

# **Violence against women in the childbearing period: Women´s and men´s experiences**

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av

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This thesis is based on the following papers, referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.

- I Engnes, K., Lidén, E., & Lundgren, I. (2012). Experiences of being exposed to intimate partner violence during pregnancy.  
*International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*,7.
- II Engnes, K., Lidén, E., & Lundgren, I. (2012). Women´s experiences of important others in a pregnancy dominated by intimate partner violence.  
*Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*.
- III Håland, K., Lundgren, I., Eri, T. Schauer, Lidén, E. The meaning of men´s experiences of becoming and being fathers, in men who have subjected their partners to violence. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*.  
*Submitted 21.07.13. Revised 16.12.13.*
- IV Håland, K., Lundgren, I., Lidén, E., Eri, T. Schauer. Men´s experiences of perpetrating IPV and being in change in the childbearing period.  
*Manuscript 2014.*

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UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

# **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE CHILDBEARING PERIOD: WOMEN'S AND MEN'S EXPERIENCES**

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## **Abstract**

*Aim:* The overall aim of this thesis is to describe and interpret women's experiences of being exposed to intimate partner violence (IPV) during pregnancy and of important others in relation to change, and men's experiences of becoming fathers and of being in change in the context of pregnancy and early parenthood.

*Methods:* In Studies I and II, a phenomenological method was used to describe women's experiences of being exposed to IPV during pregnancy and women's experience of important others in a pregnancy dominated by IPV. In Study III, a phenomenological hermeneutic method was used to illuminate the lived experiences of becoming a father in men who have subjected their partners to violence. In Study IV, a lifeworld hermeneutic method was used to explore men's experiences of perpetrating IPV and of being in change in the childbearing period. Data were collected from interviews with five (Study I) and seven (Study II) women who were exposed to IPV, and with ten men (Studies III and IV) who had perpetrated IPV in the childbearing period.

*Findings:* Being exposed to violence by one's partner during pregnancy was characterised by difficult existential choices and ambivalence. The existential choices are related to the women's whole life, both before and during pregnancy. By ambivalence is meant being uncertain about one's own feelings, self-esteem and abilities. (Study I). Women's experiences of important others implied striving for control in an uncontrolled situation, where other people might be experienced as representing both a rescue and a risk (Study II). Becoming and being fathers was experienced as a demanding transition and was affected by the men's experiences with their own fathers. It forced men to grow up and to take responsibility, and it seemed that the men were struggling hard to keep control. Being a father implied being able to protect the child (Study III). The men's experiences showed that to be perceived as a multifaceted individual was a prerequisite for finding the motivation to change. Men expressed a need for support in learning how to become good fathers, and their experiences of being in change is about seeing oneself through the eyes of others. The child is crucial as a motivator for change (Study IV).

*Conclusions:* The childbearing period is experienced as a period for change for both the women and the men which involves the past, present time, and the future. Both the men and the women harbour desires to change their life situations with respect to IPV. To be seen by others as multifaceted individuals and not just be associated with the role of victim or perpetrator of violence is important. The child represents a key motivating factor for change, and both the men and women want to be good parents. The childbearing period is a significant time in terms of meeting women who are being exposed to violence. Both men and women need support and help with changing their life situation and in their role as parents.

*Keywords:* Intimate partner violence, childbearing, pregnancy, becoming fathers, change, phenomenology, hermeneutics, lifeworld

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