

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION.....	I
ABSTRACT	IV
TABLES.....	VI
FIGURES.....	VII
ABBREVIATIONS.....	VIII
1. INTRODUCTION	1
PART I THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	3
2. THE PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF STRESS	3
2.1 <i>The Definition of Stress and Its Related Concepts</i>	3
2.2 <i>The Psychobiological Stress Response.....</i>	7
2.2.1 <i>The Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis</i>	9
2.2.2 <i>The Autonomic Nervous System</i>	14
2.3 <i>Summary.....</i>	20
3. EFFECTS OF PREGNANCY ON PHYSIOLOGICAL STRESS SENSITIVE SYSTEMS.....	22
3.1 <i>The Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis During Pregnancy.....</i>	22
3.1.1 <i>Corticotropin-Releasing Hormone.....</i>	22
3.1.2 <i>Adrenocorticotropin</i>	24
3.1.3 <i>Cortisol.....</i>	25
3.2 <i>The Autonomic Nervous System During Pregnancy.....</i>	27
3.2.1 <i>Heart Rate</i>	28
3.2.2 <i>Heart Rate Variability.....</i>	28
3.2.3 <i>Salivary Alpha-Amylase</i>	30
3.3 <i>Summary.....</i>	30
4. THE PSYCHOBIOLOGICAL STRESS RESPONSE DURING PREGNANCY	31
4.1 <i>Investigated Stressors During Pregnancy</i>	31
4.1.1 <i>Natural Occurring Stressors</i>	31
4.1.2 <i>Standardized Laboratory Stressors</i>	35
4.2 <i>Pregnant Women's Stress Response and the Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis</i>	37
4.3 <i>Pregnant Women's Stress Response and the Autonomic Nervous System</i>	40
4.4 <i>Summary.....</i>	47
5. THE ROLE OF 11B-HYDROXYSTEROID DEHYDROGENASE TYPE 2 DURING HUMAN PREGNANCY	48
5.1 <i>Characteristics, Biological Function and Tissue Distribution of 11β-Hydroxysteroid Dehydrogenase.....</i>	49
5.2 <i>Placental 11β-Hydroxysteroid Dehydrogenase Type 2 and Maternal Prenatal Stress</i>	55
5.3 <i>The Regulation of Placental 11β-Hydroxysteroid Dehydrogenase Type 2</i>	56
5.4 <i>11β-Hydroxysteroid Dehydrogenase Type 2 in the Salivary Glands and The Maternal Stress Response.....</i>	57
5.5 <i>Summary.....</i>	58
6. SUMMARY OF THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND, STUDY IDEAS AND HYPOTHESES	60

PART II EMPIRICAL STUDIES.....	62
7. SALIVARY CORTISOL TO CORTISONE CONVERSION AS A MARKER OF THE STRESS RESPONSE DURING AMNIOCENTESIS CORRESPONDS WITH THE CONVERSION OF CORTISOL TO CORTISONE IN THE AMNIOTIC FLUID.....	62
7.1 <i>Introduction.....</i>	62
7.2 <i>Methods.....</i>	64
7.2.1 <i>Study Participants</i>	64
7.2.2 <i>Study Design and Procedure.....</i>	65
7.2.3 <i>Outcome Measures.....</i>	66
7.2.4 <i>Data Analyses.....</i>	67
7.3 <i>Results</i>	69
7.3.1 <i>Sample Characteristics</i>	69
7.3.2 <i>Effect of the Amniocentesis.....</i>	70
7.4 <i>Discussion</i>	73
8. THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE ACUTE AUTONOMIC STRESS RESPONSE AND AMNIOTIC FLUID CORTISOL AND CORTISONE DURING THE SECOND TRIMESTER OF HUMAN PREGNANCY	79
8.1 <i>Introduction.....</i>	79
8.2 <i>Methods.....</i>	80
8.2.1 <i>Study Participants</i>	80
8.2.2 <i>Study Design and Procedure.....</i>	81
8.2.3 <i>Outcome Measures.....</i>	82
8.2.4 <i>Data Analyses.....</i>	83
8.3 <i>Results</i>	84
8.3.1 <i>Sample Characteristics</i>	84
8.3.2 <i>Effects of the Amniocentesis.....</i>	85
8.4 <i>Discussion</i>	91
PART III GENERAL DISCUSSION	98
9. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES	98
9.1 <i>Salivary Cortisol to Cortisone Conversion as a Marker of the Stress Response during Amniocentesis Corresponds with the Conversion of Cortisol to Cortisone in the Amniotic Fluid..</i>	98
9.2 <i>The Effect of the Autonomic Stress Response on Amniotic Fluid Cortisol and Cortisone in the Second Trimester of Human Pregnancy.....</i>	99
9.3 <i>Integration of the Current Findings</i>	99
10. LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES	105
11. OUTLOOK	107
REFERENCES	110