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TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD AFTER SUCCESSFUL IVF: THE EFFECTS OF INFERTILITY AND IVF ON PREVIOUSLY INFERTILE COUPLES' EXPERIENCES OF EARLY PARENTHOOD

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ABSTRACT

Recent social science research in the field of parenting following assisted conception has focused on the experiences of donor assisted conception and surrogacy. This paper draws from a study which explored the experiences of the transition to early parenthood in 16 heterosexual non-donor couples and includes a specific consideration of the experiences of men as they navigate this journey. We argue that these couples' transition to early parenthood can be as complex and provisional as in other newer forms of family making as they struggle with an emerging identity as a parent after successful non-donor IVF following their experiences of infertility. Their family making is contingent upon their ability to work at integrating their experiences of infertility and IVF into their emerging identity as a parent. This struggle is prominent when they contemplate a further pregnancy. Considering a sibling causes them further uncertainty and anxiety because it reminds them of their infertile identity and the possibility of further IVF. We report novel findings about the experiences of this transition to parenthood: how couples' identity as parents is shaped by the losses and grief of infertility and the anxiety of IVF. We argue that their struggle with an emerging parenthood identity challenges the normative, naturalised view of non-donor heterosexual IVF parenthood. Our work contributes to the work on identity in parenthood after IVF in an ongoing effort to understand how assisted technologies shape infertile parents' lives. This paper reports a small study with a relatively homogenous sample recruited from one fertility clinic. Nevertheless as an exploratory study of an under researched topic, we discuss useful insights and ideas for further research with larger and more diverse samples.

Key words: Infertility, non-donor IVF, Transition to parenthood

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