

Discovering gender of an unborn baby and choosing a name may help fathers bond with their offspring, study finds

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(Medical Xpress)—Dads who find out the sex of their unborn child and give him or her a name may find it easier to connect emotionally with their baby, a study conducted at the University of Birmingham has found.

The report, entitled "The Moral Habitus of Fatherhood: A Study of How Men Negotiate the Moral Demands of Becoming a Father," funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, looked at men's experiences of, and feelings about, becoming a father and mapped their journeys from the discovery of the pregnancy to the early months of fatherhood.

Dr Jonathan Ives, a senior lecturer in the centre for Medicine, [Ethics](#), Society and History at the University of Birmingham, who carried out the research, said: "Serious consideration needs to be given to how men can be empowered to become the fathers they want to be.

"[Healthcare workers](#) who are involved in this process need to engage with men's views on what it is to be a good man, a good partner, and a good father and help them achieve an appropriate balance between their own needs and interests and those of their partner and future children."

The study found that some men's understanding of what it means to be a good man and/or a good partner could act as a barrier to being drawn into, or actively seeking involvement in antenatal or postnatal

consultation, but that "this is not necessarily demonstrative of a lack of commitment to fatherhood, but merely a different construction of the fatherhood role in that context".

"Helping men effect an 'active transformation into positive fatherhood' may require helping them to reconcile their [moral sense](#) of how they ought to act as a partner and as a man, with how they need to act as a father and a father-to-be," the report states. "Encouraging fathers to become actively involved, and drawing them in, may require more than making them feel welcome and creating space for them to talk, but also giving them explicit permission to become actively involved."

The research found that scans helped to make their partner's pregnancy more real for men but "it was discovering the gender of their child, and giving him/her a name that tended to enable men to feel emotionally connected, because it allowed them to think of the [unborn child](#) as a person whom one can father, and with whom a relationship could be developed and a future imagined".

Dr Ives followed 11 [men](#) over a period of 9 months, from the first scan to 8 weeks after the birth of their child. The ages of participants ranged from 22 to 58.

Jason Cole, one of the [dads](#) who took part in the research, said: "I really wanted to know the gender of our first child. My partner wasn't fussed. She was happy either way but I really wanted to know. I don't know why. As soon as we found out she was a girl, from about 20 weeks, we named her Molly and I think it did help me prepare for her and connect with her once she was born."

Mr Cole, who lives in Devon, is happy to discuss his experiences with the press. He and his [partner](#) are now expecting their second [child](#) – also a girl.

More information: www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/...thics/project-1.aspx

Provided by University of Birmingham

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