

Conceiving a first child: fathers' perceptions of contributing elements to their decision

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(Received 7 October 2012; final version received 25 May 2013)

Objective: To describe the elements that contribute to men's decision to have a first child. **Background:** The factors contributing to women's and couples' decisions to conceive a first child are known. Less research has been carried out on men's experiences with respect to such decisions. **Methods:** Qualitative research was carried out in 2011. Twelve Canadian first-time fathers were interviewed. **Results:** The findings show that fathers consider a set of personal, socio-economic, interpersonal and temporal characteristics when making the decision to conceive a child. **Conclusions:** Better knowledge of the elements influencing men's decisions to have a child will make it possible to provide them with support during the transition to fatherhood.

Keywords: father(s); pregnancy; psychosocial factors; reproduction; qualitative methods

The decision to conceive a child is a complex, multi-dimensional process with bio-psycho-social and cultural aspects (Testa, 2010). Both quantitative and qualitative studies have been carried out on the decision process for having a child. Such studies focus in particular on parents' motivations and intentions (Beckman, Aizenberg, Forsythe, & Day, 1983; Cassidy & Sintrovani, 2008; Langdridge, Connolly, & Sheeran, 2000; Langdridge, Sheeran, & Connolly, 2005; Miller, Millstein, & Pasta, 2008; Morgan, 1985; Purewal & van den Akker, 2007; Schoen, Kim, Nathanson, Fields, & Astone, 1997; Thomson, 1997; Thomson & Hoem, 1998; Thomson, McDonald, & Bumpass, 1990). In fact, most research has focused on heterosexual women's motivations to have children (Beckman et al., 1983; Morgan, 1985; Thomson, 1997; Thomson et al., 1990; Thomson & Hoem, 1998), revealing that for women, her partner's consent, the desire to get pregnant, cessation of contraception and reaching the ideal moment in life are key elements of a planned pregnancy (Barrett & Wellings, 2002). While it is relevant to examine the decision to conceive from this angle, as women often influence men in the decision to have a child (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Dandurand, Bernier, & Lemieux, 1997; Fischer, Stanford, Jameson, & DeWitt, 1999; Miller, 1994), however, the opposite may also be true (Fischer et al., 1999). This justifies the need to look at men's experiences in making

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