasies that some men hold about labour and their role at this time.

I know that when she, when the water breaks, that's when she's worried stiff. I've got to get my car out and go like the clappers of hell to hospital.

Tommy Hooper

It wouldn't ...harm to know exactly what to expect just in case anything did happen at home. Lesley doesn't seem to think anything will but I always tend to look on the black side, you know. But she says when she starts it'll just be a case of dial an ambulance or get a taxi - I always say it could be over in an hour, you know, and no taxi or anything.

Terry Shapiro

As this latter account suggests there does seem to be some shared discussion and anticipation of the birth between couples, with women

often playing an instructive or educational part in such discussions. However, the amount of detail paid to this topic seems to vary greatly across the group of men and women, and for quite a few it was described as a 'passing' subject of conversation, hingeing mainly around the father's planned birth-attendance. One father, Terry Shapiro, felt they would talk more closely about labour and delivery as it approached, one, Nigel Owens, felt they could talk about childbirth but didn't, and one, Evan Crowley, preferred never to discuss it. He was the only father who did not know how his wife felt about his attending or not attending the birth.

Sources of Information

The main sources of information about labour and delivery proved to be television and baby-care literature. Eight fathers⁴ had watched a birth on television at some time, and three of these had seen additional health education films about childbirth. Several were hoping to go to a film organized by the local hospital, for expectant parents. Eight fathers had read some material about labour and delivery, and two reported personal experience of being in attendance at births. In one of these the father, Len Kerr, had experience only with farm animals but felt this gave him some, if limited, appreciation of what happens.

A number of fathers had discussed childbirth with other men, generally focusing the conversation on birth-attendance and other fathers' experiences of this. At this point, it is important to comment that while men still express reservations about talking about pregnancy and babies (see Chapter 10) childbirth seems to have

become a more legitimate topic amongst fathers; with less taboos and inhibitions attached. It is not possible to go into this at any depth here but it would seem that fathers have developed some folklore of childbirth experiences which they transmit to others and by which they encourage and recruit new birth-attenders.

None of the fathers learnt about birth through formal sex education at school or at home. Indeed fathers depicted such education as very poor, sketchy or non-existent. Six men did have some instruction at school but half of these concentrated on animal reproduction alone. Again, the majority of the fathers relied on a mixture of talk, personal experience and experimentation, television and books.

In short, fathers appear to approach childbirth armed with a conglomerate of fact, fantasy, fiction and fairy tale relying heavily on books, films, heresay and commonsense. Quite a few recognize that their vision may well be idealized, romanticized or intellectualized and that the reality may be a shock, and their own reactions, an unknown quantity. We leave this section with the anticipations of two fathers. Their responses are in reply to the question 'Do you feel you know what to expect?'

I think so yeh. I saw one film on it - uh, several years ago - on actual birth and I suppose I've seen a couple on television by sheer chance - um and I suppose I've read a couple of books on it. I suppose intellectually speaking I know what's going to happen but I suppose one is very remote from it on television, so I don't know how I'll react to it. In a way it worries me I don't know how I will be. I suppose it's a natural male thing - I don't like to feel as though it's going to upset me - I don't think it will. I'm not particularly squeamish so I should think I'll be all right.

Stephen Banks

A lot of gruntin' and groanin' and then a cry (laughs). No. Yes, you know, you've seen it on television, not in real life but I've seen what happens so I know basically what happens.

Tommy Hooper

7.3 Fathers' Role in Labour and Delivery

Turning now to the data on fathers' actual participation in labour and delivery collected retrospectively when the baby is 11 weeks old, we have an opportunity to see how fathers' expectations, beliefs and hopes fit the reality.

Onset of Labour

We find firstly, that all the fathers except one, Derek Morris, were at home during the onset of labour. (In this case, his wife was already hospitalized for oestral tests.) Couples tended to be in bed or about to go to bed when the first signs of labour were identified, and several husbands describe being woken up by their wives. This would suggest that husbands are often from the outset an integral part of the labour scenario. This observation is important because the data suggests that the recognition of labour symptoms, the decision to take action and which course of action to take is not clearly prescribed, not automatic, nor necessarily the sole responsibility of the woman. Instead more typically, women were unsure as to whether labour had started and their initial communications to their partners were often querulous rather than definitive. While women obviously have autonomy over the physical symptoms and their reporting, they often involved their husbands in attaching a meaning to these symptoms, and in taking subsequent and appropriate steps. Statements which suggest that only women decide on the opportune time to go into hospital are too simplistic and belie the complex interactions and negotiations reported by this group of fathers and their wives.

Some fathers responded to the early labour reports with alarm, wanting to rush to the hospital immediately, others went back to sleep, others sought

advice from family or friends, still others contacted the hospital and one, Stephen Banks, consulted a childbirth manual. The pattern was one of diversity rather than conformity and of negotiation rather than maternal arbitration. There were some hints that wives tended to hesitate, fearing that labour was false and their help-seeking fraudulent, while husbands tended to hasten, fearing that the labour was imminent and their help-seeking negligent. This would reflect the theme mentioned earlier about men's views on the urgency of labour and their sense of responsibility in delivering their wives to hospital. That fathers play a direct and responsive role at the onset of labour and that their perceptions and actions can influence and be as important as the mother's are clear in the following statement.

... So uh, um at about a quarter past two she comes up (to bedroom) and says 'I'm gettin' pains'. And I said 'how often?' And she says they're all't over place, you know ... 15 minutes and then maybe 10 minutes and then a minute and then back you know, a few more minutes. They weren't comin' regular, so I says 'look, I'll ring t'hospital and ask t'matron or t'nurse-in-charge what I should do, cos I hadn't an earthly. And she said wait till they get regular and then bring her in. And anyhow we sat down here, had a smoke. Quarter past two, I said 'it's no good, you're not gonna go in', I said 'right, I'm off to bed'. So I went up to bed. She come up then and we sat in bed and she sat there willing herself in labour, you know, proper labour. Anyhow they starting comin then about 10, 12 minutes each time. So I says 'right I'm not waitin' any longer, let's go!' So I come down 'ere .. and I rangt' ambulance and ambulance came and then off we went.

Tommy Hooper

All of the husbands, again with one exception (Derek Morris)

accompanied their wives to the maternity hospital. Eight travelled by car while three used an ambulance and one couple (the Shaws) went by taxi. As suggested earlier, fathers assumed that it was part of their role obligations to travel with their wives at this time and there is no evidence that this was something that required a conscious decision by couples. The actual arrangements about how they would travel to hospital seem to have been made in advance and to have been decided by the couple. In one case the arrangements were fairly elaborate and involved the husband, Chris Hill, cycling to his parents to borrow their car. In another case the husband being an ex-policeman, Tommy Hooper, had decided in advance to ring 999, always having wanted to do this.

Arriving at the Hospital

Actually arriving at the maternity hospital seemed to be a critical and significant event for some expectant fathers. Typically husbands and wives were separated on arriving, wives were taken to be prepared for childbirth and husbands remained in a waiting or a reception area. Five fathers reported waiting an extraordinarily long period at this time (1 to 2 hours) and of experiencing a sense of loss and a mixture of loneliness, confusion, anxiety, annoyance, boredom, lack of concentration and frustration. These fathers felt neglected by medical staff and forcibly dislocated from the events of birth. Richman & Goldthorp (1978) aptly summarize this experience as 'entrance trauma' and this certainly fits the existing data. The fathers felt unprepared for the long wait, they felt it was mishandled and they felt it was unnecessary. They described marking time by smoking, going for walks and by reading out-of-date newspapers. For most, the

experience was heightened by the time of day, often being the middle of the night or early morning when they themselves felt groggy or tired, when there were no staff about, when refreshment facilities were curtailed and when there was an absence of other fathers to talk to. The shock that fathers feel concerning their hospital arrival is expressed poignantly in the words of one man. In his case he perceives his initial reception to be a direct and ironic indictment of his loss of role in the medical context.

I noticed it very soon after arriving - I soon became aware that my role had been shed at the door, and we'd been working through pregnancy together and relying upon each other so much and I was just left really like a spare part without any clear instructions as to how I could help. I was really regarded as a burden and I'm fairly sure that some of the midwives regarded me as the villain of the piece, that really caused all this. There was that sort of air about. And I was asked to sit in another room to undergo a sort of induction ... I didn't know what was going on in that time because I didn't know whether Robert was on his way very quickly or how long it would take or anything - I was very confused. Obviously I was in a very excited state and then to be in a room on my own was not a nice experience.

Simon Shaw

Even more dramatically, one father, Tommy Hooper, was left in the entrance corridor for almost two hours, seeing no-one and without any explanation for his wait. One father, Bill Elliott, returned home after delivering his wife to hospital and was consistent with his intentions to be absent from labour and delivery.

One father, Pete Mitchell, stayed for a few hours of labour and was advised to go home for some rest as birth was not expected to

imminent. He returned home only to be called two hours later to say that his baby was arriving and he returned to the hospital just in time. All the other fathers were labour attenders.

The Labour Ward

When fathers were reunited with their wives in the labour ward their subsequent experiences were very varied, just as mothers themselves report differences in their labour experiences. The length of labours and the intensity of pain reported varied from case to case. For one couple they were admitted to hospital and the baby was born three hours later. In a contrasting case, the Prices were admitted at 3 a.m. Saturday and the baby was not born till Tuesday, midday - by Caesarian section.

Despite the individual diversity, fathers seem to fall into two groups - those who felt integral to and functional throughout the whole labour process and those who felt superfluous and largely redundant. The reasons fathers classified their experiences in one way or another appear complex and centre on a combination of factors, the way they were regarded by medical staff (or disregarded), the physical and emotional state of their partners, their own physical and emotional state (one father, Evan Crowley, had been drinking and describes sleeping through much of labour), the demands and needs of their partners and the duration of labour.

Some of the fathers describe being purposely ignored and denigrated by staff while others were enlisted by staff to help. It would seem that just as fathers feel themselves to have no clearly prescribed role during labour, likewise medical care staff are uncertain about the purpose of their presence.⁵ Fathers are therefore very much reliant on the whim and personal orientation of the staff

on duty, and victims of the pressures staff themselves face. One father, Simon Shaw, felt strongly that his presence excused the medical staff from regular attendance of his wife and felt in this way that the father's presence could be and was, abused. Three accounts are used to portray the contrasting experiences of labour-attenders, and the differing responses of medical personnel to their presence.

... Then the contractions were gettin' worse and I had to start timin' them cos t'nurse told me to start timin' them. And I were lookin' at t'clock and checkin' with me watch, n'watchin' her and wipin' her brow and holdin' her hand and strokin' her. And she wanted her back rubbin' all't time. Oh I was gettin' sick you know, constantly rubbin' me arms were achin'. And I kept givin' up and she says 'no rub me more' you know, cos her back was hurtin. And I'm goin' on and me arms are just oooh - !

Tommy Hooper

I felt very much like a spare part, there was not a great deal I could do. People spoke to me as if I wasn't there, spoke about me to Sally or asked Sally to answer questions on my behalf even though I was standin' there. And I felt very much as if I was in the way.

Simon Shaw

... From the time I got in there she was having contractions fairly regularly ... Uh and I felt rather rotten, there wasn't a lot I could do at that stage. I just sort of sat there.

Nigel Owens

The specific tasks that fathers describe performing during labour included - back rubbing, hand holding, brow wiping, holding or lifting their wives, moistening lips, timing contractions, relaying wives

needs to medical staff and in some cases medical instructions to their wives, calling medical assistance, and assisting with technological aids such as the gas and air equipment, or observing the foetal heart monitor and reporting its progress to their wives. Most fathers felt that companionship, reassurance and comfort were the central features of their presence and this very much matched their reasons for deciding to attend. For some, this was a compensation for their overall feelings of powerlessness and impotence. Fathers were not continually present throughout the labour and were often asked to leave for various medical routines to be carried out. Again, the number of these 'medical interludes' and the attitudes of staff to the fathers presence at these times seemed to differ, and fathers themselves seemed to be given little choice whether to leave or stay. For some, the opportunity to leave the labour room came as a relief for others, it heightened feelings of anxiety and fearfulness.

Again fathers had to devise ways of coping with these waiting times and again described smoking, going for walks, seeking refreshment and in one or two instances talking to other fathers in the waiting room. The conversations they describe with other fathers seemed almost of a therapeutic nature, with one father consoling and comforting the other. As expected, some fathers found watching their wives in pain distressing, and two fathers, Nigel Owens and Stephen Banks, wished that they could swap places with their partners and do some of that labouring. Fathers also experienced physical discomfort themselves if the labour went on for a long time. They frequently expressed feelings of hunger, thirst, exhaustion and were often unbearably hot. Three fathers felt that their own physical needs were neglected by the medical staff and would have appreciated a cup of tea. This lack of regard for their physical state helped compound their feelings of

'spareness', uselessness. In general, fathers felt that their wives responded to labour bravely and some felt that sharing the labour experience brought them closer together.

The nervousness that fathers expected to feel was often described as disappearing or diminishing during the time of labour. Some put this down to exhaustion dulling their senses, others felt confident because of close involvement in the process and being able to monitor events, and still others felt total engrossment in the labour with no time to reflect on their own feelings. However, while nervousness was not a continuous or overwhelming reaction at the time of labour, a number of fathers experienced sporadic moments or isolated episodes that were frightening or nerve-wracking. For one father it was returning to see his wife using a gas and air appliance, for another it was seeing a very poorly baby resuscitated and for another it was returning to the labour ward to find that his wife had been removed to delivery. These instances where fathers become alarmed and anxious highlight their vulnerability, underscore how dependent they are on the medical parameters of birth, and point to the strange and threatening context in which they are placed. Decisions are taken outside of them and they must conform to the medical and institutional dictates. Richman and Goldthorp nicely describe this: they say "the father can be temporarily or spatially disoriented. Birth sequences are governed by foetal, mother, medical and institutional times and exist largely outside his experience." (1978).

The Delivery Ward

In the move to the delivery ward, fathers seem to get caught up in the activity of things. In their accounts there is an impression of haste and of little time to take studied decisions. Consequently, two fathers who had been unsure about attending found themselves in the delivery ward.⁶ On the other hand one father who had hoped to attend and another who had mixed feelings chose to opt out.⁷ In both these cases their absence at delivery was a mixture of choice and chance. Both were actually out of the labour room getting some fresh air when delivery became imminent. On their return they found the suddenness of the coming birth to be rather daunting and at that moment felt unable to enter the delivery ward. Both expressed the feeling that if they had not absented themselves at this time they would have accompanied their wives and stayed through the birth. Two fathers⁸ were prohibited from attending the birth due to delivery complications, one a breech/forceps and one a Caesarian.

In one study it has been shown that a significant relationship exists between a father's presence at delivery and his degree of participation in baby care in the early weeks after childbirth. The authors of this study (Richards et al, 1977) suggest that the connection is not necessarily a causal one but should be interpreted as a sign of 'some characteristic attitude toward involvement with the children in fathers'. The detailed case study material suggests that care is needed in the use of birth attendance data. The attendance or non-attendance of fathers must not be interpreted as necessarily reflecting a choice. As we have seen, it may instead reflect or embody situational or external factors over which the father feels he has little control. It is not safe to assume that non-attenders are poorly motivated or lacking in interest, nor to construct

associations based on this premise. The case study material suggests that as a variable, attendance at labour may be more meaningful, suggesting something about the jointness of the couple relationship and the orientation to parenthood. However, even here we run into difficulties where fathers do have strong dislikes of medical institutions and/or a constitutional delicacy. That fathers can experience a loss of control over decisions about birth-attendance and are subject to medical legislation is evidenced in the account of one non-attender:⁹

I was a bit disappointed really, cos I'd have liked to have stopped till the end. I don't know why they throw so much out if it's a forceps delivery - the husband has to leave - and yet they show them on television and everything.

Derek Morris

Other studies have characterized any discrepancy between fathers' birth attendance intentions and practices as 'drift'. It is usually not clear in which direction this occurs. In the present study the movement is both upwards and downwards. Two fathers who were undecided about birth attendance were actually present and three who planned to be, were not (and as we have said two of these were excluded by medical personnel). What we do not find in this study is any shift in the affirmed non-attenders, in this case we are only describing one father, and he fulfilled his intentions as a non-attender both at labour and birth. This suggests that we need more information about the influences and experiences of fathers who have no fixed intentions, and it would seem that what happens to this group is fairly random, situational and haphazard.

In contrast to long periods of waiting described by fathers in labour and the dragging of time, fathers perceived delivery as happening with more speed and rapidity. For some this came as a surprise and one father experienced it as a sense of anti-climax.¹⁰ Fathers appeared to play no part in deciding where to stand or sit, but were ushered into surgical garb, and placed by the mother's side and at the 'top end'. Again fathers felt they had a fairly limited role at this time, although once again the group splits in two with those feeling more purposeful and those feeling extra, spare. Fathers again emphasized their supporting, comforting and reassuring role at this time. Some played an active part in mediating between the medical staff and their wives, reminding their wives to breathe, controlling the pushing and reporting the need to push. It would be interesting to know how mothers feel about their husbands playing this instrumental role at this time and if mothers feel fathers to be in collusion with medical staff or acting on their behalf. It is possible to speculate that fathers could be used against mothers by staff, persuading the mother to have medication, submit to undesired practices and so on. There is no evidence of couples in this study experiencing this, and the impression is more one, of couples united than couples divided. However, this whole area of birth politics could warrant closer scrutiny, especially if increasing numbers of unwilling husbands are encouraged and pressurized to be there. Again as in labour, fathers report holding their partner's hand and often supporting her bodily.

7.4 The Moment of Birth and Reactions to the Newborn

Seven of the 8 birth-attenders saw the baby's head emerge, while one saw the body only when he was fully born. Fathers reactions to the first sight of the baby were almost universally ones of relief and

pleasure. Fathers describe hastily checking the baby for signs of abnormality. Fathers found it difficult to put their feelings into words and the experience of birth filled them variously with a sense of strangeness, wonderment, joy, uniqueness and elation. These are the typical responses of some of the fathers describing the moment of birth. Fathers describe dividing and balancing their attention between their wives and their babies.

... I was more relieved to see it all over for Lesley than I was at the baby being born, you know. I thought well that's it, you know, they are O.K. And then I went and had a look at him next ... I was ever so pleased that everything was in the right place ... It was a very emotional time as well that you know. I think a tear ran down Lesley's face and one ran down mine as well, you know. It really does choke you up - I don't know why, it's very emotional.

Terry Shapiro

Oh it was marvellous, wonderful ... I felt relieved you know, that's the thing, that he was all right when he was born like.

Evan Crowley

It's uh, and the actual birth, no it's something I couldn't put into words I don't think - the feeling of it. It's uh - they talk about - uh the miracle of birth - and I really felt it at the time.

Len Kerr

(Reactions even when absent: still very emotional and tender)

I was, I wanted to look at both of them at the same time. I couldn't um - I looked at Sally and obviously she was very happy with herself, there was a big smile on her face, so that was very gratifying to know. I can't remember what I said but uh, it was something short and sweet. And I remember looking at Robert and thinking well this is it, you know, I'm supposed to have great feelings for this little lad and I did because he was a little baby. And I remember sort of searching his face to look for facial characteristics or anything that

could ... I remember looking at his hair and seeing if it could possibly be red ... I was obviously - it was in a sort of dream sense. I remember sort of wandering through the fields sort of later on thinking you know, amazing thoughts and feeling very elated.

Simon Shaw

As well as responding to the well-being of the mother and baby some fathers also mention responding to the sex of the baby at this time and to the baby's physical appearance. For one father, the magic of the birth was reinforced by the baby's sex. This was true for both birth attenders and non-attenders, on first seeing the baby, and several fathers also describe their wives as initially reacting to the baby's sex. This is a very complex area and there is much rich data concerning parental sex preferences - however, of the 7 couples who had girl babies - one father was disappointed, and of the 6 couples who had boy babies - one father was disappointed. However, in pregnancy more fathers wanted boys than girls, (see also Chapter 5), 6 wanted boys, 4 wanted girls and 3 had no strong sex preference. The data on the wives provides a tantalizing contrast - of the 7 couples having girl babies, 3 wives were disappointed and of the 6 couples having boys - none of the wives were disappointed, although one was shocked as she had been strongly expecting to have a girl. (Ann Oakley's study shows a similar satisfaction among women having boy children.) It is interesting that all 3 women who wanted boys and were disappointed by producing girls, wanted boys - chiefly for their husbands' sake (see Chapter 5). Yet interestingly, the three husbands concerned, describe helping their wives to overcome the disappointment about the baby's sex, and the fathers whose preferences the wives espoused in the first place, ironically spend their energies

consoling and reassuring their wives about the birth of a daughter.

While the recognition and impact of the baby's sex was immediate to some, for others it took time to sink in. Normality was described as superceding sexual characteristics, and the baby's sex took a secondary place. The differential reactions of fathers to the sex of their babies are described by two fathers.

(The birth was) undecipherable, really. I don't know and the fact that she was a little girl (laughs) and we'd wanted a little girl, it just - it - the actual seeing her being born didn't bother me so much. It was just the fact that she was a little girl more than anything. And then I think I could have fainted, passed out, flaked out.

Len Kerr

And Jean was that overcome she didn't even ask what it was. I didn't, you know. I didn't think to look and see if it was a boy or a girl - You were so pleased to know it had come and once the cry came, you know. Jean was over t'moon, and she started cryin' on me shoulder like and I had to start comfortin' her.

Tommy Hooper

Later, asked about his feelings about it being a girl he says:

Disappointed really - butuh, I think it's uh (sighs) I wanted a boy - I'll make no bones about that ! I wanted a boy to do what I have never been able to do, you see. I want him to do what I want, what I've always wanted to do you see and that's be a racing driver. And uh, when it was a girl like, you know, I sort of got a bit upset, a bit disappointed. But I wouldn't lose her for the world now.

Tommy Hooper

Immediately after the birth, it was usual for couples to have a cup of tea together but again the immediate post-birth experience showed great variations, again dependent on staff routines, activities and ideologies. Some fathers were ushered away soon after, and some were left alone with their wives for a considerable time. There were also discrepancies in men's opportunities to hold or touch the baby at this stage. This again seemed to be dependent on the disposition of the medical staff, and the baby's state of health. A few babies had to be resuscitated, or incubated and so even the mother had limited opportunities for holding the baby. Only two fathers were given the chance to hold the baby in the delivery ward.

Indeed fathers found that throughout the entire period of hospitalization they had little occasion to hold their babies. Seven fathers never held their babies until after hospital discharge. For some, this caused a considerable amount of frustration and longing. The reasons fathers gave for this lack of contact included the hospital rules prohibiting fathers touching their babies; the baby's sleeping patterns and father's exclusion from intensive care wards. Two of the other fathers who did pick up their babies during the hospital stay, describe doing so in defiance of hospital regulations and one was reprimanded by medical staff for doing so. Fathers found such institutional constraints on their contact with their infants meaningless and alienating. They were also insulted by the implication that they were unhygienic or not antiseptic. Two fathers summarize these feelings:

You're not allowed to go in and touch them. (This is in the special baby care unit). This is another thing that we didn't like the idea of. Yet there's all the nurses goin' in. I know they're all protected but there's

nothin' to stop them dressin'
fathers up in gowns ... And yet I tried
to go in and I got hustled out.

Evan Crowley

... I was longing to say, hold the baby
which I was never able to do. And I
didn't realize just what a powerful feeling
it would be to sort of stand and watch your
own son without, not being able to hold
him ... I wasn't, I was never consulted
about anything actually. Sally was given
instructions to tell me not to hold the baby.

Simon Shaw

When they finally do get a chance to pick the baby up this can also
be a time of great emotion.

Going Home after the Birth

Leaving hospital after the birth seemed a time at which fathers again
felt a bit at a loss. After the intense drama of the birth fathers
felt uncertain what to do next. The usual pattern was to busy them-
selves spreading the news to other family members either by telephone
or in person. Typically parents or parents-in-law were told first
and in a few exceptions, close friends. As such telling the news was
very rule-governed, automatic and symbolic. Fathers also expressed
feeling celebratory and wanting to pronounce their news and change
of status to the world at large. In some cases this exhilaration
was frustrated by the birth having occurred in the middle of the night
and the rest of the world being asleep. The way that fathers want to
publicize and share the birth event is captured by two fathers:

And so I said ta. ta. to Jean and that was it. I walked off, just walked out t'hospital. I didn't know what to do. I was that pleased n' I got t'phone box n' I rang about a dozen people, to tell people straightaway ... And (when) I came home I went out straight out and shouted at the top of me voice, 'I'm a daddeee !'

Tommy Hooper

I felt, right from the start I felt really proud. The fact that it was the middle of the night really upset me because I wanted to phone everybody and tell them the news straightaway. I wanted to sort of run about in the street and stop people and say 'I've got a baby girl'. Which if I had done they'd have just looked at me and said, so what ? But then it was fairly late at night so I couldn't even do that.

Nigel Owens

7.5 The Post Natal Period for Fathers

During the period when their wives and babies were hospitalized most fathers in this group remained in their own homes (11) alone and continued working. The usual length of mothers hospitalization was 10 days. While the overall picture is one of fathers being self-sufficient at this time quite a few had the back-up support of family and friends. One father stayed with his parents throughout, Len Kerr, one had parents to stay for a weekend, one had occasional meals at his mother and mother-in-law's, one had parents visit for a day and bring provisions and, a couple of fathers were invited out for occasional meals to friends. A few fathers also hinted that their wives had prepared meals and left a well stocked fridge or freezer.

While fathers were adamant that they could and wanted to cope alone, the picture behind the scenes is one of considerable support and substitute care. For 4 fathers it was the first time they had been separated from their wives since marriage and for some a first attempt at coping alone. Fathers described missing wives greatly mainly for companionship and conversation, and to some, ten days seemed a long separation from both their wives and baby. In some of the accounts there is a vague impression of men 'camping out' at home during the ten days, surviving with lower standards of home-life than normal - eating baked beans and cheese sandwiches. One father, Chris Hill, in fact describes eating a proper meal just in order to please and reassure his wife that he is looking after himself. That home life alters when one partner is absent, that men and women perhaps set different standards for home life and that women continue to feel it their responsibility to care for their menfolk can all be detected in his remarks. What we have in his comments is a mix of new and traditional family patterns and values.

I could cope but there just didn't seem any point in coping. I mean I was doing the washing mainly because Jenny was giving me nightdresses and bras and things to bring home from hospital to wash. And again, I was doing the cooking (sighs) only so I could say when I got to hospital, well I had a chop and some potatoes and some peas (laughter) and she'll think I was looking after myself. But if I said I've had a cheese sandwich she'd have worried. And it was all I wanted really.

Chris Hill

All the fathers in this group visited their wives regularly, either once or twice daily. Some found it irritating and frustrating to

have their visiting limited to formal times, and sometimes found that such visits lacked privacy or intimacy as the mother was surrounded by the family and friends. The Motherhood Project suggested that visiting times could be unsatisfactory for some mothers, this data suggests that it is also unsatisfactory for some fathers. As was said earlier not only was contact with their wives constrained but contact with their babies was restricted and in some cases curtailed. It would seem that for many fathers, fatherhood is suspended until their partners and babies are discharged to the home setting.

7.6 Conclusion and Summary

If we recapitulate on the data in this section, we find a picture of fathers who were deeply active and engaged in the processes of birth. In intending to be present at birth, the fathers studied here were keen to make a statement about their own role as parents, and to mark out their contribution in the decision to have a child. They perceived childbirth as something which should be shared and saw their main role as providing comfort and sympathy to their wives throughout the experience. In deciding when labour has started and what action is appropriate, fathers were intimately involved. They saw themselves as playing a key role in conveying their wives to hospital and took this task seriously. At the maternity hospital fathers experiences were mixed, some experiencing a strong sense of loss on their inception at the hospital. Throughout labour and delivery, there were those fathers who felt their presence to be instrumental and purposeful, and those who felt largely peripheral

and unnecessary. The reactions of medical staff to fathers seemed to play an important part in how fathers construed and characterized the experience. Where staff were dismissive, negligent or off-hand, fathers tended to feel less essential and less appreciated.

Witnessing the birth was often a very emotional experience for men and fathers described being very moved, touched and overwhelmed at the moment of birth. They reacted both with relief and pleasure, that wives and babies had been unharmed by birth. They reacted differently to the baby's sex, but this seemed to be of less importance (at the instance of birth) than the baby's normality. After the births, fathers often experienced a sense of loss and confusion as to what to do next.. Their immediate reactions were typically to share the news with close family and friends. During the period of hospitalization fathers had limited access to their babies and wives, having to comply with hospital visiting regulations. This was a frustration to many. In a number of cases, fathers were unable to hold or become familiar with their babies until homecoming. Many saw this as a bitter irony and contradiction in hospital practices - having been encouraged to be present at the moment of birth - they were then discouraged from assuming any fatherhood rights or concerns.

Reviewing their own and their wives' feelings about the standard of medical care they received, the fathers divided into two groups. Seven fathers felt very positively about the way they had been treated by medical staff, two fathers were highly critical and four felt ambivalent about their care. Most fathers looked after themselves in the post natal time when wives were in hospital, relying on back-up support from families and friends. Most usually, they missed

their partners a great deal, and felt they could not experiment with or adjust to fatherhood until the time of home-coming.

Just as with men's accounts of pregnancy, men's accounts of childbirth contain a public and private tension - between separation and exclusion on the one hand and deep emotional commitment and involvement on the other.

Such accounts also afford us the opportunity to see men in culturally unusual poses - displaying heart-felt emotion; institutionally weak and displaced; secondary actors in a drama peopled by women.

As Richman (1982: 103) states, men's childbirth accounts provide 'ethnographic evidence about the hidden side of masculinity'.

CHAPTER 8

FATHERS' PARTICIPATION IN INFANT CARE:
ACTIVITY AND INVOLVEMENT

**Oh dear! I've been called
up again!**



Postcard circa 1918

' The first couple of nights I began to think I was never going to get any sleep ever. It seemed that as soon as we put her down and dozed off to sleep she'd start up again and I really did feel in a bad way then.'

Chris Hill

CHAPTER 8

FATHERS' PARTICIPATION IN INFANT CARE: ACTIVITY AND INVOLVEMENT

Studies of the family have become increasingly concerned with the father's contribution to childcare and his involvement in the life of the child. The focus on fathers' participation has allowed researchers to commentate on a number of central sociological issues: on the nature and character of contemporary sex roles and definitions of masculinity and femininity; on the jointness/segregation of couple relationships; on the social or working conditions of full-time mothers; on the total care and developmental environment of the child; on the parent-child relationship; and on the generic and cultural meaning of parenthood. At the same time, attempts to measure and evaluate men's involvement with their children have been coupled with an interest in other aspects of men's household and domestic work and can be collectively referred to as the 'domestic politics' of the family (Oakley, 1979: 198). Researchers agree that the way couples divide up their home and family work is an important contemporary political issue, reflecting much about the power relations between men and women, between husbands and wives and between parents and children (Oakley, 1974; Moss, 1980) and identifying a particular form of relationship between the family and the economy (Rushton, 1979:32). However, our preoccupation with 'who does what?' within the family must be set in an historical context which recognises both changes in the family form itself and changes in economic modes of production. The importance of how much labour men

contribute to the rearing of their children and to the maintenance of their homes arises precisely because modern families, unlike peasant and early industrial working class families, are no longer discrete economic units where all members are expected to contribute to the survival of the unit.

We shall deal in detail and critically with the historical perspective in Chapter 9, where the fathers' reported activity in childcare is counterposed against their attitude to involvement and the complexities of childcare involvement are drawn out. It is, however, intrinsically interesting to observe how fathers behave and this chapter pursues a conventional approach to evaluating fathers' role, examining fathers' reports of their participation in infant care, using frequency of fathers' performance of well-defined caretaking 'tasks' as an index of "involved fatherhood". Findings will be compared and contrasted with those from other researchers' studies.

The following chapter will be highly critical of this approach, suggesting that such aggregation of tasks may be flawed, that the selection of particular tasks for measurement is problematic, that infants' age and mothers' involvement are rarely standardised, that the range of selected tasks is typically too narrow and that the methodology suggests and implies simplistic relationships between reported behaviour and reported attitudes. The present chapter will examine fathers' involvement in the baby's feeding, nappy-changing, bathing, night attendance and play. Patterns of involvement will be detailed longitudinally and use will be made in the analysis of mothers' attitudes to fathers' involvement.

8.1 Fathers' Role in Infant Feeding.

Moving first to an examination of the father's role in feeding at 11 weeks post-partum, we find that the sample divides roughly into two, with six families bottle-feeding and seven breast-feeding at the time of this interview. The ratio of breast-feeders is higher in this sample than in the sample of mothers as a whole where by five months only 31 per cent were breast-feeding their babies. This may in part be explained by the slightly variant social class composition of the two samples. For example, in the fatherhood sample the proportion of mothers from social class 3A is smaller than in the motherhood sample and the proportion of mothers from social classes 1/2 is higher (See Appendix VII).

The fathers' comments on feeding practice suggest that a fairly high degree of consensus exists between mothers and fathers as to what method is adopted and pursued. However it is difficult to know whether this represents a post hoc rationalisation for the election of a particular method or whether in fact the fathers' preferences and feelings actively influenced or affected the mothers' decision in the first place. Of the nine fathers who expressed a preference for a particular feeding method (when asked at this interview) only one father reported that the baby was not being fed by this method. In this instance the father stated that his preference was for breast-feeding but that his wife had experienced difficulties with this method. He indeed, was actively involved in the decision to change to bottle-feeding in the face of these difficulties. He describes his role at this time as follows:

I think it (breast) would've been better. Uh, I've no strong feelings

either way. As I say it was taking it out of Marjorie. The sister said she'd have to make her mind up, she either stuck to breast-feeding or started bottle-feeding and so she asked me, and we both had a word with the sister and I told them whatever was easiest for her.

Pete Mitchell

As well as mentioning a concern for the choice that best suits the mother, a number of other fathers in citing their feeding preferences emphasise qualities perceived to be inherent in the method itself. In breast-feeding they stressed the naturalness of the feeding method; its ease and practicality; its acknowledged health benefits; and in the case of bottle-feeders the flexibility as to who administers the feed.

The fathers who expressed no feeding preference uniformly felt that the decision to adopt a particular feeding method was entirely the mother's and were happy to support her autonomy in that sphere. The typical comments of the two fathers below reiterate this theme of non-interference in the mother's choice of feeding:

I didn't have any preferences.
Jean said she was going to bottle-feed and that was that.

Tommy Hooper

I wasn't bothered as long as she was happy. You have a lot of these people who've started breast-feeding and they can't or they have a lot of trouble. I think it's best to find something that suits yourself really. And it suited her and he seems to be happy, so no complaints really I don't think.

Bill Elliott

All the fathers of bottle-fed babies reported having fed the baby by the time of this interview (consistent with Cleary and Shepperdson (1979), who report feeding to be the least-avoided task). Only two fathers did so on a regular day-to-day basis: one when he got home from work in the evenings and one, who was jointly sharing the care of the baby with his wife, who regularly gave one or two feeds in the afternoon and early evening. The husband and wife in this case worked complementary shifts, he as a milkman and she as a medical receptionist. One other shift-working father fed the baby often, but not regularly, due to the irregular organisation of his shift work whereby he sometimes worked three days off and seven days on. One father fed his baby at weekends only and the remaining two fathers fed the baby only on odd or rare occasions. The occasions described included times when the mother herself was out, was feeling unwell or was for some reason otherwise engaged. These latter fathers saw themselves as deputizing for their wives, taking over in an emergency, or in particular circumstances. Such variation in the frequency and occasion of fathers' participation has been documented elsewhere (cf Newson and Newson, 1963; Gavron, 1965; Rendina and Dickerscheid, 1976: 373-377; Richards et al, 1977): however, the calculations of the extent of the participation have often been derived from mothers' reports. For example in the previous study of mothers it is shown that 93% of fathers had fed their babies at one month post-partum, while only 57% were described as feeding the baby regularly (of those bottle-feeding and living with the mother), (cf Graham and McKee, 1980). Table 8.1 summarises the evidence of this and other surveys. The fathers who engaged in regular (or frequent) feeding stress that it allows them to come into closer contact with the baby and serves to give their wives a break.

TABLE 8.1 Fathers' Involvement in Infant Feeding

Investigators & Date	Parent Interviewed	Age Of Infant	Categories of Participation	Results
Newson and Newson (1963)	Mother	One Year	Often	34%
			Sometimes	44%
			Never	22%
Gavron (1965)	Mother	Mother had to have at least one child under 5yrs	General involvement of father in caretaking-feeding not isolated	"44% of fathers would do and in fact did everything required for their children from playing with them to soothing them when they cried at night from feeding them to changing nappies"
Richards et al (1977)	Mother	30 weeks and 60 weeks	Often	@ 30 weeks 35%
			Sometimes	55%
			Never	10%
Gallagher (1978)	Mother	2 months	Never	23%
			Rarely	12%
			Occasionally	29%
			Frequently	36%
Rendina & Dickerscheid (1976)	Fathers (interviews & observations)	5/6 mths and 11/15 months	Composite caretaking scale. No separate data on feeding	Composite caretaking scale

continued/...

Fathers' Involvement in Infant Feeding (continued)

Investi- gators & Date.	Parent. Inter- viewed.	Age of Infant	Categories of Participation	Results	
Graham & McKee (1980)	Mother	4 weeks and 5 months	Regularly	@ 4 wks 57%	@ 5 mth 49%
			Not regularly	43%	51%
Cleary & Shepperd- son (1979)	Mother	3 months	Frequently	97%	
			Occasionally	0	
			Never	3%	
McKee	Case Study of 13 Fathers* and mothers * 6 bottle- feeders in sample at 11 weeks	11 weeks and 12 months	Daily	@ 11wks 2	@ 12mth 2
			Regularly at weekends	1	2
			Often but not daily	1	3
			Occasionally	2	3
			Rarely	-	3
			Total	6	13

These feelings are expressed below:

It draws both father and child closer together whereas it wouldn't if it was just the mother feeding it. It's brought us closer together as a little family than it would have done if Cathy has just done it on her own, or breast-fed.

Derek Morris

I was off work for a fortnight nearly 3 weeks and I was helping Marjorie, like I was doing most of the washing n' that. But when it started that she had to do the washing n' things I started feedin' her (baby) so she could get a bit of a sleep-in, in the mornings and things like that.

Pete Mitchell

Fathers who did not engage in regular feeding alluded to the lack of opportunity or to other constraints on their time. One father also mentioned that he was simply not keen on the idea.

Amongst the fathers of breast-fed babies there were four fathers who, although they approved of breast-feeding as such, reported that they would like to be able to participate in feeding the baby. Again the theme of wanting to be able to relieve the mother from the total burden of care and responsibility emerged. These remarks evolved particularly when fathers were describing the disadvantages of breast-feeding. One father (Chris Hill) felt that not being involved in feeding denied him a closeness to the baby. Another (Simon Shaw) felt that feeding laid down the pattern for the overall care of the baby and by not feeding he was precluded from engaging in a number of other primary care tasks. On the other hand, Stephen Banks was quite happy to be excluded from feeding as it meant he was able to have an unbroken night's sleep. The feelings expressed

by fathers with regard to breast-feeding and their role are typified by the following:

- I. How do you think you would have felt (if wife hadn't been able to breast feed) ?
- R. Disappointed. in one way I suppose but I suppose I would have been able to help with the feeding which obviously I can't do now, it really is a tie. Also I feel that as I never get to feed her I'm very much more of a stranger with her, even now, like I'll play with her obviously as much as I can, obviously, but I'm still largely a stranger to her because she just doesn't see that much of me.

Chris Hill

In a way obviously it's been easier from my point of view because I can't get up to feed her. You know, I think it avoids the possibility of me getting up in the night (laughs).

Stephen Banks

I suppose the only disadvantage (of breast-feeding) is that when she wakes up in the night that you're (looks at wife) the only one that can feed her. I can't give her a bottle or anything.

Terry Shapiro

Feeding Patterns at 12 Months

Although the overall pattern of occasional, regular, frequent or intermittent feeding of babies by fathers is replicated at 12 months the data reveals, interestingly, that it is not necessarily the same fathers who are involved to the same degree. At 12 months Tommy Hooper now admits to feeding his child only occasionally, when

previously he had had regular involvement; while Bill Elliott, an occasional feeder before, has virtually ceased participation in feeding, feeling that the novelty has worn off. His wife Joan regrets this drop in his participation in feeding. Three other fathers whose babies were breast-fed (Len Kerr, Terry Shapiro and Chris Hill) at 3 months are now actively participant in bottle feeding on a regular basis: while three others show no change in their involvement, despite their babies having been weaned.

Importantly, the detailed results here suggest that the fluctuations in fathers' participation over time may not simply reflect fathers' attitudes, values or perceptions of their role. Rather fathers explained changing patterns in terms of the changing nature of the task itself: from breast to bottle, from bottle to solids; the reduction in the quantity and change in timing of feeds; and lastly the changing availability or opportunity of fathers to perform the task.

For example, by 12 months 5 of these 13 fathers had changed jobs and all felt that the new job inhibited their time spent with the family. Derek Morris' lunch-time breaks were curtailed; while from long hours of studying at home, Keith Anderson had returned to a 9am to 5pm job. Reduced opportunities to interact with the child were significant in both cases, directly accounting for lower rates of participation in feeding. Such findings draw attention to a close interrelationship between men's employment and domestic schedules, and show one way in which the pattern of men's occupations can interfere with familial involvement (See also Bell, McKee and Priestley, 1983 for further evidence in this regard).

Longitudinal studies usually presume that a decline in men's involvement in caretaking over time is suggestive of a decline in motivation or interest (Graham & McKee, 1980; Richards et al, 1977). However, the data here suggests that this may be a simplification of complex changes in men's as well as infant's lives. Similarly, the findings that fathers of second or subsequent children engage less in infant caretaking than first-time fathers (see Motherhood Study) cannot be taken as a literal sign of increasing disinterest. The complementary data in the Motherhood Project reveals such men as highly involved in the care of the older sibling, a point made also by Gallagher (1978).

Womens' Attitudes toward Father Involvement in Feeding

It may not be enough just to understand men's reasons or motives for any resultant pattern of caretaking. Certainly, mothers in the current study voiced strong views about the male role in vital tasks such as feeding and played a part in either encouraging, or chivvying men to get involved. Equally there was a small number of mothers who dissuaded men from feeding, or distrusted their competence. Infant feeding can be one reflection of wider marital negotiation and of the resolution of spheres of responsibility.

None of the mothers however, took male involvement in infant feeding for granted. It was often construed as a luxury or privilege and husbands are described as 'good', 'considerate'; also their performance is open to comment - fathers being praised for their 'patience' or good handling of the baby. Gavron (1965) describes how women in her study applauded men's involvement in housework and

childcare, seeing themselves as 'lucky'. Strong (1979) also notes in his research how health professionals felt that it was appropriate to judge fathers' parenting performance/competence, while taking the mothers' management of the baby or child as unremarkable. Here, in the situations where fathers were active in feeding and encouraged to be so, the wives favoured their participation for the following reasons: the mother could have a break and the mother was not indispensable; the father could learn about the baby; develop childcare skills and/or build a strong bond with it; and the father could be made to feel involved. Beth Banks makes this latter point and despite breast-feeding, she ensures that Stephen has a role to play in the feeding process:

What I try to do ever since I've come home is, the minute I've finished feeding her - give her to Stephen to hold and wind her. And I think it's quite an important thing to feel wanted. If she pukes on him and so forth, does dreadful things, the quicker he learns to cope the better. The first time she was sick, he hadn't winded her ... you know absolute blind panic with 'phone the doctor' sort of thing. I think it's quite important, that. He'd be able to cope more if he handled her more.

Several of the breast-feeding mothers regretted that the method did exclude fathers so much and saw it as inhibiting the development of the father/infant relationship; and in one case as interfering with the couple's sexual relationship. In those cases where mothers distrusted husbands' abilities to feed the infant, they usually appealed to superior instincts as women to 'explain' the different abilities of men and women. By drawing on material from the Motherhood Project a few extracts show how women may either fear men's incompetence or cite instances of actual incompetance - and in both

instances retain their control over feeding:

I don't like him to feed her.
The second day we brought her home he couldn't hold her properly then, she was all hunched up. ... He always says 'can I feed her?' and I always say 'No'.

My husband does feed her but he gets a bit bored. He nearly lost her, she nearly died, he nearly killed her. I was putting these curtains up and I looked round and she'd gone black and all the top of her head had gone purple and her eyes were nearly popping out of her head ... And he was choking her and he didn't realize it ... And he was in a dream. And I says 'what were you thinkin' of?' and he says 'surfin' in America' and I says 'don't go surfin' no more when you're mindin' her !

I don't think men have the instinct to look after a baby.

8.2 Fathers' Role in Changing the Nappy

When we turn from feeding to the fathers' participation in nappy-changing and their attitudes to the performance of this task we find that rather similar patterns of involvement occur and that very similar reasons for involvement and non-involvement are raised. The case study material again identifies the contrasting pattern of regular and of intermittent performance of the task and as with bottle-feeding, no one admits to never having performed this task. However, four fathers (Bill Elliott, Terry Shapiro, Len Kerr, Keith Anderson) confessed to having changed the baby's nappy on only one occasion; and in one case it was a disposable nappy - Len Kerr claimed not to know how to arrange a cloth one. Six fathers reported changing the baby's nappy irregularly or occasionally and

only three fathers (Tommy Hooper, Derek Morris and Evan Crowley) described changing the baby's nappy often or regularly. Both Tommy Hooper and Derek Morris also classified themselves as regular bottle-feeders. Evan Crowley, however, while he was prepared to change nappies regularly and frequently, found feeding unappealing and unattractive. His experience of nappy changing was traced immediately back to his handling of his younger siblings. Conversely one shift-worker, Pete Mitchell, who was prepared to feed the baby often, did not display the same eagerness to change nappies. None of the fathers of breast-fed babies participated regularly in nappy changing, which may suggest that the two tasks do tend to be coupled together and performed by a single caretaker - the mother. This might substantiate the observation of Simon Shaw cited earlier, that the establishment of an initial and particular feeding method may predicate all subsequent patterns of primary care.

This claim is, however, weakened by the two exceptions above, where the relationship between feeding and nappy changing is not consistent and by findings elsewhere which suggest that a 'hierarchy of paternal activities exists' with nappy changing appearing as one of the 'rarest categories of regular participation' (see the summary of findings in Table 8.2). It is just these inconsistencies and complexities that the survey approach fails to detail and document. Many studies which rely on patterns of involvement can only reveal differences in participation across the sample: they cannot display individual anomalies and contradictions. While they can characterize fathers as highly or non-participant in a generalized or composite way, they cannot differentiate tasks in which the father may be highly participant from those where he is non-participant. These

inconsistencies will be explored fully in Chapter 9 below.

Where both feeding and nappy changing are done regularly the fathers (Tommy Hooper and Derek Morris) describe the tasks as being a natural and integral part of the care of the child and as forging a closeness between themselves and the baby. One other father, Chris Hill, who did not regularly change the baby intended to do so more regularly in the future, largely because of a desire to get to know the baby better. All the other fathers expressed satisfaction in their current level of involvement in this task. Most felt happy that they knew how to perform this task and so could cover for their wives in any emergency, or when their wives were unavailable or indisposed. Again Stephen Banks attributed his low level of participation in nappy changing to his general idleness and several fathers referred to their wives' superior adeptness or competence: one mentioning that his hands were 'too big' (Pete Mitchell) and another, Terry Shapiro, expressing a fear of putting the pin in. In both cases, their wives are described as making tighter, neater nappies. Ralph Price saw his job as disposing of the soiled or wet nappy and two fathers reported that they often washed or rinsed out the nappies. Only Bill Elliott mentioned being squeamish at the idea of changing a soiled nappy and claimed he would leave it. Nigel Owens felt squeamish about washing soiled nappies, but could change them without difficulty. Neither Bill Elliot nor Pete Mitchell had thought they would cope with nappy changing when asked before the baby was born, but both admitted to finding it less off-putting than imagined. This reality, of only one father objecting strongly to changing a soiled nappy, contrasts with findings from the study of mothers, where several mothers explained their husbands' non-involvement in nappy changing to be a direct consequence of

'squeamishness' or delicacy (Graham & McKee, 1980).

When fathers were asked how or where they learnt to change nappies some interesting though perhaps not surprising findings emerge. In all but three cases (Evan Crowley, Pete Mitchell and Keith Anderson) fathers were completely reliant on their wives for instruction in this chore. For some, this method seemed natural or appropriate. However, two fathers (Simon Shaw and Chris Hill) did mention that due to the unescapable delay in this learning period (usually 10 days of their wife's hospital confinement) they never quite mastered the skill to the same degree as their wives. Wives were perceived as having a head-start and as having developed a superior competence against which it was difficult to compete. Simon Shaw poses this problem very succinctly and shows how this advanced competence of the mother has a spiralling effect:

Sally's really chief nappy-changer.
I said earlier that most of the things that happen in the beginning tend to stick with you and one of them is nappy-changing.
I mean when Sally came out of hospital she'd acquired various skills and she was ahead of me. As I said, I hadn't even picked the baby up ever. And when Robert needed changing were usually times when he was crying and in those circumstances you can't really say, look - we'll practice this time round - cos the baby's hitting the ceiling and your intention is to get him not to hit the ceiling, to soothe him. So really Sally became very adept and we found out as time went on that she could make better nappies. But I practised making and I've changed him although Sally's in charge of that as it were. It doesn't mean to exclude me, I mean I do change him whenever the situation arises, that Sally can't do it.

Of the three fathers who were not taught nappy-changing by their wives;

Evan Crowley again had direct family experience of changing his younger brother and sister; Keith Anderson had lived with a young family early in his marriage and watched them changing the baby; and Pete Mitchell, finding he could not adopt his wife's style of nappy-changing, turned to a parentcraft manual and taught himself an alternative mode which he felt to be less professional but easier.

Such variations in the performance of the task of nappy-changing have been documented by other investigators. Table 8.2 shows the results of this work, against which the case study material can be reviewed. Again there are inherent difficulties in making such comparisons - there being differences in the sample's use of mothers' and fathers' reports, the age of the baby and the categorization of participation.

TABLE 8.2 Fathers' Participation in Nappy Changing

Investi-gators	Sample	Age of Infant	Categories	Findings
Newson & Newson (1963)	709 Mothers of One Year Olds	One year old	Often	20%
			Sometimes	37%
			Never	43%
				Sex of child found to be important
Gavron (1966)	Mothers 48 working class 48 middle class	One child under 5 yrs	Composite category - of what fathers would do for children. Sex of child found to be important amongst w.c. fathers	44% would do and did everything for the child. 21% rated as helpful by wives but 'drew the line at one or two things, usually changing nappies.' (p.71) 31% interested but not helpful

Fathers' Participation in Nappy Changing (Continued)

Investi- gators	Sample	Age of Infant	Categories	Findings
Richards et al (1977)	Mothers 80 first & second time mothers	30 weeks ⁿ⁼⁶⁶ and 60 weeks. ⁿ⁼⁶⁸		<u>At. 30wks</u> <u>At 60wks</u>
			Often	21% 27%
			Sometimes	38% 35%
			Never	41% 38%
Gallagher (1978)	Mothers 279	1-2 months		n = 274
			Never	28%
			Rarely	13%
			Occasionally	20%
			Frequently	39%
Redina & Dicker- scheid (1976)	40 First- time fathers interviewed and observed	20 infants 5-6 months 20 infants 11-15 months	Social/care- taking/ watching infant	No specific details General caretaking scale
Pedersen & Robson (1976)	45 fathers of first- time infants & observed interviews with wives	8 months 9½ months	9 point scale of General caretaking	No specific details. Variety & frequency in task performance noted.
McKee & Graham (1979)	120 mothers 60 first- time 60 second- time Sex of child not controlled	n = 108 4 weeks	Yes.Changes regularly nappy no conditions	19%
			Yes.Sometimes	39%
			Does not change nappy	42%
		n = 112 and at 5 months	Composite scale Father performs no tasks	4%
			Performs a few	48%
			Performs many	39%
		Not given/not applicable	14%	

Fathers Participation in Nappy Changing (Continued)

Investi- gators	Sample	Age of Infant	Categories	Findings
Cleary & Shepperdson (1979)	166 mothers of first- time babies	3 months	Frequently	65%
			Occasionally	10%
			Never	25%
McKee	13 fathers interviewed sex of child not controlled	Mean age 11 weeks	Regularly or often- daily	3 (01, 14, 06)
			Occasionally	6 (03, 08, 09, 12, 13, 16)
			Once only	4 (15, 17, 04, 02)
			Never	0
		And at 12 months	Daily or usually	5 (17, 13, 06, 04, 03)
			Regularly/ often	2 (01) (12)
			Occasionally	2 (. 15 14)
			Rarely	3 (02)(06)(09)
			At weekends	1 (08)

Nappy-Changing Patterns at 12 months post-partum

Just as examination of changes in participation in feeding revealed differences within the sample's performance over time, so too can variations and shifts be detected in nappy-changing. Only one father (Evan Crowley) can be seen to be consistently highly involved in nappy changing at both interviews and similarly one father, Bill Elliot, is consistently rarely involved. The overall shift is toward

a slight increase in fathers' participation in this chore, although one father (Terry Shapiro) when talking of his daily performance of this task, is describing behaviour of a month previously. His baby is described now (at 12 months) as being out of nappies. Other fathers shift categorisation from 'daily' to 'regular, but not daily, (Tommy Hooper), 'daily' to 'occasional' (Derek Morris), from 'occasional' to 'daily' (Chris Hill, Simon Shaw), from 'occasional' to 'regular' (Pete Mitchell), from 'occasional' to 'rarely' or 'at weekends' (Nigel Owens, Stephen Banks and Ralph Price), from 'once only' to 'occasionally' (Len Kerr) and 'daily' (Keith Anderson). Such complexity can be traced not just to the infant's developmental changes, but to deeper, more fundamental pressures from the job status of fathers and of mothers. A number of fathers indicate that changes in their job and leisure patterns affect contact with the baby. Ralph Price's job takes him away from home during the week; Derek Morris' return to work has restricted access and contact with his baby during the evenings, while Tommy Hooper and Stephen Banks spend much of their leisure time in D.I.Y. work on their homes: Tommy is also planning a moonlighting job as a window cleaner to boost the family income.

I. Do you still do practical things for Beverley now ?

R. Not as much, not as much. You see I'm back to the old state again where I'm rippin' things to bits, as soon as I come in from work. I sort of say hello and play with her, you know, for so many minutes. And then I get into this, me scruff, and then start rippin' out again. And of course then I'm up there and I'm working till about 6 o'clock and it's time for her tea and at bedtime I say goodnight. I don't see a great deal of her, unless maybe at weekends.

Tommy Hooper

I do very little with being away during the week on the practical side. I give him a lot of his meals and I help prepare them while Judy's preparing our meal. And just generally playing with him. That's all really. It's difficult with just the weekends to spend as much time as I can with him.

Ralph Price

Such increased polarisation of provider: carer roles is common, although with some cases of intensification of the residual time father has with the baby. However, the wife's job status also intervenes. Both Terry Shapiro and Evan Crowley share the care of their infants while their wives are at work, involving at least one nappy change. Tommy Hooper's wife, on the other hand, has become more accessible at 12 months, giving up the job she had at 5 months and returning to full-time mothering.

The infant's development can affect involvement - both positively and negatively. Fathers report becoming more involved and having more confidence in tasks such as nappy-changing because their child is less fragile, less susceptible to male clumsiness. Most frequently, however, they recount a diminishing, less routine level of involvement. The complex of reasons underlying this aspect runs from the learned competence of their wives, who have become faster, to the development of mother-centred routines and associations. These are stressed and give rise to most comment. Fathers do not wish to break into established routines, as Simon Shaw explains:

I think our roles have more or less crystallized out, you know, we've reached a very smooth system - uh, and because Sally's still breast-feeding him we still have the old problem of, uh, when Sebastian goes to bed that she still has the sort of ultimate job of settling him down ... I change him when

its necessary. Usually if I change him it's in the morning because I get up first thing in the morning, 'cos he's in his own room now, uh and he will cry about half 6, 7 o'clock. When I say cry, you know, sort of a token, staged cry and I usually take him into our bed or if I'm going to get up first I'll change him then and there. And I'm still not very good at doing nappies, but they suffice.

This close interrelationship of tasks is the dominant theme of the accounts. Where daily, or almost daily nappy-changing is performed by fathers at 12 months it is associated closely with bath-times or bed-times, or in conjunction with dressing or undressing the child whereas nappy-changing and feeding are less closely linked as the child matures. The fathers' willingness and regularity of involvement in nappy-changing is seen as coupled with involvement in these additional tasks. Although two fathers have looked after their children single-handedly for short periods (Nigel Owens, 3 days, Stephen Banks 1 week) while their wives were in hospital, by 12 months both these only realise their role as deputies or surrogates for their wives. The data on nappy changing suggests that the baby's maturity can be construed both as an opportunity for fathers to retreat from 'help' with childcare or lead to a greater partnership in practical parenting.

Women's Attitudes to Father Involvement in Nappy-Changing

In the Motherhood study, there is evidence that fathers engaged much less commonly in nappy-changing than in feeding. At one month 57% of fathers were described by mothers as feeding the baby on a regular

basis and while 56 per cent of fathers had also changed the baby's nappy, however, only 19 per cent did so 'regularly' or 'unconditionally' (that is whether the nappy was wet or soiled, or whether the wife was present or not). In explaining such levels of fathers' non-involvement in nappy-changing, mothers raised 'mother-centred' and 'father-centered' rationales and referred to aspects of the jointness of the conjugal relationship and definitions of appropriate male and female work. The main distinctions were drawn between a wet nappy and a soiled nappy, between a routine happening and an emergency, between the wife being present and the wife being absent. Such rationales called upon the personal preferences, tasks and attributes of men rather than upon either women's views of the maternal/paternal role, or on the division of marital roles. Women, on the whole, tended to collude with or accept with resignation these preferences, reporting that their husbands were 'squeamish', had 'large hands', were 'clumsy' or 'rough'. Such explanations match those of fathers themselves and create an image of the woman/mother as competent, adept, nimble-fingered, experienced and gentle. Only few mothers cited their own experience or practice as being a sufficient reason for their husband's disengagement from this task. Again it was only a minority who underscored the mother's 'instinct' for such a division of responsibility, with a few pleased to be doing this chore themselves.

Mothers' descriptions (taken from Motherhood Project) of paternal squeamishness are evidenced in the two accounts below and the first account also illustrates the mother's lack of intervention and encouragement:

No, he won't change nappies, no. He will. if he knows that they're not dirty nappies but he's very dubious about changing nappies. It's just one thing he hates doing. I never really push him. If I leave him on his own he's got to do it, but I'm sure if it was a dirty nappy he'd stay dirty would Patrick. I'm sure he couldn't change it - no.

Oh that night I got that tummy bug, I just felt ghastly - he tried to change his nappy. He'd filled his nappy (soiled) and he had him down here on that thing (baby mattress) and he had a tea-towel over his face and he had two dessert spoons and he was lifting one leg and scraping it (laughter). He can't bear it, he just can't bear it. And that's the first and only time, (husband changed dirty nappy). Well he didn't complete it.

Some women saw their husbands as falling gratefully back upon role models of non-participant fathers: perhaps neighbours, or their own father, but crucially they see the father as having that freedom of choice, of opting out or in as it suits him, not her. This can be jocular:

He's been finding out from all the other people like next door; and he said 'How many nappies did you change?' and he said 'Oh, about two', and he says 'Don't you mean about two a day?' and he next door said 'No, just two'. So that's given him ideas I think (laughs).

or it can be more bitter

I said 'Why?'
I had to start from scratch, I'd never had any experience before with babies and I can change a nappy, so why can't you?
I know there's supposed to be maternal instinct. I don't know about maternal

instincts, I don't know if there is one. I mean, I love her, I think she's lovely, but, um, I change her nappies, I do things for her. I don't think its instinctive - I think its because I want to.

I. And do you think he could learn as well ?

I don't see why not. If I had to, why shouldn't he ?

The mothers were not universally in favour of 'equitable' relationships, however, many accepting nappy-changing as 'mum's work' and not questioning the father's right to shrink from distasteful aspects of childcare. While squeamishness was taken as an accepted male characteristic and a genuine reason for withdrawal from nappy-changing by men only a few women ever confessed to such queasiness and distaste, and in these few cases it did not result in a refusal to perform the task. Instead mothers persevered until accustomed to it. Mothers typically view fathers as less competent, even guard their own skills. The differential responses of mothers to competence at nappy-changing can be seen in the comments of two mothers:

... Well, his first two fell off.
But I'm not so bad now. I have to whip it on quick 'cause he hates his nappy-changing, so I've got better and quicker at it. As I say, you know, he creates a fuss.

Eleanor Owens

(Responding to a question on father's involvement):

No, not a lot really. He does on the occasion, but he'd rather just look after Richard, play with him. He doesn't do it because he doesn't want to. He'll say 'Aw, you can do it quicker than I can'

Judy Price

To summarize, this material from mothers on fathers' involvement in nappy-changing highlights the ambivalence of attitudes towards men's involvement in childcare in general. Levels of involvement are connected to structural factors such as job, learned competence and to the association with other tasks such as bathing, dressing, (breast-) feeding, in common with other indices of involvement. However, the importance of nappy-changing lies in the accentuation of the asymmetry of attitudes towards involvement. Here, where the task is not viewed as potentially pleasurable and where it is often construed as distasteful, the whimsicality of fathers' involvement is highlighted: male involvement here tends to be lower because it is a more menial task and can safely be left to the mother.

Many if not most mothers seemed to accept this state: indeed a consensus seems to exist about the level of fathers' involvement, with both partners referring to notions of women's work, the physical unsuitability of the 'rough' male who is too delicate to handle the soiled nappy. Men's slowness and intolerance is contrasted with mothers' instinctively, naturally superior competence. Where fathers do get involved, this seems to be at the mother's instigation and participation will fall away when pressures increase on fathers' time or when the frantic early months of care give way to more orderly routines in later months. At the same time, while mothers may invite and encourage fathers to opt in to nappy-changing, there is little questioning of fathers' right to resist such pressure. Mothers accept fathers' reasons for low levels of involvement where they would not apply them to themselves; mothers portray fathers' participation as voluntary, welcome and noteworthy, where their own attention to nappy-changing is natural, taken-for-granted.

8.3 Fathers' Involvement in Bathing the Baby

At the first post-partum interview fathers' involvement in bathing stands in stark contrast to their levels of participation in either feeding or nappy-changing. At 11 weeks 6 fathers reported never having bathed the infant and only one father (Chris Hill) reported bathing the baby regularly. In his case this was a recent occurrence and the outcome of a deliberate decision for him to participate more actively in the baby-care and so develop a more intimate father-child relationship. There were two fathers, Bill Elliott and Ralph Price, who had never carried out this task single-handedly but had assisted their wives on occasions. One father had bathed the baby only once (Stephen Banks) and the remaining three fathers described their participation in bathing as occasional or sporadic.

One of the chief reasons cited for the non-involvement in bathing focusses around the fear of either hurting the baby or distressing/frightening the baby. Fathers compare their own possible ineptitude with the level of confidence they perceive in their wives' handling of the baby. They also describe the level of security the baby displays during its bath routine and report not wanting to shatter or interfere with this. For these fathers it is as if the bath-time constitutes a special and exclusive time in which the mother-baby relationship is consolidated and where the fathers' role is one of spectator, to support but remain distant. These themes are captured in the remarks of two fathers, Keith Anderson and Len Kerr:

I've never bathed her - no.
I always let Marjorie do that. I
think I'm a bit frightened, a bit
frightened to bath her. But I'm
usually here when Marjorie does it

and I help her like, but I've never done it. I don't think I'd like to do it really. I'm a bit frightened I might hurt her more than anything else.

Keith Anderson

No, I've not tried. I don't think I will just yet. I think they get the security of their mums, you know, when they're bathing them all't time. She loves her bath now and I wouldn't like to frighten her or anything cos she loves her bath so much.

Len Kerr

Additional reasons given by fathers for not bathing the baby, or for doing so infrequently, include: a lack of opportunity or time; feeling tired at the baby's evening bath-time; laziness; bathing being part of a primary care routine that has been laid down and which falls to the mother (like nappy-changing and feeding); and bathing the baby having been 'automatically' assumed by the mother to be her job, despite the father's (in this case Tommy Hooper) high level of participation in both feeding and nappy-changing. Other observers have evoked additional reasons to make sense of the low involvement in bathing. Cleary and Shepperdson cite evidence that the nature and expectations of when and how often babies should be bathed have changed. They say 'Bathing is by no means the daily/twice-daily activity it was once. It is no longer considered to be essential and mothers are 'given permission' not to bath everyday' (Cleary and Shepperdson, 1979: 14). They argue that the reduction in the amount and frequency of bathing has probably affected fathers' access to and presence at bath-time: one quarter of their sample were described as not at home at the critical time. Gallagher also cites the frequency or lack of frequency of bathing as a powerful

explanatory factor. He says

.... bathing occurs, on the average, only once daily. In contrast, feeding occurs four or five times daily when the infant is very young and fresh diapers are needed 10 to 15 times. Moreover the daily bath is likely to occur when the father is away at work.

(Gallagher, 1978)

He also argues that bathing is the task most likely to involve competence and dexterity.

... bathing is perhaps the most complex in terms of the equipment involved, the requisite manual dexterity, and the integration in time and space of the components of the total production. This is not to say it is beyond paternal capability, but bathing the baby is not a well-stereotyped fatherly activity in our culture, and in some instances maternal anxiety may discourage this employment of the father

(ibid, p 110)

Other comments about low-participation refer to the 'danger' perceived to be inherent in bathing (Cardiff Staff Seminar) - any error in the performance of this task leading to more drastic consequences than with others. It might be argued that perceived 'skill' is not a sufficient reason why fathers should be reluctant participants in bathing since it was pointed out earlier that bottle-feeding itself is a very skilful task - especially where correct holding and winding are underscored. Interestingly, Cleary and Shepperdson also argue that bathing is perceived as the 'task requiring most skill' (Cleary and Shepherdson, 1979: 14) and that this was the reason why a large number of fathers in their sample were non-participant.

Despite the low direct involvement of fathers in bathing, there is evidence from the case studies that presence at bathing is seen as an important but subsidiary, cooperative event. Most fathers were 'frequently' present and in a couple of cases this led to an occasion of play where fathers describe splashing the baby or talking to it. One father reports being involved at this time by drying the baby's hair and another actually supports the baby while his wife washes her. Fathers perceive the bath-times as an opportunity to assist their wives and relate directly to their babies. Several fathers mentioned that bath-times are enjoyable because the baby displays obvious pleasure, 'laughs' and 'smiles'. These more indirect aspects of paternal involvement may be concealed in studies which rely on actual participation. For example, two fathers (Simon Shaw and Tommy Hooper) show how their presence can alter the bath-time interaction very markedly. Both these fathers answer negatively to having actually bathed the baby, yet they are key participants in the bath event.

I'm most probably sitting here
watching the box as often as not
and Jean'll bath her and I'll go down
and splash her wi' water and talk to
her and mess about with her in't
bath.

Tommy Hooper

I do things like clean his eyes for him
or dry him or brush his hair, things I
can be doing at the same time. Or I dry
his toes while Sally's emptying the
bath. Or maybe flick water on him
whilst he's in the bath or talk to him.

Simon Shaw

The Newsons also describe low participation in bathing and nappy-changing as a measure of skill or competence. In their sample they found that

Bathing and nappy-changing were regarded as special skills; many women whose husbands were otherwise participants said the father would 'be afraid to bath him'

(Newson and Newson, 1963 : 135)

The patterns of engagement in bathing the infant can be compared across studies. Again there seems to be marked symmetry within the studies, all indicating the rarity of fathers' involvement in bathing and the low status on the paternal hierarchy of activities.

TABLE 8.3 Fathers' Involvement in Bathing the Infant

Investigator	Sample	Age of Infant	Categories	Findings
Newson & Newson (1963)	Mothers of One Year Olds (709)	One Year Old	Often	15%
			Sometimes	24%
			Never	61%
Gavron (1966)	Mothers with one child under 5 48 w.c. 48 m.c.	One child under 5	Husbands perceived as doing everything required for the child	44% would do everything 4% non-participant
Richards et al (1977)	Mothers - 80 first-time and second	30 weeks & 60 weeks	Often	@ 30 wks 20% @ 60wks 34%
			Sometimes	27% 34%
			Never	53% 32%
				n=66 n=68
Gallagher (1978)	Mothers 279	1-2 months	Never	80%
			Rarely	8%
			Occasionally	10%
			Frequently	3% n = 274

Fathers' Involvement in Bathing the Infant (Continued)

Investigator	Sample	Age of Infant	Categories	Findings
Cleary and Shepperdson (1979)	166 Mothers of first-time	3 months	Frequently	18%
			Occasionally	9%
			Never	73%
McKee	13 Case-Study	11 weeks	Regularly/Often	1
			Occasionally	3
			Once only	1
			Never	6
			Assisted at bath time	2
		and at 12 months	Daily or Usually	4
			Daily	0
			Often but not daily	2
			Occasionally	2
			Rarely	2
			Never	3

In the Motherhood Project data on bathing was not analysed separately from other tasks.

Bathing the Baby at 12 Months

Table 8.3 above highlights the radical difference in bathing behaviour at 11 weeks (one father regularly involved) and at 12 months (four daily, two others often). It would seem that the passage of time has affected the case study fathers' participation in the

task of bathing. This shift is quite a dramatic one and in the other studies above is hinted at only by Richards et al, where by 60 weeks the numbers of fathers never bathing the infant has also diminished. In the case study materials some of the fathers' involvement in bathing remains constant: as in the cases of Simon Shaw and Len Kerr, who continue not to directly participate in this task; Chris Hill, who continues to be highly participant; and Stephen Banks whose involvement remains occasional. For the remainder the shift in participation is upwards. In the case of Tommy Hooper, it is from 'never' to 'rarely', for Pete Mitchell from 'never' to 'occasionally', for Bill Elliott and Terry Shapiro it is from assisting their wives to frequent and single-handed involvement, while for Evan Crowley and Keith Anderson it is from 'never' to 'daily'. Derek Morris shifts from 'occasional' to 'daily' and Nigel Owens from 'occasionally' to 'rarely'. Finally, Ralph Price moves from once only to rarely (2 or 3 times being cited). Where fathers increase their participation in the task of bathing they give a number of varying reasons. One of the main ones centres around the increasing size of the baby and the consequent change of bath place from mobile bath to 'big bath'. The maturity of the baby is seen as ridding fathers of their fear of its fragility and bath-time is seen as therefore less hazardous. Dropping the baby, or letting it slip are not seen as overt handicaps or obstacles, similarly fathers feel better able to hold/manipulate the baby - large hands are no longer an intervening factor.

Bathing is also construed more as a social act, less of a primary care-taking chore. Fathers perceive it as an opportunity to play and socialize with the child and may carve out bath-time as an intimate

and special part of the day for father and child. Often mothers are described as being totally absent and the father and child have an opportunity for direct and uninterrupted, unmediated interaction. Fathers often describe getting in the bath with the child (Derek Morris, Evan Crowley, Nigel Owens and Tommy Hooper). When talking about bathing together fathers describe this time with pride and pleasure - seeing it almost as an accomplishment or an exciting discovery - these bath-times typically take place when the father returns from work. In all three cases (excluding Tommy Hooper) these fathers have sons and although they do not refer explicitly to the sex of the child it would be interesting to investigate whether fathers feel more ready to share bath-times with sons rather than daughters. Nigel Owens does mention that his wife is more likely to bath with his son - so the sex of the parent or sex of the child may not be a significant factor in this interaction.

The transfer from the baby bath to the 'big bath' occurs at different ages or stages and this may have an effect on the reported involvement of fathers to this task. Bill Elliott cites his participation as coinciding with the transfer to the big bath at around four months; Derek Morris, on the other hand, cites 11 months as the significant time. As well as the place of bathing changing from baby bath to 'big bath', with the switch from a basic caretaking task to an occasion for social activity and interaction, there seems also to be some change in how bathing relates to the other routines of baby care. In early infancy bathing is often qualitatively indistinct from the other necessary routines (apart from the earlier discussion about differences in skill, competence, danger, frequency): it is expected and rule-governed, seen as vital for the well-being and health of the

baby. However, bathing of the older child, the one year old, seems to be associated more with night-time/bed-time routines and with settling the baby. It is associated in some cases with the pleasurable aspects of baby care - allowing parents expressions of joy and delight, more physical contact and special individual, undivided attention. In its own right it is now a social and potential play occasion and it can be made even more play-oriented by the introduction of toys and special games. Fathers can be involved in this task without any high commitment to either feeding or changing (especially feeding). This is less feasible at an earlier age, where the play aspects of bathing are less obvious and constrained and where the associations between feeding and the other terms appear closer, simply in terms of the baby's needs for feeding, sleeping, changing, bathing alone. Bathing, putting on the nappy and dressing the baby for bed are described as collective responsibilities by several fathers (Keith Anderson, Derek Morris, Evan Crowley, Chris Hill) and the way that fathers are involved in bathing and drawn into social interaction with the child is illustrated by several transcripts. These transcripts underscore the themes about the changing place of the bath and its changing character as a task. Firstly, Derek Morris:

I. Do you bath him ?

R. Oh better than that - Oh, we have baths together now - bubbly baths - yeah, great !

I. And when were you able to start ?

R. Oh, it'd be about a month ago now we started. Um, uh, having the occasional bath together. He was gettin' a bit of a handful for Cathy to bath in the little bath. He's more darin' and he wanted to

explore the bath and uh, with working at British Rail it's a bit of a dirtier job so I thought, well, I'll have a bath with him see how he likes it. And uh, oh, he's great he splashes, he's not frightened of water at all. He rolls about and splashes and explores - yeah it's real good fun. We used to have, up until he was poorly (baby has cold), we used to have one every night. I came home all sweaty n' dirty, been crawlin' under a railway carriage and uh I thought I'll have a bath and he jumps in with us (me).

That babies also get a lot of pleasure from the exclusivity of the bath with their fathers is described further by Derek Morris.

- I. Do you think he's aware of the change now, to having baths with you ?
- R. Oh, he does. If he sees me he goes and runs the water and starts gettin' stripped off for it. He knows he's gonna have a bath yeah. He gets all excited as soon as water runs he thinks he's gonna have a bath. He loves water, you can take him in there and sit him on your knee and turn the taps on and he's scrambling to get bathed.

Similarly Evan Crowley reports the pleasurable side:

Yeah, oh I bath him, yeah - on a night-time, every night just about. I bath him and change him and, you know, and then put him to bed. He goes in the bath with me, like. He laps it up.

Nigel Owens describes how his involvement in bathing is more marginal - their bath-time usually occurs in the middle of the day when Nigel is at work:

Well he usually goes up in the bath now, during the day actually, all on his own,

you know, so he gets in with me sometimes, usually with Eleanor, not often with me. - So I sort of scrub both their backs now (laughs).

I. Do you think he's aware of you doing things.?

R. Yes I think so. I think he finds it a bit of a novelty if there's somebody else there, somebody else doing it for him. Only trouble is I can't do things as quickly as Eleanor can so if he's tired and a bit 'fracty' Eleanor usually does it just for quickness.

Keith Anderson illustrates the way in which bathing creates part of bedtime preparation - which he takes as his special responsibility.

Uh, well let's see I'm usually in about, I usually finish the dinner round about six so we have about 20 minutes roll around on the floor, then up to the bath, get her ready, into the bath, back out, change her bring her down, feed her and take her to bed, which that's usually about an hour or so in any case.

Other reasons given for increase in participation in bathing include that of changed parental work routines. In Keith Anderson's case care-taking activities increase to compensate for the reduced exposure to the child following his return to work. He feels it important to earmark a proportion of the day where he can have direct contact with the baby. Changes in the mother's work routine can also be significant. In Terry Shapiro's case his wife's return to work has afforded him more opportunity to take part in bathing (and other tasks).

Where there is no change, a low or a diminution of fathers' engagement,

work routines can again be cited as important. Ralph Price does not like to interfere with his wife's routines when he is home at weekends; Tommy Hooper has less time for all caretaking and increased demands on his leisure time. For some, too, the 'big bath' transition has an opposite effect to that described above. These fathers see the larger baby as more difficult, more lively and active and requiring the skilful management that their wife is seen to be better able to provide. Both Tommy Hooper and Ralph Price appear eager to hand responsibility to their 'competent' wives. This is how they explain being rarely participant to bathing at 12 months:

Um, I'd have a bit of trouble bathin' her I think now cos she's a bit of a handful but Jean knows how to do it so Jean does that. I don't think I could bath her (pause). Well I suppose I could, but I wouldn't want to in case I'd most probably make a right mess of it (pause). But she she gets in the house all she wants to do is play - you know - I was in't bath once and she came up and had a bath, you know we' me and we were playing in't bath for ages. It was great (laughs shyly)

Tommy Hooper

I. Have you ever bathed him ?

Yes I have um - but not very regularly I think two or three times, one was fairly recently and, uh, when he's in the bath now it's not as worrying as it was before, course the other thing is now if he's clambering around, is if he slips. He's standing at the side of the bath and just messing around.

Ralph Price

He further explains his level of involvement:

... I think with being away during the week she has her routine which she tries to stick to. I think it's best to try and abide by that routine rather than put him out of step at the weekends. When she has

him on her own during the week
it'd be a bit unfair if we tried to
change it.

Ralph Price

Mothers' Reports on Bathing

Turning to data from the partners and mothers in the motherhood study we find corroboration of the view that fathers are minimally involved in bathing (at 1 and at 5 months). Again the reasons for this are divided amongst mother-centred and father-centred reasons and reflect on the jointness, segregation or complementariness of the marital relationship. The father-centred reasons again emphasize aspects of male incompetence or unsuitability, and male reluctance, reticence. Fathers are described as being unsuccessful in their attempts and disinterested in practical care and this is taken as a sufficient condition for the withdrawal from the task. Mothers describe men as rough, clumsy, frightened or nervous:

He attempted once and he didn't
get on very successfully and he
offered to do it again, but I said
I'd do it (laughs). I think he's
quite happy to keep away from that
side of it quite honestly. (laughs)
I don't want to force him to do it.

Angela Anderson

I said to Christopher (the baby)
yesterday 'He (the father) doesn't
hold you quite like your mum, does he ?'
He's a bit clumsy, but he tries.
A woman holds a baby in her body
differently.

Joan Elliott

Again, mothers accounts point to the relative ease by which fathers

can withdraw from tricky or 'hazardous' tasks. Initially, mothers lack confidence and many of their responses to the initial experience of bathing the baby exactly parallel those of the fathers. The same fears of hurting/distressing the baby are endemic in their comments concerning the size and fragility of the infant. Mothers, however, go on to master these early fears: they may get training (usually in hospital), have had previous experience in childhood or with relatives, or have female family and friends to advise them. Fathers both lack the supportive training and support network and perceive themselves as backed up by willing mothers: if the father fails, the mother copes.

In the mother-centred reasons for low involvement of fathers in bathing there are again the themes of mothers wanting to retain some gender specialisms, of mothers distrusting or disproving their husbands competence and of mothers feeling that their partners (or men in general) have not got appropriate personalities and characteristics to perform this (or any) nurturing task. Husbands are described as careless, casual, 'anti-baby', incompetent: as short-tempered, impatient, rough, slapdash. Mothers also feel reassured that the task has been performed properly if they've done it themselves.

One mother (Motherhood Project) reflects this attitude:

I wouldn't, I mean I wouldn't leave Danny to bath her and, not for the simple reason he couldn't do it but I wouldn't trust him to do it. I don't know, I think that babies of that age should be with their mothers, you know ... if I do it (practical care) myself I know she is getting it properly (food), but if Danny did it, you know, he's one of these that if she leaves it, that's it, bugger her, you know. He's a bit quick, you know.

There were mothers who regretted the low level of the fathers' involvement in bathing, although there was little hostility about it and there were those who actively instructed and encouraged their husbands in this task (just as in nappy-changing). These mothers take their role as tutors very seriously and feel that passing on this knowledge and skill is essential and important in the overall development of the father-baby relationship and in the maintenance of harmony in the triadic relationship. This theme is illustrated with remarks from Beth Banks:

I. Does Stephen join in in changing (nappies) ?

R. He does, yes. He always said he would never change a nappy but as I say, I think he needs to be involved for his own sake and for the baby's sake. I think he can comfort her very easily I think she's very aware of the strength and steadiness of being held by him. The first time he bathed her I insisted (my emphasis) that he did, he was, I can do it very quickly having done it before (as a midwife) and I'm very aware of her losing body heat, and of course he isn't, he was messing about testing the water with his elbow and I found I really had to restrain myself not to say 'come on hurry up she's getting cold'. He bathed her which took about half an hour and put her nappy on which fitted where it touched. It was awful, running down her legs and generally a mess. He will change her, for instance when I feed her in the morning, he sometimes changes her and brings her into me before he goes off to work which is rather nice.

This account shows that in understanding why some fathers opt in or out of particular babycare tasks it is essential to know the context in which they make any first efforts and the partner's responses to their attempts. While some mothers seem ready to dismiss a fumbled effort and to accept little or no further cooperation, other mothers actively encourage repeated and practiced attempts. It would seem that

understanding fathers' motivations, fears, feelings and prejudices is not enough - these must be balanced against the views, preferences and expectations of the mother. What is interesting is not just that some fathers succeed and others fail, but why they succeed or fail and in what context. The case study approach allows detailed appreciation of the complexity and nuances of this family context.

8.4 Evidence on Other Care-Taking Tasks

With feeding, nappy-changing and bathing these fathers' attitudes and activity can be viewed against a run of other survey studies, as detailed in the Tables 8.1 to 8.3 above. Many other dimensions of participation could be or have been addressed, but they have not been universally researched in a comparable way. The other main aspects which have received attention are night attendance on wakeful babies (see Newson and Newson, 1963; Cleary and Shepperdson, 1979; Richards et al, 1977 and Graham and McKee, 1980), getting the baby to sleep (Newson and Newson, 1963) and play with the baby (Newson and Newson, 1963; Cleary and Shepperdson, 1979; Graham and McKee, 1980; Richards et al, 1977). Such a division between 'major' activities and 'minor' less noteworthy activities is not a coherent, logical separation. It is, as will be argued in Chapter 9 below, an artificial product of the survey tradition, with its devotion to measurement and task identification: and a product of that tradition which inhibits an understanding of fathers' commitment to and involvement in infant care. The most common dimensions of involvement will be followed here, using fathers' accounts to point up the complex meaning lying behind their activity.

Waking at Night and Settling the Baby

Patterns of night attendance suggest that about one half of fathers will sometimes or often attend to a wakeful baby. Table 8.4 summarises such data as exists. The reasons given for this pattern by Cleary and Shepperdson stress: work demands faced by men, which lead them to 'need' unbroken nights; mothers' beliefs that night attendance is their responsibility and that they can catch up on lost sleep through the day; absence of fathers at night due to shift work; mothers' distrust of fathers' capabilities; and fathers' express lack of competence at dealing with small babies. Cleary and Shepperdson found overall that the picture was one of consensus: on the whole most couples were agreed about the existing pattern of responsibility, although some mothers were resentful at their partners' low performance of this task and some fathers wished they had to do more (or less) of the night attendance. These themes are supported by Graham and McKee in the Motherhood Project and by this case study material. Both these projects suggest that attendance rates may underestimate the fathers' interest and concern and that even where fathers did not carry out the night feed they often woke and gave the mother support by either talking to her, making her drinks, fetching the baby or settling it again. This was true for both bottle and breast-feeding mothers. Some mothers also depicted their husbands as more fretful or anxious at night than they themselves - husbands were described as lying awake awaiting for the baby to stir. This was described most particularly in the early weeks of home-coming, where fathers reported needing time to accustom themselves to the noises and signals of their babies. Also if the babies were difficult and had a disturbed sleep pattern fathers were often described as sharing attendance through the night, or taking

over when their wives were particularly tired, or at weekends when they themselves had no work commitments.

TABLE 8.4 Fathers' Attendance During Night-Waking

Investigator	Sample	Age of Infant	Categories	Findings
Newson and Newson (1963)	709 mothers of 1 yr olds	1 year	Attends often	18%
			Sometimes	32%
			Never attends	50%
Cleary and Shepperdson (1979)	166 first-time mothers	3 months	Attends frequently	46%
			Occasionally	7%
			Never attends	47%
Richards et al (1977)	80 first and second time mothers	30 weeks and 60 weeks	Wakes	@ 30wks 36% @ 60wk 35%
			Does not wake	64% 65%
Graham and McKee (1979)	120 mothers 60 first-time 60 subsequent	4 weeks	Always wakes	22%
			Sometimes wks	41%
			Never wakes	37%
			Always does night feed	4%
			Sometimes	36%
			Never does night feed	60%
McKee	13 case study	11 weeks and 12 months	Never wakes	@11wks 54% @12mths 69%*
			Woke once	15%
			Occasionally wakes	31% 31%
			* baby no longer wakes	

No case study father routinely did the night-feeding and changing. Three fathers describe having occasionally attended the baby at night (Derek Morris, Pete Mitchell and Evan Crowley) and in the latter case it was at his wife's request, when she woke him up because she was feeling tired. One father (Simon Shaw) got up occasionally and prepared the kitchen by putting on the heating and kettle; two fathers (Bill Elliott and Nigel Owens) had done a night feed once (in both cases their partners were reported to be feeling tired and unwell); and 7 fathers had never attended the baby at night by 11 weeks. However, of those 7 fathers only one 'never' woke (Tommy Hooper): his baby did not waken through the night and by the time of the early morning feed he was at work. Two other fathers 'rarely' woke (Bill Elliott and Ralph Price), and the rest 'usually' or 'sometimes' awoke, even if they were only partially awake. Four fathers found that initially they were always awake before their wives, waiting for the baby to stir (Keith Anderson, Stephen Banks, Len Kerr, Terry Shapiro); and one (Terry Shapiro) routinely woke his wife:

It's usually me that wakes her up

Terry Shapiro

I always woke up, in fact, I don't know I feel as if I always woke up first cos I'm quite a light sleeper in fact. It's probably 'cos the first night we brought her back we had her in the room and I just couldn't get to sleep. Every time she made a murmur you know, I could sort of feel myself wake up again and the adrenalin flow.

Stephen Banks

By 12 months, although most babies had stopped waking for feeds through the night, they were described as waking for other reasons.

with little ailments such as colds, tummy upsets, colic and teething problems. Four fathers specifically mentioned attending the baby through the night at such times (Simon Shaw, Derek Morris, Evan Crowley and Nigel Owens). In Nigel Owens' case, the baby was described as very restless and in need of frequent night attendance. He suffered with colic a lot and the Owens' shared caring for him at night. Usually, Eleanor would attend to him during the week, Nigel assisting if it was particularly distressing. However, he typically took over-night attendance at weekends, when he could compensate for lost sleep through the day.

Although case study fathers did not actually describe whether they succeeded in settling their babies to sleep, they did discuss putting the child to bed, which might be taken as the same concept. Putting the baby to bed was perceived by some fathers as a special, enticing activity. Three fathers took regular responsibility for this task (the Newsoms, by comparison, reported only one in five never settling the baby) and it was seen as a time when the father-baby relationship could be strengthened. For Terry Shapiro the format was fairly ritualistic, this father taking his daughter around the room, showing her pictures and talking to her before settling her down. This pattern was established in early infancy. In the other cases, settling the baby was closely associated with bathing and changing routines as described earlier and this pattern was a more recent one, coinciding with increased participation in the task of bathing (Terry Shapiro, Keith Anderson and Evan Crowley).

Two fathers described a similar regular or routine pattern for getting the baby up in the mornings (Derek Morris and Simon Shaw) and one father, Terry Shapiro, who also settled the baby at night, got the

baby up and dressed her two mornings every week. (His wife was on night shifts and he would take the baby to meet her).

These special settling and wakening routines of fathers are illustrated in the following remarks:

I usually sit on't settee with her for a while in the evening after her bath. About fifty per cent of the time I take her up to bed.

Terry Shapiro - at 11 weeks

I always take her to bed, 99 times out of 100, I do. She knows she's going and she never cries or owt now ... (I say) just 'bedtime' and she knows.

Terry Shapiro - at 12 months

My first job really is to get him up out of bed and pot him, so I get him up every morning. I'm the first one he sees moreorless, until we go in the kitchen and Cathy is preparing breakfast, gettin' my pack-up ready, well she just makes a flask of coffee, she does the, um, sandwiches the night before.

Derek Morris

While it can be assumed that many mothers accept, approve or encourage these special father-child routines, this is not the case for all mothers. Some mothers feel that these special fathering, paternal activities constitute all the pleasant parts of parenthood, while they as mothers are left with the nastier, day-to-day coping, when the baby may be bad tempered or ill, or difficult and in need of disciplining and supervising. Mothers' activities are characterised as arduous and work-centred, fathers' as easy and pleasure-

centred. There is a certain injustice in the way roles are enacted. Such comments emerge when partners (and case study wives) discuss the differences in maternal and paternal roles.

Well, I think his (Terry's) relationship's better. She knows that when he comes in he's just going to play with her all the time and take her round and show her pictures and show her things and that. I mean I can't sit all day and play with her. Like when he comes in he can feed her and then play with her for half an hour. So I think his is better. And he always takes her to bed. He's always done that, he always takes her up to bed.

Lesley Shapiro

Sebastian knows that he has all clean clothes and all changes done by me and that food comes from me and how he takes his food, is how I give it to him and how I 'train' him for want of a better word - The same with potty-training I suppose. Whereas Simon (husband) is telling him about things, touching them and looking at trees - this is a tree. He's sort of more the intellectual side, I'm the mundane, scrubbing, cleaning, feeding if that makes sense.

Sally Shaw

Going Out with the Baby

Taking the baby out of the house is another easily reportable, countable, and observable task which has been treated by researchers since the Newsoms' 1960's study. As Table 8.5 shows, investigators again suggest a fairly high degree of fathers' participation in these activities. The age of the baby seems a significant factor here. Cleary and Shepperdson report that half of their sample of

fathers of three-month-old babies did not take the baby out - while the numbers refusing to do this at one year (Newson and Newson, 1963) and at sixty weeks (Richards et al 1977) is considerably lower at 32 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. Cleary and Sheppardson rely on mothers' reports to explain the fathers' lack of solitary outings to be due to their going out as a couple, to fathers' work commitments and to masculine inhibitions about pram-pushing. The wives of the case study fathers evoke similar explanations for their husbands' lack of outings with the baby and one of the case study partners, Angela Anderson, refers to her husband's reluctance to push the pram.

I think he's self-conscious about it,
but he'll do it to show willing.
He'll take her out for a walk.
There again he's a bit self-conscious
about it.

Other mothers refer to outings by car and describe this as an area where fathers are prepared to share care of the baby, the car being used (for example by the Hoopers) to sooth a distressed baby. Interestingly, none of the case-study fathers admitted to having inhibitions about walking out with the baby and many described this as a very pleasurable aspect of infant care (especially at 12 months). Their accounts hint of pride and enjoyment in this task, walks being a time for showing off the baby, for father-child interaction and play, exhibition and discovery of the world. These particular fathers did not seem to feel their masculinity was at stake, or that their reputations were open to ridicule. Walking out with the baby is also construed as giving mother a break, acting as a soother to the baby, giving the baby fresh air. Fathers' positive attitudes to walking out their babies are revealed

in the following accounts:

... I take her for walks, we go for hours, down at sea front you know, it's great. You can go places round here whereas you couldn't where we were before, you just, you know, - one day when we were a bit untidy in't kitchen after me doin' one of me workin' stints I just put her in the push-chair and off I went and I was out for about 5½ hours with her just walkin' her right round Hornsea. Aw it was great down t' sea front you know, there's so many things for her to look at, different colours and different noises, you know - here's the sea, then a plane flies over, 'cos there's a bombin' range down there, you get a lot of planes flyin' over and uh it's great, it's fantastic !

Tommy Hooper

... We go out a lot and we try to take him somewhere special on Sundays like a little picnic thing. Um uh but him out for walks and we used to take him down the Museum gardens but we don't do that so often now because we walk and it'd be a long way to walk (moved house). But he likes trees and animals and birds so we take him out to see the trees and things like that - boats .

Simon Shaw

This evening we went out for a walk around the Stray to pick some crab apples.

Chris Hill

TABLE 8.5 Taking the Baby Out.

Investigator	Sample	Age of Infant	Category	Findings
Newson and Newson (1963)	709 mothers of 1 year olds	12 months	Taken out often	29%
			Sometimes	39%
			Never	32%
Richards et al (1977)	80 first and second time mothers	30 weeks and 60 weeks	Taken out often	30wks 24% 60wks 45%
			Sometimes	46% 40%
			Never	30% 15%
Cleary and Shepperdson (1979)	166 first time mothers	3 months	Takes out frequently	45%
			Occasionally	4%
			Never	51%

Note: This activity was not analysed separately in the Motherhood Project and case-study fathers were not systematically asked such a question.

Fathers Playing with their Babies

'Play', in contrast with the well-defined, physically describable activities which have been considered so far, is a relatively diffuse and fuzzy concept. Although most surveys attempt to impose a metric upon 'play', its definition is elusive and it is unsurprising to find that parents regard themselves almost universally as engaged in play with their infants. With the Newsoms, a mere 1 per cent 'never played'; Cleary and Shepperdson did not bother to record the minority 'never' figure; while the Richards study measured engagement in play at 92 per cent at 30 weeks and 93 per cent at 60 weeks post-partum. All the case study fathers (and the overwhelming majority in the Motherhood Study, by mothers' accounts) described being involved in playing with their infants at 12 months and although play was not treated as a quantifiable item at 11 weeks quite a number of the fathers cited playing with the baby at that time, for varying, if minimal amounts of time. Others described their anticipation of future times of playing with their babies when they were older.

The father's role in playing with the baby is underscored in the comments recorded in earlier sections about the differing roles of mothers and fathers, with play a recurrent male area of competence. In the observational literature, too, play is a dominant theme in the treatment of fathers' influences on the infant (for a survey and examples, see Lewis, 1982). Most of the play activity was described as taking place in the evening, when the father came home from work, or at weekends. Many fathers describe the baby's anticipation of their homecoming and the excited 'greeting' of the father is reported. Mothers teach babies to await their fathers, to look through the window and to listen for the car or his footsteps.

Other play-times commonly recorded were after the evening meal, preceding the evening bath, weekends and holidays. Play and interaction could occur alone or in conjunction with care-taking activities. For a couple of fathers, play seemed to be engaged in consciously, as a duty and fathers actively construct or create recreational opportunities. Again this self-conscious approach to play is motivated by a desire to get to know the baby better, to forge a better father-child relationship and to provide change and relief for the mother and baby. (Stephen Banks and Keith Anderson both report these influences.) Other fathers describe their play as a mere natural or emergent aspect of their parental roles and there is no sense there of any deliberate or contrived organization of recreational time.

In some cases, play is described as involving special games, or toys, or special physical or verbal cues. Fathers describe chase games, hiding games, peeping games, rolling on the floor, or physical tumble games, splashing water games and playing with balls, kicking throwing and retrieving balls and toys. They also refer to reading, talking, chatting and to providing educational interaction and stimulation: teaching the baby about his/her environment. Two fathers also describe involving the child in their own household tasks and activities and in this case the play and recreational content may be incidental to the father pursuing his chores. The child is a companion to the father and makes his/her presence and demands felt even though it is not time specifically delineated for play. The way that fathers play an educational role and invite and encourage babies to be interested and engrossed in their worlds is captured in the transcripts of Tommy Hooper and Evan Crowley:

I mean she comes out with me in the garden you know, or there again if I'm doing a job in the kitchen she'll come through and sort of pick me tools up n'hand me 'em and I always say thankyou even if I don't want them, you know, make her know that she's doin' summat that she thinks I appreciate what she's doin'. Um, for me, she can't do all mummy's things she's got to help father in some way.

Tommy Hooper

Well he tries to help you and he gives you the impression that he knows what's going on. He'll bring the hammer n'that, he wants to be in on it - oh yeah. My mate was helpin' me do this cupboard in't corner and when we went over and picked him up to take him away he cut my mate on't hand with a piece of wood (laughs) !

Evan Crowley

or later, discussing father's role in shaping baby's character:

Oh definitely especially when it's a boy like. I wouldn't be so bothered if it was a girl.

I. What sort of things do you feel you can teach him ?

Well everything that I know ... everything general, probably what I have to do in't house, probably learnin' what I know, which isn't a great deal. (Baby says "daddee" - talk aside, laughs).

Evan Crowley

Both these fathers also cite involving their babies in a 'masculine' world of cars and motorbikes. There are frequent hints that the sex and social class of the parent and the sex of the child can be important in the perception and enactment of the educational role. That fathers take their role in playing with baby seriously and in some cases see it as their central parental role (along with the intellectual/educational role) is evidenced by the comments of several

fathers. A number of fathers also see that their recreational/
educational/intellectual roles will increase as the baby gets older :

... Mainly my job at the moment is in looking after him, playing with him, speaking with him. I suppose I've got the best bit of it. Um - Sally doesn't like or finds it, finds that she is isn't able to read from nursery rhyme books, she gets, she doesn't know what to say about objects when I can, I can enthuse about them and I enjoy reading with him.

Simon Shaw

... the husband is the person who plays with the baby whereas the mother is the one who deals with his needs. And I think as the baby gets bigger from a year onwards, I think the roles should come closer together and join fairly quickly.

Ralph Price

... uh, I always try and play with her when I first come in. I didn't especially make the effort when she was younger but now she's very much aware that I'm coming home. And so its nice that. Uh, I, you know, I think I should make an effort, so to speak, even if I don't especially want to.

I. Do you enjoy playing with her ?

Uh, yes, yea she's, yea. I find if I'm not careful I'm too rough with her, you know. In a way I'm looking forward to when she grows a little more - uh, yeah I enjoy it. I find her a great, uh, she can be a great trial as well when you're wanting to do anything. You've got to have a hundred per cent of your time towards her otherwise its no good.

Stephen Banks

There is an impression that fathers feel they will be able to play more and in a more diversified way with their children, the more

active and social they (the children) become. This is suggested not just in the amount and quality of reported play between 11 weeks and 12 months, but also in their comments about which activities fathers imagine sharing with the child in the future. Richards also reports such an upward trend in 'play' activity (Richards et al, 1977: 28). In the main fathers report fairly specific recreational expectations and aspirations. Only one father in the case studies could not identify such specific future family pursuits (and this was characteristic of his approach to life in general, where he tended to live in the present and to avoid looking ahead (Keith Anderson).) The kinds of activities anticipated (Chapter 5 also touches on these aspirations) included going to the swimming baths, going together to a pub, for walks, camping, cooking, fishing and teaching baby about nature, stamp collecting, holidaying, visiting museums, going to the seaside, going to cricket and football matches; playing ball games, hiking, playing with lego, train sets and cars. It is such complexity - of definition, of the meaning as well as the interpretation of play - which makes the study of involvement in play so unproductive and yet so interesting. In summary, the counting of play is seen to be inadequate without a wider and richer examination of accounts to unearth the meaning of play to fathers, to describe the contexts within which play occurs and takes on such meanings and the interactions between play and other caretaking involvements.

8.5 Summary and Conclusions: The Measure of Involvement

This chapter has pursued the survey paradigm first established for this context within the Newsoms' seminal study of fathers' involvement in child-care. That approach proceeds by discovering and measuring the extent of fathers' recorded involvement in the care of their babies. Survey studies have concentrated upon 3 'major' loci of 'care': feeding, nappy-changing and bathing. This concentration has been dictated by the needs of measurability and compounded by studies' reliance upon the mothers' reports of the extent of fathers' involvement in infant care. The overall impression is that it is only a minority of fathers who are observed to be involved in the regular care of their babies. This emerging picture is, however, not a simple one, but is diversified by the nature of the specific task to be performed. No one father from the case studies was consistently involved in all three headline tasks. Instead, at 11 weeks, we have one father who takes on the full-time care of his baby every afternoon yet has never bathed her. Alternatively, we have another father who at 11 weeks has never bathed his baby, fed it only on rare occasions and yet he routinely changes its nappy. Participation rates vary not only across the case study group and from task to task but individual fathers participate differently over the time span studied. By 12 months the father who was earlier assuming full-time responsibility for the baby each afternoon is now only minimally involved in her care, while the father who had least to do with caretaking at 11 weeks now sees his chief role as bathing, changing and settling the baby every bed-time. Such diversity - even perversity - of meaning attaching to task performance casts grave doubt on the value of data deriving from the tradition of involvement-counting or indexing alone. These

doubts are increased when the fathers' motivation for involvement are addressed. In the case studies fathers' report a myriad of factors encouraging, trammelling, promoting or inhibiting their activities in baby care. Factors cited have included work commitments (both of father and of mother), leisure activity and D.I.Y. work. Fathers diverge in beliefs and values concerning their own and their wives' roles and the ways in which these are negotiated; in beliefs about infants' needs; or the needs and aptitudes of parents in general and in particular. The baby's behaviour, sex, emotions and personality are seen as critical in the formation of patterns of care. In contrast with the counting of the reported performance of child care tasks, therefore, there is a need for researchers to address the fathers' attachment to notions of commitment to, context and meaning of the performance of childcare. This theme will be developed explicitly in Chapter 9 below.

Turning to the longitudinal dimension of research, the overall trend in the quantity of fathers' involvement seems to be an upward one, most notably in nappy-changing and bathing. Many studies have suggested a waning of fathers' involvement in infant care over time, usually attributed to the fading novelty of fatherhood. Oakley, for example, says

... it is clear that birth produces a peak of domesticity: many fathers may be heavily involved in the early days but this level of participation falls off as babies become older, life becomes more routine and the novelty of fatherhood is eroded by time and sleepless nights. Parallel with this trend mothers become less satisfied with fathers' role ...

(Oakley, 1979: 211)

The pattern of reduced satisfaction with fathers' involvement was also noted in the Motherhood Project, alongside a reduction in the help with infant feeding (Graham and McKee, 1978a: 19). Again, the case study data shows matters to be more complex and demanding of research. It is not necessarily true that a falling count of the performance of visible tasks is symptomatic of diminishing interest, involvement or participation. It can as easily be true that the nature and timing of tasks in the overall sequence of caretaking has changed. Fathers may be less concerned with meeting basic infant needs and more with building a social relationship between parent and child. The reasons for changes in rates of participation are not captured in many static surveys, where investigators focus on discrete points in time rather than on a continuum. Such studies presume a consistency of involvement, experience and behaviour where none may exist. This case study approach allows one to grasp the fluidity and flux of early parenthood, where the external and internal worlds of work and family life can be subject to rapid change. The longitudinal approach not only documents fluctuations in the amount fathers participate in infant care but further suggests that such fluctuations, while they may be symptomatic of the fathers' perceptions of his role, also are influenced by the interaction of fathers' and mothers' work and leisure roles. Five fathers in this case study group changed jobs during the period surveyed and these job changes directly or indirectly affect their opportunities for caretaking. Two mothers similarly take up paid employment outside the home, again affecting their opportunities for childcare. The case study approach has also highlighted the narrow scope of survey enquiries into father participation. It is not clear why (except for utilitarian ease of research methodology) there has

been such concentration upon feeding, nappy-changing and bathing, to the exclusion of other vital, chronic or even banal tasks of infant care. Some of these alternative facets of care have been brought into the fourth section of this chapter. In examining play in particular, the complexities of measurement and meaning have been observed. Many more tasks can be 'counted' in these 13 fathers' accounts and Chapter 9 will develop some of the important implications which spring from their recognition and analysis.

The transcripts from both fathers and mothers reinforce the belief that performance of tasks is in and of itself an incomplete and shadowy guide to the fathers' actual involvement. Indeed, this material raises instead the question of whether the important focus of performance is the characteristic attitude of the father to his role, rather than any quantity of infant care. The data suggests that the father's willingness or potential to involve himself is as important as the task itself. This may prove to be the factor which distinguishes father from father, family from family and which differentiates mothers who feel exploited from those who are content with equitable care arrangements with their spouse. (Which is not to say that the latter women necessarily regard such division as desirable, but it may be seen as inevitable). This suggests that different and additional questions may be needed to elicit data about fathers' participation. While the quantity of participation should still be tapped it should be recognised as insufficient to account in isolation for complex, shifting attitudes and behaviour. Before moving on to the constructive critique of participation contained in Chapter 9 and in conclusion to this chapter, it can be observed, as other researchers have observed in the past, that the

contemporary father does get involved in many tasks of early infant care. However, the facts that fathers are involved and may be becoming more involved than in the past are not necessarily reflections on any blurring of sex differences or any shift in the distribution of power between men and women. It is more a statement that the male sex role of 'father' has expanded yet further to include involvement in child-care, but without any radical redefinition of differences between the sexes. Quintessentially, fathers can opt in and out of child-care - particularly pleasurable or self-affirming aspects of child-care - much more readily than can mothers. Men can find opportunities to adopt caring, nurturing roles with their babies, in private and in the privacy of leisure time; and they will find social approbation for it. It is less easy to construct a symmetric image of esteem for women retreating from care and expanding into the public economic sphere. Men's sexual stereotypes are shifting and this must ultimately facilitate the lives of both mothers and babies. Women's sexual stereotypes appear to be stuck, however, and will remain so until parenthood and its tasks become a public concern.

CHAPTER 9

FATHERS' PARTICIPATION IN INFANT CARE: A CRITIQUE



I WISH I WAS SINGLE AGAIN.

Postcard circa 1905

' I think you should both share the day to day happenings with the baby. I think it's all part of having a baby and watching her grow up and everything.'

Len Kerr

CHAPTER 9

FATHERS' PARTICIPATION IN INFANT CARE: A CRITIQUE

Throughout Chapter 8 the difficulties of enumerating and interpreting fathers' active involvement in infant care have emerged. The traditional attention to 'norms' of behaviour, in particular to fathers' involvement in physical care-taking, is too simplistic in developing an understanding of that behaviour and this chapter, by dealing with data in a manner which better reflects men's ideologies of fatherhood, better addresses questions of whether sex roles are now blurring or sharpening, whether marriage relationships are becoming more symmetrical, whether fathers can be nurturant.

The introduction to Chapter 8 referred to the measurement of involvement within the historical context of development of the family as a social construction (supra, 346). It is not sufficient to observe male involvement as though changes were occurring within an immobile, discrete social unit of the family. Instead, as family history has shown, the 'cooperative productive' interdependence of families has splintered: children have become almost entirely dependent family members; parental power over children has lessened; adults, especially men, usually generate their income away from the home and receive 'private' remuneration for their labour; the nature of domestic labour has changed and fewer tasks are tied to survival; total household numbers have fallen due to smaller family size and a reduction in the presence of servants, lodgers and other

relatives, leading to an increased privatization of family life, the inevitable connection between marriage and procreation has broken; and child-bearing and child-rearing occupy a smaller proportion of the family life-cycle. (Aries, 1962; Laslett and Wall, 1972; Flandrin, 1976; Anderson, 1979).

More fundamentally, modern families are characterised by a type of economic organisation that sharply ranks and separates domestic and productive activity, divides homes from workplaces and provides few opportunities for women to participate equally with men in the sphere of work. In this family structure, which it is argued first emerged amongst the bourgeoisie of nineteenth century Europe, men are commonly assigned the breadwinning roles, while women are assigned the tasks of homemaking and child-rearing. (Scott and Tilly, 1975; Poster, 1978). Each confers a different status and ideology: the one economic independence and superordination, the other economic dependency and subordination. This contrasts with the peasant family type where all members were economically active and individuals were not divisible from the family unit. Sex-role differentiation clearly did exist in peasant families and husbands maintained authority over wives; however, the sex-gender relations of modern families have a different and peculiar tenor attributable to the shift in the location and definition of productive work and in women's access to it. Feminists have largely been responsible for highlighting these structural inequalities of the modern family and for drawing critical attention to the differential participation of men and women in waged work. Their campaign through the Women's Movement of the 1960's and 1970's for more and more equal opportunities for women to express themselves outside the home has paradoxically compelled us at this point in time to review seriously what

happens inside the home. In short, the relationship between domestic and waged labour has been thrown into sharp relief and the home has become politicized. This is why the organization of infant care and domestic work and, more specifically, fathers' participation in infant care and housework is important. It stands as a symbol of the sex-gender relations within a particular family structure, shaped by particular economic forces and embodying the forms of oppression women experience elsewhere in society. But it is a contemporary concern and in former times the struggles between the sexes must have cast up other issues and been sited in other terrains. (Anderson, 1979: 65; Oakley, 1979; Rowbotham, 1979). Having briefly outlined the historical background to why fathers' participation in infant care is a crucial area of study, it is now necessary to ask how researchers have gone about their investigations. This is the main concern of this chapter and it will focus chiefly on the social survey approach for three reasons. Firstly, social surveys have become the dominant mode of sociological inquiry. Secondly, social surveys have been influential in shaping the categories and questions applied by other researchers outside the survey tradition, especially ethnographers. Thirdly, there continue to be too few opportunities for users of different styles of inquiry to pursue a constructive dialogue one with the other. This chapter is not intent on invalidating the social survey method but rather aims to pick up on some persistent limitations as it has been applied to the father's role and to feedback insights gained about fathers through an alternative method. Primarily, the interest here lies in uncovering whether social surveys have asked the right questions about fathers, if more or different questions should be asked, if there are any different ways of asking and seeing which lie outside the scope of surveys and if

any different sense can be or should be made of the answers given. The critique relies on the case study material from thirteen couples who were interviewed in-depth about their perceptions of becoming and being a parent. This case study approach is distinguished from a social survey by the number of people selected for study, their representativeness and by the number of questions focussed on the father's role. Social surveys, especially those employing questionnaires and structured interviews, tend to extend their inquiries over a large number of cases, to aim for a sample that is representative and to have to restrict the number of questions on a given phenomenon. Consequently, social surveys are valuable for identifying patterns and variations for large populations and for aggregates of individuals. The case study approach is directed less at the full variation of phenomenon, being better equipped to explore social processes and social relationships between individuals, including the meanings which people attribute to the actions of others. Despite these fundamental differences in what each method can achieve and the often variant philosophical assumptions of the two approaches, this chapter will show that grounded data gathered through one route can have relevance and validity for the other. In commenting on the flaws discovered in the survey approach to fathers' participation a heuristic division between empirical and interpretive flaws will be used: however, this distinction is in no way an absolute or exclusive one.

9.1 Empirical Flaws in the Survey Approach

In the measurement of fathers' participation in infant care the survey approach can be criticized first on two general points: on its narrow definition of 'participation' and on its narrow definition of 'infant care'. Participation is usually taken as 'direct' participation in the life of the infant, while infant care is chiefly taken as 'physical' caretaking. Typically, as shown in Chapter 8, a small range of fatherhood practices is identified and these practices cluster around the father's involvement in caretaking activities (feeding, bathing, nappy-changing, soothing the crying baby and attending the baby at night); his participation in domestic baby-care duties (washing nappies, preparing bottles); his performance of social activities (walking out with the baby) and play; and, more recently, his attendance at childbirth (Newson and Newson, 1965; Gavron, 1966; Richards, et al, 1977; Gallagher, 1978; Graham and McKee, 1980). The father's performance of these tasks, the regularity and frequency with which he carried them out is taken to be the summation of the father's role and the prime expression of being a father. However, the nonsense of this quantitative approach, when taken as a single index of the father role, can be seen if attempts were made to measure motherhood in this way. For example, in assessing mothers' involvement with their babies it is not enough to add up how many feeds they give daily or how many nappies they change. Clearly, more sensitive indices have been developed for assessing the degree and extent of maternal involvement and these have incorporated other variables, not least the baby's individual needs, the mother's other responsibilities and what these duties mean in the total context of the infant's care and the mother-child relationship. Similarly, while it is important to know what

fathers do for their babies, this information needs to be reviewed alongside what the mother does, including other non-physical dimensions of infant care and the demands of the baby itself. The survey approach tends to assume a homogeneity of both mothers and babies and the data on fathers' engagement in infant care tasks is often presented in isolation and without qualification. When represented in this way it is difficult to know what the resultant figures mean, especially if they claim to embody something about the totality of fatherhood. If measures of direct participation in caretaking were set against other approaches to the father's role then they can be revealing and permissible, as will be demonstrated here. The case study material suggests that it is possible to gain a fuller appreciation of the father's role by focussing additionally on how men feel about the economic/provider roles, by reviewing the way men's home and work roles interconnect, by tracing the part men play in decision-making concerning their children, by exploring the level of interest and knowledge men hold about their babies, their sensitivity to the baby's cues and by examining how men engage in the educational, moral and disciplinarian aspects of child-rearing. These areas expand our vision beyond direct and physical caretaking and provide a context in which it can be understood. The case study findings will be outlined along each of these dimensions to illustrate how the scope of inquiries about the father's role can be broadened.

All the fathers interviewed in the present study felt they had the prime responsibility for providing financial security for their families and this was identified as one of the big changes wrought by parenthood. In many ways they felt more bound to their homes,

their wives and their jobs.. They also cited ways in which they felt their jobs interfered with their opportunities for contact with the baby: home and work commitments were sometimes felt to be in competition with one another (see also Moss and Fonda, 1980). Nonetheless, most of the fathers could foresee no alternative to adopting the chief bread-winning role when their babies were infants (one couple, the Hoopers, attempted role-sharing, dove-tailing their working hours, but this later broke down) and only one father, Chris Hill a librarian, had given any serious thought to swapping roles with his wife. Men's attitudes to the economic provider role are reflected in the following comments from Derek Morris. He poses a stark choice between breadwinning and child-rearing which was not atypical in the minds of many of the couples:

Well, um there has to be somebody rolling in the, bringing in the money. It has to be one or the other that does it hasn't it. So if it's the wife that's going to go out to work then it's the fathers got all the time with the baby or vice-versa ... You know as much as people go on about Women's Lib, I still think the man's job in a house is to go out and earn the keep.

Decision-making was investigated particularly through questions about the baby's health: who would observe that the baby was ill, who would contact help and who would decide which help was to be sought? Parents were asked to describe what happened with regard to the decision of whether or not to vaccinate their babies. In the main, parents were described as acting consultatively over 'major' health care decisions, but mothers carried most health care responsibility and arbitrated over 'minor' decisions. They also

engaged more regularly with health professionals and in the public aspects of child health care.. (Kerr and McKee, 1981).

The complex negotiations, discussions and decision-making processes that inform a child's environment and determine the context of its total care are reflected in the exchanges below:

If there was something wrong with her I suppose I'd be asked, what do you think and I suppose I'd voice my opinion - then I suppose she'd be the one to phone t'doctor - yes or I'd go down t'phone box and phone t'doctor while she'd do a quick clean up cos you can't bring a doctor into a dirty house do ya ? I mean you've got some opinion, quite a lot of things she'll ask my opinion you know, what I felt. And I'd always do something go t'phone or look after Lucy while she went. I always had n'opinion.

Tommy Hooper.

In fact I had a word, I was at our doctor's, we're both under the same doctor and I had a word with him at the sort of time we were considering (vaccination). In fact we signed the application to have the lot done, on the understanding that you could change your mind which we did. I had a word with the doctor - and even the doctor couldn't give you a straight yes or no - but sort of quoting him he said 'if there's any doubt in your mind as to whether to have this vaccination or not' he said he wouldn't have it done. So you see it's your own decision.

Ralph Price

She went, I think a couple of times (to baby clinic) and then this particular time when she went they said to her that bairn had put too much weight on. So I said - 'right don't bother goin' no more, it's a waste of time' 'Cos she'd gone t'doctor and doctor had said that's stupid like, so. It was a load t'rubbish about that bairn putting too much weight on.

Evan Crowley

(On coming home from his studies)

It's the first question usually you ask, 'how are you, how have you been, have you been a good boy?' Well, I suppose it's more for our benefit than anything because little comments like 'has he been a good boy, I mean they don't mean a good deal - cos he's not got much option poor little tot. But I mean just the reporting back, it's sort of a very family thing. It's very nice.

This key role of the mother as the correspondent of the baby's affairs ties in with her earlier role as instructress in primary care tasks and indicates a strong reliance of fathers upon mothers' definitions and skills. Yet while much of fathers' information about the baby's behaviour is second-hand or mediated via the mother, it is nonetheless valid and should not be dismissed. Fathers use, store, value and rely on this information for attending to and caring about their babies and for infusing their definitions of themselves as parents. The discovery and collection of this data on the minutiae of their babies' lives is a way of affirming their identities as fathers and for building a present and future meaningful relationship with their child.

The majority of fathers (nine) also felt that they could distinguish different cries, knew why or when the baby was going to cry and claimed that they could devise different strategies for soothing the crying baby. In some cases, this ability to recognize the differential infant cues was described as a learned attribute, in others it was perceived as instinctual. Fathers felt that they had a responsibility in providing comfort for their babies and also held well-developed beliefs about how parental reactions to distress could influence the

When fathers were systematically asked about the baby's sleeping/crying patterns their responses suggest that they felt themselves to be fully informed about the baby's daily behavioural pattern. They claimed a high level of knowledge about the number of feeds given, the timing of feeds, the type of food given, (for example why and when solids were introduced), the number of hours the baby was awake and the types of occasions when the baby was likely to cry and why. Only one father, Evan Crowley, reported ignorance about both the number of feeds given and the baby's sleeping/waking pattern and explained this in terms of his daily absence at work. He says in reply to the question 'How many feeds does Len have in a day now?'

I don't know. I haven't got a clue.
I'm not here at all you see during
't day time.

and to the question 'have you any idea how many he got when he was a small baby?'

Uh about four I think (wife grimaces).
Well - I don't know do I? Well I've
not been there at all during the day time
so.

All the others answered these questions, with confidence, going into the minute details of the daily repertoire of behaviour. The transcripts suggest that this knowledge is gained partly through direct observation and experience (all the fathers had at least a few days off in the immediate post-natal period) and by mothers' reporting back daily happenings/routines to fathers. Mothers were described as playing a key role as correspondent of the baby's affairs. Comments from Simon Shaw, for example, illustrate how this pattern of communication between husband and wife serves to inform him about the baby.

baby's later behaviour and personality.

Recognizing different infant cues has variously been seen to require a considerable degree of sophistication and familiarity with an infant and is not necessarily automatic to mothers. Given the limited contact many fathers had with their babies in this study - some reporting as little as half an hour exposure each day - this claim to intimate knowledge of the baby's repertoire reminds us that parent-child bonds are built and developed qualitatively and not quantitatively - Derek Morris and Nigel Owens reinforce this point with their observations when asked at 11 weeks post-partum 'Has he/she got different cries?' Not only can they detect different cries they judge themselves to have some direct control over the baby and its behaviour.

Oh he's got an attention cry which I try to ignore cos it gets a bit, you get he wants a bit too much attention and he's got an annoyed cry and a pain cry. Like you can tell if he's got wind and if he wants attention you can tell cos there's a different tone to it.

Derek Morris

You can tell when he's just sort of guertin and when he wants picking up and when he's got wind. I can let him cry for quite a long time if I thought he was just wanting picking up. I could leave him quite a long time. I think Eleanor'd pick him up a lot sooner. I've always said you've got to be, sort of leave 'em a bit, let him cry cos he can get too used to being picked up all t'time.

Nigel Owens

Likewise, the fathers took their responsibilities for educating the

child, both morally and intellectually, seriously. Being a parent carried with it from the outset the expectation that the father should be interested in the child's welfare and self-conscious about the business of child-rearing. Most read in their brief as parents the need to provide comfort, succour, stimulation and control.

Although this cursory overview of the fathers' perceptions of their role conflates and simplifies many complex findings (dealt with in more detail in McKee, 1979; Kerr and McKee, 1981) it does raise some new and important issues for consideration and uncovers some previously hidden pathways to the study of fatherhood. Furthermore, it provides a context in which to place findings about physical care-taking. By developing the concept of participation in this way, it is possible to detect subtle differences between fathers, their values, ideals and overall contributions to childrearing which are at first obscured if only the traditional measures are employed. By balancing the two sorts of data it may be possible to generate some 'true' or 'better' evaluation of high and low participation and to decide what this participation means for individual families. For example, two case study fathers, Simon Shaw, postgraduate student and Evan Crowley, British Rail guard, came out on the physical care-taking scales as participating very little in the routine handling of their babies: they have never bathed the baby, rarely fed the baby, seldom attend to the baby in the night (see Chapter 8 above). Yet, when this is seen in the context of other aspects of involvement, their experiences were very different and their knowledge about the baby very diffuse. On the one hand, Simon Shaw has carved out a very distinctive educational and intellectual role for himself (reading to the baby, talking to him, offering him unusual toys, food) and has taken this aspect of fatherhood very seriously. He has read

extensively about babies both for personal and academic reasons and is highly engaged in assessing the minutiae of the baby's life. At eleven weeks post-partum, he is keeping a detailed journal of the baby's progress. Evan Crowley, on the other hand, sees his role in early infancy as minimal, is rarely at home - working long hours and relaxing after work with his friends - has not read anything about babies or infant care and does not know what the baby's daily routines are because of his absence from the home. These differences must affect not just their roles as fathers but the experiences of both their wives and babies. Listening to their comments it is possible to detect the diversity of what fatherhood means to these two men and the way they enact being fathers:

... We've got some books with very colourful illustrations in them so I sit him on my knee just to get him used to the idea of being near me and listening to me speak about an object, not necessarily to him but about an object to him about something. And it's easier if we have a book because then we can cater for the length of time he can concentrate. Or I wander round the flat getting him to look at things in the flat and using the same route each time and using the same words.

Simon Shaw

Well I mean you do your bit when you're 'ere. But I mean a bloke's never 'ere most of the time. Either he goes out for a drink on a night time or he's at work all day like. I mean, like I am, since he's been born I've been out at work seven days a week. I'm not in a great deal. But I mean you do your bit when you're in like, you hold, you get hold of him and things like that.

Evan Crowley

As well as the narrow range of tasks identified by social surveys in

the investigation of the father's role, another key survey technique of aggregating tasks can be misleading and further betrays the complexity of what is being studied. Typically, investigators try to create some composite or additive measure of participation which represents a sum of tasks performed regularly or often by the father. The selection of how many tasks and which tasks seems arbitrary and is rarely justified. In one study the 'high participation group' comprises fathers 'performing at least two categories besides playing "often"'. (Richards, Dunn and Antonis, 1977: 28), .

while in another, the researchers divide the categories into:

fathers who perform 'many', 'few' or 'no' tasks. 'Many' is taken to mean four or more tasks performed on a regular basis. (Graham and McKee, 1978: 4). This aggregating of tasks, as well as making comparison across studies difficult, again is restricted to the quantity of fatherhood practices and does not reveal what the performance of those tasks mean for the couple or how it affects the overall quality of child-rearing. One mother may find the burden of childbearing relieved by a regular, willing performance of one task by the father, perhaps one that she dislikes or finds distasteful, while another mother may still feel exploited even though the father might regularly do four tasks, but might not do them very well or might only do them under duress. The case study findings suggest that weighting of tasks should be tied to the couples' evaluations of what is done and how essential it is to the overall context of childcare. Couples' assessments of the extent of the father's involvement need to be matched against one another, and against 'real' rates of involvement before any general or wholistic categories can be generated. Mothers' satisfaction with levels of participation also needs to be measured over time, as it has been shown that this can

diminish as the baby grows older. (Oakley, 1979; Graham and McKee, 1978).

Another persistent short-coming of the way surveys have investigated fathers' participation is the lack of standardization in the period of infancy under review. More importantly, researchers also tend to take this issue as unproblematical and to make comparisons across studies where the infants' ages vary from four weeks to twelve months. (Richards, et al, 1977; Graham and McKee, 1978). In one study comparisons are made between fathers of one-year-old infants and fathers of children of an unspecified age; the criterion for inclusion in this study being that the mothers should have at least one dependent child under five years (Gavron, 1966). From talking to the same fathers over the course of the first year of infancy, it would seem that the time-specificity of the study is an important factor. Taking the three basic caretaking tasks of feeding, nappy-changing and bathing, there were marked fluctuations between fathers' reports at three and twelve months after the birth (see Chapter 8 above.) While some fathers had increased their involvement in one task, they had reduced their involvement in another; or some had increased overall involvement while others had lessened total involvement. This lack of consistency between individual tasks and between fathers' degrees of participation over time was explained in a number of ways, relating to either changes in the husband's or wife's employment status, to perceived changes in the infant, to changes in the nature of the infant care tasks themselves or to other circumstantial or environmental demands. Five men changed jobs over the twelve month period and this could either facilitate or restrict the opportunities for involvement. In one instance the father began working away from home and only returned at weekends, so his contact with the baby was

severely curtailed. In another, the father returned to work after a period of studying and decided, because he would see less of the child on a daily basis, to participate more actively in her care. These case study examples underscore the fine intermeshing and interdependence of men's home and work roles and reveal the impact that work can have on the form of family life (see also Moss and Fonda, 1980). By twelve months two mothers were working and their husbands felt that this encouraged and necessitated a more equal division of child care work. Surveys need to build into their design ways of evaluating both the influence of men's and women's employment statuses, ways of appreciating any changes in these, the effects of different kinds of occupations and ways of assessing differential work patterns: shift-working, working nights and part-time work. Perceived changes in the baby were felt to enable some men to participate more in primary care, whilst for others such changes were inhibiting. The baby was seen as becoming easier to manage, being less fragile; on the other hand, for others, she became less easy to handle, struggling and protesting more. It must be remembered too that a number of fathers expected their involvement to increase as the child got older (this has been commented on by several researchers), especially identifying the importance of the father's role when the child became 'sociable', walking and talking. (Newson and Newson, 1974). Increased involvement at twelve months may in part be a reflection of this ideology. One of the most interesting observations is that fathers isolated changes in the nature and sequencing of the three primary tasks themselves. With a very small baby the tasks of feeding and changing were felt to be inextricably linked, and usually performed by a single caretaker, especially where babies were breast-fed. Bathing was, at this stage, the least preferred

task by men and also closely tied to the nurturing tasks of feeding and changing. However, by twelve months, fathers felt these tasks to be much more divisible and segmented. This had a particular effect on bathing, and while at three months six fathers had never bathed the baby, by twelve months only one had never done so and six described themselves as regularly or always bathing the baby. Bathing had become a social task and was often characterized as an occasion for play. Babies had been transferred from baby baths to the 'big bath' and four fathers actually bathed with their babies as a routine occurrence. Interestingly, three of these men had boy children. Bathing in these cases was a pre-bedtime activity and fathers also usually changed and prepared the baby for bed. This suggests that it may have been an important part of the father-child repertoire of contact.

Any shifts in feeding patterns from breast to bottle or to solids, the time of day when bathing routinely occurs, and the frequency of bathing also need to be noted when identifying father's participation. It may be that variations in family schedules affect this and are subject to change as the baby matures. The reasons why fathers' involvement in basic caretaking either increases or diminishes can be said then to be very complex, neither moving unilaterally nor equally between tasks. Studies that have attempted to capture shifts in performance rates over time usually attribute a decline in caretaking to a decline in interest, commitment or motivation, or this assumption is implicit in their findings. (Richards, et al. 1977; Oakley, 1979). However, such shifts are multifaceted and can be explained away in practical or external terms as well as in psychological or motivational ones.

A final empirical bias in the conventional survey findings on fathers' participation is the continued reliance on maternal reports of paternal behaviour. This is justifiable if investigators are mainly interested in mothers' perceptions of what fathers do. However, it cannot stand as an accurate report of fathers' activities; for this it is necessary to turn to fathers themselves. This criticism is now being well-heeded and as work by Simms and Smith shows, social surveys are now being designed with fathers in mind (Simms and Smith, 1982). However, it will not be enough for surveys to look at fathers 'as if' they were mothers. New questions may have to be devised and the 'old' questions may not translate very well when applied to men. This is especially important in deciding which variables to explore and trust, and as has already been suggested, men's physical or direct caretaking may be only a partial avenue of inquiry. What is compelling is that the direct incorporation of fathers' views will allow researchers to compare mothers' and fathers' accounts and to develop an appreciation of the processes by which mothers and fathers come to adopt and construct their current roles and how they feel about the existing division of labour. This will throw up insights about the nature of the power relations between husbands and wives and between parents and children. It will also help to show how couples build and sustain their family ideologies, how they set and achieve family goals and how they face and adapt to institutional and interpersonal change. This is where the case study approach is especially useful and draws its strengths. The couples in this study seemed from the beginning, as has already been said, to adhere to the conventional sex-gender division of man/breadwinner, woman/child-rearer during the period of infancy, but to negotiate what was felt to be a fair and equitable division of infant care within this

context. What seemed to be important was not so much how labour was performed by which individual but the spirit in which this was done and what each felt about that apportioning. The 'moral context' of child care in terms of perceptions of fairness and justice seemed to be devised between couples and could be subject to change. The overall impression from this group of couples was one of an atmosphere of mutuality and satisfaction but the degree of satisfaction was always finely tuned and delicately balanced. One couple, Evan and Sheila Crowley, were in continual conflict about how the responsibilities of the home should be divided up and each envied the other's freedom and ease of life-style. For others, these issues were absent, or were merely transitory. Having assumed the primary role of child-rearer, a number of mothers applied what can be called a 'maternal framework' in which to either directly encourage or discourage their husband's family involvement and by which to evaluate his efforts. The application of this framework must be seen, however, in its wider context of the men's economic independence and often physical superiority - 'the power of the purse' and 'the power of the hand' - and any bargaining powers that women had could be diminished or undermined. (Bell and Newby, 1976). This larger inequality and lack of symmetry between husbands and wives is especially noticeable in that many mothers were 'easy' on their husbands, praising their involvement even where it was minimal, accepting reasons for low involvement such as male inexperience, tiredness, disinterest, incompetence, physical unsuitability (clumsiness, large hands), and psychological unsuitability (rough, quick-tempered, impatient, squeamish) - reasons which would not stand up if applied to women. A few contrasting comments capture the complex processes of negotiation, chivvyng and bartering that result in a

particular division of child care across families. These insights have only been gained by talking to both parties and suggest that fathers' participation is closely linked to mothers' orientation and responses as well as fathers' own preferences:

I don't think he's interested in the practical side (of infant care). He does now and again, he'll do things just to show willing more or less. He's not really interested in that side of it. He'll do it if he has to I think, but he doesn't really want to. So I do most of it ... He's never fed her, no. He changes her occasionally and he'll dress her. He attempted once (to bath her) and he didn't get on very successfully and he offered to do it again but I said I'd do it (laughs). I think he's quite happy to keep away from that side of it, quite honestly (laughs). I don't want to force him to do it.

Angela Anderson

I wouldn't say I'm involved in that side (nappy changing). Well, Angela takes, does it all really There hasn't really been a decision, it's just worked out that way, you know. If it happened this afternoon that she started screaming and it was obvious that her nappy needed changing I'd go ahead and do it. (Bathing ?) Angela always does that. I don't know. When she's a bit bigger, I'd feel a bit hopeless. I'd rather leave it. There again, in an emergency I suppose I could do it. I think I could manage it.

Keith Anderson

I think he needs to be involved for his own sake and for the baby's sake. I think he can comfort her very easily. I think she's very aware of the strength and steadiness of being held by him. The first time he bathed her I insisted that he did. I can do it very quickly having done it before but I'm very aware of her losing body heat and of course he isn't, he was messing about testing the water with his elbow and I found I really had to restrain myself not to say "come on, hurry up she's getting cold". He bathed her which took about

half an hour and put her nappy on which fitted where it touched, it was awful, running down her legs and generally a mess.

Beth Banks

9.2 Interpretive Flaws in the Survey Approach

Three main interpretive flaws recur in surveys of father involvement in childcare. Firstly, there is the very general problem of the relationship between what people say they do and believe and 'real' behaviour. All methods relying solely on verbal reports face this difficulty and some would argue that it can only be overcome by the inclusion of observational techniques. What surveys can and should do, however, (but often fail to) is make this issue explicit and treat it self-consciously. Secondly, and more critically, there is often the unspoken assumption in the presentation of survey findings that fathers' reported practices match or reflect fathers' ideologies. By focussing the attention on what fathers say they do there is a tendency to neglect how this connects with what they believe and to treat reports of overt behaviour as harmonizing with attitudes and values. Lastly, and relatedly, there is a frequent assumption that any observed change or lack of change in reported behaviour is necessarily accompanied by a change or lack of change in belief and value systems and that the two move in a progressive or continuous fashion. For example, any reported increase in fathers' participation in infant caretaking is interpreted as an indication of a loosening of sex-role definitions and stereotypes; high paternal participation is 'good', low participation is 'bad'. (Parke, 1979). However, it would seem that all these assumptions are naive, that the relation-

ship between reported behaviour and values may not be obvious or consistent and that behavioural and attitudinal changes may not occur at the same pace or with the same potency. Others have noted that social change can occur even when there have not been massive changes in overt behaviour and that social change might be simply the time when new forms of behaviour appear 'plausible' (for example see Gagnon and Simon, 1970; Skolnick and Skolnick, 1974). The simplistic marrying of overt measures of behaviour to conclusions about the quality of marriage, the nature of contemporary sex roles and social change can be detected in the extracts below. The Newsons' pioneering study on infant care is selected not because it is the most flawed or blame-worthy but rather because it has been taken as a model and a basis for comparison by so many authors (for example, in Richards, et al, 1977; Gallagher, 1978). Here the rationale for studying fathering activities is described (Newson and Newson, 1965: 133, 134 and 147):

However, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the traditional pattern of family life is changing. Marriage today is ideally envisaged as a partnership in which husband and wife share each other's interest and worries, and face all major decisions jointly ... Against such a background, it seemed natural for us to inquire into the extent to which fathers actually do participate in the care of one-year-olds. The procedure we adopted was to ask the mothers whether the fathers took an active part in doing things for the children ...

And in finding that seventy-nine per cent of their sample of fathers (by mothers' report) 'take a part in the care of their small babies' they go on to conclude that:

... both mother and father are becoming home-centred, finding their interests, their

occupation and their entertainment within the family circle. At a time when he has more money in his pocket, and more leisure on which to spend it, than ever before, the head of the household chooses to sit at his own fireside, a baby on his knee and a feeding bottle in his hand: the modern father's place is in the home.

Turning to the case study fathers, it is possible to document ways of uncovering men's parental values and beliefs which go beyond the mere enumeration of childcare tasks and which allow for a comparison between participation rates and paternal ideologies. Already it has been argued that the range of tasks traditionally counted is too limited, and some positive suggestions have been advanced to widen the existing range. Here the argument developed begs for an even more radical reappraisal of what fathers do and asks not just are sufficient areas being reviewed, but how does this fit with men's and women's beliefs about their roles, their marriages, and their definitions of masculinity and femininity? Asked 'do you think it is important to share baby care?' eleven fathers answered in the affirmative and subscribed to some general principle of 'democratic and participant parenthood'. However; there appeared to be much variation in both the structuring and meaning of sharing, and in the supporting explanations. Some fathers advanced the notion of sharing primarily because of a commitment to the child: child-rearing was felt to be part of a 'shared reality' (see also Backett, 1980). Sharing was also seen as fostering the parent-child relationship. This view was backed up in statements such as 'it's all part of bringing her up', 'if you keep it even stevens they grow up to admire you both' and 'it gets you more involved with the baby'. Other fathers

emphasized the importance of sharing mainly as a gesture aimed at alleviating the burden of care placed on their wives. These fathers alluded to the desire to establish some kind of symmetry or egalitarianism in their marital relationship. Two such fathers, Stephen Banks, accountant, and Nigel Owens, electrician, expressed strong concern about their wives losing touch with the outside world, being over-burdened and house-bound. This view of sharing, to release the wife from excessive domestic and familial demands, did not necessarily mean that fathers took on direct physical care of the infant; two elected to share domestic workloads instead, washing nappies, clothes, cooking and general housework. (For a discussion of the relationship between men's involvement in housework and infant care see Oakley, 1979). Bound up with the view that mothers should be supported there was also a strong orientation to the child and a sense of commitment towards the child's upbringing and upkeep. This sense of responsibility toward the child has been mentioned earlier and men no longer felt footloose or 'able to vanish to Paris' (Simon Shaw). The fathers who contested that baby care should be shared did not reject the ideology of sharing, but in one case felt that couples should be left to work out a routine that best suits them, overlaying the concept of sharing with the concept of individualism (Keith Anderson); while in the other case, the father found difficulty in reconciling the dictate of sharing with other demands of the male role which centred outside the home (see the earlier quote from Evan Crowley). It must be stressed that for the majority of fathers this notion of sharing was not always perceived as any fifty/fifty division of infant care labour but instead was something shifting, arbitrary, personalized and negotiated. It was as if fathers, along with mothers, established their own criterion of sharing, ranging in

some instances from an occasional 'mucking in' to an ideal of equality in others. They had few standards by which to compare or judge their own degree of participation and what they did was largely invisible to public scrutiny. Men who did not contribute at all to childcare or who displayed a casual attitude toward parenthood were castigated: classified by one father as 'sky-larkers'. However, the meaning of sharing was elastic and private and, as already shown, carried out within a context where there was an assumed asymmetry in the division of roles from the outset. While fathers could opt into childcare and influence the sex role division of childcare work, mothers did not feel that they had an equivalent facility for opting out of childcare or into full-time waged work.

A number of other questions serve to highlight men's parental values and reveal how these relate to their overall contributions to infant care. Answers to a series of questions about male attitudes to infertility, adoption, family planning and the desire to have children suggest that most men saw having children as part of the 'normal' fabric of adulthood; marriage and having babies was ineluctably a natural part of the human life-cycle (see also Owens, 1982). Husbands and wives were perceived as being equally implicated by the decision to have children, in that each would have to adjust their own life in some way both to accommodate and create a 'family'.

When asked about the existence of maternal and paternal instincts, the competence levels of mothers and fathers, the qualitative difference between being a mother and father, attitudes to working mothers and men's general interest in babies, the replies from this group of men form a fascinating and complex patchwork. What is striking is that their dominant ideological positions fall into three

categories: 'traditionalist' (Evan Crowley, British Rail guard); 'modified traditionalist' (ten fathers are characterized here) and 'neo-feminist' (Stephen Banks, accountant; Simon Shaw, postgraduate). (For the origin of these labels see Komarovsky, 1973). In the 'traditionalist' mode childcare, especially the care of small babies, is felt to be women's work: women have special nurturing aptitudes. Wives and mothers should not work and their 'proper place' is in the home; and men's chief fathering roles are to provide financial security and discipline and to teach children, especially boys, about gender-specific activities: 'boy's things'. In the 'modified traditionalist' stance, which is the majority position for the fathers in the present study, early infant care is held to be women's work but fathers have an important contribution to make and should share some of the practical care. Men can nurture babies, but perhaps not so well as mothers - mothers having a 'special touch', being able to cuddle babies differently, acting out a more comforting role. Wives and mothers should withdraw from work during the child's early years but return to work when the children are school age and at the same time keep up their interests in the outside world. While men's chief roles in infancy are to provide financial security for the family; to create a caring and supportive environment for wives and babies; to offer 'back-up' to the mother, to provide sex-role models for their children, to entertain children and to instil a shared moral code in a spirit of fairness and collaboration with their wives. The 'neo-feminist' value constellation is one in which the fathers espoused an egalitarian belief about the inter-changeability or symmetry of men's and women's roles. However, they were not truly 'feminist' in that they did not feel that they could modify their behaviour to facilitate this goal; and wives' careers were still suspended. For a summary of these value positions see table 9.1.

TABLE 9.1 SUMMARY* OF MEN'S PARENTAL VALUES AND ATTITUDES

	Attitudes to Role Sharing	Attitudes to Working Mothers	Attitudes to Developing Gender Roles
Evan Crowley Traditionalist	Well I mean you do your bit when you're 'ere but I mean a bloke's never 'ere most of the time. Either he goes out for a drink on a night or he's at work all day like ..	I don't like it at all. No - but I mean it's a matter of havin' to at the moment. But I'm strongly against it. I don't believe in women working anyway.	I shalln't make a lad stay in t'wash pots up n'all that whereas if I had a little girl I would... a son's more, you know, on my side in't it like. It takes an interest in what I do and likewise with a son. (Shared interests wishes to promote - motorbikes, cars, DIY, tools)
Derek Morris Modified Traditionalist	Well, both have different roles both can pull together to make them roles bind ... My role? Uh, oh I don't know how to put it, a guiding hand, uh, um, I think you tend to be a bit more stricter than Mums are and, um, probably a bit more guiding. I don't know ... Um, I think the guiding side of it'll come more when he's a bit older and tottering about and you can communicate better with him. But, uh, he does understand now at his age, right from wrong.	Um, I don't, I don't want her to start work again while Tom is still, you know, kickin' about here. If once he starts school then Chris can start work if she wanted to, but, you know, I'd rather me be the breadwinner.	Model train sets (laughs). I've started collecting little cars for him. I've got all the different ones of the day - Matchbox series, all yesterday yesteryear, isn't it? And we've started collecting him Lego for when he gets a bit older. You, lookin' into the future and there's loads of things you could get and do.

* Only three variables are included here although a more extensive and detailed value/attitudinal map was analysed for each father (see Appendix XIV). Continued/...

SUMMARY OF MEN'S PARENTAL VALUES AND ATTITUDES (Continued)

	Attitudes to Role Sharing	Attitudes to Working Mothers	Attitudes to Developing Gender Roles
<p>Simon Shaw Neofeminist</p>	<p>In the beginning I was very keen to try and work on a sort of equality, you know try and work an equality. I didn't want Sally to do all the traditional things simply because, you know, women do traditional things. But we found for one reason or another that's the way it works out, that the traditional demarcations did occur. And I got very sort of guilty about it . . .</p>	<p>. . . I like staying at home and I've got no desires to be the martyr and to go out and earn the bread all the time and if I had an opportunity to make my way in life as a writer I'd be off like a shot. I wouldn't mind doing it all and letting Sally go out. But I don't see any sense in liberating Sally from home just for the hell of it when I'm the one we decided in the first place would be the one whose career would be of most importance simply because when we met that was the state of play. I was building a career and she wasn't and she'd no intentions of building one.</p>	<p>I'm itching to take him places. I mean we go places now, up by the river and watch boats go by - go to the railway-museum and show him what he thinks are big tractors. But I'm dying to sort of take him and Sally and any other children we have say, camping or fishing or on a holiday cos I think that's a splendid opportunity to teach people about everything - about each other, about how, what, about living and the contrast between how they're living at home and about flowers and birds and cooking and stamps.</p>

These classifications should not be read as too fixed or exclusive and there were many inherent contradictions and ambivalences within men's value positions. More interesting was the frequent clash between their reported performance of and orientation to childcare duties. For most, these apparent inconsistencies and conflicts seemed tenable or manageable and were not remarked upon. For example, Evan Crowley espoused the belief that married women should not work, yet later did not feel the need to comment on his wife taking up waged work almost immediately after the birth of their baby. Or alternatively, Tommy Hooper felt women to be more able in the care of small infants, yet his almost equal care of the baby during the early months was presented as unproblematic. The fathers who reported the most unease because of the disjunctions between what they believed about being a father and what they did as fathers were, interestingly, the 'neo-feminists'. This might suggest something about the lack of cultural supports for this value position and be a comment on the absence of real social opportunities for parents to swap or at least equalize their roles when their babies are young. As well as the confusion and tension within men's belief systems and between their ideals and practices there was some further hint that their feelings did not always complement those of their wives. Although this cannot be developed here it serves to further underscore the inherent complexity of men's experiences in both defining and carrying out their fatherhood roles. Two brief comments reflect on this: one is chosen from the 'modified traditionalist' group while the second represents the 'neo-feminist' type:

I do very little with being away during the week on the practical side. I give him a lot of his meals and I help prepare them while Janet's

preparing our meal. And just generally playing with him, that's all really. It's difficult with just the weekends to spend as much time as I can with him ... I think they (parents) have slightly different roles now but I think the roles join or should join as time goes on. And I think fairly soon they should become the same, the same role. Because the mother is able to satisfy the needs of the baby with her being at home most of the time, sort of most mothers who stay at home with the baby and the husband goes out to work, so think the roles are different there - where the husband is the person who plays with the baby whereas the mother is the one who deals with its needs.

Ralph Price

In the beginning I was very keen to try and work on a sort of equality, you know, try and work an equality out. We didn't want Sally to do all the traditional things simply because women do the traditional things. But we found for one reason or another that's the way it works out that the traditional demarcations did occur. And I got very sort of guilty about it, probably up to six months. And I used to say - Look do you want me to do more? Do you want me to do less? And Sally would say - Well you don't do it right, or, you take hours doing it, or, one could have done it in a few minutes, or, what's happening? and slowly things do settle out.

Simon Shaw

The present data, while it shows much about the lack of coherence and uniformity in the modern fathering role, cannot reflect on whether social change has occurred without recourse to historically comparable material: which takes us back to where the chapter began and to the work of family historians and historical sociologists (see Lummis, 1982). The case study fathers perceive that things have changed and in comparing their fathering experiences with those of

their own fathers, felt fatherhood practices in particular had changed in a direction of 'progressive egalitarianism'. It is possible to speculate, considering the views and experiences of the 'modified traditionalists' (who constitute the largest group of fathers in the present study), that what may have happened is that the modern father's role has expanded to include some involvement in childcare as part of its repertoire and there now exists some ideological compatibility between caring for babies and breadwinning. Whether this is advancing in a linear fashion towards a 'feminist' pattern is more difficult to ascertain, as is the question as to whether it has shaken the overall hierarchical nature of men's and women's gender-relationships. Certainly, this possible 'shift' of fathers toward greater participation in infant care does not seem to have been matched by an equivalent expansion of women's roles in the early phase of motherhood and, as has already been pointed out, women did not feel that prime responsibility for infant care was a matter of choice or could be easily combined with either other occupations or individuals. That the 'dominant' social role may have the luxury and power to change first has been emphasized by other researchers (for example, McKee and Sherriffs, 1959). As well as returning to historical evidence, studies like the present one need to be set in the context of much larger and more extensive work: families where the mothers of infants are working full-time; families where couples have shared equally or swapped roles (Russell, 1979); families where the male breadwinner is unemployed; families where men act as primary caregivers (see O'Brien, 1982 or Hipgrave, 1982) and families where childcare is shared amongst a number of adults. Only then can a comprehensive impression of men's family roles be gained and any social changes be properly detected and monitored.

9.3 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has shown through the use of the case study approach that social surveys have suffered some repeated limitations in their approach to fathers' participation. The weaknesses identified relate to: the small range of childcare tasks isolated for study; the tendency to aggregate tasks; the failure to take account of the period of infancy under review; the frequent reliance on maternal reports and concealment of the processes of paternal negotiation; the tendency to neglect the problematic relationship between reported behaviour and values; and lastly, the imputation of social change as revealed through reported practices alone. Some ways of tackling and improving on these drawbacks have been thrown up by the case study findings and these include: widening the range of tasks to take account of 'indirect' and non-physical caretaking especially with regard to decision-making; looking at fluctuations within the performance of given tasks; assessing the impact of the time-specificity of the study and the value of a longitudinal approach and especially exploring the effects of occupational and employment status on the organization of infant care; uncovering how each partner feels about the division of labour and how these patterns were established and are maintained - taking consideration of marital power relationships; and finally, directly asking men about their beliefs about marriage, parenthood and sex roles and relating this to their behaviour. This is a large programme and begs the question - can any single approach encompass this task? The answer is clearly no, and a combination of social surveys, ethnographies and observational work all have their part to play. What is needed is for each of these methods to enter into occasional discourse and self-criticism and to learn from one another, especially

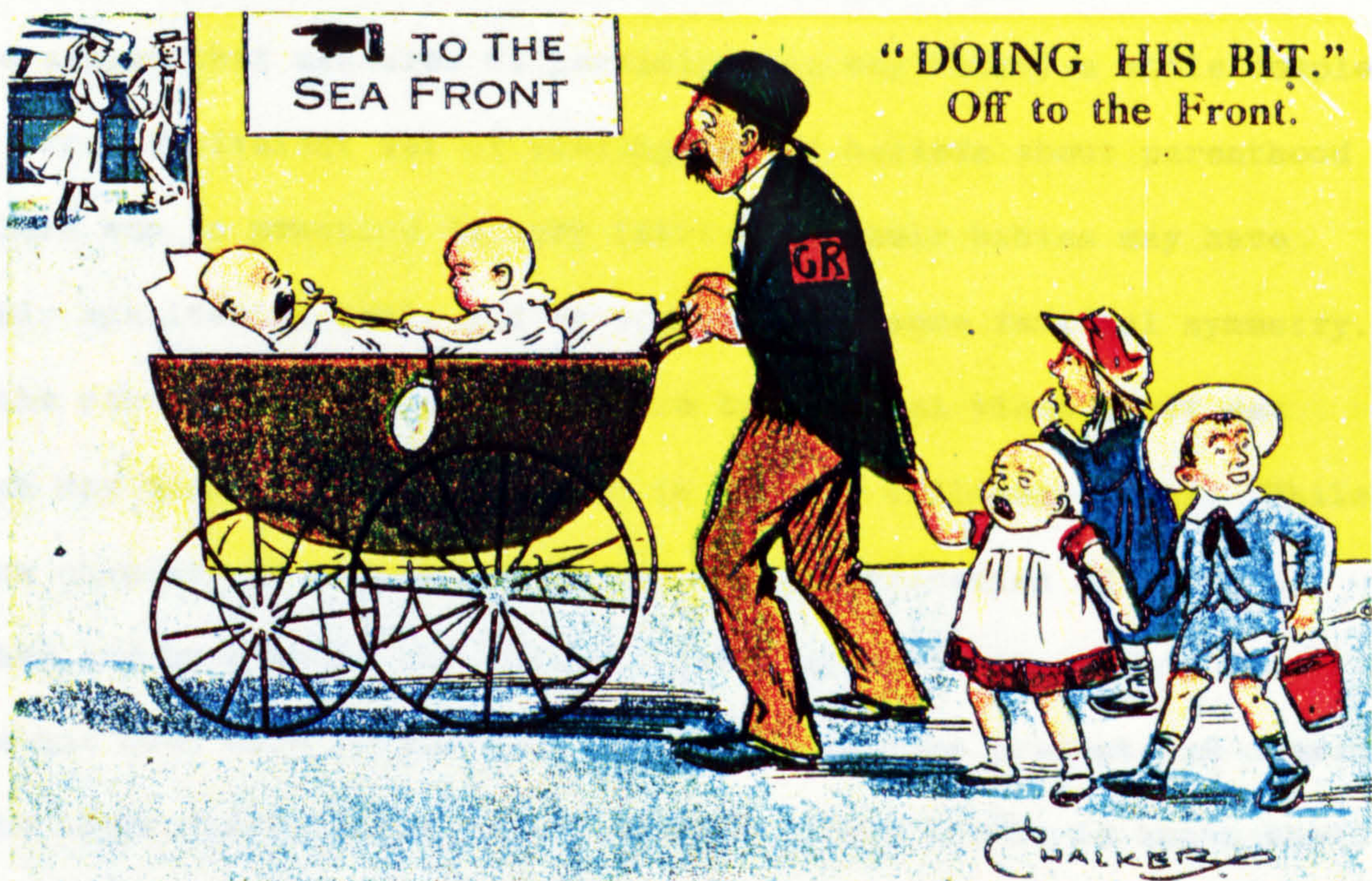
when a new field of inquiry is being opened up. This present work moves some way towards this end. That this critical endeavour may prove fruitful is given full support in the comments of Peter Townsend, author of one of the most far-reaching social surveys of this century. He asserts:

The defects of any research method have to be spelt out so that modifications can be introduced into research and its results properly evaluated.

(Townsend, 1979: 114)

CHAPTER 10

PRAM TALK: MEN TALKING ABOUT BABIES



Postcard circa 1916

' ... I mean it's not really the subject of conversation is it babies (for) men in groups? I mean I told them and they said you silly devil what did you want to go and do a thing like that for?'

Tommy Hooper

' I mean it's natural for women to talk about babies. Men don't talk about it so much as other things, cars and football.'

Terry Shapiro

CHAPTER 10

'PRAM TALK': MEN TALKING ABOUT BABIES

One of the general aims of this study is to develop new concepts for appreciating the status and meaning of fatherhood which go beyond fathers' actual participation in infant care. The previous chapters have argued that measures of participation may betray a whole complex and often ambivalent set of ideologies and beliefs about parenthood - fathers who in practice do very little for their babies may have highly egalitarian goals and be striving for some familial symmetry. On the other hand, fathers with more traditional views about sex roles may find themselves engaged in routine childcare tasks. While these chapters have revealed the internal intricacies of being a father and much about the father's orientation to the child, they have not been able to describe how men as fathers present and communicate their family roles to one another. Very little is known about the public face of fatherhood, how men interact with one another as family members, how men integrate their family and work statuses or how male networks are affected by the advent of parenthood.¹ This chapter aims to attend to these neglected areas and to map out the wider context of fatherhood, inclusive of kin, occupational and friendship relationships.

The analysis focusses on responses to questions posed at both 11 weeks and 12 months post-partum,² questions concerning whether men talk about babies, whether men have opportunities to discuss their feelings

with others, whether men are generally interested in babies, whether other people are aware of the problems of early fatherhood, whether men have any contact with babies other than their own and with other parents, and whether fathers would appreciate the existence of formal parent-baby support groups. In addition, fathers were asked to describe and comment on the nature and quality of their friendship/work networks and social life patterns. Collectively, the responses highlight much about the legitimacy of babies as a topic of conversation for men,³ about male socialisation, male stereotyping, male friendships, perceived gender distinctions, the social value of talk, aspects of marital communication and familial privacy, the structural relationship between work/leisure/family roles and the norms of masculinity.

In general, it will be shown that two themes recur and dominate the findings. Firstly, the fathers in this study felt there to be a sharp conflict between the norms of fatherhood and the norms of masculinity and secondly, they reported the lack of a coherent male framework which could be adapted to the public representation of fatherhood. In other words, men's frameworks were specialised against parenthood and the male roles of husband, worker, colleague/mate, father did not always sit easily together. While men's breadwinning and institutional roles attracted recognition and identification, their family roles were conducted in private and without much commentary.

10.1 Three Kinds of 'Baby' Talk

When fathers were asked if they ever talked about babies or their own baby, the replies fell into three categories, reflecting both the nature

and ease of the talk pursued. Firstly, there were those men for whom talking was relatively easy and who shared their feelings and experiences with others and sought advice and corroboration from others. This can be classified as 'confirmatory talk'. These fathers remarked on the increased validity of the topic of babies and on their new inclusion and contribution to 'baby' conversations. They referred to the value of comparing notes and of identifying with other parents. There is an impression of fathers gaining some sense of solidarity through this talk and of them publically announcing and affirming their fatherhood status. However, not all audiences were classed as equally receptive or sympathetic to talk about babies, and fathers appeared to discriminate on grounds of age, marital and parental status and gender in their exchanges. Bachelors, older fathers and childless married men were perceived as the least interested, and women, married men and recent fathers the most interested and appreciated.

The importance of the composition and characteristics of the audience are highlighted when we look at the individual fathers who engaged in 'confirmatory talk'. For example, two of the fathers in this group (Chris Hill, a librarian and Ralph Price, a bank security officer) worked in settings that are sedentary and of mixed gender, and perhaps allowed for a greater deal of interface than some other occupations. The other two fathers (Nigel Owens, electrician and Pete Mitchell, policeman) dealt specifically with the public in their jobs and their work often placed them in domestic scenarios, where talk about family life was perhaps more pertinent, more private and again, often cross-gender.

A selection of comments illustrate how the achievement of fatherhood can trigger and enhance men's interest in children, how men seek to share and confirm their experiences of fatherhood with others and how audiences are classified in terms of their gender and phase in the life-cycle.

I discuss it with a few (mates) and sort of, do yours have what ours have got (laughs lightly) ? And uh, I've talked about it quite a bit. Some of them have been a lot worse, sort of not gone to work because they've been tired out. Some of them aren't particularly bothered about talking, others are, you know, they've experienced similar things.

Nigel Owens

I don't think I would've sat and talked to people at work about babies before he was born. I feel a sort of pride as soon as you start to ask how he is, I tend to go on a bit talking about him ...

(I: Is it difficult to talk about babies to colleagues ?)

Not really as most of them are married and have children and a lot of the girls are always interested in talking. 'Cos with them there's been 5 births, either wives of people at work or girls at work and there's another one who's just announced she's pregnant so that'll be virtually 6 in a year, so there seems to be a lot of talk about children going round.

Ralph Price

.... them that are in the same age group do (talk about babies) but there's a lot of older chaps there they've got grown-up children. They don't reflect back unto their children's children. But the lads that have got young children, uh a year or so old, they reflect back, 'oh well our little Simon was a devil when he was 3 months old' sort of thing.

Derek Morris

More common than 'confirmatory talk' was a style of discussing babies that can be summarised as 'etiquette talk'. The largest group of fathers characterised their comments about babies in this way, claiming not to discuss details nor to confide personal responses or difficulties. Their conversations about babies were casual and part of a work and social repartee. This everyday talk was little different in quality or form to general remarks about the weather or their own health, was woven lightly into other exchanges and often of only a passing or polite significance. Whether these conversations about babies could be pursued or developed was again perceived as dependent on the nature of the audience, with women and recent fathers depicted as the most aware and concerned. The generality of men's talk about babies, particularly in their work contexts is evidenced in a number of statements:

They (workmates) just ask
how's t'family and I say
all right.

Er, yeah there's talk, there's
talk in general like, 'how's
t'little lad or that?' Just
general conversation.

Just general talk how they
felt and how it's affected them.

(I: Is it easy to talk to other men about babies?)

Uh not, not bad. Some are, it
just depends who they are, uh
there's one or two who as I say,
just had their babies more or
less recently. They're all right.
But you don't go into great lengths,
you know. No, you just, (it's) a
matter of how is he n'stuff like
that. And that's about it really.

Bill Elliott

The difference between those who indulge in 'confirmatory' and 'etiquette' talk is one of degree and purpose or function. It should be stressed at this point, that not all fathers accept or are happy with a particular style of talk, and may feel that the format of such talk is imposed upon them by others. For example, one of the study group fathers, Simon Shaw felt that it was his peer group who enforced 'etiquette talk' and restricted his conversation about both pregnancy and childcare. His peer group were described as simultaneously structuring the amount of talk allocated to family matters and determining its general relevance to the group. His comment demonstrates the way that fathers can feel encouraged to conform to the conversational norms of their peer group, norms which underscore men's traditional occupational or 'intellectual' role.

... I find it principally because no matter how enlightened people claim to be or the male people in company claim to be, it's a topic (pregnancy and babies) they don't really like talking about. And I've noticed a great stigma attached on this in fact and it's all very well you're given your sort of statutory five minutes to say how Sally's getting on and so on but after that they want you to get back into the old role, you know, and talk about hard sociology or hard psychology or whatever it is. If you go on with it too long it seems a bit anti-social.

Simon Shaw

Two fathers in the study⁴ (Tommy Hooper and Stephen Banks) were emphatic that they found talking about babies difficult and preferred to avoid the subject. This can be classified as 'illegitimate talk', meaning that the topic itself was viewed as having little relevance for men's interactions and if anything, being of low status. Both

these fathers contrasted their own reluctance to 'talk babies' with the eagerness of mothers to share and confer, and upheld the view that such talk was a specifically 'womanly' activity. For one father in particular (Tommy Hooper) talking about babies was a direct contradiction to the ethos of masculinity, where group norms guided masculine conversations toward common interests of speed, work or sport. This father sharply differentiated between male and female culture and between men in a group and men as individuals. His vision was of a fairly segregated world of the sexes, with talk about babies traditionally being peculiar to women, affirming female solidarity and driving men into each other's company and into the pubs. Interestingly, he is the one father who shares the care of his infant in the early months while his wife works, describes himself as being very emotional, crying easily, being very attached to his daughter and being highly participant throughout the birth. In his comments and actions it is possible to detect a blend of old and new beliefs about sex roles and his statements poignantly capture the contradictions and inconsistencies facing men in their family, work and friendship relationships. For these reasons his views are presented in some detail.

(I: Do you ever talk about babies to your friends ?)

Tommy: Naw, I would never bring it up really. It's a thing you don't talk about. It's a thing women talk about all the time. Like I notice when Jean's friend up the road there, she's just 'caught on', she's pregnant now and Lorraine's (next door neighbour) sister-in-law she got pregnant, what about a month ago and now all the talk is baby. It's baby this, baby that, baby the other when you go out. Her husband goes out and all the rest of us go out and go to the pub and let them get on with the old chin-wagging.

(I: Why do you think it is that men don't talk about babies ?)

Tommy: I suppose men have other things to talk about other than babies. I mean it's a thing you don't concern, I mean people look at a baby as something of a woman rather than of a man - uh - and the sort of men's things - you know - men talk about men's things and women talk about women's things ... I mean most people look at it as a baby's a woman, something to do with a woman so that's what they talk about.

(I: What would you say are men's topics of conversation ? You said there are men's things, particular things men talk about ?)

Tommy: I don't know 'cos we talk about that many things when we're together. I suppose we're all that way inclined - speed-inclined, racing, uh, we talk about darts, sport, you know. Just a general thing you know, what's happened - work a lot, we talk about work a lot and mainly just sports and pastimes. I mean all my friends we're one bunch and we're all interested in cars, motor cycles, planes, ships, you know, things like this are the usual topic of conversation wherever we are.

Tommy Hooper is part of an established group of men, or 'male clique' who meet with regularity and who are drawn together by shared hobbies and interests. Much of their social life is spent drinking together and the interactions confirm their male identity. Family and leisure activities are sharply demarcated and wives are often confined to each other's company and to their own homes. This specifically male culture cannot absorb or adjust to the status of the 'family man' or reconcile parenthood within its boundaries. The group base, identity and rationale is essentially 'masculine' in character and underscores values of daring, resilience, technical expertise and even danger. The men's common links are as workers and adventurers. Babies suggest

'womanliness', softness, vulnerability and as such are debarred from conversations. This theme of the influence and power of the 'male clique' or male culture will be developed later, where it will be further argued that male support networks inhibit men's family roles and preserve and reinforce the traditional divisions between the sexes.

While the distinction between men and women's spheres of interest was also made by a second father, Stephen Banks, some additional reasons emerge to explain why men may find babies an illegitimate conversational topic. In particular, Banks highlighted a preferred segregation between home and work domains, between personal and business affairs and between intimates and strangers. In his view of things, personal matters should not obtrude into work relationships, nor should work-colleagues who are essentially strangers, be invited to share confidences or intimacies. His family role was perceived as separate and qualitatively different from his work role and as providing a solace and contrast to the strains and pressures of work. While work relationships were construed as governed by the professional norms⁵ of objectivity, self-reliance, efficiency and independence, family relationships were seen as governed by the affective norms of subjectivity, mutuality, emotionality and dependence. The glaring contradiction between the ethic of home and work worlds became most apparent when work-colleagues attempted to bridge the gap and to investigate family matters. Banks found this hard to handle, problematic and his typical response was to curtail such enquiries. That men's conversations about their babies may be restricted due to a poor dialogue between home and work lives and through the operation of different and contrasting professional and personal standards can

be seen from the remarks below. Again, factors such as marital status and gender and level of interest are cited as affecting the relevance and likelihood of 'talking babies'.

(Asked if ever talks about babies ?)

Stephen: I don't. I think it's a, I must admit I feel a bit embarrassed about it. Um I feel embarrassed, I mean when the secretaries sort of ask me I'm quite happy to say 'everything's all right' but I feel no desire to go into a great flood of exactly what's happening. I don't think they're that interested, that it's asked out of politeness more than anything else. And with the men I know at work, uh I mean half of them aren't married so they've got no interest whatsoever and I'm sure when I was like that I had no interest in babies whatsoever - a boring subject. And the married ones (sighs) well they'll ask obvious questions like how are you getting on, sleeping this sort of thing, at night. But again it's a very limited, a very limited, uh, conversation. I mean it's not just me, they very seldom talk about it. ... I think women would be surprised in general how little men do talk about them (babies). I think if I mention her once a week it would be as many, apart from possibly a short reply, yes everything's all right which maybe crops up about once a day. It's not a subject they think you want to talk about. It's not one I want to talk about. It's a very personal private thing I think.

(Later, discussing nature of male relationships says:-)

I think men are very reticent about showing emotion to other people that they have for their children - uh - and emotions full stop. I mean I wouldn't dream of showing any of my emotions at work. Beth often plays hell with me for being short-tempered, uh but I say to her that's the only person I can be short-tempered with. I wouldn't dream of being short-tempered with somebody who I have a working relationship with because I just have to force myself to be controlled. I think that must apply in any

working relationship and that's the pleasant thing about being married that one can be oneself. And unfortunately the other person gets the brunt of the disagreement with the outside world.

On this theme of the divide between home and work selves, Komarovsky (1962) in her study of blue collar workers noted that this could serve as a barrier to marital communication. She described some men as believing the home to be too 'pure' for the reporting of masculine camaradie. In this instance, there is a suggestion of the workplace being too 'pure' for domestic unburdening, or alternatively of family matters being too 'pure' for outside revelation.

Tied to the notion of marital/familial privacy was a complementary belief that husbands and wives should be primary confidants. To publicise aspects of the marriage or family relationship was to defile the confidentiality of marriage and break loyalty with the marriage partner. Marriages were assumed to be self-sufficient and 'secret' and couples were supposed to turn first to one another for self-disclosure and support. Reactions to being a father and talking about the baby fell within this category of 'marriage secret', and this theme was evidenced in the case of Stephen Banks. For him talk about the baby is also suggestive of the highly taboo areas of sexuality and personal morality. He says in answer to the question if he would like more opportunities to discuss his feelings as parent:-

No, no, not at all. We talk between ourselves and that's all as far as I'm concerned. In fact I don't really value anybody else's opinion. I possibly would if there was something wrong with the child, I would probably be far more willing then. And it's quite helpful to

talk to somebody who's recently had a baby to find out if she was the same and if she's the same as everybody else's but that's through another woman I would say. I can't ever remember speaking to a man like that As I say I somehow never talk to men about (laughs), I don't know why we don't. But it's purely, maybe it's something amusing the child's done that's about the only remark you'll ever hear. I think we're both reticent about our wives' physical side of it. I mean I would never dream of discussing childbirth with another man - it's none of their business so to speak - where possibly a woman would ...

This dictate of 'marital primacy and privacy' was also commented upon by Komarovsky and she found it particularly compelling for the more educated couples in her study. Summarising this marriage norm and its effect she says:

We expect that a married person will be his mate's closest confidant with whom he will share his deepest feelings and thoughts. The romantic ideal calls for completeness of communication - no secrets from the mate. It implies also that the secrets of marriage must not be disclosed to outsiders.

(Komarovsky, 1962: 112)

Another factor inhibiting talk about babies was connected to the intrinsic value of talk itself. For Stephen Banks again and a number of others, talking about babies was seen as having little educational or instructional value. Such talk ran the risk of uninvited comment or criticism and could lapse into idle or interfering chatter. Instead, advice and guidance was sought through more 'objective' resources, through the written rather than the spoken word. On this he also described his wife's preference for literature sources as

against hearsay.

... I think both of us have tended to turn towards the written word rather than the spoken word. Neither of us have any belief in what the majority of people say. I think that's the reason (don't talk babies) I mean our parents' generation quite often make amazing comments, you know, which are difficult keeping a straight face, so uh.

Stephen Banks typifies his marriage as one of jointness, egalitarianism and companionship. His friendship and social life is shared with his wife and their friendships to a large degree are mutual. Many of his closest friends live at a distance and they only meet irregularly. Many of his close friendships were forged at university and he has not developed friendships with this degree of intimacy since. His relationships with his work colleagues are satisfactory, but formal and non-confiding. Work and family worlds are sharply differentiated and his status as a father is curiously at odds with his identity as a worker. The work context is felt to be antipathetic to family concerns, while working relationships are felt to be exclusive of emotional or intimate ties. In the case of Tommy Hooper it was the clash between the norms of masculinity and fatherhood that prevented men coming together as fathers and declaring their common bonds. In the latter case, the same effect is created by the clash between the ethics of the workplace and the hearth. For both, there is an emphasis on male relationships which are institutional, organisational or instrumental, rather than affective or nurturant, and sex stereotypes are reinforced.

10.2 Structural Limitations to Talk about Babies

Having presented a broad overview of how men communicate their family roles to one another and having revealed the diversity and complexity of this process we now take up a more detailed analysis of their accounts. One of the questions dogging the author was, why do fathers have such a low public profile despite the very real evidence that within the privacy of their own homes, their role is often pivotal, potent and perhaps augmenting? Was the answer purely structural, instigated by their primary bread-winning and economic roles with other roles being submerged and classed secondary? Certainly a number of the case study fathers felt this to be so and explained men's limited interest in or talk about babies as a corollary of their chief social role as providers. In their role as providers men were both distracted from the affairs of the home and their interests were developed along other dimensions. In addition, they were precluded from having direct and sustained access to their families and their knowledge of its functioning was curtailed. The fathers who talked in these terms felt their fatherhood role to be constrained and subdued by their worker role which preoccupied the most of their waking day. While not necessarily conflicting (as in the previous case of Stephen Banks), home and work worlds were viewed as segregated and exclusive. Mothers, on the other hand were felt to represent a continuity in their productive and reproductive spheres, their chief social role being the business of nurturance and childcare. Women were absorbed by babies and talked about babies as their occupation. Their relationships as mothers stemmed from daily and primary engrossment in the work of childcare. It was not so much that women were believed to be psychologically predisposed to a preoccupation with babies, but rather that

it was conditional of the job.

The impact of the differentiation of men and women's social roles on their interpersonal relationships and interests, is disclosed by Keith Anderson below. He is asked if he thinks his wife talks more about the baby than he does ?

Yeah - I think this is because of the situation where Angela is involved totally. Again, I go off to work and there's a helluva lot of things going on and uh the talk about babies'll maybe span one hundredth or one thousandth of the day's conversation. But obviously when Joan comes across with Faith (neighbour and baby) then the conversation totally revolves around what they're doing, what they're buying from Mothercare, what they're feeding them on.

Keith Anderson

The difference in men and women's primary social roles was seen as having far-reaching consequences.⁶ It affected the opportunities men had to meet with other men in the presence of their children,⁷ confining these occasions to leisure or 'non-work' contexts. It was also felt to colour the content, value and purpose of men's communications and interest in their babies. Men were seen as not needing or being able to discuss the minutiae of their babies' lives through low day-to-day involvement in childcare. As Terry Shapiro says when asked if he feels he has enough opportunities to talk about his baby or fatherhood in general.

Aw you get't chance to discuss it wi' your wife. (pause) But I don't think fathers get that many problems, especially if they're out all day.

Men were also seen as not needing to transmit primary skills or information to one another as fathers, nor as being able to serve as role models for one another. Women, alternatively were depicted as trading every day hints and technical insights about the nature of infant care, and as serving as instructresses and guides in the art of motherhood. Although, the earlier chapters have shown fathers to have a fairly detailed stock of knowledge about their babies' affairs, it would seem that is not felt legitimate to publicize or pass this information on, especially in conversations with other fathers. The men in this case study group who sought confirmation and advice on their fatherhood status represented the smallest group and even they qualified their comments and cited occasions when such conversations were inappropriate. More typically, men's interactions were governed by their primary roles as breadwinners and their conversations and relationships corroborated their detachment from their family roles. While mothers could learn the maternal role from their own and other mothers, the paternal role was not one that could be made visible or readily imitated. Reflecting on this, we have Bill Elliott's reply to the question of whether women talk more about babies than men.

Aw yeah, they must do, yeah cos it's all they've got at the moment to keep them occupied, I suppose isn't it? They swap experiences and I think they learn a lot through that - talking to people who've had babies mainly. There's a girl up the road that she's (wife) got pally with and she's got two, one's about 6/8 months and one's about 2 years and I think she learns a bit off her now and again, what they've done. And I think she learns a bit off this group that she's in. (Wife is member of mother and baby group).

Bill Elliott

This feeling that mothers could enhance their parenthood skills by talking to each other but that fathers could not, did not seem to be tied to either occupational or educational factors, nor indeed to the degree marital 'jointness', marital egalitarianism or father's involvement in childcare.⁸ Fathers were commonly constrained in their relationships and roles towards more objective and theoretical aspects of parenthood, even when in private they attached a deep significance to their caretaking role and were competent caretakers. When and if they did talk to each other, their conversations hinged on neutral or innocuous topics, often concentrating on mere factual reportage about the mother and baby's well-being. The baby's general progress and infant development was a recurrent theme and sometimes the exchanges were tinged with competitiveness, bragging, showing-off.⁹

That fathers fail to connect, even as secondary caretakers and that they demand little of each other as parents is illustrated in the case of Derek Morris. Earlier it has been noted that he is highly involved in the daily care of his baby and that his interest in babies and his knowledge about his own baby is high. His marriage is also characterised by a high degree of 'jointness'. He compares his wife's use of her friendship resources with his own.

... Going on from last week (a group of mothers and babies came to celebrate his son's first birthday) the women tend to compare and give each other hints whereas I don't think fathers do, 'cos they talk about the different sides of the babies, don't they? (to wife) Like a woman'll talk about 'what are you feeding him on?' 'Have you tried so and so's rusks?' And things like that, whereas it wouldn't do for a dad to talk like that.

The interviewer prompts to find out what is more characteristic of how men do talk. Derek Morris continues:

Well. - uh, it was about medical aspects with Danny Barnes the last time I had a good chat with him about Samantha and Timothy (two babies). Other than that, the differences (developmental) and that's about all, unless of course you get some new toys. I don't think there's anything else you really talk about, except the differences, either your daughter's getting on well or your son's getting on well.

Derek Morris makes a reference to 'toys' and it is interesting that while the father's caretaking role is poorly prescribed and scarcely publically acknowledged, the father's role as playmate does seem to have some universal acceptance and was felt to fit more easily with his primary social role as provider. This theme that fathers are specialised in 'play' and that they can identify with each other in the 'recreational' role of father, was especially apparent in the responses to the question about men's general level of interest in babies. For a number of fathers the differentiation between men and women's social roles was perceived not just as a split between provider and caretaker, but also between 'entertainer' and nurturer.¹⁰ While the breadwinning role was felt to inhibit fathers' caretaking activities, and their identification with other fathers as caretakers, it did not similarly interfere with their recreational activities. The roles of playmate and provider were more symmetrical, or at least, complementary. The father's engagement in play was both more normative and institutionalised and meant that in their communications the subject of babies' toys, games, playful instances were all legitimate and possible. A fuller discussion of the father's role in

play takes place in Chapter 9.¹¹

If fathers did then talk about babies they were likely to do so in a way that did not conflict with their primary role as economic providers and in a way that accentuated and reinforced the traditional division of sex roles. Babies provided a rare topic of conversation for men and when the topic did arise, fathers focussed on the more objective aspects of parenthood such as development and play. These aspects did not reflect on their own personal performance as fathers nor on the subjectivity of being a parent. They were neither expansive nor experiential. In addition, they did not contest the fundamental status of men as workers and kept men's family roles concealed and submerged.

The impact of social roles on the way men and women talk, and on the interests they share, is commented upon, again by Komarovsky (1962: 154). Her remarks support many of the observations made in this section:

In all social classes to be sure, the sexes are bound to have some separate interests because their social roles differ. Neither husband nor wife can be expected to be interested in the purely technical aspects of the other's daily tasks. A woman friend confronted with similar problems will naturally have a more lively interest than the husband in the baby's diet, or new recipe or a bargain. Similarly, a fellow worker will be more competent than one's wife to discuss the technical problems of the job.

Before leaving this section on the structural limitations on men talking about babies, it is important to note that two fathers (Evan

Crowley and Terry Shapiro) did exhort biological reasons to explain why babies were not a legitimate topic of conversation for men. Mothers were viewed as having some 'natural' or instinctual orientation to babies. To talk about babies and to show an interest in babies was a genetic predisposition and such talk was an index of womanhood or femininity. Men and fathers were programmed to have different interests and qualities. Terry Shapiro promotes this view of the biological differences between the sexes.

It's not something that crops up. We (men at work) tend to talk about different things. I think women talk about babies more than men do. I think it's human nature. I think it's inbred in a woman I suppose.

While this theme of the biological differences between men and women is implicit in a number of comments by the case study fathers, it is impossible to investigate its potency and typicality within the group in terms of educational, occupational or social class characteristics. A large study is needed to document the range and patterning of these beliefs.

10.3 The Impact of Men's Networks on the Expression of their Family Roles

Although the segregation of men and women's social roles and the marginality of men's fatherhood role may be a sufficient explanation for why men talk so little about babies; fathers themselves invoked additional reasons for why the level of talk was so low. In particular, they referred to characteristics of their networks which were felt to contain or exclude the expression of their family roles. Earlier

the detailed case of Tommy Hooper illustrated how male networks are specialised toward common pastimes/interests which are essentially 'masculine' and 'non-home-centred'. This theme can be traced across the case study group where several fathers described friendship or peer networks that were forged through common preoccupations or organisational ties. For example, Nigel Owens was a keen angler, belonged to an angling club and spent most of his Saturdays fishing with a male friend; Len Kerr belonged to the local hunt and in the appropriate season, went fox-hunting with neighbouring farmers; Terry Shapiro was a member of the works football team,¹² and weekends were often spent in competition. These links between men were incidental to their status as fathers, often pre-dated the men's entry into parenthood and tended to remain unchanged by the occurrence of fatherhood.¹³ There seemed no way for men to introduce their fatherhood status into these contexts and relationships or indeed any need to do so. Men's leisure and family roles could be conducted and sustained independently. This observation may not hold for fathers of older children, when children may be included in the father's leisure activities and where the father's chief family role may be expressed through leisure - the father may take the child fishing or to watch football for example. However, in the period of early infancy, fathers can continue to separate their family and leisure worlds and to identify with one another as fishermen or footballers first.

As well as men's networks being sculpted by organisational and recreational affiliations, work itself represented an important source for male contact and support. To a number of fathers, friends and workmates/colleagues were undifferentiated and their institutional ties as workers premised the development of a friendship in the first

place. In their capacity as breadwinners they often had common working conditions, common instrumental needs and sometimes, common goals. In some cases, these 'work-based' friendships spilled over into home and leisure-based friendships and involved a fairly high degree of sharing and disclosure (for example Simon Shaw mixed socially with his fellow postgraduates and the wives were all also friends), in other cases these friendships were confined to work but were nonetheless significant (for example, the case of Stephen Banks cited earlier). Whatever the degree of intimacy or the content of these work relationships, they could survive unchanged by the man's transition to parenthood, at least at a macro-level. Parenthood had no structural effect on men's working ties with one another or on their identity as workers (excepting where they abandon or agree to adopt or share the breadwinning role). The accounts from this group of fathers suggested that while qualitatively relationships could be altered, (the father's tiredness could interfere with his job performance, contaminate his interactions with others, make him less available for overtime or extra-curricular affairs) - becoming a father had no necessary, inevitable, or universal impact on his status as a worker or on his relationships with fellow-workers. Just as male leisure networks could remain impervious to parenthood, so too were male occupational networks cocooned from changes in family circumstances. Men could continue to relate as policemen or rail guards and their institutional bonds absorbed or overruled any switch in their family roles or responsibilities. Where networks are primarily organised away from the home and where they underscore men's traditional economic role, it is not surprising that the subject of infant care and babies is peripheral and uncommon.¹⁴

A brief comment from Pete Mitchell shows that men's roles as father and worker can exist with some degree of autonomy and that men have networks which do not necessarily take account of their parenthood status.

I don't talk to any blokes I know in depth about her (baby). I think it seems to be, because I think with a woman when you have a family most women stay at home, 99% of their life is, well maybe 100% is looking after the family - whereas a bloke he always has to go out. Well, he's got his job to go to which is different, he has a different interest in life. And the ones I work with directly their families have grown up and we do talk (about babies) occasionally, but not a great deal.

Pete Mitchell

The fathers in this study had varying degrees of contact and support from their family and neighbourhood network (see the appendices for details) ranging from one father, Evan Crowley who saw his father daily, shared a mutual interest in car repairs with him and mended motors for his neighbours to Simon Shaw who was estranged from his father and whose relationships with the immediate neighbours were antagonistic. However, despite the degree of 'connectedness' of these local networks, the shift from non-parent to parent seemed to evoke few changes. While motherhood has been shown to change the nature and quality of women's neighbourhood, family and community ties¹⁵ and to alter women's demands from these networks, there was little evidence of any change in men's orientation to either their families or their neighbours. Fathers did not seem to become any more reliant on their parents, nor to seek specific guidance from their fathers on aspects of being a father. Only one father (Bill Elliott) reported a direct improvement in his relationship with his father and

this resulted from the baby providing a source of common interest and conversation, in an already fairly distant and empty relationship. Similarly, men did not feel drawn any closer to their siblings through parenthood, brothers did not necessarily form parental alliances nor serve as advisors or role models. Instead, family relationships were described in general as continuing as before and the man's adoption of the fatherhood role did not lead to new areas of disclosure, intimacy or identification. In the relations between men and their own fathers, it was as if fatherhood as a skill was contemporaneous, expendable and unteachable. There was an impression once again that the paternal role could not be imitated or transmitted and that men had to make their own highly individualised and private adaptations to fatherhood. While men could talk to their families about babies, their exchanges were more likely to be descriptive and reportage rather than inquisitive and problem-solving. When men described receiving direct support from their own fathers or referred to an identification with their own fathers this tended to reflect on aspects of their primary breadwinning role, focussing on advice about education, careers, finance, home maintenance or car repairs, and reinforced areas of traditional 'masculine' solidarity. The men who reported a friendship with their fathers highlighted a mutuality of interests which were external to their family roles, they were men first and fathers second. They were bound together through an interest in cricket or carpentry rather than by their common parental status.

Just as men's family networks were little affected by parenthood, their ties to the neighbourhood and community witnessed few alterations. If men did describe making new allegiances with neighbours through

parenthood, it was usual for the contacts to have been established through their wives. This 'snowballing' of neighbourliness and friendship was not always observed and in quite a few cases wives initiated and maintained links with their neighbours independent of their husbands and specifically organised around their role as caretakers and mothers. Neighbourhood contacts often served very different needs for men and women, women sought corroboration of their motherhood practices and offered each other practical assistance in the primary caretaking role. Men tended to share traditional 'masculine' practices, or in their leisure time, to share common hobbies and interests. Motherhood was a sufficient condition for women to come together as neighbours and childcare served as a mutual interest and preoccupation. For men, their common status as fathers was likely to be peripheral and neighbourliness was more usually directed toward some traditionally 'masculine' skill or pastime, even if in the first instance the 'baby' (or 'wives') triggered the contact. For example, Pete Mitchell described how parenthood had enhanced his contacts with his neighbours. His wife was chiefly responsible for building up the early contacts and he was then drawn in. Nonetheless, his pattern of neighbourhood contact developed along traditional lines, the wives and husbands segregating into two groups, the men going drinking together and the wives remaining at home. The wives' conversations were characterised as focussing on childcare and domestic matters, while the husbands discussed work, politics and current affairs. This theme that men and women's neighbourhood contacts differ in quality and style, is further developed by Stephen Banks where he compares his wife's network with men's networks in general -

One of the reasons she's
friendly with the woman up the

garden is because she's a mother.
I accept that certain relationships
are built on the fact that it's two
mothers.

(Interviewer asks 'Do you think men build relationships on the fact
that they are fathers?')

No I think men never build, no, uh
they may get to know the man because
their child plays with his, but they'll
then get to know him in a totally
different direction because they
suddenly find that they both play
football or that they both have the
same interest, not just because their
children play together. I can't ever
see that happening.

None of the fathers in the case study group described forming neigh-
bourhood bonds with other men because they were fathers. None cited
talking to their neighbours in any detail about babies or fatherhood.
None felt neighbours to be primary sources of help in the face of
infantcare difficulties.

In her study of 25 American families Lein (1979) made a similar
observation about the differences in men and women's peer groups.

Parallelling the current findings she says:

(men) ... never reported drawing
on their own social network to help
with childcare or housework.
Women tended to call on people from
the neighbourhood, their families and
a variety of informal groups.

Lein observed that these distinctions in men and women's supports
partly reflect the contrasting demands facing men and women in their
traditional roles, men being expected to connect the family and the
outside world and women taking care of the internal dynamics of the

home. On this she says:

For men, it is useful to know
people who know other people.
For women it is more helpful to
have personal contact with people
who can pitch in.

In Lein's thesis, it is the lack of support men receive from their networks which influences their low participation in infant care and makes adaptation to fatherhood difficult and ambiguous. The present study would support this suggestion and further argues that men's networks inhibit their identification one with the other and maintain fatherhood as a well-kept secret. Fatherhood has a low public image and is bottom of a hierarchy of larger, more visible and traditional male social roles.

Much of the evidence from the case study group suggests that not only did men's networks exclude men's family roles and emphasise their occupational and leisure roles, but also that such networks often consistently ridiculed or denigrated men's involvement in family life. Some men were especially reluctant to talk about babies or their experiences as fathers for fear of leaving themselves open to abuse or to more mild teasing or joking from others.¹⁶ Fathers feared not receiving sympathy from mates, colleagues and of being disparaged, laughed at for their folly in being a parent, for their sensitivity and 'softness' toward their child and for their solidarity toward their wives. They felt inhibited in announcing the news of the pregnancy and birth and were wary of other men's scorn. Some occasions were cited when men did respond with disrespect and without empathy to the fact of parenthood and the recent father was made an object of derision or bemusement. These occasions of actual

or potential hostility influenced men's degrees of self-disclosure and made them selective about when discussions of family life were 'safe' and appropriate. Men tended to select categories of men who were 'insiders' and as suggested earlier, young, recent fathers and married men were classed as more supportive and less threatening. The general effect of all male contexts was to subdue men's expression of their family roles and to present an image of manhood that was impenetrable and resilient to changes in personal circumstances. Men were expected not to have been touched or changed by fatherhood and to continue to affirm their identity as men rather than as fathers. They were expected to slip quietly and unobtrusively into fatherhood after the first public ceremonials had died down, drinks and cigars bought and distributed. Certain taboo zones were identified where the topic of babies or family life were discouraged, work-places and pubs being particularly antipathetic to such talk. In addition, men were assumed to be competent and to be managing their new role successfully - any disclosure of problems or fears would indicate a personal weakness or inadequacy and allow other men to score moral victories. The suggestion that men feel vulnerable before one another, that there can be a lack of empathy in their interactions and that they face a degree of competitiveness and rivalry in the performance of their family roles is backed up by the accounts of three fathers.

Bill Elliott asked if other people are aware of how it feels to be a new father, says:

Um, it just depends, some of them are. Some say it's awful but it's only because they've had a rough time. Um and I think they expect you to have a rough time and to come to work bleary-eyed n'stuff like that. I don't think

they have any sympathy for you. But uh when you say to them that he's all right, they say 'aw well' like you know - they seem to want you to have the same rough time as they had like.

Tommy Hooper responds to the same question:

People who have already been a father - yes - but (pause) most of 't blokes, you know, I went back to work and told them I was a father and all they could say was 'well you're silly' ... I mean I told them and they said 'You silly devil what did you want to go and do a thing like that for'

Similarly, Nigel Owens highlights the themes of male insensitivity and censure. He is asked if it is useful to talk to other fathers.

To a certain extent, but not a great deal. I think there seems to be a terrific amount of 'oh it was no trouble to us', 'why should it be any trouble?' Some of them appreciate the problems more than others um, but to a lot of them you just say enough to get by ... As I say, I don't think work's the best place to discuss it from a man's point of view. If I'm round at a workmate's house talking to him and his wife, me and Eleanor, like yeah, I think it makes a good topic of conversation. But I don't as I say, I don't think a man likes to roll into work not feeling fit for it and admit it's because of his children.

In the last comment there is the explicit suggestion that man's family roles could conflict or interfere with his performance as a breadwinner. This was perceived as undesirable and is a recurrent theme throughout fathers' accounts. Work and home life were seen as having dual standards of having sometimes competing demands but men were

expected to balance the two without difficulty or protest, and by suppressing all conflict. (See the detailed remarks of Stephen Banks' earlier). Men saw this as a private and not an institutionalised battle.

As well as experiencing outright hostility from all male contexts, men also reported being the victim of mild teasing, joking or bantering. Many of the jokes hinted at the man's sexual virility, saw the man as 'caught' or trapped into parenthood, questioned his masculine identity, and again reflected on his competence and performance as a worker and the effects parenthood would have on this. Typical reactions by men to the expectant father's news of pregnancy emphasised his foolishness and his naivety, 'you silly bugger', 'you silly devil', 'it's a mug's game', 'you must be daft'. Most fathers seemed to expect a certain amount of legpulling and to have devised satisfactory ways of coping with it. However, it did have the effect of curtailing any detailed self-disclosures and of preventing any noticeable degree of sympathy and interdependence. Instead, it kept fathers wary of each other, tentative and self-protective. It also reinforced fairly traditional sexual divisions and ensured that male stereotypes went unchallenged. The following extract from Len Kerr, farmer, illustrates that male culture has a repertoire of joking and teasing which downgrades men's family roles in favour of work proficiency and the satisfactory accomplishment of the primary provider role. The difficulty the interviewer has in unravelling the nature and content of these stereotypical jokes is indicative of their potency and commonplaceness.

Len: You get the usual legpulling and what have you (from friends).

I: What do you mean ? What sort of jokes are there ?

Len: Just the typical daddy joke, you know, just typical daddy jokes. (Long pause) ... Sleepless nights and coming to work in a bad mood, just feeling bad at work, things like that. I've done very well for those.

That men's participation in infant care is still considered 'feminine' and that men together poke fun at any shift from a traditional division of sex roles, is evidenced in another case. Here the father has sufficient confidence to retaliate and to assert a non-traditional role. His degree of assuredness was atypical.¹⁷

Interestingly, in his retort he exaggerates the 'feminine' implication behind the teasing.

I get quite a bit of fun taken out of me. I don't mind 'cos he's my lad as well. 'Aw you haven't been doing the nappies - aw ?' and I say 'Aw yeah I haven't got me gold bracelets out of the bucket all morning' And it's a standing joke like but I don't mind. I mean I drink with some blokes that have never washed a pot, to me it's a disgrace !

Teasing, joking, ridiculing was not just efficient in promoting sexual stereotypes and binding men to their traditional economic roles, these devices also created a particular image of women, as sexual and available. In the all male context of the pub and sometimes work, women were viewed as sexual objects and this vision of womanhood could not accommodate notions of motherhood, responsibility and non-erotocism. There was a direct clash between women and men and between concepts of fathers and mothers as allies, and women and men as sexual protagonists. In the pub setting, talk about babies and parenthood

could determine not just men's masculinity, conflicting with their interests in sport, politics or work, it could also threaten their impression of dominance over their wives and women generally.¹⁸

Men had to be seen not just to be masculine but to be virile and with a healthy sexual appetite. The remarks of two fathers display the incompatibility of fatherhood as a topic of conversation with certain all male contexts, where women are primarily regarded as sexually desirable. These remarks illustrate the inappropriateness of firstly, the pub and secondly, certain work environments for men to declare or ponder their parenthood status. The two fathers hold different occupational and class positions, one a British Rail Guard, the other a skilled electrician suggesting that such sexism is not tied to social position and unsurprisingly is endemic to leisure and workplaces and part of a pervasive ethos which controls women and silences men on their family commitments.

Nigel Owens is asked if he would talk to his mates about the baby when out drinking:

No, I don't think so - no.
They're more likely to be
talkin' about t'barmaids behind
t'bar.

Evan Crowley says:

I brag about it a lot (being
a father) to some of me mates.
They say I'm an idiot, 'cos a
lot of them are single, you know.
All those I work with are all single.
They don't understand I don't think.
they say 'I don't know how you could
do it'. I say at work 'I've got a
bairn' and they don't understand it
I don't think. They're on about women
'n that you know. I say I'm not
interested.

In Evan Crowley's comments he makes a reference to the marital status of his peers. Earlier, Tommy Hooper repeated this theme and it is one that was echoed throughout the case study group. Single men, bachelors, were continually berated for lacking understanding, empathy, interest and appreciation. This segregation of men into married and unmarried categories fits with findings elsewhere that it is marriage that severs links between men or bars total communication and interaction, the spouse and male friends often standing in opposition to one another.¹⁹ However, this is made more complex by the fact that married and single men can maintain a similar lifestyle, retain their associations and the tensions between the marriage partner and male friendship can be kept minimal in the early phase of marriage when there are no children. While marriage superficially differentiates the married from the unmarried, the differences can be overlooked or incidental. It seems that parenthood invokes much greater changes, and the gap in the dialogue between the single and married men is complete. If marriage initiates 'the domestication of men' and divides them up, it is entry into parenthood that finishes the process and sets single men and fathers apart. Whole areas of communication are closed, interests are polarised and loyalties divided. With marriage, the antagonism can be between attachment to the marriage partner and attachment to the male group, with parenthood there is an additional attachment, attachment to the child. It is interesting to note that male groups, 'cliques' in particular seem to have developed a sophisticated weaponry for controlling 'men as husbands' and dealing with this first step into 'marital socialisation'. However, on the topic of 'men as fathers' the 'male clique' seems to have a very incoherent or ambivalent philosophy and as we have seen, the common strategies are to either denigrate it, to ridicule it as

idiocy or the greatest tactic of all, to avoid or ignore the issue. A blind eye is turned to the man's status as father and it is in his interests to collude with this, both to preserve his masculinity and privacy and to create an impression of marital dominance.

It is not surprising that in differentiating men into 'insider' and 'outsider' groups, parental status was also recorded as significant. Marital status and parental status were sometimes used interchangeably, emphasising the earlier point, that it is marriage that initiates the process of becoming a 'family man'.

While much of this chapter has suggested that men feel the lack of a group identity as fathers, and that their predominant social roles and networks militate against their expression of a paternal identity and affiliation, some of the findings contradict this. From the whole mass of men - other fathers at least were felt to be more appreciative, more aware and more motivated to share feelings and confidences. This was expressed as an ideal, if not an actuality. Parents and non-parents were felt to be separated in their interests and general orientation. Fathers often reflected back on their own attitudes and feelings prior to becoming a parent and underscored their own previous naivety, intolerance or irresponsibility. Parenthood was felt to invoke value changes, which in some way united all fathers and signified some kind of group identity, if only abstractly.

In identifying parental status as a differentiator between men, fathers were quick to note the generational gap between parents. Only recent fathers qualified as part of an 'in' or support group.

Already it has been argued that men failed to rely on their own fathers as role models, likewise older fathers in general were classified as unappreciative and unaware of the experiences of modern fathers. Older fathers despite their previous child-rearing experiences were perceived neither as experts nor advisors and their fathering experiences were deemed as redundant, defunct and inapplicable. As suggested earlier, there is a feeling that knowledge of the paternal role is time-specific, contemporary and peculiar to an early phase of fatherhood. Fathers of older children were not appreciated for their advanced wisdom and insight but instead the greater the duration of his experience as a father the less relevant his experiences were felt to be, and the greater the barriers between he and a novice father. The point that men may be unable to identify with older men, particularly their own fathers was also made by Komarovsky, She says:

Relatively fewer husbands it
would appear found satisfactory
role models in their fathers than 20
did their wives in their mothers.

The way that fathers feel their interactions are governed by the lack of homogeneity in their networks and contacts can be best illustrated by a series of extracts. Fathers carve up and sub-divide their networks by age, marital and parental status, single men, non-parents and older fathers constrain interactions and affect the content, quality and depth of exchanges.

Stephen Banks highlights the disinterest of bachelors:

... And with the men I know at
work - uh I mean half of them
aren't married so they've got no

interest whatsoever and I'm
very sure when I was like that I
had no interest in babies whatsoever,
a boring subject

Terry Shapiro reflects on the low interest of the childless and
unmarried:

You usually find it's only the
people who've had children who
you can talk to. You know, the
confirmed bachelors are not interested.

Simon Shaw comments on older fathers and the generational divide:

.... I don't know many young fathers.
The fathers I do know are sort of,
belong to my father's generation
and they don't seem to have had the
same experience and might well in
some cases at least have had a
different experience altogether.
Uh, I suspect the fathers of that
generation aren't able to talk as
freely about the things they feel.
I think they feel embarrassed about it ...

10.4 Psychological or 'Socialisation' Barriers to Talking about Babies

Men's networks were organised in congruence with their traditional
breadwinning roles, supported traditional 'masculine' interests, were
often based on organisational or institutional links, served instru-
mental needs and were often external to the home and community. The
character of these networks was an adequate explanation for why men
found difficult in sharing their fatherhood experiences or coming
together as fathers. However, the case study group also identified
some psychological or socialisation factors which could influence the
expression of their family roles and inhibit self-disclosure. This
final section reports some of the findings in this area and suggests

that future researchers of men's experiences should not overlook these factors. Firstly, some fathers intimated that talking about feelings in general was something they were unused to. They found it hard expressing their thoughts and emotions and had become accustomed to keeping facets of themselves concealed from others. In their work, and leisure roles they preferred to talk in more impersonal and abstract terms (Stephen Banks illustrated this theme of privacy earlier) and sometimes even with their marriage partners they found difficulty in communicating with any depth through talk. One father, Terry Shapiro, classified himself as 'a quiet type' and Tommy Hooper was very surprised that he survived the interviewer's questioning, '... it's not usual that I can be interviewed'.²¹ This inability of men to disclose their personal feelings has been commented on, again by Komarovsky where she described it as 'a trained incapacity to share'. The mothers in 'The First Months of Motherhood' study also remarked on this, and sometimes described their husbands as 'deep', 'reserved', 'a quiet type', 'undemonstrative', meaning often that their marital dialogue was poor and that they found it hard to fathom their husbands' feelings and opinions. For fathers like this, talk was neither usual, nor therapeutic, nor a way of cementing and expressing mutual bonds. The incapacity to share feelings with others was especially identified as a male characteristic by Stephen Banks where he comments:

I think men are very reticent about showing emotion to other people that they have for their children and uh, emotions, full-stop.

Secondly, some of the reports suggested that not only did men find self-expression difficult but that they found it particularly difficult

in all-male company. This supports the earlier feelings that male networks were organised around 'masculine interests' and supported traditional sex role divisions, but goes further and suggests that there is something 'unmasculine' about emotionality and self-revelation. Fathers feared displaying any weakness or softness which would interfere with their overall self-image as providers and household heads. Men associated objectivity, self-control, self-reliance, with success in their primary role as workers and with success in their management of a masculine identity. The entrusting of secrets, doubts and worries to other men was felt likely to damage their overall credibility and competence, and to attack the basis of their manhood. Disclosures about family life or one's feelings about one's child were suppressed because they questioned the norms of masculinity and business life/productivity - norms of strength, achievement, daring, aggression, toughness, self-sufficiency, independence, and were suggestive of affection, love, softness, dependency and emotionality. Stephen Banks' case is used again to convey the ambivalence that men face in their interactions with one another and the limitations of men's expression of their emotions. His quotes show that men can be very lonely and isolated from one another because of this dictate of non-disclosure. Asked if he thinks men generally find babies interesting:

In short, I think they do. But they're not prepared to admit it. I should think that's exactly the same in my case. I would not talk to another male, even to my closest friends I would be careful what I said. Men have a great desire to hide their, I mean they're brought up that way. Boys are not meant to show emotion and it rubs off on you for the rest of your life ... And I think I'm more

emotional than a lot of males.
And that again is unfair to say
because I don't know how other
men are at home. But that's what
every man thinks isn't it.

The failure of men to serve as confidants for one another was complemented by the finding that some men did find they could talk more easily to women, to their wives, 'the girls at work', to women friends, or in cross-gender company.²² There was a suggestion that on the topic of babies and parental experiences, women were more receptive and interested. Also women were felt to be generally more sympathetic, comforting and less critical and rigid in their sex role expectations and identifications. Fathers did not have to keep in line with their traditional masculine preoccupations, women as an audience were more broad-minded and less censorious. For women it was legitimate to be emotional and to build relationships through affectivity and self-disclosure. Women as a group were also assumed to be homogeneous, and did not sub-divide into groups of 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Women were felt to have a generic orientation to 'babies' and to 'the personal'. Stephen Banks' initial comments in this chapter suggested that he could talk about childbirth to a woman and not a man. Simon Shaw similarly finds women more prepared to listen to his feelings. He says:

... You find that the spouses
(of his male friends), the ladies
are more interested and so you've
got to be aware to govern the
conversations so that you don't
simply talk to the women in the
group and the men start talking
among themselves. This often happens,
you're given a limit and after that
they (the men) lose interest.

or Tommy Hooper shows how the presence of women can affect discourse:

... If you'd got a few women in the team sort of thing I would be able to speak. But I think I'd be outclassed by the women about babies. That's talk that generally concerns women. Men don't generally go out to the pub and start talking babies.

This finding that men may find it easier to reveal their emotions and to talk about their family roles to women or in a mixed-gender context may have important methodological implications. For example, some respondents may have felt more oriented to self-disclosure because of the female gender of the interviewer and sometimes by the presence of their wives. These points are expanded in the earlier methodology chapter .

10.5 Summary and Conclusions

Fathers found difficulty in publically expressing their family roles and in achieving any sense of common identity as fathers. What they did with their children and what they felt about their paternal role was highly privatised and individualised. Fathers differed in the degree to which they could talk about their infants or sought corroboration of their experiences, but generally they shied away from much self-revelation or help-seeking. The factors inhibiting men's reliance upon one another as parents included the following:

- Men felt their primary role to be as breadwinners and providers. This influenced the knowledge they held about the child, the opportunities they had to be in the company of the child and other parents, their role needs, and the development and maintenance of other masculine and 'non-familial' interests.

- Men were not perceived as being able to learn the paternal role through imitation. As a secondary role, it was less visible, and less transmittable.

- Men were defined as being interested in the developmental or intellectual sides of a baby and as being able to communicate on these more objective and recreational topics. Often there was a hint of bragging or competitiveness in their exchanges.

- Men's primary network relationships were often built around organisational or institutional ties. Men's networks were compatible with their primary economic roles and could remain unchanged by the advent of parenthood.

- Male networks tended to support a fairly traditional division of sex roles and to organise around 'masculine' interests of sport and work.

- Parenthood was not a sufficient condition to trigger new network bonds for men, and men's neighbourhood and family contacts could continue as before. Where men did make increased community contacts, their wives often initiated the relationships which then drew the husbands in. Male friendships were unlikely to concentrate on their common identity as parents.
- Men made no direct demands on their networks for practical support in the caretaking fatherhood role.
- Men's networks not only suppress men's family roles but they also ridicule or denigrate these roles.
- Workplaces and pubs were particularly hostile to the expression of men's family roles and men experienced teasing or bantering if they talked about their children or themselves as fathers. This joking and teasing reinforced masculine stereotypes and promoted the traditional division of sex roles, where women care for babies and men provide.
- Men were not felt to comprise a homogeneous group but were classified by age, marital and parental status. Men at the same stage in the life-cycle were more empathetic and more likely to serve as confidants and advisors. Men could not readily discriminate these groups.
- Some men felt inhibited in disclosing their feelings generally. This meant that feelings about family life had

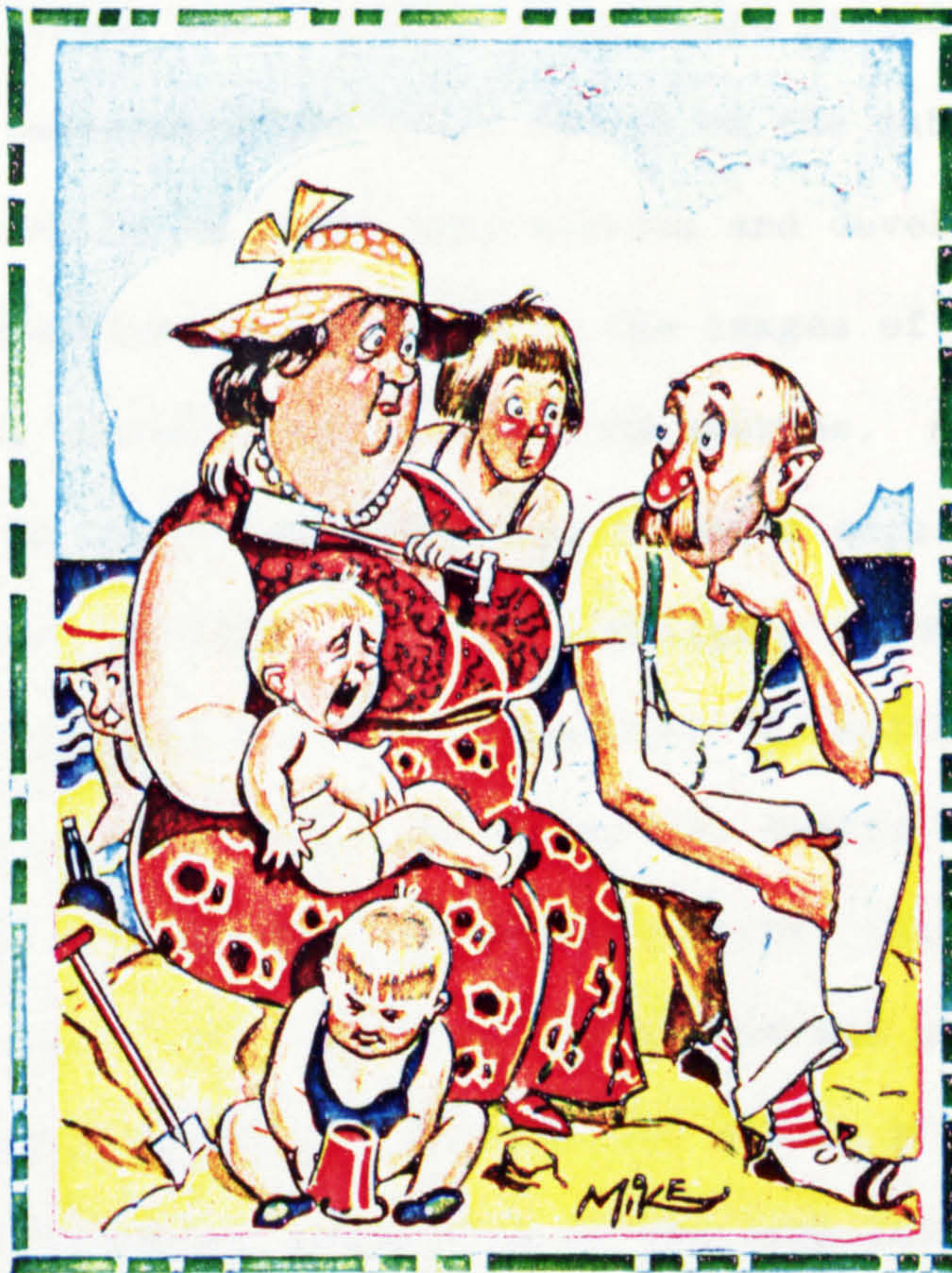
to be concealed. Display of emotion was associated with 'femininity' and so 'all masculine' groups were especially restrictive.

- Some men found it easier to share their feelings and reflections in a cross-gender group or to women alone.
- Some men felt men and women to be biologically different - women could talk about family roles because it was natural, 'unnatural' for men.
- For some men talk was not therapeutic.

CHAPTER 11

FATHERS' ACCESS TO AND USE OF INFORMATION ABOUT FATHERHOOD

“You know, Herbert, You’ve been neglecting me lately!”



Postcard circa 1949

' ... I'd like to see a greater attempt to teach people about children because in this day and age when children don't happen all that often and we don't see the birth and we don't see the death, it's all curtained off, all the important bits. I think it's important people ought to know about children. I was so ignorant. I don't see how anyone could reach my age and be so ignorant of something which is so fundamental to life. '

Simon Shaw

CHAPTER 11

FATHERS' ACCESS TO AND USE OF INFORMATION ABOUT FATHERHOOD

In Chapters 6 and 7 there was brief mention of expectant fathers' access to written information about pregnancy, childbirth and children. It was reported that men's information-gathering during wives' pregnancies was sketchy and superficial in the main, although there were exceptional cases such as Simon Shaw where pregnancy and parenthood were fully researched and files opened on the subject. The present chapter builds on these observations and develops them in more detail. Attention is also paid to the images of fathers portrayed in some contemporary information sources. Again such a focus allows us to pin-point dimensions of men's experience typically neglected by larger surveys. It also highlights assumptions about parenting more generally and the perceptions of health educators and others about the 'proper' place of fathers in family life. It will be seen that the tensions and contradictions that fathers experience between taking direct responsibility for babies and providing 'support' for wives (being a 'helpmate') and between a high private profile and a low public image are reinforced in the very literature that is available to them.

11.1 Reading and Researching about Babies

Fathers were asked at each interview about their reading, viewing and listening habits concerning the topics of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare.¹ They were asked to describe the volume of material consulted, where it came from, the extent of their use of this information and their evaluation of it. Their replies provide some interesting insights about men's access to this material and form a valuable critique of it from the father's perspective.

In pregnancy all the expectant fathers, save two, claimed to have read something pertaining to pregnancy, childbirth or child rearing. In the one case, the father claimed 'never to read', but watched a good deal of television; and in the other, the father felt he had enough knowledge. Over half had seen a birth on television and everyone, with the exception of one middle-class father who did not have a television, had seen at least one programme concerning either child-bearing or childrearing. Few fathers could remember any programmes in detail, but the Nationwide Series, Citizen '76 which followed a group of mothers throughout pregnancy and early parenthood, was most frequently quoted. Patterns of reading and viewing were described as progressively dropping off after the birth of the baby. At 11 weeks post-partum, eight fathers admitted to having consulted the baby care literature in the previous weeks since the birth; and by 12 months, only four fathers mentioned consulting such literature on an occasional basis. A comparative tailing off of mothers' use of infant care material was not found in the larger study of mothers, with reading at 4 weeks, and 5 months post-partum remaining fairly constant (Graham and McKee, 1978b). However, we do not have information about

maternal reading patterns or practices at 12 months (although husbands described their wives as reading less and less) and it is possible that between 5 months and 12 months marks the critical time. The reasons why reading did show marked reductions over time for fathers are complex and related not so much to fathers' diminishing interest as to fathers' perception of their increased competence and confidence in caring for the baby, ability to 'read' the baby's needs and the changed nature of infant care problems. Some fathers felt there to be fewer problems as time went on and readier solutions.

In the first twelve months over half the group had watched a television programme on babies. The topics covered by programmes included childhood difficulties and abnormalities, with very little on 'normal' parenthood and less on 'normal' fathering. A number of fathers specifically commented on coverage of the whooping cough vaccination. Such media discussions resulted in mixed feelings, some being grateful for the informative nature of the programmes, others feeling that it only heightened their own anxiety and made the decision whether or not to vaccinate more complicated.

Interestingly, even if fathers had missed programmes on parenthood, they frequently described programmes watched by wives. This illustrates that some amount of information-swapping occurs between parents and that fathers may learn indirectly, through their wives. In talking about wives' viewing of such programmes, fathers sometimes referred to a bias in the screening times - these typically being in the morning or afternoon, when many fathers are at work.

Accordingly, it was often the shift-workers who had more exposure to these programmes. In some comments a couple of men connected the viewing of parentcraft programmes with the perceived 'luxury' of the

housewife/mother role, contrasting their own time as being eaten up with more 'productive' work.

The type and volume of literature consulted by fathers varied: some seeing only the 'official' clinic literature; others relying on additional specialist parentcraft magazines; and a few others, particularly highly educated fathers, using a fairly wide range of serious pregnancy and infant care manuals either bought or borrowed from the library. At one extreme was one father (Simon Shaw, social science postgraduate) who was collecting all the material he could find, filing and classifying it and treating it as a personal and academic exercise. In the majority of cases, mothers were depicted as both the source and the 'keeper' of the baby care literature: 'She's got a whole pile of them'. Wives brought booklets and pamphlets home from clinics, borrowed them from friends, sent away for them, bought them from newsagents or chemists, and borrowed them from libraries. Consequently, husbands were very dependent on wives' access to this material and compilation of it. There were only three exceptions to this pattern of wives' being the information repository: the one student above who took direct steps to find material for himself; Chris Hill a librarian whose access to the literature was guaranteed; and one printer, Bill Elliott, who purchased a copy of 'Parents' magazine to complement his wife's existing stockpile of information. These findings seem to have an important bearing on the distribution of parentcraft information and expose our assumptions about who needs and uses it. It would suggest that fathers are neither assumed to be a target group nor individual consumers.

Two findings about the fathers' style of reading or approach to the

material are important. Firstly, wives played a central role not just in the provision of material but sometimes in persuading fathers to make use of it. For example, two wives bought their husbands books on expectant fatherhood. The way wives may try to initiate or stimulate the father's interest is reflected in the following short extracts:

She got a few books from her
cousin and thrust them at me
to have a look.

Tommy Hooper

The wife did get me a book on
'Becoming a Father' and I haven't
read it yet. 'To be a Father' or
'Becoming a Father' I think or
something like that. (hunts for it)

Len Kerr

Secondly, fathers' general approach to the literature tended to be casual and they variously describe their style of reading as 'glancing', 'skimming', 'flicking' through the booklets and texts. The information was referenced selectively and not read or absorbed from cover to cover. This seems to contrast with the impression given by their wives' reading style and those of first-time mothers in the main study, who could be said to adopt a more 'serious' orientation to the information and to read more comprehensively. In some ways, the extent and style of fathers' use of the literature more resembled second-time mothers (Graham and McKee 1978b). This male 'flippancy' toward the material did not seem to vary according to how involved men intended to be in infant care, or later turned out to be: just as the extent of their reading could not be distinguished along these lines.

Concerning fathers' views on the content of the available baby-care literature some significant results emerge which may explain why they covered it in such hasty or superficial ways. Essentially, among those who did read, there was a strong consensus that the material neglected to address fathers directly. Only six had come across something devoted to their role, either in pregnancy or child-rearing. Furthermore, there was a feeling identified by a sub-group of fathers, that the information provided and the images conveyed were inadequate, stereo-typed, patronising, banal and insulting. A series of comments demonstrate how some fathers felt the information sources failed or misrepresented them:

One of them springs to mind - in one of the books there was 'the mother if she has any anxieties her closest people she can talk to are her doctor and midwife' which I think's a load of bunkum because the closest person to the mother is her husband that she can talk to in real confidence and they don't mention him. There's nothing about the father or the father-to-be at all ... it takes two to make a baby doesn't it and I think the father should have his little bit of weight to pull.

Derek Morris

There have been several sections in books about the role of the father .. but I didn't find them any use at all. I found them sort of er very low key, platitudes that didn't really help me in any way. I suppose it was a kind of patting on the head or this is what fatherhood's all about really.

Simon Shaw

You usually get the bit about making cups of tea (laughs) during morning sickness, how the father should, it tends to say the obvious really ... It's a bit like, now I come to think of it, like the statutory Womens Liberation Movement in that one's got to say in the advert that the job's open to women as well as men ... Well I think it's a sop.

Stephen Banks

However, not all fathers were united in wanting more information directed to them, some being content with the status quo. Those who did want changes were very articulate about where their dissatisfactions lay and how things could be improved. Amongst the constructive suggestions they made were ideas about 'speaking' to both the mother and father throughout rather than 'slapping in a paragraph about what the father should do'; and requests for specific types of information of direct pertinence to the father. They stressed the need for guidance on how to provide proper assistance and support for their wives in pregnancy and the post-natal period; for information on the emotional or psychological aspects of childbearing and child-rearing; for details about what they themselves could expect to do during labour and delivery; for greater discussion of the social and moral aspects of being a father - potential problems as well as joys - and for more advice on the financial implications and costs of childbearing and childrearing, such as the availability and provision of benefits. Few wanted to be told 'how' to raise their children, feeling this to be a highly individual and private matter and resenting interference. On the whole, fathers rejected 'text book' childrearing and wanted to construct their own 'family' expectations, rules and guidelines. A few would have appreciated more accurate and up to date

descriptions of child development, growth and performance. On numerous occasions fathers displayed themselves to be intimately involved in observing the infant's progress and marking off its milestones.

11.2 Images of Fathers in Contemporary Babycare Literature

In the second part of the chapter the current literature offered to parents is reviewed to see if fathers' reservations are valid.

For the analysis, three Family Doctor Publications have been chosen:

'You and Your Baby' - Parts 1 and 2 and 'Father-to-Be'; the Health Visitor's Association publication, 'New Baby'; three issues of the specialist magazines 'Mother', 'Mother and Baby' and 'Parents' for the month of October, and a random selection of pamphlets and leaflets which were available at my local health clinic.² The selection was influenced by factors of distribution and availability and by evidence on usage and popularity. For example, it has been noted that the Family Doctor Publications 'You and Your Baby' - Parts 1 and 2 reach almost all mothers, being distributed free at ante-natal clinics or through doctor's surgeries (99% received these in the larger study of mothers, (Graham and McKee, 1978b) while all mothers received them in the Swansea survey (Cleary and Shepperdson, 1981b).

A number of observers have noticed that the volume of babycare material which refers to husbands and/or fathers has increased (Gallagher, 1978; Cleary and Shepperdson, 1981a and b). It has been suggested that this has followed an historical continuum, with the earliest literature this century being 'mother-centred' and transforming from the 1940s,

1950s and '60s to some inclusion or consideration of the father's role. (Gallagher, 1978; Cleary and Shepperdson 1981b). In this review of the literature there was frequent reference to the husband/father, both through illustrations and in the text, so it would seem at least that the dimension of fatherhood is being taken seriously. However, what is proposed is to uncover how fathers are now represented and what is suggested about their expected role.

The first impression given by the baby care material is that parenting is expected to be a 'shared' or 'joint' affair and that becoming a parent changes a couple into a 'real family'. These beliefs are conveyed both through pictures of couples, pictures of the husband, wife, baby, 'family-unit' and in explicit statements such as 'Now You're a Family' (Title of H.E.C. pamphlet by Claire Rayner) and 'Having a baby is a joint undertaking if ever there was one' (Father-to-Be, B.M.A. 1981). In 'You and Your Baby, Part 1' the image of 'parental togetherness' is underscored by examples of the expectant couple jointly preparing a meal and playing Scrabble. In 'Parents' magazine there is a picture of an expectant father assisting his partner with her ante-natal exercises. Fathers are variously shown holding small infants, out walking with toddlers or young children and reading or playing with sons and daughters. Sometimes, they are alone with their offspring; at others they form a threesome along with mothers. The general message is that pregnancy and parenthood have a relevance for both mothers and fathers and that each partner carries some responsibility. Rapoport et al (1977) would suggest that this model of shared parenting is a fairly recent phenomenon dating from the 1970s and has replaced an ideology previously held by the baby care experts, that 'parenting' equals 'mothering' or of 'unitary

parenting'. Graham (1979) has made a similar observation in her review of child health policies in the 1970s where she notes that the words 'mother' or 'father' have been replaced by the androgynous word 'parents'.

It is necessary to look more closely at the content of the baby care literature to see how this larger philosophy of 'shared parenthood' is translated into detailed advice and information. It becomes clear immediately that shared or joint parenthood does not mean interchangeability of parental roles, nor equal parental responsibility. In fact, most of the texts continue to treat the division of infant care labour in very traditional terms, assuming that mothers still have major care and control of small children, being especially expert in meeting their physical needs, being more necessary and available when the children are very young and typically combining full-time motherhood with the roles of wife and housewife. These conventional assumptions about mothers' duties and aptitudes underly and contradict the wider ideology of parental 'equity' and paternal participation. They are revealed both in the style and tenor of texts where 'you' equals 'mother' and where (husbands) fathers are addressed in a separate paragraph (or paragraphs) under headings like: 'You and Your Mate'. (You and Your Baby - Part 2); 'The baby's father: how does he feel?' (New Baby - H.V.A.) and 'Father - a help and comfort' (You and Your Baby - Part 1). They are also conveyed in discussions of discrete topics such as infant health care, immunization, diet, potty training, weaning, safety, buying the layette and baby-clothes (and shoes), where mothers are expected to have exclusive expertise and control.

In contrast, the father's role, under the rubric of 'joint parenthood' rests firmly on the implicit assumption that he will be the economic breadwinner, and not only that he will have a job but he will work full-time at least while the child is young (although there is surprisingly little or no direct reference to his work role as we will later see).³ The 'modern' father appears not so much as an 'equal' parent but as a back-up to his wife, in times of emergency or crisis, for example, when she first arrives home from hospital or when she is tired or over-wrought by the demands of full-time mothering. Fathers are 'the relief parent' and step in gallantly when there is a break-down in the mother's energy or resources. This is how 'You and Your Baby' - Part 2 puts it (in connection with bottle-feeding):

... If Mother is very tired, Dad
can give a helping hand too ... (:27)

This is repeated in the Family Doctor pamphlet addressed to the 'Father-to-Be' where it suggests under the title 'How you can help' (my emphasis).

You could give the occasional
bottle-feed in the night to give
your wife a break.

Cleary and Shepperdson (1981b) in their review of parental information sources have also spotted this tendency to treat the father's role in infant care as one of helpmate or support. They suggest that this view is promoted not only by the parentcraft literature but also resounds in women's magazines and newspapers.

The concept that fathers should be occasional caretakers (but not primary caretakers) of young children is also coupled with the vague notions that 'some' involvement in caretaking is 'good' for fathers,

mothers and babies and that father's involvement and competence can and should be encouraged by mothers. This embodies the 'old' belief that women are best fitted to 'mother' but also reflects a 'new' acceptance that the efficient performance of childcare tasks is not tied to parental sex. So, on the one hand, mothers are reminded of their major control over infant care and, on the other, they are told to ease up and not to be possessive. On the whole, the message to mothers is that if fathers wish to participate from time to time in the practical care of the infant this should be encouraged - and indeed they should then count themselves privileged. Mothers are given new responsibility for fathers and for the degree of paternal involvement. These themes are captured in the following extracts, and we will see that while mothers' performance of infant care is assumed and compulsory, fathers' involvement is expected to be optional and voluntary.

Some young mothers refuse to let anyone but themselves pick up the baby or do anything for him: then they wonder why his father doesn't seem interested in him and isn't much help. Many men don't find children very interesting until they're three or four months old, but if your husband feels like taking his turn helping with the baby, do let him. (my emphasis). If your husband is willing to learn how to change nappies and bath the baby, then you're lucky. So is the baby - he'll be able to make friends with his father from the beginning and that gets the family on to a good footing right away. (A Guide for the Nursing Mother and Her Baby. Pamphlet produced by the National Dairy Council).

After you have relaxed for a while
(after getting home from work) you
could nurse the baby, perhaps bath
it and put it to bed ...
The only thing you can't do is
breast-feed, but everything else
you can do if you wish. (My emphasis)
(The Father-to-Be, 1981: 28)

... try to rest as much as you can during
the day, and get your husband to help
out by holding and cuddling the baby.
(my emphasis)

(You and Your Baby Part 2)

In this last extract there is a hint that husbands/fathers may have to be cajoled or motivated to take care of babies. This lack of male spontaneity towards sharing is also frequently mentioned in relation to husbands' housework involvement. Many of the texts imply again that the husband/father's support has to be 'won over' and that need for his 'help' is particularly acute in the early weeks of parenthood. There is a further assumption in many of the booklets that husbands are both incompetent and inexperienced in the domestic arenas and that parenthood heralds an appropriate time for the learning of new skills such as shopping, washing, cooking and cleaning. In the 'Father-to-Be' booklet the expectant father is advised:

If you cannot make your own meal,
wash up, do some washing and housework,
now is the time to learn. Then if
your wife is away at any time you will
know you can cope without running back
home to your mother. (:6)

Later there is an illustration of a father wearing a chef's hat and stirring a pot accompanied by the caption:

Some of the best cooks are
men ! Now is the time to
indulge your flair for Cordon
Bleu - or even scrambled eggs.

(:28)

This portrayal of the husband/father suggests there is something comical about men who adopt domestic roles and is premised on a belief about men's general lack of domestic self sufficiency and their reliance on women - wives and mothers. It is a view of men perpetuated by other media forms and Cleary and Shepperdson identify numerous instances in magazines and newspapers where fathers appear as 'laughingly incompetent' (1981b). While not wishing to exaggerate the domestic skillfulness of all men or the blurring of sex roles it is important to show the inherent tension between this vision of fatherhood/'husbandhood' and that conveyed for example, on the cover of 'You and Your Baby' - Part 1 where the husband is willingly and ably chopping the carrots and she peeling the potatoes. In general, this harmonious, symmetrical image is undermined by the invocations to husbands to 'help' with the chores (New Baby, 1981).

It is interesting too, that although men are assumed to have poor domestic ability, they are awarded a high degree of technical knowledge with regard to maintaining and repairing the house. In the H.E.C. leaflet 'Now I am One Year Old' under the section addressed to 'Daddy' there is a request 'please make our home safe for me to play in'. The page itself is coloured blue and there is a picture of a frayed flex and socket. The matching advice to 'Mummy' on a pink page refers only to duties connected with nurturance and health care. Elsewhere there are sex-stereotyped assumptions, that only husbands and fathers drive cars. Father's driving skills are used to take

wives to ante-natal clinics and the maternity hospital and to take the mother and baby on outings. (This observation is also made by Cleary and Shepperdson, 1981b). There is no information provided which attends to women drivers, although many pregnant women may wish to know if they should observe any driving restrictions and may require guidance on the use of seat-belts.

The rigid separation of sex-roles into man/breadwinner, woman/childminder/homemaker carry even further and very conservative views are prevalent in relation to parent-child interaction and child development. There is an explicit adherence to the view that the mother-baby relationship is the primary relationship and that this relationship or 'bond' is forged through caretaking, especially feeding. This is summed up in the following passage from *You and Your Baby - Part 2*, under the heading 'That "togetherness" feeling'.

Although you can delegate the feeding to another member of the family if required, it is not a good thing to do this too often. A strong psychological 'togetherness' should develop between mother and baby and this will not be so effective if she does not feed baby herself whenever possible.

(: 28)

The view embodied in this statement derives from psychoanalytic theories concerning the primacy of the mother-baby unit and the significance of the feeding context. However, these theories have been challenged and superseded and it has been shown that babies form strong 'attachments' to others and to other non-caregivers. Some would argue that the notion of 'bonding' in *'You and Your Baby'* is therefore old-fashioned, erroneous and excludes fathers unnecessarily.

The main developmental roles awarded to the father in many of the texts concern his part in imposing discipline and providing recreation for children. Fathers are also shown serving as instructors, educating the child about the 'outside' world, while mothers teach about 'domestic' routines. The 'instrumental' role of fathers is clearly alluded to in the H.E.C. leaflet 'Your Children Need You' where one picture shows a family threesome outside a bakery and the father is pointing in the window. The text reads 'When you take them out show them things which will interest them, the shops, the traffic, the people, the parks.' In another picture, a mother is shown teaching her child (albeit a boy) how to sweep the floor. In 'Mother' magazine (October) Dr Hugh Jolly in his article 'What Makes a Good Father?' devotes many of his questions and answers to the father's role in recreation, discipline, and moral and social training. In his view, the 'good father' helps children adopt 'reasonable behaviour', is warm and caring, communicates with his children and joins in their activities. He also takes the position that fathers serve as role models for their sons and influence their son's later fathering behaviour.

Although the mother-baby unit appears as the closest, affective family tie, many of the booklets warn against mothers' over-absorption with their infants. Mothers have to develop close bonds but not too close' so that husbands/fathers are excluded. Mothers are expected and encouraged to balance their affection between babies and partners and this is commonly seen as a source of potential conflict. It is mothers alone who are told that they have the chief responsibility for effecting an equitable division of marital and maternal love and if they fail, then the dire consequences will be paternal jealousy,

even rejection. Some leaflets suggest there is an even greater risk of paternal jealousy if the baby is a boy. Again, this kind of notion would seem to have its roots in Freudian theory about sexual development and the existence of Oedipal rivalries between fathers and sons. In all the literature surveyed there is only one reference to the fact that mothers might feel jealous of the father's affection for the baby. Once again, the dominant impression is that husbands have to be carefully handled and managed by wives and, in a sense, coaxed into the family unit. These themes of mothers and babies versus fathers and of paternal 'fragility' are echoed in the following comments:

... you're still a couple needing to get out on your own sometimes. It's easy for any new mother to become so involved in caring for her baby that the father feels left out, even a little jealous of his child.

(First Three Years, New Baby Growing Up HVA 1979)

If a father is suffering from jealousy, a loving wife doesn't get angry, or show scorn or disapproval. She accepts it as an expression of love for her, which it is, and helps him by showing her own love in every way she can.

(Now You're a Family, H.E.C.)

... you will rightly expect your husband to be loving towards you and admire your recent achievement. But remember that he has been deprived of your company (and sex) for a long time and see to it that the new member of the family does not mean that he has less of your time and love.

(You and Your Baby - Part 2. 1981)
(The (and sex) was added sometime after the 1974 edition).

The implication behind many of these suggestions is that if mothers do not take care they will lose their man or his love. This is further borne out in advice to buy a new frock, have their hair done and to go out socially as a couple. In the 'Father-to-Be' pamphlet fathers are not told how to keep themselves attractive for their wives; nor to remember that their wives have been sexually deprived. They are given no instructions as to how to apportion their love and time between their wives and babies. There are then differential models of maternal and paternal love, of female and male marital responsibilities and of men's and women's sexual needs or drives. Mothers love their babies more; keep marriages intact and ensure their husbands sexual fulfilment and fidelity. In fact, the only exclusive role afforded to fathers in aiding the successful transition to parenthood and the evolution of harmonious family relationships refers to his intervening between wives and mothers-in-law. The 'Father-to-Be' pamphlet sums up his function here as a 'Liaison Officer' (: 30) - and he is perceived as smoothing over female hostilities, but at the same time maintaining his first loyalty to his wife, after all 'you actually chose your wife'. (: 30).

So far attention has been drawn only to the very divisive and distinctive roles of mothers and fathers as contained in the baby care literature and it has been shown how they can contradict the global impressions of 'jointness' or shared parenting. However, there are some areas where the themes of jointness and sharing recur and are now established in the information sources. These areas comprise an 'orientation' to parenthood or a child-rearing morality and propose a way of problem-solving during child-rearing. It should be said firstly, that the achievement of joint parenthood is seen as being based

largely on the formula of talking things over, especially discussing problems and negative feelings. There is a call for conjugal honesty and openness. Secondly, joint parenthood is seen as bound up with the taking of 'joint' decisions, which are mutually agreed, and the occasional making of compromises. 'It's time for give and take, for understanding each other's needs'. (First Three Years HVA, 1979). 'Talk to each other about your feelings, try to give mutual support, help each other to prepare for these new and unknown roles'. (The 'Father-to-Be' 1981: 6). Partners are expected to show insight and empathy towards one another. Some of the issues couples are now advised to consider jointly include: decisions about contraception and family size; decisions about father's attendance at the birth and place of birth; and decisions about the method of feeding to be adopted (but not when to wean or what brand of milk to use). They are also variously invited to talk over mutual fears and anxieties in pregnancy and about becoming a parent; the type of birth preferred what they 'consider to be acceptable behaviour for children' (What Parents Should Know - HEC); and post-natal love-making. Only one booklet 'The Father-to-be' mentions talking over the mother's returning to work and the division of child care when both parents are working.

In some instances, when fathers are asked to take part in decision-making, direct appeals are made to them to line up with and see that wives' follow current medical or 'expert' opinion. This is particularly evident in some of the literature on breast-feeding and in one commercial leaflet breast-feeding is promoted to fathers in terms of it enhancing wives' sexuality. (It's Your Baby Too - Wyeth Nutrition).

... some men look upon their wife's breasts as their 'domain'. They relish the sensual pleasures of feeling, stroking and sucking them - they are a part of making love. They do not take kindly to a little infant coming in on the act - and who can blame them. Fathers who feel this way may be cheered by some research that has shown that women who breast feed their babies are more likely to resume sexual activity quicker than their bottle feeding sisters.

Also, many women find that they are more sexually active during the time they are breast feeding than at any other time in their lives.

(It's Your Baby Too - Wyeth Nutrition leaflet)

There is here an image of the sex-starved husband just longing to initiate sexual relations at the first possible opportunity. This echoes the theme of men's animal appetites alluded to in Chapter 6 in the discussion of husbands' needs during pregnancy. There is also some implicit suggestion that fathers should act as medical or experts' allies. Cleary and Shepperdson (1981a) suggest that fathers may be more susceptible to medical recommendations, being more likely to be 'blank sheets' in the handling of infants and that they may provide a more amenable and acquiescent audience for doctors than mothers.

The model of the confiding, companionate couple has been most vividly presented in relation to pregnancy and delivery (more so than in the enactment of parenthood). Indeed, the greatest proportion of advice and reference directed to fathers seems to focus either on the time of expectant fatherhood or the time of birth. This is reflected in the only Family Doctor booklet designed specifically for fathers ('The

Father-to-Be') and would suggest that there is both more recognition of and consensus about men's role at these 'phase-specific' times. As well as being told to be supportive, to share confidences and to assist with 'heavier' housework, fathers-to-be are being increasingly encouraged to take direct preparatory steps for their coming role. In two recent sources they are advised to attend ante-natal or parentcraft classes; to learn about the female reproductive system; to find out the circumstances in which they can or cannot remain for the birth, for example, during a forceps delivery; to investigate the hospital's use of and attitude to analgesia; to visit the ante-natal clinic or surgery at least once; to find out which position the mother is to be delivered in; to survey the hospital's regulations about visiting (fathers and children) and infant feeding routines; and to discover whether fathers can stay after the delivery (Father-to-Be 1981; Mother 1981). These directive prescriptions contrast sharply with the fuzzy notions of 'help' and 'support' cited in relation to infant care or household responsibility. In many ways, they focus entirely on the man's preparation for attending the birth and have a strictly practical and medical relevance.

The 'Father-to-Be' booklet gives a very thorough account of the expectant father's place in the medical context of the maternity hospital, even detailing where to stand and how to put on his gown and mask. It gives factual information about the likely physical progress of labour and delivery and at the same time gives clear guidance on the exact tasks husbands can perform to ease their wife's labour - or birth; and details ways they can assist her medical attendants. The father's role during a home delivery is also explained and some cultural myths about 'jugs of boiled water' effectively dismissed. Some of the advice

about how to pass the time during admission and labour is also very humane and realistic, telling husbands to bring magazines, books or games for long waits. The general impression given of the birth is a 'team affair', in which the father is an integral actor and during which he can make a unique contribution by his presence. However, as soon as his social role and the post-natal time are discussed he slips again into a secondary part where he is thought best fitted for the role of 'parental understudy'.

It may be possible to conclude that pregnancy and, to a greater degree, birth have now been popularly accepted as 'joint' enterprises, affording 'equal' participation, if couples so wish. This has not been transferred into the dictates on child rearing where the images are much more ambiguous and tend to revert to the differentiation of parents by gender and biology. The philosophy of joint parenthood as conveyed by the baby care literature is only a conceptual and moral context in which mothers contrive to raise their children but in consultation with their husbands.

11.3 Summary and Conclusions

Use of the material provided for parents was found to be casual and occasional and some fathers dismissed the validity or usefulness of these sources of knowledge altogether. Husbands put a great deal of trust in their wives to act both as informants as to how the pregnancy was progressing and as instructors in the basics of childcare and management. Wives were also repositories of information on pregnancy

and child rearing and had greater access to advice booklets and manuals. They were associated with 'ownership' and control of this material. When men did turn directly for guidance to the baby care literature they were frequently disappointed with the quality of the contents and dissatisfied with the infrequent, unreal and token references to fathers.

A review of some of the more widely available parentcraft literature confirmed that the volume of material directed to fathers has increased but contains many sex-typed and conservative images of husbands/fathers: especially in relation to domestic and infant care tasks. A more 'participant' view of pregnancy and birth now prevails and at least one publication is now aimed at guiding the father through pregnancy, labour and delivery.

However, it could be said that there are many failings in how fathers use the available services and information sources and in how the services and sources reach and represent husbands and fathers. The fathers themselves made some concrete suggestions about how the information sources might be improved - by eliminating platitudes and sexist or stereo-typical overtones; by directly 'speaking' to them and by providing relevant types of advice and facts, particularly in relation to the financial implications of parenthood. It is notable that all the booklets, although implicitly accepting the male provider role, omit to discuss how work and family demands might be best orchestrated. There is no awareness that these two areas of male experience might even be in conflict. There is no discussion of how men might negotiate time off either during pregnancy, at the time of confinement or in the post-natal period, or even indeed what rights

may exist for men in this sphere. There is no mention of the concept of paternity leave (with the exception of Mother and Baby magazine under the heading 'Working Girls'), even as an ideal and only very slight reference to maternity leave and benefits. The father's care of older children is never alluded to and this could well be influential in whether he attends the birth or engages in the care of the new infant. Indeed only first-time fathers are addressed, although this criticism also applies to how the material approaches motherhood (Graham and McKee, 1978b; Cleary and Shepperdson, 1981b).

With regard to distribution, fathers might be more attracted to make use of the baby care literature if it were made directly available to them. At present, distribution is tied to 'women-centred' places, clinics, surgeries, even chemists. However, it would be feasible to make appropriate material available at men's workplaces - perhaps offered through personnel departments and given out to those men who make 'leave-taking arrangements'. This would shift some of the responsibility away from mothers. It may well be that health care workers will also have to take additional and complementary steps to engage fathers' attention and to make services directly attractive and widely publicised. Again, it may not be enough to rely on wives' informing, motivating and enlisting husbands' co-operation and participation. Is it too far-fetched to envisage medical personnel going into male work settings and working men's clubs to promote the value of men's ante-natal involvement and participation in child health care? If the answer is yes, then we are a long way from the ideal of 'jointness' and even further away from the ideal of parental symmetry or equality.

CHAPTER 12

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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This final Chapter will be divided into four main parts. Firstly, there will be a review of theoretical issues raised and advanced by the thesis. Secondly, attention will be turned to the major empirical findings of the study subject to the original research aims. Thirdly, the significant methodological issues inherent in the project will be critically discussed and summarised. Lastly, the implications of the research for future work will be briefly addressed; and conclusions drawn as to the formulation of future research questions.

12.1 Theoretical Issues

The poverty of academic research work directly focussing on the role of fathers in family life and from a 'parent-centred' perspective has been demonstrated in Chapter 3. That deficit played a considerable part in the genesis of the present investigation, and it was notable that at the outset of the project British research on families tended to focus on mothers as family representatives or to involve the father only insofar as his presence or absence affected child development or the experience of mothering.

This tendency to exclude fathers was described in Chapter 3 as having a complex aetiology and a number of explanations were raised to account for the 'mother' emphasis in both research theory and practice.

Epistemological explanations were uncovered which suggest that many academic theories, particularly certain psychological and sociological theories, of men's and women's 'nature' and 'place', gave rise to a view of family relations where women are essentially nurturant and expressive and where men are essentially public-minded and instrumental. Theories of the family constructed around these assumptions of necessity directed attention away from men's private lives and towards their lives in the market place and in public affairs. Other explanations for the 'neglect' of fathers discussed in Chapter 3 relate to observations about the structure of social relations. In Western Societies maternal primacy in child-rearing is repeatedly observed and, moreover, is repeatedly applauded and encouraged both by society and by society's researchers. In other words, research theories are seen as encased within and supportive of a dominant social structure and morality. Research designs themselves and researchers' methodological conventions were also found to have inhibited inclusion of the father in much family research. Such charges range from the trivial - fathers being less accessible to household enquiries - to the more serious - researchers suffering from 'gender blindness'.

The review of the literature has played a useful part in synthesising why fathers were typically omitted from previous research investigations. It has also attempted to go further and to pinpoint factors which have contributed to an expansion of research on fathers within the last decade. Importantly, through posing these tandem questions, this particular project, its context, politics, methods, strengths and weaknesses have been illuminated. In the present study, involvement of fathers is shown to have sprung variously from questions posed by

feminist theories both about the quality and contours of motherhood and about women's inequality; to have been spawned by weaknesses found in previous empirical studies where mothers were asked about fathers; and to have originated from an observed tension between fieldwork reality - fathers' presence/power in households - and research design - fathers' accounts being disregarded as data.

In sum, this thesis contests theoretical assumptions that parenting is women's business only; that fatherhood is derivative of motherhood; that quality of nurturance is related to the frequency/quantity of task performance; that men's low public engagement in childcare reflects a lack of commitment to children; and that masculine personality, socialisation or motivation sufficiently explain the low salience of childcare to men. Furthermore, comparing the legendary, allegorical and historical evidence of Chapter 2 with the scientific literature of Chapter 3 there is evidence that 'father figures', male creation myths and rituals provide a recurrent and powerful cultural theme which sits uneasily beside the enfeebled research 'father' of our times. The theoretical challenge emerging from the present study is both to describe the power of fathers and patriarchy conceptually (McKee and O'Brien, 1982) and also empirically, as it is executed in everyday life. It is the kind of data provided by the present study which will inform the evolution of adequate theories.

12.2 Review of Findings

Through in-depth and repeated interviews with 13 fathers and their partners this study was designed to produce an ethnography of men's experiences of becoming and being a first time father. It was

influenced by a commitment to studying women's accounts of motherhood and similarly aimed to incorporate men's own meanings and experiences of fatherhood over a discrete period of time. The chronology of men's experiences proved powerful in shaping both their interpersonal accounts and the research format. Much emphasis was on the transition from non-parent to parent and in Chapter 5 details are given as to how men first anticipated fatherhood and the part they played (if any) in the decision to have a family. Great variations were found concerning when men first articulated an interest in having children, but commonly, the majority recognised that having children was a fundamental component of their adult life plan. The existence of a 'marital context' or identification of a marriageable partner or 'mother' figure seemed to establish or release the legitimacy of parenthood for men and there was little rehearsal of fatherhood roles within either boyhood or adolescence. Husbandhood and fatherhood appear to go together.

Interestingly there are only a few couples in the study who engaged in talking seriously about having children prior to marriage, which serves to underscore the presumed normality of having children for both men and women. Decisions about the timing of having their children caused much more conscious negotiation between these men and women and could lead to differences, with one partner ultimately overruling the other's wishes. Reasons for fathers not being 'ready' to start a family often revealed underlying beliefs about the conditions judged necessary for adequate childrearing. These could reflect on aspects of the man's perceived eligibility for fatherhood. Personal maturity, aptitude with children and material security all seemed to feature as determinants

as to whether men thought themselves fit to be a 'family man'.

Becoming a 'family man' was also bound up with notions such as an increased sense of a responsibility to provide for wives and babies. This could include treating jobs more seriously, restricting male networks and curtailing leisure interests.

Contrary to popular belief not all men reported that they especially wanted sons or attached more value to a first-born son, although those who preferred to have a son, did express a very instrumental view of children. They saw themselves as directly engaged in the future in gender-typed pursuits with their child. For example, men wanting sons envisaged flying kites, or racing motor cars, playing with model railways and cars and going fishing. Those wanting daughters were much more likely to stress the affective or relational aspects of parenthood, yearning to have daughters who resembled wives or substituted for non-existent sisters. Although wives were seen to want to produce sons for their husbands, husbands did not describe a symmetrical wish to produce daughters for their wives. More women thought their husbands desired and preferred a first-born son than there were husbands who admitted this preference.

During pregnancy, fathers typically kept their options open about how engrossed they intended to be in the nitty-gritty of childcare. On the one hand there was universal support for fathers to play a part in the direct care of the child, while on the other hand each father raised unique boundaries which could contain his own actual involvement. Men's breadwinning roles were cited as an explanation for the inhibition of substantial involvement. Such involvement was not read as necessarily

equal with that of wives but was subject to negotiation. It was unusual for fathers to have any direct experience of caring for or indeed handling young babies prior to the birth of their own child. The unfamiliarity with the care of small babies led to men often stressing negative expectations of the early months: for example, dirty nappies and sleepless nights formed critical parts of this vision.

The way that men experience the months before the birth has largely been ignored by social researchers, excepting where the expectant father displays gross or bizarre pregnancy symptoms, seeks out an alternative sexual relationship (extra-marital, or if single, outside the couplet) or engages in some other conspicuous or deviant behaviour. Chapter 6 makes the typical and ordinary experiences of expectant fathers public. It is commonly suggested for example, that men are at one remove from parenthood until the child is actually born. However, the case study material from the 13 fathers illustrates that things are more complex. While a small group of fathers did perceive pregnancy as 'nothing unusual' and described life carrying on much as before, a greater number identified pregnancy as the catalyst for major interpersonal and marital changes. Symbolically, men were drawn into the pregnant reality in a number of ways, ranging from changes in behaviour toward expectant wives through to private rituals involving naming the unborn child, attending to its quickening, or to preparing the infant's room, mastering the ante-natal care literature and getting directly involved with wives in ante-natal care visits. Behaviour toward mothers as carriers of the unborn child could lead to an increased domestic commitment and/or restriction of the mothers' activities.

Changes in sexual orientation and practice were also noted and where a reduction in sexual activity was reported this could be due to men's inclinations as well as women's.

During pregnancy a number of men also found themselves plagued by particular anxieties about the safety and well being both of the unborn child and of their wives during labour. Fears of foetal abnormality were common. Men seldom, however, felt able to share this anxiety with wives and tended to adopt the strong, 'sturdy oak ideal', reassuring and allaying wives' fears. When compared with wives' accounts fear for maternal safety during childbirth seems to be greater among husbands. Although men saw a potential choice between mothers' and babies' lives women were less likely to identify birth as a time of risk for themselves. Many reasons were proffered for this in Chapter 6.

The practice of men attending childbirth has become commonplace in the last decade. Explanations for this trend are many and various. However, not least important are the dispositions and intentions of men themselves. Within the case study group the majority of fathers intended to attend the birth of their first child. Some were directly persuaded to do so by their wives and felt honour bound to see the birth as a joint undertaking. Ambivalence arose around issues of squeamishness, fear of seeing wives in pain and a dislike of medical routines. The new cultural imperative for men to attend childbirth presumes that the committed do and the uncommitted do not. It was hard for me to duck this assumption although the reality of what actually did happen during labour and delivery reveals that men themselves are very much at the mercy of medical and maternity practices.

Some of the fathers in this study who were most committed to attending failed in the event to do so, because of obstetric complications, while others who had been undecided found themselves sucked into the drama of birth and staying throughout. Consequently, it is dangerous to assume too much about the fact of birth attendance or to use it naively as an index of enlightened fatherhood.

Throughout the experience of attending birth men were highly dependent upon medical definitions of their role and the degree of involvement or marginality felt by a father at this time could be affected by the attitudes and behaviours of medical personnel. These organisational or institutional facets of the maternity hospital also impinged on men's early experiences with their babies and structured the extent of physical contact fathers had with their infants and their opportunity to engage in early caretaking tasks. There was considerable variation in how men reacted to the moment of birth and/or first sight of the infant. However, most often deepfelt emotion was expressed and in recounting the experience to the researcher many were at a loss for words. Again the baby's normality surfaced at this moment and overrode the issue of gender in the first instance. Some men felt that their presence at the birth forged a closer link between them and their wives and indeed did initiate a warm father-child relationship.

The intensity of these feelings was varied - as was men's ability to express them. The data suggests that the tenderness and depth of feeling triggered by childbirth for men has not yet been fully appreciated by midwives and maternity personnel. Hospital routines are not always best designed to incorporate husbands' needs at the time of birth and men would have appreciated steps being taken to make them

more welcome and central. This came down to a demand for basic provisions: such as chairs to sit in, refreshment facilities and privacy with wives. These findings have implications for hospital planners/administrators and practitioners alike, to make for a more humane incorporation of fathers into the labour ward.

Physical caretaking of the infant preoccupied a major part of the early phase of parenthood. Consequently, attention has typically focussed on measuring which parent does what at this time. Only a few studies have asked the father to audit this directly, so the present study makes a useful contribution in this respect alone. It also raises comparative data which will influence more widespread conclusions about modern parental roles. In addition, it is not always possible to determine to which tasks parents themselves attach a significance. Chapters 8 and 9 of the thesis attempted to extend our understanding of the issues of fathers' participation in child caretaking both by using measurements of conventional tasks and by exploring additional tasks, men's attitudes to tasks, subjective accounts for why hierarchies in the distribution of childcare arise and parental values more generally. Questions of 'who does what' have been set alongside questions about level of knowledge and interest in the baby, responsiveness to a crying or sick baby, child health care decision-making and role-swapping. This has led to development of a more sophisticated understanding of the context of early childrearing and shows how methodologically complex it is to aggregate father's involvement in the child's life a) at a discrete point in time and, even more importantly, b) over time.

The fathers in this study could not easily be classified as highly

participant or non-participant in any simple way. Instead, fathers were seen to make highly individualist and often idiosyncratic adjustments to parenthood, influenced by a mix of personal choice, circumstance, and babies' and wives' needs, perceived or real. Such adjustments were dynamic and complex and suggest that fathers receive a very open script concerning what is or is not appropriate behaviour. The clearest directive received by fathers seemed to relate to their abilities as economic providers. Thereafter, direct involvement in the infant's care was construed as optional, private and negotiable.

Wives also supported this viewpoint in the main, seeing it as an internal domestic issue determined by personal preferences, constraints and aptitudes. Non-participant fathers could be excused responsibility for direct care of the infant and reasons such as fathers' lack of skill or time were often taken as sufficient or legitimate by wives. However, there was considerable diversity not just among fathers about what they were prepared to do but also among mothers about how actively they encouraged or discouraged fathers to engage in tasks. For reasons of expediency alone, even in those cases where the mothers sought to recruit the fathers' direct involvement, couples often found themselves slipping into conventional patterns. It would seem that babies themselves are more active in establishing or triggering parental regimes than has ever been seriously considered. This was reflected in minor examples such as responding to a distressed baby and in major examples such as the establishment of bathing routines. Not all of these situations provide an equal opportunity for learning or practicing. Fathers could find themselves deskilled by default as well as by design.

From the present evidence it would appear that the 'moral' context of childcare and the father's disposition toward parenthood signifies more than 'who does what' on a practical basis. Couples in this study accepted at the outset the traditional structural divide between breadwinning and childrearing; and 'proper' fathers were expected to provide material security for the household. They were also expected to make an emotional commitment to parenthood, to display maturity, act responsibly and take an interest in the welfare of the child. This could lead to men engaging in practical child care but the extent and range of involvement remained ill-defined. Although the data does suggest some expansion of the father's role to the point where the distant, disinterested father is berated, fathers in carrying out their roles continue to have huge scope.

Structural limitations to the refinement or enlargement of the fathers' direct role in infant care were raised. However, there was surprisingly little indication of the men in this study pushing for changes in either their work routines or conditions of service. It could be argued from the present findings that, because fatherhood chiefly raises the subjective issues of responsibility and commitment for men rather than the practical issues about division of childcare labour, this allows it to remain a private and individual concern. Women entering the labour market do not pose a symmetrical 'problem' for at once the objective question of who will look after the children arises. This creates a public and collective issue. Men's entry into the domestic arena will only be a public concern if men themselves identify it as such or are encouraged by women to do so. Couples in this study seemed far from adopting this stance.

In Chapter 10, the tension between the public and private enactment of fatherhood duties and responsibilities was most acutely recorded. The earlier profile in Chapters 8 and 9 of men deeply engrossed in attending to sick and distressed babies contrasted sharply with men's accounts here of being ridiculed by peers for becoming and being a father. Similarly fathers' expressed competence and pride in handling their infants made a strange contrast with their reported inarticulateness or silence on the subject of babies. The focus for Chapter 10 was the social or public construction of fatherhood and included an appreciation of aspects of male socialisation, and norms of masculinity. The findings show that fathers generally found difficulty in identifying with or relying upon other fathers during the early months of parenthood. They felt unable to learn from each other either by imitation or by enquiry and most often men's primary networks were founded through organisational or institutional ties. Parenthood for men did not bring a massive upheaval in their performance of their jobs or indeed in their neighbourhood ties. In many cases, male networks were not just specialised against domestic/familial identities but also denigrated such identities. Fathers could serve as the butt of jokes - 'typical daddy jokes' and male workplaces and pubs were especially hostile and suspicious of familialism.

The low salience of the topic of babies had the effect of bolstering gender stereotypes and of supporting a traditional division of labour between men and women. Men seldom 'admitted' in male company that they shared a common bond of fatherhood and made no demands on their networks for practical or affective support as fathers. There were some exceptions and men at the same stage in the life-cycle were identified as more probable confidants if only theoretically.. If

fathers did discuss their babies. such conversations touched on the recreational or developmental aspects and did not involve practical help-seeking. These exchanges could be competitive or light-hearted.

The general issue of male self-disclosure was raised as a partial explanation for men's reported silence on babies. This was discussed in relation to its influence on the research process and responsiveness to a female interviewer. For at least a few of the fathers cross-gender talk about babies, parenthood was easier and more legitimate. If men are not talking to each other about their children or childcare and failing publically to define it as their business it is not surprising that modifications within households go by unremarked. It is also easier to appreciate why individual fathers are awarded such a generous brief. It would seem in short, that men are not held publically accountable to one another vis a vis direct participation in infant care. There are no checks and no censors.

The vague and often unclear messages men currently receive about the components of 'good' fathering are reviewed in the final chapter of the thesis. Chapter 11 firstly examined what steps men took to obtain advice and information about fatherhood. It showed that once again fathers were caught between being primary actors in their own right and secondary actors dependent on wives' access to material, reference to it and ownership of it. Just as wives were often seen to act as correspondents of the baby's affairs they were also portrayed as librarians, collating and collecting babycare literature and passing this to prospective fathers. Only two fathers energetically sought out material for themselves. Even when access was gained, the babycare

literature was largely found wanting. Patronising, banal stereotypes were identified and fathers were spoken about rather than addressed directly. A brief survey of some of the contemporary information sources by the author substantiated these observations of fathers. Conclusions were raised here about the need to reach fathers directly through their workplaces and to tailor the messages and take account of fathers' expressed needs. This section also raised implications for the training of health educators and other health professionals engaged in preparing couples for parenthood. Some of the contradictory assumptions about the value of 'shared parenthood' and primacy of the mother-child bond were identified and nicely illustrate the very complex and competing beliefs facing parents themselves.

12.3 Methodology

The present thesis has both gained and suffered from its close associations with another major piece of empirical work: the Motherhood Project. In Chapter 4 much detail was given as to how the study of fathers sprang from that work and was in a sense parasitical upon it. The Motherhood Project gains included: ready made sampling frame; identification of a research 'problem'; access to a research population; supportive colleagues throughout the data collection and cross-fertilisation of ideas; opportunities for research training and development; and importantly, the ability to incorporate wives' and husbands' accounts. The losses inherent in the association included: an initial dependence on the Motherhood Project questions and parameters; an imitation of time-sequencing of interviews; a restriction in the original pool of respondents; an over reliance on interview data without equivalent inclusion of observational material; competition over time and energy available for two concurrent projects; and prioritising of the 'paid'

research.

In retrospect, It would have added to the research to have included more fathers, to have stratified the research group and allowed for an appreciation of fathers who were unemployed, and families where there was a less conventional division of labour from the outset. It would also have enriched the investigation had more observational work been incorporated. Furthermore, more attention could have been devoted to understanding men's attachment to work and the exact constraints placed on men by their jobs. As was said in Chapter 4, at times the research suffered from an over-emphasis on fathers' 'mothering' behaviour.

The dependency of the research on in-depth interviewing of couples brings to the fore both strengths and weaknesses. In Chapter 4 it was shown that interviewing men, women and couples raised very peculiar issues - where the interviewer found herself being alerted to her own gender and to varying degrees of empathy, defensiveness, involvement and detachment. As a single person interviewer in the study of fathers, there was no standardising instrument and the interviewer herself played the role of data collector, analyst and raconteur. Non-directive interviewing allows the interviewer to adopt the role of filer and, although Chapter 4 has tried to delineate the contours of this process, the exact techniques of interpretation remain hidden from the audience. The influence of the interviewer on her respondents is also inconspicuous and both her version of what happened and the respondents' version of what happened have to be taken on trust. The way that accounts are constructed for the interviewer and later reconstructed by the inter-

viewer — combined with the forcefulness of the chronology of the story should not be underestimated. The author is aware that her analysis is shaped by personal biography and convention as well as by the findings but is comforted by the ability to find 'surprises' in the data as well as affirmation of earlier assumptions. Dedicated attention to detail and rigour and a close 'ear' for nuances have ensured that the data remains dominant — despite the lack of objective checks and scrutineers.

The analysis of the data has led to some important methodological conclusions concerning measurement of 'involved' fatherhood.

Particularly, it was suggested that the range of tasks measured by social surveys is too limited, that the tendency to aggregate tasks is misleading, and that the age of the infant under review needs standardization. By allowing fathers themselves to define meanings and subjective experiences, the questions about practical childcare take a reduced significance. Care should be used in making any interpretation about social change or indeed parental devotion on these measures alone.

In addition, the data on men talking about babies and men's networks suggested that much may be learnt about fatherhood and masculinity through observations of men at work and at play. The present study presumed an association between home and fatherhood and saw it as the natural site for the research. Innovative projects, involving observations, interviews of men in their workplaces could reveal much about how organisations are structured to exclude men's domestic commitments and ensure men retain their distance from the day-to-day concerns of childcare and marriage.

Chapter 4 has also made a contribution to the body of literature amassing on naturalistic accounts of the research process. In particular it has attempted to insert a reflexive account into the thesis which both highlights steps in its initial development and final production. This attempts to identify the rules for producing a 'naturalistic' account and the process is likened to the psychodynamic, therapeutic tradition where 'secrets in the family' are spilled.

In developing the case study approach the thesis has highlighted the advantages of handling data on a small group of respondents where each individual case can be analysed closely and in depth. Profound familiarity with cases can be established and the research is 'individual centred', and not variable centred. The reader can begin to 'know' the individuals, and to view the world from their perspective. What is less easy is to relate cases to each other and to make meaningful patterns. Each observation or statement can have a weightiness of its own and it is sometimes difficult to display this fairly. For example, in the current analysis - one is dogged by the omissions as well as buoyed up by the inclusions. However, in the uncharted domain of fatherhood research this depth of enquiry cannot be faulted for every question spawns a further question and only at later stage of research development will it be necessary to tighten up associations and global understandings.

12.4 Research Implications and Formulation of Future Research

This study has inherent within it many implications for further work. On the one level it will add to the substantive literature on family organisation, and on another it will be influential in theoretical

debates about what constitutes the 'family'. By exposing the private face of fatherhood and the tensions between men's domestic and other more public identities it will also add to the development of theories about gender, especially the construction of masculinity. . . . The empirical findings about what fathers do and what they feel compelled to do also relate to wider concerns about whether gender roles are changing and whether the place of the 'family' in society is changing. Explanations may be found in studies such as this for why the pressure for equalisation of opportunities has come largely from women and for why men seem complacent about the status quo. Implicit within the data scope is offered for continuing work in developing theories about parental power relationships in general and about patriarchy in particular and for appreciating the complex processes of marital decision-making and negotiation. Seemingly mundane or banal findings about how nappy-changing routines are established and distributed between parents reflect more widely on grander issues such as the nature of marriage, 'proper parenting', organisational practices and gender stereotypes. Family theorists can and should exploit such detailed empirical work.

The results from the study also suggest that in future work it will be necessary to avoid massive generalisations about fathers and they illustrate the need to develop models and concepts which reflect the heterogeneity of fathers. The case study fathers have unique biographies and, in many instances, are as different from each other as they are from mothers. The data begs the expansion of research which compares fathers with other fathers and stops using mothers as the yardstick of 'proper' or adequate parenting. Furthermore, it is clear from the thesis that an adequate appreciation of fatherhood needs to

embrace fathers' 'non'-nurturant activities as well as the nurturant. Economic provisioning and notions of responsibility need to be incorporated into any investigation in the future.

The emphasis on a very specific phase in the life-cycle of families (early parenthood) by this study should also not be ignored. The findings can be related to other work on families at this time of transition and will contribute to the literature on life-events, interpersonal change, and family process. Currently such work is sparse.

Methodologically the thesis also has important implications for the way family research can be conducted. It stresses the importance in future of directly canvassing the views of individual family members and of making sense of separate accounts. It breaks with the tradition of 'mother' equalling 'family'. By gathering separate accounts discrepancies, contradictions and tensions in perceptions of the 'family' and in its reality can emerge. This approach also allows more attention to be diverted to the conceptualization and construction of the 'family' by its members. Much more work following this methodology is required - where households are 'deconstructed'.

In addition the study highlights some techniques of data collection and analysis which should influence future enquiries into the personal domain. Although there was a reliance on reports of what people do there was also attention to observational material and an attempt to cross-check men's accounts internally. Development of measures such as the 'value-attitude map' and attention to a longitudinal perspective

gave the researcher the occasion to treat each individual father as his own control. Typically researchers in the past have provided snap-shots of families at a discrete point in time. The present study builds a model which should encourage and inform further work with the same families over time.

The research detailed here also has a relevance to policy makers and service providers as well as to academic theorists and researchers. The data on men's experiences of maternity and child health services and of health education provision reveal many areas of neglect, omission and stereotyping. In particular, maternity hospitals need to find ways of properly incorporating expectant fathers into the occasion of birth, by providing proper waiting facilities, refreshments, offering explanations of events, and by facilitating father-child contact. The health education literature needs to address some of the existing and imperfect assumptions about what men need or want to know and to begin to speak to men directly.

The findings also challenge the assumptions made by child health workers, including health visitors, about the way child health decisions are taken, especially the assumptions about the peripherality of fathers. This observation has implications for the training of child health care personnel.

Finally, some discrete research initiatives are identified which could follow on from the present investigation:

- a) A case study of parents of older children - following the same approach to the present study, but including more observational methods.

- b) An in-depth study of couples who have chosen not to have children. - including interview and observational methods.
- c) A large-scale survey drawn by random sample of first-time parents, where fathers and mothers are questioned. To provide base-line data for comparative purposes and to include both cross-sectional and longitudinal dimensions.
- d) A qualitative study of parents living in non-nuclear households, to reflect the diversity of parenthood practices and arrangements.
- e) A study of health professionals' attitudes to fathers especially those of health visitors, midwives, General Practitioners and Child Health doctors. Some observational work to be included: for example of clinic visits.
- f) A study of households where fathers and mothers have swapped roles or where fathers are outside the labour market. This should employ qualitative methods - both interviews, diaries and observations.
- g) A review of contemporary health education materials and initiatives on fatherhood and preparation for parenthood. To include an analysis of schools' Child Care courses.

Footnotes

1. I am grateful to Sheila Kitzinger's 'Women as Mothers' for first drawing my attention to this. See Kitzinger, page 97.
2. Interestingly, amongst the Azande, illegitimate boys could be especially vulnerable, the life of illegitimate girls being spared or preserved in order that their marriage spears would be later obtained. Evans-Pritchards did not uncover any instances of infanticide but admits that this could be because he neglected to ask about it !
3. This work is usefully reviewed by Einzig (1980). It is too complex to go into all the versions of 'male uterus envy' here.
4. As an example she cites the Legend of St. Agatha whose breasts are cut off by her enemies and carried on a plate.
5. Commenting on the attribution of female characteristics and qualities to an essentially 'male God' Sara Maitland says:

... the Old Testament prophets made themselves at home with a god who will "pant and cry out like a woman in labour" and of St. Anselm she notes that he could comfortably write "In our Mother Christ we grow and develop". She quotes Pope John Paul I as saying publicly that "God is Father but even more God is Mother". This is a language which confounds mothers and fathers, and allows fathers to also be mothers.

See S Maitland 'The Church's One Foundation - Men', Guardian Women, Guardian: 8 July 1981. We also think here of the usage of the word 'father' in contemporary times to describe an initiating or high-ranking act, individual or context - for example, 'the founding fathers, the 'father' of the union chapel 'the father of nations'.
6. Evans-Pritchard notes that there was no regularity of speech in this matter but this was a general mode of expression. A similar occasion from a man's mother's clan would be met by the claim 'it is we who carried you', and suggests a mutuality of meaning and status between 'begetting and carrying'.

7. Some pre-industrial cultures turn this relationship on its head - the 'biological' father has little prestige and authority - while the 'social' father carries clout. This further demonstrates the flexibility of these meanings of fatherhood.
8. For example, Apollo leaves Asclepius in the care of a centaur but instructs that he is to be educated in medicine and science.
9. These characters come variously from Shakespeare's: *The Tempest*; *The Merchant of Venice*; *King Lear* and *the Taming of the Shrew*. See The Oxford Shakespeare: Complete Works (1957)
10. See Stringberg, A "The Father" In The Father, Miss Julie and the Ghost Sonata (1976).
11. It is Metis who provides the potion administered to Cronus which makes him revive the five dead children - he vomits and they return to life.
12. Oedipus was born with a curse and traditions vary in their explanation of this. Some believe that it was predicted in an oracle that Oedipus would kill his father, others claim that Laius was forbidden to have children, but defied this and did so despite being told that such disobedience would lead to his being killed and supplanted by his son. Still others saw Oedipus as a divine punishment for the earlier homosexuality of Laius. When Oedipus was born Laius banished him to the mountains and manacled him to a stone by piercing his ankles with a strap (Oedipus means 'swell foot' and this is the origin of his name). He was cared for by Corinthian shepherds and eventually taken to the King Polybus who reared him as his son. In his manhood he left the court of Polybus and while he was journeying he met his father Laius, King of the Thebans, who was unknown to him on the road. A quarrel broke out and Oedipus killed Laius. He continued on his way and eventually was invited to be King of the Thebans after exterminating a sphinx which had dominated the Thebans. He married Iocaste, Laius' widow, not knowing her to be his mother. Eventually the truth of their relationship emerged (traditions vary as to how) and Oedipus on learning that he was his father's assassin and his mother's lover put out his own eyes with Iocaste's brooch and left Thebes in voluntary exile. Iocaste committed suicide. See Larousse World Mythology.
13. The hostility between Jacob and Reuben emerges more dramatically in Thomas Mann's re-telling of this Egyptian myth. See Thomas Mann (1968) Joseph and His Brothers Volume I The Tales of Jacob. London: Sphere Books.

14. The powerful imagery of a father sacrificing a son resounds in the verses below (Genesis 22: 9-10):

And they came to the place which God had told him of and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son, and him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

15. As well as the hostility of fathers and sons, brotherly conflict pervades this same literature. However, this is outside the scope of this chapter. Completing his quote on fathers and sons, Mann says:

... But often again - and nobody knows what they were at first - they are brothers, like Set and Osiris, Cain and Abel, Shem and Ham. And it may be that there are threes forming both pairs in the flesh: the father-son pair on one hand, the brother pair on the other.

(Mann, 1968 op.cit. 165)

16. This is an over-simplification of the Oedipus complex - but there is not space to do justice to a full expansion of this here. It is presented only as one possible way of 'seeing' father-son hostility. For a fuller account and a polemical view of the 'oedipal drama' see P. Chesler About Men (1978 : 203-210.)

17. Examples of where father-son hostility is openly connected with sexual rivalry can be found in the stories of Jacob and Reuben; Laius and Oedipus and Theseus and Hippolytus. In Mann's (1968) retelling of the tale of Jacob and Reuben, Reuben seduces Bilhah, Jacob's concubine. Jacob is enraged and punishes Reuben dreadfully, calling him Ham, the shame of his sire and refers to Behemoth a shameless hippopotamus, who in Egyptian mythology kills its father and mates with its mother. By having intercourse with his father's sexual partner, Reuben is likened to having slept with his own 'mother'.

18. In a review of the writings of French moral philosophers Flandrin (1979) notes that children were suspected of evil intentions towards their parents, in view of obtaining the family inheritance. Moralists berate children for wishing for their parents' death. See Flandrin (1979: 152).

19. Further examples of son's charity towards fathers can be found in Greek, Roman and Egyptian myths. Horus avenges his father Osiris by fighting Seth, emasculating him and losing one of his own eyes (this he later offers Osiris).
20. See the fratricide of Cain and Abel, the selling of Joseph by his brothers - Genesis 4:4-20 and Genesis 37:3-4.
21. It seems that for long periods of history as written down in legend, religion and folklore the uneven treatment of children by parents was a common pattern (although regional variations are noted). Flandrin (1979) suggests that this pattern of inequality began to give way from the sixteenth century onwards in France due to the influence of Catholic and Protestant reformers. He provides evidence from the writings of moral philosophers which shows favouritism to be increasingly condemned. While outside the scope of this chapter, it would be interesting to identify the cultural conditions under which favouritism flourishes or wanes and what affects this process.
22. Lot's daughters are impregnated by him, they 'lie' with him after making him drink wine. This story is open to several interpretations as to whether Lot was the abuser or whether he was abused by his daughters seduction. Myrrha was cursed by Aphrodite and forced to commit incest with Theias. On the twelfth night she was discovered and Theias threatened to kill her. She fled and the gods took pity on her and turned her into the myrrh tree. Thyestes impregnated Pelopia his daughter disguised as a serpent and then persuaded her to marry Atreus his brother and enemy in an act of revenge.
23. See Jane Austen's 'Emma' and George Eliot's 'Middlemarch'.
24. It is not possible to discuss here the complex ways in which 'patriarchy' has been used and developed as a sociological concept. For useful reviews of its usage see Rowbotham (1979) and Barrett (1980).
25. See Shakespeare's The Tempest and King Lear; George Eliot's 'Silas Marner' and 'The Mill on the Floss' and Antonia White's 'Frost in May'.
26. Flandrin op. cit. notes that although paternal sovereignty was widespread in France of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were variations in its application and tenacity. For example, in Normandy fathers were never empowered to confer priveleges on their children at death,

while elsewhere this was automatic. Similarly, in some regions children could remain subject to the father's authority until the age of sixty (Brittany), while in others they were released from his authority at 25 (Poitou). In written law provinces, paternal authority was 'felt' by children as long as the father lived. They could only be emancipated if they obtained exalted positions.

27. Butler makes a direct connection between paternal repression and biblical precepts and attributes nineteenth century parent-child violence to the rise of Puritanism. Butler's account of fatherhood is very important and he makes some interesting observations about the different behaviour of fathers across epochs. He also comments on the different portrayals of fatherhood in the novels of Fielding, Smollett, Sheridan and Austen. See S. Butler (1960) 'The Way of All Flesh' page 23.
28. For a detailed account of the changes in legal statutes affecting fathers' rights and duties and the rights of children see Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969-73) and N. Lowe (1982).

CHAPTER 3

Footnotes

1. Peterson et al, reviewing publications on parental attitudes and child adjustment, noted that between 1929 and 1956 at least 109 concerned mothers while only 12 dealt with father-child relationships. LeMasters surveyed a number of eminent research reports about the parental role and found that 2,295 mothers were questioned but not one father. Levine, commenting on both the work of family sociologists and psychologists (such as Sears, Blood and Wolfe; Goode), found that all these major researchers talked only to mothers despite using terms such as 'husband' and 'parent' in their project titles.
2. The article referred to by Walters and Walters, is one by M E Lamb (1976) They note that 'little new knowledge' (p.808) emerged from this proliferation of work. However, they do not address the important questions of why so much material has emerged, what this might mean, or why new knowledge has not been generated. These would seem to be fundamental questions. For a detailed bibliography (organised by topic) of the expanding work on fathers see Price-Bonham (1976).
3. The previous chapter has argued that much of Judeo-Christianity has been 'father centred', in that God the father has been presented as all-powerful. However, the 'power of the mother' is more specifically associated with Catholicism and many of the artistic images and forms that Howells alludes to have emerged from this tradition. Two prevailing and therefore contradictory images can be associated with Christianity.
4. Richman and Goldthorp fail to note just how recent is this tendency for maternal rights to champion. Their claims therefore are ahistorical and only pertinent to the current legislative position of mothers. A more comprehensive account of the historical shift from paternal to maternal rights is contained in Chapter 2.
5. Pleck associates 'exchange theory' with the work of Scanzoni and Scanzoni (1976) and 'resource theory' with the work of Blood and Wolfe (1960).
6. The studies reviewed by Taconis include those by: Hoggart (1957); Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter (1956); Mays (1956); Kerr (1958); and Levy (1943).
7. Rapaport et al (1977) express scepticism about this explanation, noting: 'research workers in other areas of

investigation have found it possible to alter their working hours to suit the demands of the situation' (1977: 184). They prefer some of the earlier explanations, about the power of the myths of motherhood.

8. This is not to say that women have been given an equal 'hearing' with men more generally-- indeed it has been well noted that women's experiences have been 'hidden from history'. But rather to say that it is as mothers and wives that they have most been studied - women workers have traditionally been ignored. Again, this reinforces tying the 'feminine category' to biology.
9. Similar criticisms about how social scientific questions have always favoured the male perspective have been raised by Oakley (1974). She uses the term 'androcentric' to describe the sociological tendency to put 'the male role first' (Oakley, 1974: 182). Bigner (1979) also comments on the impact of patriarchal imagery on the questions social scientists devise.
10. Philosophers of science would describe the emergence of interest in fathers in various ways which can only be crudely summarised here:
 - a) Popper: his thesis would suggest that the facts of fathering controvert/falsify the universality of 'maternal' theories of parenting. If they cannot be accommodated then the theory of 'mothering' should be rejected in favour of a theory of 'parenting' or 'the family' embracing a wider domain of facts. This can be described as 'methodological rationalism'. Popper is probably closest to the positivist tradition of psychology, but even here the falsification is necessary to provoke change. Theory does not emerge and then look for its domain of facts, because science exists to economise on the theories needed to explain the factual world.
 - b) Kuhn: this thesis suggests that the research paradigm of 'mother-as-parent' promotes the effort to force 'factual' material into maternal theories. The increasing difficulties encountered with badly explained 'facts' are a symptom of healthy paradigm breakdown. But, without the efforts of researchers to broaden the paradigm's domain (for example, by including the study of fathers) it would never break down. Research on fathers therefore is needed to show where the 'matricentric' paradigm is deficient - and to eventually purposely reject it.

- c) Lakatos and Musgrave - this work extends that of Kuhn, clarifying the fuzzy notion of paradigm - the concept they use is one of 'research programmes'. The thesis suggests that 'research programmes' have a core: for example, the core notion of the 'family', which is surrounded by belts of subsidiary theories as to how it works, all based on the notion that the 'family' is analyzable. In this view one would see the researchers' concern with 'facts' about fathers as 'mothers' and theories of fathering as 'mothering' as part of a normal exploration of the scope of 'maternal' or 'matricentric' theories of parenting, within the context of 'family' research. If 'maternal' theories are found lacking to explain fathering, then this should be met by auxiliary theories of 'fathering' - but still adhering to the core of 'family' theory.

11. An example of this value position - that the study of fatherhood and the demonstration that fathers are important childrearsers is good and beneficial - is expressed by Lamb and Lamb (1976). Commenting on the past 'devaluation' of fatherhood they say:

... the demonstration that fathers are important in the eyes of their infants and that they have an important role to play in the socialisation of their children from infancy onwards, would not only enhance the self-esteem of fathers, but might in so doing strengthen their commitment to their marital and parent roles.

... the American family is urgently in need of such strengthening.

(Lamb and Lamb, 1976)

Such comments not only take up a value stance on the role of fathers but also imply an adherence to certain beliefs about the 'nuclear family' and its function in society.

12. 'Developmentalists' have often debated whether or not these 'transitions' have the properties of a 'crisis' (see Duvall, 1957; Hill and Rodgers, 1964; Rossi, 1968). There is not space to develop this debate here, but for a clear review of this literature see Smith Russell (1974).

13. These labels are used as broad organising devices and for clarification of 'general' traditions. Like all labels they betray the complexity of much of the work done which straddles

the two categories. Some research may not fit neatly into a single category and this must be borne in mind. Indeed, researchers themselves may disagree about where their research is placed.

14. The methods used to elicit this information are diverse, sometimes involving direct questioning and sometimes using play and projective techniques, or batteries of tests.
15. Women's 'mothering' or 'nurturance' has also been given an exaggerated importance, the assumption being that 'nurturance' is women's most important contribution to childrearing. However, women as mothers contribute in other ways to the child's development: in ways that are not associated with caretaking or nurturance. The model of infant development through direct nurturance is too limiting for women and for men. The economic roles of men and women, their intellectual contributions to childrearing, the provision of external stimulation for children, all may be essential components for early as well as later development. Furthermore, the competent nurturing parent may be the one least suited to assisting the child's development at other periods in the life-cycle. There is a danger of trapping fathers into the 'straight jacket concept of nurturance' from which mothers have been trying to break free.
16. There are no national statistics on this as yet in Britain. Estimates quoted range from 80% attending (quoted by Brian Jackson of Bristol) to 43% wanting to attend (Oakley, 1979 - figures derived from maternal reports). Richards (1980) quotes rough estimates of between 60% and 80% for first births.
17. This argument is highly condensed here and is more fully elaborated in an article I have written elsewhere: see McKee, 1982. Very many studies have tried to differentiate fathers into 'styles of fathering' - 'traditional' usually refers to those who are uninvolved. The terms referring to those with a greater involvement include: 'modified traditionalist' 'neo-feminist' (McKee, 1982) and 'developmental' (Elder, 1949).

CHAPTER 4

Footnotes

1. The decision to present an account of my research methods in this naturalistic way and as process has been influenced by the pioneering work of Colin Bell and Howard Newby (1977); of Colin Bell and Sol Encel (1978) and latterly, of Helen Roberts (1981) (See also Bell and Roberts, 1984). I am also grateful to Colin Bell for discussion about the direction and content of this chapter. In writing this account I have also tried to be reflexive and have quickly identified some of the guidelines or rules which seem to have shaped my writing. At this stage, these are just crude thoughts, the kind of 'hidden agenda' of the 'new' methodology as I see it.

Rules of Writing a 'Naturalistic' Account.

1. Get the story straight - that is, orderly and readable.
2. Keep it clean - avoid personal recriminations and besmirching of individuals, especially the powerful.
3. Keep it soft - do not reveal too much pain.
4. Make it respectable/passable - that is, accept that there are hidden rules of conformity, especially if it is for a PhD - this is called being 'upfront - but not too upfront.
5. Make it sociological - that is, include conventional concerns from a regular 'methods' approach, but do more.
6. Bring 'yourself' into the research process - that is, use the first person and be honest about your limitations.

Reading this list of implicit dictates makes one want to refer to naturalism in the writing of research accounts - as a kind of 'evangelical method'. Themes of honesty and integrity, and forgiveness and reflection all come to the fore. Research crooks are ferretted out of their warrens and shamed into self-revelation and self-blame. All good noble stuff and in keeping with the Protestant ethic and the spirit of Weberism, even Maoism but flawed. Just as research itself is imperfect, so are researchers and so are researchers' accounts - down to how many layers of varnish we want to and can strip away. For myself writing this account I am always standing back watching myself construct the account, watching what influences my inclusions and omissions, watching my linkages and schemas of thought. Some areas I feel I have captured with more acute honesty than others and have 'truthfully' reproduced my awareness of the sequence of events. In other areas, I can see the censor working, the censor who protects others and the censor who by protecting others protects myself. I also see myself sifting and discarding experiences, filing memories into 'acceptable' and 'relevant' and 'unacceptable' and 'trivial' categories - but the criteria are vague and

hard to articulate. Sometimes something is rejected because it has been said better by somebody else, sometimes it is incorporated because it supports the conclusions of somebody else. There are allegedly no prescriptions for writing naturalistic accounts, yet a form evolves which is recognisable, patterned and governed. For my own intellectual development one of the next valuable tasks would be to unpick the stitches from my account and try to make sense of my 'making sense' of my research history. This too seems an integral part of the research process. (Is there ever an end point? Where are the ethnomethodologists?) A later thought about the style of the naturalistic account is its resemblance to a 'therapy' situation. Oakley talks about the secrets of interviewing being like the secrets of 'marriage' - while it strikes me that the 'secrets' of the entire research process are like 'secrets in the family'. The attempt to faithfully reproduce 'the research as process' is remarkably similar to the work of those family therapists who have applied a phenomenological approach to mental illness (such as Laing and Esterson, 1970) where the emphasis is 'at the one and same time' on making sense of 'each person in the family' 'the relations between persons in the family' and 'the family itself as a social system'. If we substitute the word researcher for 'person', and research process for 'family' - we come near to some of the expectations of a reflexive sociological methodology. Note too how this analogy goes further: in the family therapy mode there is an attempt to expose 'disjunctive attributions and perspectives' of family members to create a version of the totality - while in the sociological mode, tandem accounts and perspectives are often sought where projects have been collaborative. Something in the writing of my version of the Motherhood Project led me to reread Laing's 'Self and Others' and to the following passage:

One person investigating the experience of another can be directly aware only of his (sic. her) experience of the other. He (sic. she) cannot have direct awareness of the other's experience of the 'same' world. He (sic. she) cannot see through the other's eyes and cannot hear through the other's ears. The only true voyage, Proust once remarked, would be not to travel through a hundred different lands with the same pair of eyes, but to see the same land through a hundred different pairs of eyes.

(Laing, 1961: 28)

I include this passage as a caution to myself and a post-script to the whole research exercise.

CHAPTER 5

Footnotes

1. This refers to Evan Crowley (British Rail Guard) and to Bill Elliott (Lithographer). Both described the desire to have children as ever-present and taken-for-granted. Evan Crowley comments 'I've always wanted a family like, so'. He could find no additional words to explain his orientation - and did not make an explicit tie-up between husbandhood and parenthood.

2. Derek Morris describes talking aloud about family plans to his prospective wife. Here, both were in the early thirties at the time of marriage and this may have been a factor affecting their considerations of when to have children.

3. Chris Hill and Simon Shaw both gave serious consideration to the idea of having children only after conception had occurred. In the former case, conception was not actively intended but the couple were not using contraceptives and were leaving their options open. Jenny Hill was reported as being more favourably disposed toward having children. As for the Shaws, the pregnancy was a total mistake and unintended. It came as a shock and plans about having children had to be quickly formulated and crystallized. Sally Shaw was described as always wanting children at some eventual stage. It is noteworthy that Simon Shaw and Chris Hill were both middle-class, highly educated men and older. These variables may prove revealing in a larger study.

4. The complex family intentions of the 13 couples can be depicted in tabular form as follows:

Family Intentions of the Case Study Group

	By Husband and Wife	By Husband Only	By Wife Only
Pregnancy Actively Intended	9	Evan Crowley	Jean Hooper
Pregnancy Passively Intended	The Hills		
Pregnancy Unintended	The Shaws	Tommy Hooper	Susan Crowley

5. The 'inferential' nature of paternity was never alluded to by any of the men interviewed. All accepted, or at least reported with confidence, that they had fathered this baby. It is hard to imagine, even where/or if doubts existed, how an interviewer could encourage a man to disclose such feelings.

6. Busfield (1974) gives a very full and plausible account of why such beliefs about size and gender composition have emerged in our culture. She suggests that two contradictory sets of ideas exist - 'large families are a better family environment' and it is 'easier to stretch limited resources over a small number of children' - which together create the norm of 2-4 children. As for gender composition, she suggests that beliefs exist about the complementariness of the sexes and this encourages the desire for 'one of each'. Stephen Banks captures the contradictory beliefs that result in having a family of two:

Two is as much as, in a sense, I want to damage my life by, 'cos I do think it takes something out of us not just financially but emotionally and two seems satisfactory, although I'd be the first to admit that, I don't think you have a full family unit, not a family unit, but you don't have a full group of people somehow with only 2 children.

7. The four fathers not conforming to the 'ideal' family pattern were: Bill Elliott - who preferred one child; Terry Shapiro who favoured three; and Derek Morris and Simon Shaw who could not fix an exact number. A number of fathers also shifted their preferred family sizes over time and at second and subsequent interviews had modified their hopes in the light of having the first baby. Evan Crowley had for example changed his mind from wanting two to one.

8. It is possible to compare husbands' and wives' desires for a boy/girl by constructing the following table. Each couple is examined to see if there is agreement or disagreement. The table demonstrates the potential complexity of couples' preferences.

Comparing Husbands' and Wives' Desires For a Son or Daughter

Fathers' Desires Mothers' Desires	BOY	GIRL	NOT FIXED	ALL
Boy	3 Hoopers Mitchells Shapiros	1 Banks	1 Hills	5
Girl	3 Shaws Andersons Crowleys	1 Morrises	0	4
Not Fixed	1 Elliotts	2 Prices Kerrs	1 Owens	4
All	7	4	2	13

CHAPTER 6

Footnotes

1. Joel Richman and W Goldthorp have identified 'dominant pregnancy careers along 4 axes'. They similarly isolate the response that pregnancy is 'nothing unusual'. However, in discriminating between different responses they use the father's level of involvement in the pregnancy as a discriminator; this study relies on the perceived impact of Pregnancy to distinguish between men's responses. The other 3 responses described by Richman and Goldthorp - are the father who 'denies' the existence of the pregnancy', the father who 'claims total identification with the foetus' and the father who develops special bonds with the foetus. The former two responses are not typical of the case study group under review. These two categories are typifications and must not disguise the unique and complex experiences of individual couples. They equal a short hand or summary.
2. This term is borrowed from Macy, C. and Falkner, F. Pregnancy and Birth, Harper and Row 1979.
3. Richman, J and Goldthorp W O op cit.
4. For a development of the concept of pregnancy as a 'symbol of femininity' see Graham, H. The Social Image of Pregnancy: Pregnancy as Spirit Possession. Sociological Review, 24, 291-308, 1976.
5. In the case study group only two of the pregnancies were unexpected and unplanned. Both men described their experiences as 'Pregnancy as Upheaval'. The others involved varying degrees of 'hoping' or 'trying' for a family. The pregnancies were relatively unproblematic, two wives had threatened miscarriages, and one had a kidney infection and one was hospitalized two weeks before delivery as the baby was failing to grow. One of the expectant fathers where a miscarriage was threatened fell into the 'pregnancy as normal group' while the other portrayed his experiences as 'pregnancy as upheaval'.
6. For one couple, Simon and Sally Shaw, the pregnancy meant finding a job and a more suitable home. Up until this time Simon was a student and their accommodation was a first floor flat.
7. One father, Chris Hill - a librarian, had upheld a strong zero population growth belief and for many years was anti-children.

8. Simon and Sally Shaw were 'pioneer' parents amongst their peer group, whereas other couples were the 'last' of their friends to have a family.

9. The one father, Tommy Hooper, who learned about the pregnancy after it was confirmed reacted very negatively to the news. His wife told him in bed and his immediate reaction was to shout. His and her accounts of whether they were planning a family conflict. Tommy had been hoping to wait for a year or two, while his wife described herself as 'trying for a baby'. This pattern of men being involved at the pre-confirmatory stage of pregnancy may be more typical where pregnancies are a) planned, b) where couples feel jointly about their desires for a family, c) in married conceptions, and d) where marriages are stable, e) where communication between partners is open.

10. This point has been made by a number of observers - for example see Macy, C and Falkner, F op cit.

11. Richman, J and Goldthorp W O op cit. make the point that although 'Men's pregnancy careers are primarily opaque' .. they .. 'are still capable of producing equivalent attachment to the child-to-be'. They also say and this is supported by the current data that "Many fathers attempt to create a 'special relationship' with their unborn child". p.165.

12. For this case study group the pet names used include: two Bungy's; two Horace's, one Fidget, Squidge, The Lump and Young 'Un.

13. It is interesting that both these fathers Keith Anderson, teacher and Evan Crowley, British Rail Guard, fall into the 'pregnancy as usual' group.

14. H.Graham op cit, p302 points out that some wives may react to this protectiveness of husbands in a way that is self indulgent and exploitative. She says 'Pregnancy ... offers the individual a similar opportunity to capitalise on her distress'. It provides the individual with a method of manipulating members of her social network, particularly husbands.' However, she later argues that woman's powers for manipulation are only a fake, a facade and that in larger societal terms, the cultural definition of 'pregnancy as femininity' undermines woman's power and ultimately 'substantiates the notions of maleness and femaleness as two distinct, hierarchically ordered categories'. Bound up with the notion of 'men as protectors' there may also be an image of pregnancy as a time of helplessness, of girlishness infancy, as a time of passivity or

dependency. There may also be some adherence to the concept of 'pregnancy as illness'.

15. The attempts of men to restrict their wives household activities are not dissimilar to the 'maternal restrictions' or 'couvade' of some simpler societies, they are less extreme, less public and less formalized - but often with the same 'magico-protective' intent. (Richman and Goldthorp op cit.)
16. See Hartman, A. & Nicolay R C, 1966 Sexually Deviant Behaviour in Expectant Fathers in Shiloh A. (ed.) Studies in Human Sexual Behaviour: The American Scene; Charles C Thomas: Springfield, Illinois 1970.
17. I am not denying that some men do construe the reduced sexual activity in pregnancy as a denial or loss of their conjugal rights, nor am I asserting that men do not seek alternative gratification, either through extra marital affairs or more deviant forms of expression. I am simply suggesting that this single mode is a 'typification' - only one of a number of possible responses and interpretations, and reliant on a highly conventional or traditional vision of male and female sexuality. For these thoughts I am grateful to Alan Gross in his paper 'The Male Role and Heterosexual Behaviour' Jrn of Social Issues, Vol.34, No. 1, 1978. Although he does not discuss sex in pregnancy, he highlights some cultural assumptions about men and sex. Another influential paper on this is that by Scully, D and Bart, P, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Orifice, where the authors show how gynaecology text books have consistently ignored recent findings on female sexuality and promote an image of man the sexual protagonist and animal.
18. These findings have been included in an earlier paper called "Fathers and Childbirth: Just Hold My Hand", in Health Visitor, 1980 Vol.53.
19. The fear of foetal abnormality and concern with perfection has also been observed in simpler societies. Paige and Paige in their account of cross-cultural birth practices show that in some societies the 'brideprice' is not realized if the baby should have any defect, even a birth mark can lower the social and therefore economic value of the child in these societies. In our own society - the emphasis on 'normality' is more a comment about the social prestige of a 'normal child'. In a personal communication Maggie O'Brien comments that the focus on normality may be a symptom of:
 - "a) advanced capitalist ideology of the perfect human being

b) in contradiction - peoples mystical ideas about medicine in general. Fantasy still rules".

Other explanations could be that to fear abnormality is a rational response and taking cognizance of the statistical probability of handicap, that much of ante-natal care is organized as a prevention of handicap; that pregnant women are continually held responsible for their foetal environments by the media, health educators and society in general - told not to smoke etc, and finally that to anticipate the likelihood of abnormality is part of the 'psychological work' which would help if death/handicap did occur (see Macy C and Falkner F op cit.)

CHAPTER 7

Footnotes

1. Some of the material in this chapter was published in a paper with this title. See McKee (1980)
2. The three fathers here are Simon Shaw, Evan Crowley and Stephen Banks.
3. The five fathers who had only a vague idea of what to expect include: Bill Elliott; Terry Shapiro; Evan Crowley; Pete Mitchell and Chris Hill.
4. The eight fathers who gained information from television were: Tommy Hooper; Evan Crowley; Nigel Owens; Pete Mitchell; Derek Morris; Stephen Banks; Ralph Price and Keith Anderson.
5. Joel Richman (1982: 101) describes fathers in the labour ward as both being 'a stranger and marginal'. He goes on to say that the father is in a 'status gap' and has not undergone any rites of incorporation into the medical institution. Certainly his comments that many fathers serve as 'an extra with no predetermined part in the script' (1982: 102) is accurate for the present sample.
6. Evan Crowley and Stephen Banks
7. Chris Hill and Simon Shaw
8. Derek Morris - baby born breech/forceps
Ralph Price - baby born Caesarian section
9. Angela Brown (1982) in her study of medical and lay accounts of fathers' experiences of childbirth notes that doctors in her study poorly appreciated the negative effects that removal of the father could have. She argues in fact that the hospital staff can play an active and important part in encouraging the father's birth attendance and in explaining the process of events to the father. She too describes men who intended to be present but found themselves excluded through a mix of circumstances.

CHAPTER 10

Footnotes.

1. Several recent studies have tried to grapple with these issues of the relationship between men's work roles and family roles. See Hughs, et al, 1980: 76-78; Hood and Golden, 1979; Liljestrom et al, 1975: 54-62. Also an important article by Lein suggests that men have few social supports for their family roles and that they have qualitatively different social support networks from women (Lein, 1979).
2. In the interview before birth, expectant fathers were asked to describe how they felt talking about pregnancy to others and how they felt about telling the news of the pregnancy to others, particularly colleagues/mates. This material is dealt with in Chapter 6 and the findings do correspond with and support those presented here.
3. It is interesting when comparing these findings on 'men talking babies' with material on 'mothers talking babies' that the men's comments dwell primarily on the legitimacy of the topic and incidentally reveal insights about their friendship and network supports. While for mothers, the findings reveal more about network patterns and supports with comments on the legitimacy of 'baby talk' being far less prominent. At this stage, it is difficult to determine whether this discrepancy results from the interviewer's emphasis and preliminary assumptions or whether it is an independent feature of men and women's differential experiences of parenthood. A further study would need to be aware of this and to treat the whole area with caution and self-awareness. The interviewer has uncovered one blatant bias in her own approach which a future study would have to amend - she asked both men and women if they thought men were generally interested in babies - but asked neither if they thought women to be generally interested in babies. This issue of hidden assumptions about family roles and gender differences is dealt with more fully in Chapters 2 and 3.
4. The occupational, educational, social class and network characteristics of these two fathers are highly differentiated as can be seen. What draws them together are the inhibitions both feel in talking about babies and fatherhood (especially to other men). For one, there is the 'pull of the male clique' and the upholding of 'masculine' norms. For the other, there is an avowal to marital and familial privacy and the upholding of 'professional' norms. The end result is the same - the containment and segregation of home, work and leisure roles.

5. It is possible to speculate that these professional norms are peculiarly 'masculine' but that in a patriarchal society they also guide and dictate women's working relationships and values. More detailed research is needed on this whole area of how home and work lives are integrated or segregated. Studies using observational and anthropological skills could prove especially useful and insightful. Studies of men at work have tended to concentrate on their instrumental tasks and functions rather than on their affective or interpersonal ties. Likewise, women as workers have suffered firstly, from a total neglect and secondly and alternatively from the emphasis on their interpersonal milieu. What is needed is a more complete documentation of the impact and inter-relationship between both spheres, for both sexes.
6. It must be continually emphasised that the mothers and fathers in this case study group were following a conventional division of roles, none of the couples had swapped roles and only one couple made an attempt at role-sharing. All the fathers adopted a primary breadwinning or provider role (one student father was seeking full-time work) in early parenthood and all the mothers embraced a primary nurturant or caretaking role. Any differences observed within the couples' performance of childcare, value positions and ideals were confined within this framework. What is needed is a larger study of fathers where more structural diversity can be observed. It would be interesting to see if the argument about the segregation of sex roles would hold where men adopt a full-time caretaker role. If fathers were engaged primarily in childcare - would they seek help, advice, support from other parents (mothers or fathers) in the same way that mothers do? Would they continue to be isolated in their parenthood role and would communications with others be similarly debarred?
7. Tommy Hooper illustrates how the home context and the presence of the baby itself can affect conversations and interactions. His feeling is that women more than men, are likely to be together collectively in the company of the baby. He captures the situation below:

... I mean if Jean's friends come down here, girl friends I mean, the conversations will naturally get on to Lucy 'cos she's there walking around. She's the star attraction isn't she? Doing her little walkabouts and her little tricks. I suppose it soon gets onto Lucy and the photographs come out and everything else ... But I think in their own home where she's about, I suppose the subject's the baby. But I suppose if you're outside I don't suppose the subject crops up, unless it's actually Jean

walking down the town pushing
Lucy in the pushchair and she meets
up with someone else who's got a
baby and you know, it's the usual,
'how's she getting on?' and then
they start.

Again illustrating the isolation of men from babies Ralph Price says:

... I think women tend to talk
about them more 'cos they're
probably in the situation where
they'll meet another mother and
the children'll be there so I think
they do tend to talk about the children
whereas men don't.

8. This study is not able to make any hard and fast conclusions about the impact of social class, occupational or educational variables as the numbers involved are too small. Its aim is to suggest and explore areas that could warrant a larger and more quantitative search.
9. Fathers admitted to feeling 'pride' for their babies and one of the common ways of expressing this was through talk about the baby's developmental progress. Fathers often had no yardstick by which to compare their own baby directly and either consulted parentcraft manuals for information or relied on their wives' reports of other babies. Some confessed that their initial expectations about the baby's likely progress were grossly inaccurate. One father, Ralph Price, expected his baby to crawl at four months.
10. A number of the case study fathers and researchers alike, identify this as the father's key and unique contribution to family life. For example see Lamb, 1976, where there is some suggestion that 'fathers are more fun to interact with'. Again this theme is developed in Lamb, 1979, where he says 'the average response to play with fathers was significantly more positive than to play with mothers.'
11. The theme of the father as playmate was developed both in the chapters 5 and 8 concerning men's anticipation of fatherhood and fathers participation in infant care.
12. The fathers in the case study group also reported enjoying a number of activities that were home-based and not necessarily traditionally 'masculine' - such as wine-making, jam-making, making toys, beer-making, do-it-yourself and home improvements, gardening. However, these activities contrast with the others

in that they are individual pursuits and do not necessarily beg a group or network affiliation..

13. Some fathers did find that they had less time to pursue their leisure pursuits or keep up network ties due to pressures of fatherhood - often there was less money available and time was also limited. However the point is that fatherhood does not necessarily inhibit men's leisure ties. It is interesting to note that the conflict between men's family roles and leisure roles was often more keenly felt by mothers than fathers themselves. Mothers sometimes resented that fathers gave their weekends to these activities instead of to their families. It is not clear if these conflicts preceded the birth of the baby, were initiated by the baby, or exaggerated by the presence of the baby. This area needs more detailed investigation.
14. This study, its complement 'The First Months of Motherhood' and a number of others, suggest that parenthood has a devastating effect on women's occupational networks. Where women give up employment, they sacrifice their existing institutional ties and must establish networks that are compatible with the new occupation of infant care-taking. This usually results in mothers being highly dependent on neighbourhood and community ties and of women turning to other mothers doing the same job. Fathers suffer no similar disruption in their networks, nor are they faced with the same kinds of occupational needs.
15. In contrast, many mothers in 'the motherhood study' reported forming close bonds with their own mothers in particular, through pregnancy and motherhood. Mothers also often sought direct guidance and help from their own families. Of the case study group, seven wives described being able to consult and confide in their mothers about the task of mothering and of having direct and positive support from their mothers. Women also described learning and exploring the maternal role with their sisters and sisters-in-law and parenthood could affect the degree of familial interdependence and contact.
16. The hostility and potential viciousness of all male contexts is made acutely apparent in Whitehead's descriptions of male pub culture in Herefordshire where the ethos of virility, masculinity and control of women were central to many exchanges. Men were essentially sexist in their depiction of wives. wives and had to be seen to be powerful and dominant in their marital relationships. See Whitehead, 1976.
17. This account is drawn from the 'First Months of Motherhood Study' and was elicited during an interview with a second-time mother and father. See Graham and McKee, 1980. This particular father was very confident about his right to be

involved in infant care and felt very secure about his masculine identity. He played rugby, was very burly and assertive in his personality. He was part of an established male clique but did not feel pressured to accept the group norms. Instead he felt able to establish a non-traditional approach to childcare without any fear of emasculation. He felt disdain for men who were uninvolved in their families.

18. See Whitehead, 1976, for an excellent account of the way 'Sexual Antagonisms' are fostered by men in the milieu of the pub. Men had to be seen to be controlling their wives and to have a tight hold on authority. These observations have helped my understanding of my data on the clash between a view of women as sexual partners and women as mothers.
19. See Komarovsky, 1962. The impact of marriage on male networks was often most dramatic where there was a fairly established 'male clique' and where direct conflict was faced between members of the clique and the wife. In the case study group Tommy Hooper certainly felt caught between the demands of his male friends and his partner. He found it difficult to accept the constraints of marriage and family responsibilities and for a while separated from his wife to mix with his male cronies and have an uninterrupted social life.
20. Komarovsky, 1962: Also this point is made by Martin Richards (Richards, 1980). One of the case study fathers, Derek Morris observed that grandfathers did not talk about or reflect on their experiences with their grandchildren. This comment fits with Komarovsky's findings also, where she concluded that grandfathers played a smaller part in family lives than grandmothers. She says '... relatively few older men appear to be intimately involved in the lives of their married children' Komarovsky, 1962: 257; and later '... the older men are relatively isolated in the kinship structure.'
21. Chapter 4 deals with this in more detail and suggests that 'men's trained incapacity to share' has a considerable impact on the use and success of interviews with men.
22. One father, Evan Crowley, contradicted these general findings. In his job he found it easy to confide in the older men about fairly intimate matters, especially domestic concerns. (This was in his job as a British Rail Guard/ later he became a car components factory worker/ and later an exhaust fitter). He also felt less inhibited if the company was exclusively male. In general he was unable to participate in 'all female conversations' and his response to these situations was to 'cut out of the room'. What is not clear from the limited

scope of this study is whether the ability to show emotions at all is class-related, whether the ability to show emotions in all-male or cross-gender situations is class-related and whether the tendency of men to find women confidants has any class basis. One might assume that working class male cultures would be least likely to encourage the trading of confidences and the display of emotion, and that middle class culture would be more tolerant of mutuality and self-disclosure. The two cases of Evan Crowley and Stephen Banks directly contradict this - this highly complex area needs further untangling.

CHAPTER 11.

Footnotes.

1. Here I am only referring to their use and exposure to material directly relating to parenthood and with a 'serious' content. The impact of comedy programmes or other oblique images, although undoubtedly influential, are excluded from direct analysis.

2. I picked up all the available literature on pregnancy, child-birth or childrearing at the local health centre ante-natal clinic. The available leaflets or booklets were as follows:-

Father-to-Be	B.M.A. 1981
You and Your Baby - Part 1	B.M.A. 1981
You and Your Baby - Part 2	B.M.A. 1977
Now You're a Family	HEC in association with MIND
When You are Pregnant	HEC
Answering a Child's Questions	HEC
Breast Feeding	National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare
The Best Way to Feed Your Baby	HEC in association with the National Childbirth Trust Feeding Promotion Group
Pregnancy - What you need to know	HEC
How to Make Growing Up Child's Play	Wyeth Nutrition
Your Children Need You	HEC
Now I am One Year Old	HEC
A Guide for the Nursing Mother and Her Baby	National Dairy Council
New Baby	Health Visitors' Assoc. 1981
First Three Years	Health Visitors' Assoc. 1979
It's Your Baby Too: Advice for Fathers	Wyeth Nutrition

3. This point is also made by Graham (1979) in her review of child health policies.

4. This pamphlet claims that 'Advice and useful suggestions from the Health Visitors' Association have been incorporated into these sections.'

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