

Significant intra and extra-family events in the fatherhood construction process

Eventos intra e extrafamiliar significativos no processo de construção da paternidade
Hechos relevantes intra y extra familiares en el proceso de construcción de paternidad

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to identify the intra and extra-family events contributing to the construction of fatherhood. **Methods:** Exploratory qualitative study, fourteen men participants, living in a city in Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil. Data were collected between May and August 2011, through an in-depth interview. **Results:** Through discursive textual analysis and bio-ecological framework of human development, we identified the following categories: experiences in family of origin, the family lived experiences and Experiences microsystem experienced in mesosystems. **Conclusion:** It is critical thinking in promoting father involvement in prenatal care and childcare, providing the possibility to participate at all times, especially in queries and guidelines, aiming at preparing the couple for motherhood and fatherhood.

Keywords: Nursing; Fatherhood; Father; Family.

RESUMO

Objetivo: O presente estudo objetivou identificar os eventos intra e extrafamiliar que contribuem para o processo de construção da paternidade. **Métodos:** Estudo exploratório qualitativo, participaram quatorze homens, residentes em um município do Rio Grande do Sul/Brasil. Os dados foram coletados entre maio e agosto de 2011, por meio da entrevista em profundidade. **Resultados:** Por meio da análise textual discursiva e do referencial bioecológico do desenvolvimento humano, identificou-se as seguintes categorias: Experiências vivenciadas na família de origem; Experiências vivenciadas no microsistema familiar e Experiências vivenciadas nos mesossistemas. **Conclusão:** É fundamental pensar na promoção do envolvimento do pai desde a assistência pré-natal e de puericultura, possibilitando sua participação em todos os momentos, principalmente, nas consultas e orientações, visando preparar o casal para a maternidade e a paternidade.

Palavras-chave: Enfermagem; Paternidade; Pai; Família.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo identificar los eventos intra y extra familiares que contribuyen en el proceso de construcción de la paternidad. **Métodos:** Estudio cualitativo exploratorio, participaron catorce hombres que viven en una ciudad de Rio Grande do Sul/Brasil. Los datos fueron recogidos entre mayo y agosto de 2011, a través de entrevista en profundidad. **Resultados:** A través del análisis textual discursiva y del referencial bioecológico del desarrollo humano, se identificaron las siguientes categorías: experiencias en la familia de origen; experiencias en el microsistema familiar; y experiencias en mesosistema. **Conclusión:** El pensamiento crítico en la promoción de la participación del padre desde la atención prenatal y de puericultura, ofreciendo la posibilidad de participar en todo momento, especialmente en las consultas y orientaciones, preparándolos para la maternidad y la paternidad.

Palabras-clave: Enfermería; Paternidad; Padre; Familia.

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INTRODUCTION

The construction of fatherhood is a process that occurs from practices inserted in the relationship between father and children. It is marked by changes and transformations in knowledge that the father necessarily seeks to express his role¹. Thus, the exercise of parenting requires expertise for the development of parental roles and tasks. Possessing this knowledge allows fathers to organize their behaviors in relation to their responsibilities with the development of children. It also provides an opportunity to make appropriate choices for each situation experienced in the father/child relationship; this can be acquired through experiences and interactions with family, friends and community. Becoming paramount in conducting each stage of the child's development².

In addition, the fatherhood construction process requires adaptation, in which fathers need to build their values; goals and strategies are established in accordance with the socio-cultural context¹. The social context in which the parenthood phenomenon develops and the main developments in the life of the subjects, from the birth of the child, are fundamental questions to analyze the exercise of parenting, which enables viewing the situation of fathers in the process.

In this perspective, the experiences and interactions experienced by fathers with their own fathers and the way they intersect in the fatherhood model are aspects that influence the relationship to be built with their children, at a later time³. Many men raised on the traditional fatherhood model worry about reformulating the roles and responsibilities for them in the family, rather than simply reproducing the experience experienced to become parents, revealing the desire to constitute themselves as a source of emotional and affective support for the children and companionship⁴. Corroborating this idea, some authors emphasize that the change in the fatherhood model involves, in most cases, the disruption experienced model, because men are more participant in issues pertaining to family life⁵.

Beyond the fatherhood model experienced in their family of origin, the role they play in their current family is also related with their individual characteristics and social context, where their most significant interactions happen⁵. Specifically, in this study, the individual characteristics of the father are related to their personal experiences, the willingness to engage in family and previous experiences with their fathers.

The experiences lived by the father in the various contexts in which they live and in different stages of their life cycle can be as valuable to the nursing care to fathers' content, when the purpose is the development of skills to operate in the care of children. These aspects can be redeemed when, for example, the encounter between nurse and father, especially in the prenatal and postpartum periods, times when it creates the opportunity for men to reflect on their responsibilities in the role they are assuming. Sharing the moment that they realize they are a father, usually after the birth of the child, with the nurse will enable

fathers to prepare for the care and visualize strategies that can be used in coping with certain everyday situations⁶.

For nursing, it is important, first, to know the individual characteristics and the significant interactions experienced in the various contexts in which the father is inserted, so that they can establish a trust relationship with him, meeting his needs in the demands of fatherhood. In this sense, it is important for nurses to establish themselves as references for fathers, creating conditions so that they can develop skills to care for their children⁷.

The care point of view, the creation of a space for listening to the doubts and anxieties of the men, for caring tasks, enabling the sharing of experiences that contributed to the performance of their role is necessary. Some scholars emphasize that discussions with fathers who already possess practical care experiences of children may be beneficial so that the new fathers can learn new knowledge and develop skills through sharing of information^{6,8}, once the experienced can be seen as a source of support for the new fathers.

However, it is observed in daily nursing work, the difficulty of involving fathers in the care provided to their family. Thus, this study is justified by the need to invest in research in an emerging area in the field of Nursing: fatherhood. Also by subsidizing nurses practices regarding care to families.

In this perspective, this study had as its guiding question: which significant events contribute to the construction of the fatherhood process? The goal was to identify intra and extra-family significant events that contribute to the fatherhood construction process.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory qualitative study, guided by the bio-ecological theory of human development of Urie Bronfenbrenner. Which contributes a theoretical and operational framework for understanding human development, based on the interactions experienced by humans at different levels of their life context, for which they are determinants to the bio-psychological characteristics of the father, the historical time lived by him and the characteristics of the context in which the fatherhood phenomenon occurs in today's world⁹.

Fourteen men participated, between 16 and 61 years of age, experiencing fatherhood in different stages of the lifecycle, adolescence, productive and mature age. The fathers reside in a municipality of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil and were selected and recruited from the indication of the research participants themselves, considering as the inclusion criteria: age (between 15 and 65 years); have permanent contact with the children and they agree to participate in the study, signing an informed consent (IFC). The search for new subjects was suspended when there was data saturation.

To preserve the anonymity, the participants were identified by the letter "F" followed by the number that expresses their chronological age. For those who were the same age, was added

the letter "a" or "b" in order to differentiate them. The collection occurred between May and August 2011, through an in-depth interview, from an open research question that addressed the lived meaningful experiences that made the participant feel like a father. Throughout the interview, other issues were added aiming at the clarification and the search for details.

After contacting the participants, for the interview were established, the time and the location according to the availability of the men, considering their work activities and family commitments. The dependencies of the research group based at the University where the authors work were available as an optional space for the interviews. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents and lasted about 30 minutes to 1 hour, transcribed and validated with the participants. The information obtained was treated ethically and faithfully transcribed, respecting the ethical and legal principles governing research with human beings, established by Resolution 466/12 National Health Council¹⁰. The study received ethics certification under opinion number 134/2010.

Data analysis included the following steps¹¹: disassembly of the interviews, establishing relationships, attracting new and emerging construction of a self-organized process. In the first stage identified and coded each fragment detached, resulting in the eight analysis units (model of paternity, grandparents' participation, care acquired experience, interactions with his son and lived with his partner, close friends, co-workers and neighbors). From this first stage, it was possible to identify the analysis subjects and define the emerging categories. The second step consisted in establishing analysis unit's categorization of relations between them, combining them and classifying them into clusters that bring together close elements. In this sense, the intermediate categories were established: experiences lived in the family considering the proximal processes established in different exosystems; experiences lived in the family microsystem considering the proximal processes established in the family; experiences lived in the mesosystems by highlighting the proximal processes established in different mesosystems.

The third and fourth steps culminated in the construction of meta-texts, i.e., the categories themselves, as well as the interpretation and understanding obtained from the set of interviews, considering the bio-ecological framework of human development adopted in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Experiences lived in the family of origin

There are three significant events that caused the participants to feel like fathers and referred to the face-to-face interactions at different periods of time. The participants emphasized the interactions established with their own father; the involvement of grandfathers in childcare and in the light of the experience in the care of their brothers.

The interactions experienced by fathers, along with their parents, the significant experiences influenced the relations with the son in two directions. The first was the incorporation of the fatherhood model experienced with his father, seeking to reproduce the lived experiences, because they wish to be present in the lives of children, providing for them affectively, maintaining a relationship based on dialogue and passing on the values and principles learned in the family microsystem. They emphasized that the family environment in which they grew the affective relationships established with their fathers contributed to the exercise of their role in the family:

[...] In reality the experience of a father comes from being a son, when you have a father who helps you, it's you, you bring that into your life and I think the main experience I had was that the question of my father always present for me, helping me, fighting when he has to fight, this brings a certain experience (F₄₂).

The second direction referred to was the rejection of the fatherhood model, because the subjects recognize the little involvement of their father in this basic care, such as food and hygiene and, mainly, the participation in decisions involving the education of the children. For this reason, they need to perform these tasks, interacting more with the children, emphasizing the need to adapt to changes in the current world, regarding ways to create and educate the child and the desire to meet the affection needs of their sons.

Fathers highlighted three main reasons, which made them reject the experienced fatherhood model. The first was the need to participate in matters relating to family life. These men realized that changes over time in society and, consequently, in the roles of the man and woman, encourages them to have a greater involvement in the care of the children. Furthermore, they are important for the healthy development of their children, therefore divide with the companion care, emphasized the protection and guidance of their children.

The second prominent reason was little contact with the parent during childhood, a fact that led them to redirect their relationship with their children, seeking to assist their development, with a view to establishing ties from birth. The third reason was the fact that his parents were seen only as authority in the family, participating little care, which led to the desire to become involved in the care and show affection in the interactions established with their children:

[...] my brothers and I seek to be different from our father. We're three sons, we were a patriarchal family where our father just bossed, not participating, and therefore that's not quite, what we want. Until society itself, the world itself, is changing and we see today that it can't be the way it was (F₄₀).

In accordance with the results obtained, study of teenage parents identified that 77% of participants reported a desire to raise their children differently to that were created on the basis of having been living situations of physical abuse and/or emotional or abandonment. It is observed that young men would like to be present in the lives of their children, accompanying their development, and also providing the financial livelihood for the family⁶.

In this study, it was observed that the parents are anxious to participate in every moment involving the lives of their children. In contemporary family, men are re-dimensioning their life, in which the model played by a generation where the father stood silent and someone emotionally distant, being gradually replaced by a man who seeks to initiate the exercise of contact and expression of their emotional needs³.

The involvement of grandfathers in childcare was another important event pointed to by the fathers. They highlighted that the care provided by grandfathers in the early days of the child's life contributed to their performance with their son, making them feel more confident in identifying the care demands:

[...] When he [son] was born, we had the participation of my mother and her mother, each wanting to stay longer. [They] helped a lot, because a first-timer, didn't know anything and was scared, that fear you have of something happens to the child, who is very fragile. They helped in the bathing, changing diapers, caring for his bellybutton. In addition, we ended up learning a lot with them (F_{19a}).

The result resembles what was observed in the literature. After birth, the direct care of the father with the son is fairly limited. The actions of the parents are often mediated by attitudes of other members of the family that assists with valuable experiences relating to the care of children¹². Furthermore, mothers and mothers-in-law are considered by teenage parents as a source of financial and psychological support¹³.

The experience gained in the care of the brothers was another significant event experienced by the fathers. They reported that, by assisting the mother in the care of younger siblings, attending some basic tasks, such as feeding and hygiene, possible to acquire skills that contributed significantly to the performance of their role in relationship to the children. Another aspect highlighted were the interactions that they experienced with the siblings now adults, discussing and reflecting on the role of the father in the family and the way to create and educate their children. The siblings can be considered source of support and information, since, by sharing experiences and knowledge, share their concerns and questions relating to child-rearing:

[...] I used to help my siblings, I had to give milk, change diapers, and I learned it from my mother. I used to help

my siblings, doing everything and it made me feel like a father (F₄₈).

[...] always talk a lot with my siblings about my daughters, whenever I need to have their support (F₅₈).

Experiences lived in the current family

They highlighted two significant events: the interactions experienced with their own child and the interactions with the companion. The first refers to proximal processes experienced with the son in the family microsystem and care experiences acquired them at different stages of the children's lives. Parents reported care skills are learned during the very process of primary caregivers, especially when they are small and require an adult to ensure survival. Now in adolescence and adulthood of children, men realize that they are playing their role, as the children go aggregating the values and principles taught in the family of origin:

[...] When we have the first child, we have the exaggerated concern thinking that they will break and any crying or disease is of concern. We don't know how to deal well with it. We see that this is not so, things are a little simpler. After the experience that we acquired over time, most everybody knows his or her reactions [child] (F_{44b}).

The indicated result resonates with the literature. Some authors reported that the sensitivity and the ability to respond to the demands of the child is associated with the experience of care, and to care for the child, the parent will develop skills and knowledge that help in the care process⁹.

In addition, the fathers stressed that the established interactions with the child after birth were fundamental to the development of childcare skills, since, until then, they did not feel prepared to perform that role:

[...] that initial process of the child when you get him on your lap for the first time, you begin to live with the child, taking care of them (F_{44b}).

In the first pregnancy when she said she was pregnant, I didn't know, of course, I already knew it was going to be a father that thing, but I felt like a father even at that time I could feel the taste of it. When I put her on my lap, I could smell her, then Yes, there I started to feel like a father, afterwards the care just kept getting better (F₃₁).

In line with the results obtained, the study points out that the attitude of the father's care is built in response to the needs of the partner and child. Moreover, their actions are determined by the result of the interaction of man with himself, with the partner, son and the context in which he is inserted¹².

Parents also reported that they experienced in their own family interactions, with the teenage children, based on dialogue and mutual respect, considering new ways of educating in the current world, in order to monitor the development of them, guiding them in their choices and worrying about the interactions that establish in extra-family environments:

[...] We worry about everything, because we're raising a person, so we try to warn about the dangers of the world, especially in adolescence. I talk a lot, because there is a need for her [daughter] to talk, try to explain, give my point of view regarding the things she asks me. The conversation is constant (F₄₀).

Established interactions with the companion in the family microsystem was another event considered significant for the fathers. They stressed the importance of sharing with the companion the tasks involving feeding, hygiene, recreation, school, especially on weekends and during the night. When the kids were little, these fathers met their night care demands providing hours of rest for their companions. They reported that they discussed with their partner about how to create and educate, deciding together all aspects relating to the lives of their children:

[...] I've always talked a lot with my wife about their upbringing. When the decision is made by one, the other approves (F₅₈).

Some authors highlight that, pregnancy and the arrival of a child in the family context may affect the nature of the bond between man and wife, the couple's relationship influencing and modifying the parent's everyday life with feelings of greater responsibility and new projects for the future. Furthermore, the sense of loss about the habits and privacy is real^{3,14,15}. A similar result was found in this study.

In this study, it was reported that, after the birth of their child, there was a change in the couple's routine, according to which the child is going to be treated as priority and the parents begin to live according to meeting the needs of the child. Thus, the couple does not have time available to carry out joint activities, including leisure activities that are subject to the possibility of including their child:

[...] It's complicated, because you lose all your freedom, your leisure, your leisure boils down to staying home. Whenever we leave the House, we have to take him [son] (F_{19a}).

In accordance with this result, a survey identified that the sense of loss in relation to the habits and to privacy, given the possibility of becoming a father is real. The priority of parents meeting the needs of the children, leaving their needs and leisure activities for later, postponed in the name of care and living with

the child³. With the arrival of the child, the couple's activities are planned and adapted according to the needs of food and sleep and rest of the child. However, it is necessary to establish a time and a space for the couple perform their personal activities¹⁶.

In this study, it was observed that after the birth of their child, the parents acquired awareness of the women's need to rest. This result resembles the findings in the literature which highlights the concern of the parents to share the care of the baby and issues related to education¹⁶. Moreover, the woman has a fundamental role in the interactions between fathers and children, by supporting and facilitating the involvement of father and contributing to relationship between father and child¹⁷.

Experiences lived in mesosystems

The highlights were three significant events experienced in extra-family environments: experienced interactions with proximal friends, in the workplace and with the neighborhood.

Experienced by participants' interactions with friends, sharing experiences concerning child rearing facilitates the participation of the father in childcare. The fathers pointed out moments when they feel the need to discuss and advice with friends, especially when their children are teenagers; they consider a conflicted adolescence stage, when there is greater influence of external contexts in the development of children producing larger concerns about their rearing.

Another context was indicated the work environment of fathers who shared their questions and concerns regarding the care of children with their co-workers, enabling them to share experiences that contributed to their role in care:

[...] used to talk to some friends here at work about how hard it is to raise children these days, with the problem of drugs and violence (F₅₇).

Other Yes, strengthened the thesis that knowledge accumulated in different contexts have contributed to the performance of their role in the family. A participant considered knowledge from experienced interactions, especially with the neighborhood, what contributed to the education of the child, since they divided their yearnings and sought advice on how they should raise their child:

[...] I had a good neighborhood that helped me a lot, both with money as well as helping to take care of him [son] when I had to work (F₆₁).

The authors observed men with great difficulty sharing their anxieties, doubts and concerns³. The results of this study are similar to what was observed by the authors in question, which identified the pursuit of support from parents in the social conviviality with friends, family and neighbors. It becomes clear, the need for the monitoring of these parents, who can get by creating

a space where they can discuss questions and share anxieties with health professionals, especially nurses. It is necessary that the services offer expert guidance to parents, facilitating access by means of the flexibility of timetables, compatible with their professional activities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the present study, identified significant events experienced by men in intra and extra-family context that contributed to the man feeling like a father. It was observed that the events could vary depending on the stage of the life cycle that the man experience fatherhood. The findings of this study, related to the birth of the child and the negative changes in the relationship of the couple after this event, were aspects that influenced the role of the father in the family, all of which coincide with the results presented at national and international literature. Regarding the fatherhood they emphasized to the model were experienced positive experiences with parents themselves, which shows different published studies that link only the rejection of patriarchal fatherhood model. The theoretical referential element that had greater prominence was experienced by the father interactions.

A limitation of this study was the recruitment of participants and the difficulty in scheduling time to conduct the interviews due work and family commitments of the fathers.

Regarding the implications for nursing practice, it is essential to consider the one hand, the significant events that influence the role of man in the family, may vary according to the stage of the life cycle in fatherhood. On the other hand, the promotion of father involvement from pre-natal care means building possibilities to participate at all times, especially in queries and guidelines, aiming to prepare the couple for motherhood and fatherhood. When inserting the father in the care provided to the family, it is essential that nurses meet their individual characteristics, with emphasis on the personal experience of each father; the interactions that they establish with their children, with the partner and other family members. In other words, understanding how interactions can facilitate and/or hinder the performance of their role, and how the social, cultural and economic changes occurring in their surroundings influence the care of their children.

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