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**BECOMING A FATHER:
A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE
ON THE FORGOTTEN PARENT**

Michael J. Diamond

The man who does not believe in miracles surely makes it certain that he will never take part in one. — William Blake

In this article, I shall attempt to provide an integrative psychoanalytic framework for becoming a father. I shall begin by briefly discussing the general neglect of the father during pregnancy and the early stages of parenting as well as evidence suggestive of the unique contributions made by fathers of the newborn. The next section considers the psychodynamic basis of the male's motivation for fatherhood. The concluding section examines the specific stages of prospective fatherhood from a psychoanalytic perspective. Psychoanalytic and developmental literature is reviewed and integrated throughout with empirical findings, case observations, and personal experience.

THE FORGOTTEN PARENT

Several writers have recently called attention to the neglect of the father during the early stages of parenting. Burlingham (1973) argued for the end of comparative disregard of the preoedipal father in psychoanalytic writings, while Ross (1982b) has adumbrated on the father as the "forgotten parent" in psychoanalytic literature. Burlingham's (1973) seminal paper invited her colleagues to investigate the psychodynamics of fatherhood, particularly the father's fantasies between impregnation and birth and during the first weeks of his infant's life; his hopes and expectations concerning the child's growth and development; his jealousies of the mother's preoccupa-

tion with the infant; the arousal of his own feminine attitudes; and the impact of these attitudes on his latent memories concerning the relationship to his own father. Nonetheless, as Ross (1982a) said, ". . . the parental ambitions of the boy and man, their urges to create life, have generally remained linked to maternal, womanly ambitions and prerogatives. . . . It is almost, one senses, as if to be a parent one must be a woman" (p. 20).

Psychoanalysts have by no means been the sole perpetrators of this neglect. Lamb (1976) referred to the "unwitting contribution" made by social scientists toward the devaluation of the father's role; he subsequently (Lamb, 1984) advocated additional empirical study on the effects of increased paternal involvement. He discussed the tendency to infer that mothers are more important than fathers and thus alone deserving of investigation because they are the primary caretakers. Societal factors obviously play an important role in sustaining the belief that fathers are rather inconsequential, particularly when childrearing and socialization are widely considered the "duty" of the mothers.¹

This "devaluation" notion is partially substantiated by Shapiro's (1985) review of the parenthood literature, only five percent of which is reportedly devoted to the experience of fatherhood. From his more sociologically oriented perspective, Shapiro highlights the lack of attention paid to the father's internal experience. Paradoxically, as the act of becoming a father evolves to a state of greater involvement in the birth experience, so too the needs of the expectant father expand, and thus more than ever, require the clear and sensitive attention of the man himself, along with his family and culture. Shapiro argues that in spite of cultural pressures to be more involved in pregnancy and birthing, the male's thoughts, emotions, and conflicts continue to be ignored—a predicament Shapiro considers to be a "cultural double-bind." His thesis concerning the disregard of the expectant father's internal reality is well taken when one considers the implications of changing expectations with respect to the father's presence at his child's birth. Indeed, most fathers have not had a male model for this changing cultural norm. In addition, they have had little time to adjust to the internal conflicts evoked by being present during a situation (i.e., parturition) requiring the considerable passivity of a background supporter and, consequently, have not learned to master the situational anxiety in other than what are

inappropriate masculine ways of taking charge. Perhaps the experience of fatherhood itself serves for many men as a "playground" or laboratory where such learning can take place.

Jessner, Weigert, and Foy (1970) presented the prevailing cultural stereotype of becoming a father according to the phallic achievement of the boastful, beaming father making the maturational transition from a youth to an adult with first fatherhood. Such stereotypes, although inadequate, do set the stage for contrasting motherhood with fatherhood and eventually discerning the unique contribution made by fathers. As Jessner et al. stated, "Fatherliness is humanized by a new emphasis on participation, but if it is seen as identical with motherliness instead of complementary to it, there is distortion of the authentic paternal role" (p. 232).

Unlike expectant motherhood, expectant fatherhood cannot be described in terms of its biological immediacy with its more continuous, visceral knowing. As with adoptive parents, descriptions of the father's experience must rely on its experiential components, such as hope, appropriation, and responsibility (Jessner et al., 1970). As Benedek (1970) stated, the expectant father's relationship to the child is directed more by hope than by hormonal stimulation, psychobiology, and drive. The father must experience the impelling psychophysiological events of gestation, quickening, fetal growth, parturition and lactation in a second-hand, yet typically highly affective manner.

Benedek (1970) posited a "psychobiology" to fatherhood based upon survival instincts, the derivatives of which produce the characterologic quality of fatherliness. Not surprisingly, the father is considered further removed from instinctual roots than is the mother. Benedek also attempted to show that fatherhood (i.e., the male's role in procreation) has instinctual roots beyond the drive organization of mating behavior. She believed these roots included both his function as a provider and a capacity to develop fatherliness ties that render his relationship to his children a mutual, developmental experience. She goes on to hypothesize a trait termed "genuine fatherliness" that is felt to be an instinctually rooted character-trend enabling the father to act toward his children with immediate empathic responsiveness. Greenberg and Morris's (1974) observation of the "engrossment" fathers show toward their newborn offers partial support for Benedek's provocative idea. They found that this engrossment went

beyond involvement to include a sense of absorption, preoccupation, and interest in the infant that enabled the father to feel enlarged (i.e., with an increased sense of self-esteem and familial worth). This bond is viewed as an innate potential of fathers, released by early contact with the infant.

Other psychologists, both from a psychoanalytic and a developmental-psychology perspective, have presented evidence supporting the view that fathers make unique and important contributions to the development of their infants' personalities, while revealing characteristics often considered to lie only within the purview of mothers. For example, Pruett (1983) carried out a clinical study that focused on both the development of infants *primarily* raised by their fathers and on the fathers doing the raising. Fathers were found to achieve a "biorhythmic synchrony" with their infants, a kind of empathic nurturing similar to that displayed by mothers in the primary role. These fathers responded to their infants by an active and encompassing incorporation into their psychic lives and structures—a process Pruett considered to go beyond the engrossment exhibited by fathers in more supplementary or peripheral roles. Abelin (1975) had previously studied the earliest role of the more supplementary father as he facilitated his child's exploratory and early phallic attitudes, his child's disentanglement from the regressive symbiotic tie with the mother, and his child's experience of early triangulation. Yogman (1984) more recently demonstrated the unique contributions made by fathers in their interactions with young infants. In contrast to mothers, competent fathers are more likely to develop a heightened, arousing, and playful relationship with their infants while providing a more novel and complex environment. Finally, Lamb (1976) summarized the literature demonstrating the importance of the father-infant relationship on the child's development and, not surprisingly, concluded that the *quality* of this relationship is far more important and influential than is the mere physical presence of the father.

MALE MOTIVATION FOR FATHERHOOD: A DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK

In view of the appreciable neglect of fatherhood, it comes as little surprise that there have been few psychoanalytic studies of the male wish for a child. Jacobson (1950) discussed this neglect of boys' pregnancy fantasies and wishes for a baby, and subsequently sketched

the infantile history of this wish in men. She also considered the resistance among male psychoanalysts to studying the male wish for a child—a situation that is only slowly changing some 35 years later. She postulated that this neglect among (primarily male) psychoanalysts was due to reaction formations against unconscious feminine wishes to grow children, and, at a deeper level, repressed envy of woman's reproductive functions.

Such reaction formations appear to bolster the phallic masculine position. It does appear that "the times they are a'changing," and psychoanalytic understanding has been gradually influenced by numerous societal changes, feminism, the increasing influence of a number of prominent female psychoanalysts, several important theoretical advances (e.g., the emphasis on object relational development in contrast to drive psychology), and, to some extent, psychological changes occurring among a new generation of male analysts seemingly less threatened by their androgynous characteristics. In surveying the literature, along with using my clinical observations of patients and insights gleaned from my personal psychoanalysis, I shall discuss the wishes for children among boys and men as they emerge throughout the developmental process. These wishes are separated for expository purposes and tend to overlap within the psychic reality of the would-be father. Most of these wishes tend to remain unconscious and accessible to consciousness indirectly and/or through the psychoanalytic process. Needless to say, becoming a father is highly overdetermined.

Infantile Wishes to Bear a Child to Master Preoedipal Conflicts

Freud (1909) first discussed the reproductive wishes of little boys in the case of little Hans and his pregnancy fantasies. As Freud said, "In phantasy, he was a mother and wanted children with whom he could repeat the endearments that he had experienced himself" (p. 93). Jacobson (1950) discussed the evolution of the pre-genital boy's wish to have a baby, reflecting his desire for active self-assertion and independence from the mother, along with mastery of his preoedipal conflicts. These earliest wishes are believed to develop through three stages wherein the active and passive baby fantasies of little boys and girls are similar, reflecting bisexual elements in the yearning for a baby. The earliest wish develops during the oral and anal phase and fantasies tend to be of pregnancy and delivery by the

oral incorporation and anal rebirth of the mother. For example, a child might fantasize eating up the breasts or whole body of the mother, only to restore her by reproducing her through the anus, mouth, or navel. The mother-baby enables the mother-son relationship to be reversed. These fantasies reflect the child's cloacal theories of birth wherein genital and excretory organs and functions are equated. The baby is equated with the breast, womb, intestines, or feces and such a primitive "theory" may remain alive in the unconscious, particularly of pregenitally fixed individuals. Brunswick (1940) viewed this wish as initially asexual, stemming from a normal and universal identification with the mother. The wish is passive in that it involves being "given" from her.

The next set of pre-genital wishes involve fantasies about the parental relationship and concepts of the primal scene. With early triangulation, these fantasies may involve the father impregnating the mother by defecating or urinating into her, or possibly that mother grows children by drinking father's urine, eating his feces, or part of his penis. Little Hans's "lump" theories evidence these wishes (Freud, 1909).

The final set of preoedipal wishes involve a shift toward the father of desires previously directed toward the mother. These then become a part of the boy's homosexual fantasies and feminine identifications (with mother) as his early passive pregnancy wishes shift from mother to father, and concomitantly, from her breast to his penis. Thus, the child may wish to incorporate the father's penis or feces and to reproduce him as a baby boy with whom the father-son relationship can be reversed. The "breast baby" now becomes a "penis baby."

Jacobson (1950), herself a pioneering ego psychologist, widened our understanding of these desires to have babies as something purposeful, age-specific, and adaptive and not simply as expressions of instinctual urges. The process of identification by incorporating and internalizing love objects in the form of images of one's caretakers thus sets the stage for the subsequent development of this wish. Jessner et al.'s (1970) description of the pre-genital parental attitudes displayed by little boys toward younger siblings and playmates suggests further this identification and accompanying wishes for a baby. These authors also have referred to the sublimation of such early infantile wishes as reflected in the creative endeavors of the artist; thus underscoring the parallel between procreation and creation.

Oedipal Wishes to Impregnate One's Mother

With the onset of the oedipal period, the baby fantasies of girls and boys take on different meanings and directions. This is ushered in by the discovery of the differences of the sexes and the ensuing castration conflict. As Jacobson (1950) describes it, the realization of their femininity intensifies wishes in girls for growing a baby in order to substitute for the supposedly lost penis. In boys, the discovery of the female genital mobilizes castration fears and affirms the boy's phallic identification with the father; consequently, active masculine drives to impregnate mother by sexual intercourse win out over homosexual feminine wishes. Thus, the boy has to sacrifice his wish to grow babies just as the girl must renounce her desire for a penis (Brunswick, 1940).

The term "negative Oedipus complex" refers to the ubiquitous erotic interest of the little boy in his father, stemming from his feminine identification. The little boy, however, must renounce his feminine pregnancy- and child-wishes and advance to the "wish to have a child from mother" (Jacobson, 1950). Such an advance is regarded as a prerequisite for the normal subsequent development of a man's desire for children and his future attitude toward his children. Jacobson (1950) notes how this successful advance is largely influenced by the threat of castration and the birth of a younger child during this period. Unresolved castration anxieties may surface in adulthood to inhibit fatherhood, create guilt and anxieties around dependency needs arising during parenthood, or create difficulties during pregnancy as the pregnant wife is experienced as dangerous, castrating, and frequently non-erotic. Similarly, the little boy's more defensive maternal identifications in response to the traumatic birth of a younger sibling must be renounced by adaptive reaction formations that strengthen the young boy's phallic masculine position. It is noteworthy to recall Jacobson's (1950) conjecture that so many adult male analysts of the day had become fixated at this stage in order to keep their envy of mother-infant nurturance repressed. It seems that maternal fantasies can and probably need to survive in the healthy male father, as they are alloyed with oedipal-level paternal wishes.

The successful resolution of the oedipal situation occurs as the boy identifies with his father, and in turn wishes to become like his father. Behind this more mature trend are typically deeper, more primitive strivings. Thus, post-oedipal wishes to become a father

enable the boy to achieve his goal of competition with his father—he can become a father. As Benedek (1970) suggests, the man who does father a child then becomes a link in the chain of generations between fathers and their children. While all men struggle with succeeding their fathers, some men are particularly fearful and thus inhibit or prevent their own fatherhood in order to keep from being exposed to their own repressed aggression toward their fathers. Others may adopt a negative oedipal position to protect themselves from this outcome.

*Sublimated Wishes Stemming from Envy or Awe
of Female Childbearing Capacity*

Envy can be a creative or a destructive experience. It so often serves as the bedrock for the healthy internalization (via identification) of the beloved maternal object. Ross (1982a) discussed male childbearing wishes as a kind of “identification with the aggressor” as the boy identifies with his active, producing mother. Thus, feminine maternal identification can no longer be considered as passive but, rather, Ross proposes that young boys experience it as achievement, power, and competition with the mother. Kubie (1974) stated that by fathering his wife’s child and identifying himself with the child and mother at once, the father can assuage his archaic desire to possess his mother’s breast (and the magical powers exclusive to women), thus “completing himself.” It would seem that the boy’s envy and awe of his mother (i.e., “womb envy”) is never completely renounced and when successfully sublimated, fosters healthy fatherliness. Healthy maternal undercurrents in the psychological identity of boys and men have begun to “come out of the closet” so to speak, and are visible in the folk heroes of boys and young men today.³ Erikson (1969) discussed Gandhi’s “sublimated motherhood” as integral to the “positive identity of a whole man.” One can wonder as to the likely ramifications of internalizing nurturing qualities for male children as their fathers share or take primary roles in childrearing.

That which can heal can also harm and, indeed, an intense envy of a woman’s ability to grow and produce children may render it particularly difficult for the boy/man to renounce or sublimate his wish to bear children. Defenses against such envy are developed during latency years and beyond in the form of protective reaction

formations. As described by Jacobson (1950), they become manifest in the male's absence of a longing for children until the approach of marriage. At the point of marriage, the wish for a child resurfaces among those men who have largely mastered this envy; those who haven't done so frequently turn out to be impotent or, if potent, narcissistically invested in their children and frequently competitive with their wives in terms of maternal care. As previously mentioned, creative work is normally the main channel for the sublimation of such feminine reproductive wishes in men.¹ Ross (1982a) further suggested that the man's wish for a son may further serve to "drain off homosexual libido."

Sublimated Wishes for Dependency

Dependency needs are usually in conflict with the ego aspirations of young men, and self-esteem consequently is lost when dependent tendencies are recognized. Exaggerated phallic masculine behavior serves to repress such tendencies which are associated with threatening feminine identifications. Benedek (1970) discussed the exacerbation of young men's dependency conflicts upon the threat of impending separations, such as during wartime. She noted that male narcissistic defenses increase in the attempt to conquer regressive-dependent tendencies and, frequently, lead to a conscious desire for procreation which reassures the male of his masculinity through "virility." Thus, consonant with his ego-ideal, the (young) man finds an acceptable way of mastering his (regressive) dependency needs and the birth rate goes up!

Wishes for dependency and conflicts engendered by such unacceptable wishes persist for many men throughout the life cycle. Wishes for children and actual procreation serve to reassure the male of his masculinity through an identification with his own father's "fatherliness" (i.e., nurturance) while elevating him above his fears by enabling him to reverse the dependent role (i.e., infant-parent) by caring for the more needy infant-child. Many of a man's urges to bear and nurture babies reflect his desire to draw the strengths and virtues from his own history of dependent relationships (Ross, 1982a). The importance of a man's relationship to the caretaking qualities of his own father cannot be underestimated. Ross (1982a) described it quite well:

Fatherhood may evoke a paternal love on a man's part which resonates with a productive identification with his own father, who now replaces his mother as the nurturing and creative figure to whom he can liken himself. Thus, an assumption of the father's role in reproduction and in relation to caretaking helps an adult man come to terms with his hitherto repressed and disquieting "maternal" desires. (p. 11)

I suspect that coming to terms with one's "maternal" desires represents for many men a move from what Fairbairn (1952) termed infantile to more mature dependency.

Generative Wishes to Continue the Self

Erikson (1963) used the term "generativity" to refer to the concern arising in adulthood for establishing and guiding the next generation. He viewed this as an essential stage on the psychosexual as well as psychosocial schedule. Of course the mere fact of wanting or even having children does not "achieve" generativity nor is this drive necessarily applied to one's own offspring. Benedek (1970), however, regarded the wish to survive or continue one's self through one's children as biologically founded in the instinctual drive for survival. She cited data showing increased birth rates during World War II to support the idea that departing fathers-to-be often left their pregnant wives reassured that their own lives would continue through their offspring. Various rites, religions, customs, and socioeconomic organizations suggest a universal desire to survive through children, particularly the child of one's own sex.

The male's wishes to continue the self through becoming a father may also reflect a more narcissistic component activated by the ending of a more carefree, relatively less-responsible period of life as marked by marriage and/or aging. These developmental markers may stir up fears of death and, in turn, reactivate wishes for omnipotence. These wishes can be gratified by having children in whom the father will survive. The almost universal preference for a male child (e.g., Benedek, 1970) may indicate this more narcissistic or omnipotent dimension. Interestingly, Benedek (1970) reports that the majority of pregnant mothers tend to prefer male children, undoubtedly stemming in part from an empathy for the expectant father's narcissistic needs. Such preferences may also reflect the operation of penis envy.

Wishes for "Primary Illusion"

Shor and Sanville (1978) coined the term "primary illusion" to refer to the powerful and oscillating images present in all human beings of the ultimate dream of simultaneous mutuality and autonomy. This "unquenchable wish to regain paradise" (p. 28), particularly as it refers to those occasions of good fusion occurring in infancy, inspires numerous drives for fulfillment and repair of imperfections. I believe such wishes play a significant role in the male's desire for children. Wishes to be unambivalently loved and admired are relegated to less-conscious levels of the psychic apparatus, particularly for males conflicted around dependency issues. Unconditional love has long since given way to more realistic appraisals and the ensuing conflicts of adolescent and young adult development. Jessner et al. (1970) suggest that on the verge of parenthood both spouses feel more intensely than at any previous phase of adulthood "that they can no longer find the way back" (p. 212), a feeling that creates a nostalgic yearning for a return to the mother's womb, or, in Shor and Sanville's term, a longing for the primary illusion. The prospects of parenthood promise the possibility of recapturing fusional love without sacrificing autonomy, an option doubly important for the prospective father. The anticipation of an infant's or young child's unambivalent admiration and love would seem to offer unlimited possibilities for repair among adult males so needy of gratifying their healthy symbiotic wishes. Recent clinical research provides support for this hypothesis. For example, Greenberg and Morris (1974) observed fathers' engrossment in their newborn while Pruett (1983) discovered biorhythmic synchrony, with its truly empathic nurturing, in the father-infant reciprocity.

Wishes to Expand the Self

Parenthood represents an opportunity to develop one's personality and human potentialities, both along the self- and object-relational lines of development. Sublimated wishes to bear children are frequently seen in the creative endeavors of the artist while adult longings to have children embody the desire to create (Jessner et al., 1970). Procreation itself epitomizes creation and, as such, furthers self-expansion. The expectant father coming to accept his burdens

and responsibilities, his sacrifices and curtailments of freedom, courageously "transcends the juvenile ideals of manliness" (Jessner et al., 1970, p. 216) and consequently advances both as an autonomous self and in relation to his beloved others. The adaptations of prospective and actual fathering, the evolving capacities for nurturing and caretaking visible during pregnancy, and the well-established reciprocal attachments of fathers to infants (Lamb, 1976; Pruett, 1983) evidence the importance of self-actualizing tendencies in fatherhood.

Wishes to Expand the Partnership by Increased Mutuality

Wishes for children arise in both healthy and troubled marriages (or significant partnerships), frequently based on wishes to repair, improve, or expand and develop the relationship. Jessner et al. (1970) discussed these wishes among men attempting to make up for the lack of a meaningful partnership with their wives. They noted cases of "addictions to pregnancy" among dissatisfied partners. It is axiomatic that "dyads become triads during times of crisis" and male fatherhood wishes indeed frequently surface during troubled times. However, such wishes occur also in healthy relationships where the male may seek to increase the mutuality with his partner, that is, expand and develop an already meaningful relationship. Jessner et al. (1970) addressed this in stating: "If unmanageable escalating anxieties do not alienate the parents from each other, they find in parenthood a deeper meaning to mutuality that fortifies trust in life" (p. 215). Unfortunately, there appears to be little in the psychoanalytic literature that bears on such healthy adult wishes for mutuality and reparation.

Reparative and Identification Wishes to Revitalize One's Own Parents

Conflicts around separation and individuation are never completely mastered and, in fact, tend to resurface during significant phases of adulthood. Marriage and commitment to a partner mark a significant rite of passage for the adult male as he further separates and individuates from his family of origin. Simultaneously, both his mother and father are aging, and unresolved separation-individuation issues are often poignantly re-experienced. Guilt is a not infrequent companion for the individuating boy and, as such, it is often

recapitulated during this period of adulthood. Like envy, guilt can inspire creative, healing, and prosocial as well as destructive, harmful, and antisocial tendencies. Reparative drives can take many forms and frequently serve to heal the pains of separation-individuation. The male's desire for a child may serve as a reparative wish, a desire to give to one's own father and/or mother the child that the individuating adult male can no longer be. Moreover, grandchildren revitalize their grandparents by providing numerous narcissistic gratifications and compensations for the failing powers of later life (Cath, 1982; Colarusso & Nemiroff, 1982). It seems likely that wished-for parental revitalization combines with reparative desires to lessen the prospective father's recognition of separation-individuation pains of later life. Finally, the father's wishes for children may signify his own wishes for such revitalization by virtue of his identification with his hopefully revitalized parents.

STAGES OF PROSPECTIVE FATHERHOOD

It is becoming well established that the importance of fathers begins quite early (e.g., Abelin, 1975; Lamb, 1976; Yogman, 1984) and that fathers' attachment and relationship to the infant begins long before conception and birth (e.g., Gurwitt, 1976; Herzog, 1982; Jarvis, 1962). Moreover, parenthood as a stage in the life cycle represents an important developmental step (Erikson, 1963; Jessner et al., 1970). Latent dispositions for parenthood become more manifest with pregnancy while the relationship between the prospective father and wife undergoes wide swings. Gurwitt (1976) discussed these changes in terms of: (1) a new level of relatedness reflecting reactions to specific physiological and emotional changes in the wife as pregnancy stages unfold; and (2) a reaction to the general fact and symbolism of pregnancy. First-time expectant parenthood also involves dealing with the transformation of a dyadic group into a triadic group as the entrance of a third person causes considerable realignment and, with it, many risks. These are realized to some extent during pregnancy, particularly as the prospective father re-installs himself into the oedipal constellation. As Jessner et al. (1970) put it: "To have a child is to know a new commitment to marriage and family and to recognize the newcomer as triangling the relationship between the couple" (p. 241).

Jacobson (1950) noted that unconscious equations of the expected baby with the prospective father's mother, father, or siblings often become revived and consequently serve as unconscious carriers of various narcissistic expectations or fears. Similarly, revived childhood memories often involve intrapsychic revision of and reconciliation with one's own parents. In Jacobson's (1950) words:

Man approaches the birth of children with all varieties of mature or infantile object-libidinous, and also highly narcissistic fantasies and conflicts. It is the actual birth of the child which enables him, if he is normal, gradually to eliminate disturbing infantile and narcissistic elements and to transform his fantasies into healthy paternal love relationships to his children. (p. 145)

Recent technological advances such as the sonogram (and amniocentesis), which "make real" the fetus for the father, may accelerate this process well before the actual birth of the child.

The male experience of pregnancy is quite different than that of the female with its stronger psychobiological cast. Herzog (1982) observed that men can, at least partially, *choose* how much they will be involved in the process and thus determine to what degree they will respond psychologically to physiological changes in their wives. Herzog (1982) found that: "Men who have already tended to be intimate with their spouses are more likely to participate fully in the experience of anticipatory fatherhood than are those men not involved in such intimacy" (p. 302).

The male indeed undergoes evolution as the experience of fatherhood changes. Studies concerning the continuous evolution of fatherhood are even rarer than is literature pertaining to becoming a father (Colarusso & Nemiroff, 1982). Nonetheless, there is data available on the stages of prospective fatherhood obtained mostly from fathers choosing to be present at their child's birth. Such fathers undoubtedly represent a highly selective group seemingly most accepting of the father role. This methodological caveat notwithstanding, I shall briefly review four major studies of fathers' experiences of pregnancy before presenting a discussion of the seven stages of prospective fatherhood.

McCorkel (1964), in an unpublished study reported by Jessner et al. (1970), demonstrated that pregnancy was differentially experienced according to the expectant father's orientation toward mar-

riage and fatherhood. He delineated three groups of prospective fathers: (1) those with a *romantic orientation* who evidenced a casual approach to parenthood marked by feelings of concern about new responsibilities which rendered fatherhood a maturational experience; (2) those with a *family orientation*, who accepted new responsibilities easily and considered pregnancy a gift – thus becoming closer with their wives; and (3) those with a *career orientation* who regarded fatherhood as a burden and, consequently, tended to deny transformations of their identity.

Gurwitt (1976) presented a case report on a young male analyst's reaction to the psychological currents before and throughout pregnancy. His descriptions of the primarily psychological phenomena in his male patient are discussed in terms of four periods (getting ready; conception, bridging, and the early months; mid-pregnancy; coming-to-terms). His findings are incorporated in the discussion of stages to follow.

Herzog (1982) studied 103 expectant fathers whose wives gave birth to premature infants. He found that the men could be divided into two groups: (1) the most attuned group of 35 men who were most in touch with their feelings and fantasies pertaining to the pregnancy; and (2) those 68 who were less ($n = 34$) and least ($n = 34$) well attuned and who seemed to act out what they were not able to remember or experience during pregnancy while manifesting less integrated aspects in all their urges. The quality (and quantity) of the conjugal relationship tended to predict which of the two groups the men would fall into; those more empathic with and invested in their wives tended to be more cognizant of their own feelings and the impending arrival of their first child. Similarly, he found a sequence of characteristic stages of expectant fatherhood that unfolded with greatest clarity among those more attuned fathers who participated in an "expanding mutual intimacy" with their wives. Interestingly, this ability seemed to be inversely related to the man's own state of "father hunger" (i.e., longing for his own psychological father). Individual differences were naturally discerned based on individual life experiences; thus, the meaning of pregnancy for each father is individual and idiosyncratic. Herzog's (1982) findings will be further considered in my discussion of stages.

Shapiro (1985) interviewed a number of fathers as to their experience of pregnancy and confirmed Jacobson's (1950) postulates con-

cerning the re-experiencing of childhood memories along with unresolved childhood problems. He also reported seven major fears surfacing among expectant fathers participating in the birth experience: (1) queasiness in the delivery room; (2) paternity concerns; (3) anxieties involving the ob-gyn establishment and hospital procedures; (4) losing one's spouse or child by death or ill-health; (5) being replaced by the infant; (6) increased responsibilities; and (7) existential issues pertaining to life and death.

In integrating the aforementioned literature with my own case observations and personal experience, I shall next propose a seven-stage sequence of prospective fatherhood. These specific stages will be discussed in terms of their chronological, behavioral, and psychodynamic vicissitudes. Relevant examples will be cited.

Stage One: Getting Ready

There seems to be a distinct period in which both husband and wife know that they will try to make a baby soon (Gurwitt, 1976; Herzog, 1982; Shapiro, 1985).⁵ The conscious components of this joint decision pertain to: (1) timing (particularly regarding ages of the prospective parents and spacing of children); (2) readiness (i.e., coordinated versus differential readiness of the two prospective parents); (3) finances; (4) career issues; (5) division of labor; and (6) childrearing ideologies (Shapiro, 1985). This period is in fact often recalled as a more "rational and controlled" phase than are those that follow (Herzog, 1982).

There is evidence that men often display an intensification of external and internal activities as part of the process of getting ready (Gurwitt, 1976). Similarly, there tends to be a strikingly different feeling when "having sex to make a baby" in comparison with "just having sex" (Herzog, 1982). Marked ambivalence is frequently apparent along with such male concerns as: embarking on something new and foreign; transient worries of being sterile or not having sufficient "stuff" to do it; a feeling of urgency to "get on with it" before it is too late; and numerous reality anxieties pertaining to financial and career matters. Gurwitt (1976) considered unresolved developmental issues that may surface during this period including: (1) fears of revenge due to the wished-for impregnation symbolizing a surpassing of one's own father; (2) possible regression to a passive

position and denial of one's own prominent masculine role; (3) fears of abandonment, entrapment, female seductiveness, and becoming overwhelmed by the power of women; and (4) raising of (covert) envy of the female's unique creative capacity, which is often manifest in anger toward women.

Stage Two: Conception

The stage in which conception occurs and is medically confirmed is typically experienced as a time of fullness and ecstasy; a period where the expectant father's characteristic affect is joy. Gurwitt (1976) examined the severe challenges to previously attained male equilibrium in describing the period of impregnation and conception as one that ". . . constitutes an important developmental challenge for the prospective father, which, . . . brings about internal upheaval and change" (p. 262). Some men become conflicted while most report an expansion of the wish to love and to be loved. Many men report substantial improvements in their sex lives (Herzog, 1982). Feelings of unabashed pride, an expanded sense of self, and images of "primary illusion" (Shor & Sanville, 1978) are apparent among many an expectant father during this brief phase. The cultural stereotype of the "phallic, boastful, and beaming" father (cf Jessner et al., 1970) fails to do justice to such rich and far-reaching internal experiences.

Stage Three: The First Trimester

The early months of pregnancy are frequently characterized by the beginnings of the prospective father's developmental challenge or crisis—signified by the initiation of a major reworking of past and/or current relationships with his wife, parents, and siblings, along with a shift in his sense of self (Gurwitt, 1976). Inner splits, particularly in relation to the expectant father's own parents and their role as parental models, begin to surface during the time of bridging. Herzog (1982) described perceptible changes in the fantasy lives of the well-attuned prospective fathers. Moreover, the initial mood of fullness and ecstasy had markedly changed by the end of the first trimester. For some, the internal changes were pleasing and enriching; for others they were more irritating and distracting with a compulsive

quality. Oftentimes, signs of anger and ominous destructive forces appear, but remain unclear. Gurwitt (1976) examined several typical concerns at this time involving: the male and female within; fears of injury and death; starting life; being a son and being a father; and issues bearing on past-present as well as real-fantasy. He reported on the defensive pattern emerging in response to the progenitor role along with the male's attempts to cope with his sense of loss and change in relation to his wife. Many men respond with a particular enthusiasm for work while others develop neurotic behavior or symptoms as they identify with their pregnant wives (Jacobson, 1950). More attuned men do tend to become increasingly preoccupied with their own insides (Herzog, 1982).

The male's fantasies and feelings during this time tend to cluster about the theme of the "nurturing woman (or mother) and fetus" along with an attendant worry about the "adequacy of one's own supplies" (Herzog, 1982). There seems to be a blurring of differentiations both between the parent/child and mother/father at this time, a process which Herzog (1982) speculates as reflecting a re-experiencing of the earliest stage in the boy's caretaking line of development. Thus, the boy's identification with the nursing mother as the furnisher of oral supplies is recapitulated for the expectant father. This is illustrated in a male analysand's dream occurring toward the end of the first trimester. In the dream, he was informed that his baby was healthy, after which he was taken to meet the infant for the first time. Upon greeting each other, the baby licked him, and as they played together, the father called out, "My boy!"

Stage Four: Midpregnancy

Pregnancy becomes more real during the second trimester as the wife begins to show and the baby begins to kick. Amniocentesis and the use of sonograms further establish the "reality of pregnancy" for many men. The fetus is experienced more as an alive being. Many husbands at this stage feel more excluded from their wives and the "creature within her," who may come to be viewed as a rival (Gurwitt, 1976). An increase in the male's envy of the woman's procreative and nurturing capacities may become manifest and exacerbate the appearance of the expectant father's nurturing wishes. Many men exhibit an upsurge in creative sublimation in the form of

new projects and career activities; others may tend toward workaholism. Jessner et al. (1970) reported changes in the male's psychosexual responses when confronted by the more dramatic changes in his wife's physical appearance. These range from increased sexual desires for her to a complete deterrence in sexual feeling. Castration anxiety may be heightened during this period as a result of these forementioned changes along with an increase in the male's exploration of his bisexual origins and nature (Gurwitt, 1976).

Many fathers become concerned with gastrointestinal and other somatic symptoms, including couvade (Gurwitt, 1976; Herzog, 1982; Jessner et al., 1970; Shapiro, 1985). Herzog (1982) speculated that this had to do with a developmental reworking of a stage wherein the boy's identification with his mother blended with his maternal or inner-genital phase (Kestenberg, 1975) when he became aware of early prostatic and seminal vesicle contractions. Issues from this latter phase are followed by hermaphroditic fantasies wherein the boy sees himself as able to both fertilize and bear children—able to carry a baby like mother while sustaining himself within the male role (Kestenberg, 1975). This is manifest in the expectant father by the wish to "have it both ways." These wishes, accompanying symptoms, and reactions to the beginnings of (prenatal) triangulation often render the father most aware of his ambivalence toward the child and its mother, creating a dialectic described by Herzog (1982) as shifting between the "nurturing" and "punishing" penis. This occurs in conjunction with a sorting out phase of midpregnancy, which will next be described.

Stage Five: The Turn toward One's Father and Fathering

During midpregnancy, roughly between 15 and 25 weeks, most men experience an increased pressure to sort things out within their families of origin (Herzog, 1982). There is an attempt to re-establish connections with one's own father, particularly the "good father of old" as represented by the preoedipal father or an oedipal or latency years' mentor or masculine guide. There was a common preoccupation among Herzog's (1982) most attuned men that their fathering would be blighted by unresolved difficulties in their relationship to their own fathers. Shapiro (1985) anecdotally corroborated this finding.

Herzog (1982) viewed this turn as a "refueling" or "straightening out," as if to signal "a more masculine or less maternal quality associated with the second half of pregnancy" (p. 308). This appears analogous to Abelin's (1975) notion of a boy turning away from mother toward father at 18 months in order to help dissolve his "primary femininity" and embark on his "anatomically determined masculine course." Herzog (1982) found that men who failed to go through this phase seemed to become progressively less able to participate in the "alliance of pregnancy" (Deutscher, 1971). Men who were in a "state of father hunger" and thus unable to revive contact with the "good father of old," struggled with this phase and concomitantly were unlikely to participate in the second half of pregnancy. These expectant fathers were most intolerant of their own feminine identifications. On the other hand, Herzog (1982) found that gentle and tender feelings that were formerly suppressed for the sake of "masculine toughness" often emerged among those men able to master the sorting out issues of this phase.

Stage Six: Toward the End of the Second Trimester

Changes in the fantasies and preoccupations of the expectant father occur sometime after quickening. Herzog (1982) notes that men begin to think of the fetus as a child, *separate from* both themselves and their wives. The child's sex is routinely conceptualized at this time. Interestingly, Herzog (1982) found that 100 percent of the less well-attuned men "expected" boys while only two thirds of the most attuned group expected boys.

Expectant fathers began to report blatantly aggressive fantasies in the form of intrusive imagery as they experienced the fetus as a separate, third entity (Herzog, 1982). Jessner et al. (1970) reported increased jealousy frequently accompanied by increased needs for sexual intercourse or alternatively, deterrence to sexual feeling. This appears as an early-precursor to the "Laius complex" involving the father's rivalry and hostility toward the child. These fantasies took the form of wishes to hurt the baby, sadistic feelings toward one's wife, and strong concerns with child abuse. Herzog speculated that the material recapitulated the little boys' oedipal issue of being forced to acknowledge the presence of three people and the necessity of bringing together wishes to be loved and nurtured with wishes to

hurt and be punished. Regression may occur to preoedipal levels; in fact, Herzog (1982) found pronounced urethral and urinary imagery among many fathers.

Stage Seven: The Last Trimester

The last trimester brings about the end of pregnancy and a new kind of experience for the expectant father. This final phase was humorously referred to as "coming-to-term(s)" by Gurwitt (1976) and is characterized by both an intensification of the reality-orientation, and a more uncanny kind of feeling with a sense of powerful magical forces being at work. The father's empathy with his spouse further increases as he tends to actively observe other parents and his own interactions with children (Gurwitt, 1976). He may also experience apprehensions about his own role as a progenitor and future father while confronting anew such existential issues as birth and death, ending and beginning, and creating and destroying.

The sense of powerful magical forces was described by Herzog (1982) as "the sensation that something powerful, magical, and big was going on" (p. 310). This "something" is beyond the expectant father's ability to control and while magical and mysterious for all, may be experienced as sublime for some and sinister for others. A "feeling of awe" tends to accompany the ending of pregnancy and the actual delivery. Herzog (1982) discussed this in terms of the "whole becoming greater than the sum of its parts," wherein what has been willingly initiated becomes larger than past conflicts and resolutions and large enough to become a life of its own. Empirical support was reported by Brudal (1984) who found that very few fathers present at delivery escaped the experience of a new level of feeling, whether more intense or more distant. Intense affect, cognitive distortion, time alterations, depersonalization, and psychosomatic reactions were quite common.

Concurrent with this sense of awe, the expectant father's preoccupations of the previous months with his inner processes are replaced by a perceptible shift toward readying things in the real world for the child's arrival. Herzog (1982), like Gurwitt (1976), found that most fathers increased their observations of children, concerns with childrearing patterns, and preparational activities related to the actual arrival of the child. The most attuned fathers were also most

able to "parent their wife" at this very time when she most needed care (Herzog, 1982). These latter fathers were also able to get back in touch with their inner lives while maintaining a valuation of the outside world beyond the mother-child symbiosis. Such fathers were grooming themselves for their future role as the representative of this outside world but as a provider respectful of the mother-child symbiosis. In this respect, such men were able to serve as an external beacon to their wives who may feel submerged in their own inner processes and concerns at the time of parturition (Herzog, 1982). Thus, the new father comes to hold a special and unique position — grasping as he does the principle of reality augmented so long ago by his earlier attempts to solve the "mystery of the sphinx," while touching anew the unspeakable awe of the miraculous world beyond his control.

SUMMARY

This article has presented a psychoanalytic perspective on the process of becoming a father. It began with a discussion of the neglect of the father during pregnancy and briefly considered evidence as to the unique contributions made by fathers of the newborn. Nine psychodynamically based wishes emerging throughout the developmental process were next proposed to embody the male's motivation to become a father. The final section examined seven specific phases of expectant fatherhood, from getting ready through parturition.

NOTES

1. Dinnerstein (1976) and Chodorow (1978), integrating feminist and psychoanalytic thinking, have dared to consider the social and psychological importance of fathers providing primary caretaking of their infants. This radically altered arrangement of mothering is then considered as it would affect those unconscious attitudes between men and women that ultimately determine prevailing societal standards. As Pruett's (1983) clinical research suggests, the personal and social implications of viewing childrearing either as the "duty" of fathers or, perhaps, as more equally shared, are quite far-reaching.
2. Male rock artists such as Michael Jackson, Prince, Sting, Hall and Oates, Kiss, Mick Jagger, David Bowie, Wham, and Boy George dramatically illustrate the attraction of feminine identifications among contemporary English-speaking adolescent males.

3. In addition to creative work per se, specific activities may more fully discharge such sublimated wishes. Male psychotherapists, psychoanalysts, and related workers in the "people-helping" professions appear somewhat unique in their ability to express and gratify these tendencies more directly in their work activities.
4. This group seemed most like the men described by McCorkel (1964) who held a family orientation toward marriage and fatherhood. Similarly, fathers described by Shapiro (1985) seemed to lean in this direction.
5. Of course many couples are not in agreement vis à vis the decision to have a baby. A discussion of those situations wherein one member of the couple actively or passively opposes the other's decision, as well as "accidental" and non-coupled pregnancies are unfortunately beyond the purview of this paper.

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