

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

‘This child is a planned baby’: skilled migrant fathers and reproductive decision-making

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Abstract

Aim. This study analyses discourses that migrant fathers in New Zealand draw on to explain their decision to have a child.

Background. Little is known about migrant men’s reproductive decisions in the context of contemporary/active fatherhood.

Design. A discourse analytic research study.

Methods. Qualitative research was conducted in 2009 where Chinese and Indian migrant men took part in focus groups.

Results/Findings. Fathers drew on two key discourses to understand how they became fathers. The first was fatherhood as a financial decision and the second was fatherhood as a natural process. These two discourses are not always congruent.

Conclusion. Understanding the discourses that shape men’s decisions to have a child, will enhance nurses’ capacity to provide appropriate care and support for migrant families.

Keywords: decision-making, discourse analysis, father(s), heteronormativity, midwifery, neoliberalism, nurses, nursing

Introduction

Risk management and life planning are a feature of contemporary parenting, which enable children to be shaped into responsible citizens, who are successful and do not unduly burden the state (Shirani *et al.* 2012). This neoliberal project of intensive parenting and parental responsibility (typically gendered as maternal) involves child centredness and detailed knowledge of child development (Hays 1998).

Simultaneously, contemporary masculinities are increasingly being situated beyond the traditional Western binary

of the active home-caring mother and passive breadwinning father. Following Connell (1995), the plural word masculinities refers to the many definitions and practices of masculinity (See e.g. Archer 2001, Cleaver 2002, Finn & Henwood 2009, Haggis & Schech 2009, Walsh 2011). Broader and more inclusive repertoires of fathering emerge from diverse family practices and formations including queer/homoparental families; cohabitation; new technologies; changing domestic labour arrangements; the changing organization of childcare and growing involvement of fathers; and social policy initiatives including parental leave and family-friendly employment practices (Draper 2003).

Why is this research or review needed?

- Societal change is ushering in new forms of masculinity and participatory fathering.
- Fathers' integration of breadwinning and active fathering roles has not been matched by responsive services, a tension multiplied for migrant fathers.
- Understanding how migrant fathers negotiate reproductive decision-making can assist in improving services for all families, but especially this under-served group.

What are the key findings?

- Migrant men's fatherhood decisions are shaped by broader institutional structures and societal norms.
- The discourse of fatherhood as a financial calculation constructs fathers as having the capacity to economically provide for their families.
- The discourse of fatherhood as natural process constructs fatherhood as an inevitable stage of the heterosexual life course.

How should the findings be used to influence policy/practice/research/education?

- Migrant fathers base reproduction on financial capability and maturity however, active fathering requires resourcing and support.
- Nurses can apply pressure to residual cultural norms that constrain delivery of care by problematising the notion of 'choice' in reproductive decision-making.
- More culturally-responsive notions of parenting will better support and involve fathers, also improving care for migrant women.

These rapid societal changes have ushered in new forms of participatory fathering and family involvement for men in the Western world. However, the pressure to integrate traditional breadwinner and authority figure roles with contemporary demands for involvement in all aspects of the perinatal period has not been matched by reduced work pressures or the provision of active societal support and preparation (Barclay & Lupton 1999). As a result, men often feel isolated, excluded, uninformed and unable to obtain resources and support in the perinatal period placing pressure on relationships, challenging feelings of competence and requiring negotiation of competing demands (Deave & Johnson 2008). Furthermore, men have gender-specific risk factors for perinatal distress including their more limited support networks; dependence on partners for support; additional exposure to financial and work stresses; a more idealized view of pregnancy, childbirth and parenthood stemming from a lack of exposure to contemporary

models of parenting; and lastly being less keen to seek help with emotional problems (Condon *et al.* 2004). All of these factors are compounded by practitioners and services oriented towards mothers and babies marginalizing fathers (Deave & Johnson 2008, Lohan *et al.* 2013).

Background

New fathering discourses open up alternative expressions of masculinity, but like other work on masculinities tend to centralize middle-class Euro-American heterosexual men's experiences (Connell 1995). Achieving the contemporary ideal of active fathering poses a challenge for many visibly different migrant fathers who have to balance being 'committed and competitive workers as well as active nurturing parents' (Perons *et al.* 2010, p. 205) often without culturally appropriate resources or support. The settlement challenges related to employment and negotiating mixed reception from the receiving society can also impede participation (Haggis & Schech 2009). As Callister and Fursman (2013) found, there are three factors, which pose barriers to fathers' participation in parenting in New Zealand. These include: New Zealand's long working hours with unsupportive workplace cultures; parental leave which is mainly allocated to women; and family law and justice policy. Although, the authors' discussion does not examine to what extent these factors impact on migrant fathers, other research shows that migrant fathers experience the loss of extended family with migration as significant and wanted to spend more time with their children, but were unlikely to engage the support to do so. The Families Commission (2009) found migrant fathers were less likely to: attend antenatal classes (11%); speak to anyone about fathering (59%), speak to their wife or partner about it (8%); talk about fathering with other men in social situations (almost one in five). These indicate possible information and support needs that might be specifically unmet for migrant fathers.

By reconfiguring identities and gender relations, migration disrupts the default relationship between contemporary healthcare institutions and the parents who receive care from them. Examining how migrant men negotiate reproductive decision-making in a culturally different context provides an opportunity to evaluate how gendered institutional arrangements in Western-derived healthcare systems can be more effective for migrant fathers. Supporting male partners' involvement in the chain of care can enhance the perinatal outcomes for both migrant mothers and fathers separated from other supports (DeSouza 2006). Finally, addressing the theory gap about heterosexual men's reproductive decisions can help improve care for men, women

and their families, by making available for critique and transformation the culturally specific assumptions of Western health institutions (Cleaver 2002, Demontigny & Demontigny 2013, DeSouza 2013, Lohan *et al.* 2013).

The study

Aims

This study examined the discourses Indian and Chinese heterosexual migrant fathers drew on to describe their experience of new fatherhood in Aotearoa New Zealand. Informed by feminist poststructuralist theory and employing a discourse analytic approach, this study aims to condense and critically evaluate discourses used by participants to elaborate the institutional forces that construct migrant fatherhood, with a view to empowering nursing practitioners and healthcare institutions to serve migrant communities better. This article presents findings about decision-making about fathering; future papers will examine the fathers' experiences of the maternity health system.

Design

This qualitative study was conducted in 2009 and purposive sampling was used to recruit men through two community organizations. The inclusion criteria were for men who self-identified as being Chinese and Indian and who had become fathers in Auckland, New Zealand in the previous year. Recruiters who were involved with each of the community organizations publicized the studies through email and invited potential participants to take part in the ethnic-specific focus groups, which were held at the same community venues.

Participants

New Zealand's migration policy since 1987 selectively targets migrants with financial means who enter the country through a focus on skills. Therefore, new migrants entering in this way rather than a humanitarian scheme would typically be professionals with financial capital. Eight Chinese and eight Indian men in heterosexual relationships were selected to take part in focus groups. They were aged between 29–34 years and had lived in the Auckland area for between 1 year and 5 years.

Data collection

Focus groups were used to collect data with a view to achieving theoretical, practical and therapeutic ends for all

participants (Kitzinger 1994, Madriz 2000, Banks-Wallace & Parks 2001, Choudhry *et al.* 2002, McLafferty 2004, Colucci 2007, Culley *et al.* 2007, Krueger & Casey 2008, Brown *et al.* 2010). Methodologically, focus groups are compatible with discourse analysis, because spoken texts are viewed as emblematic of the discourses available in the social, cultural and historical context of the speakers (Gavey 1989, Wetherell *et al.* 2001, Willig 2003, Stevenson 2004, Traynor 2004, Crowe 2005). Practically, groups allowed access to large numbers of men, with potential therapeutic benefits for the participants. Participants were provided with petrol vouchers to acknowledge their time and contribution.

Facilitators were chosen to facilitate each group who matched the participants by gender and ethnicity and who were fathers, counsellors and experienced research and therapy group facilitators. A semi-structured interview schedule guided the group discussion. To ensure that the focus group interviewers were consistent in their interviewing technique, all attended training and used a semi-structured interview guide to ensure that key areas were addressed. I also met with the facilitators to reflect on and discuss the interview process. A note taker was also present. A schedule of open-ended questions structured the discussion and the focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. In the case of the Chinese focus group, the group discussion was translated into English and verified by an independent translator. A debriefing session was completed with the research assistants after the research was completed.

Ethical considerations

All the fathers that took part in the study gave written, informed consent. They were assured of confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Approval was obtained from the University's Research Ethics Committee.

Data analysis

Once the speech in the focus group discussion was converted into written text, they were read with a view to identifying discourses of fathering, discursive practices and subject positions. Typically discourse analysis involves breaking apart texts into unique and contained discourses and attempting to identify speaking positions and relations of power (Parker & Bolton Discourse Network 1999). In the transcripts, I examined the subject positions and strategies used by the men as they negotiated their varying subjectivities as fathers in a new country.

Rigour

Texts that attempt to represent the processes and results of research deserve scrutiny, as data must be seen as credible and undistorted by ideology or unchecked subjectivity to be useful (Lather 1986). However, many criteria used to ensure rigour in quantitative and qualitative research are problematic when viewed through a poststructural lens (Peace 2003, Rossman *et al.* 2010). Furthermore, many readings are possible when discourse analytic approaches are used (Powers, 2001). Nairn (2003) proposes several ways for making a discourse analysis rigorous, which have guided this study. Firstly, prefacing the perspective or locations that shape ones analysis. I have an 'affective engagement' (Ginsburg & Rapp 1995, p. 12) with this work that goes beyond the textual. My research emerges from my reflexive investment in the social world that I share with the men who have experienced the health system as outsiders (to the dominant culture, to the professional culture of health professionals) and to the midwives and nurses that constitute my professional community. Nairn also notes the need to provide 'a clear analytic path'(p. 29) that can be scrutinized. Nairn proposes that this path should have three key components: a clear theoretical rationale, the inclusion of analysed data and connecting analyses with literature and research. Nairn concludes that analysis itself is a construction of the social world and therefore, validation by people who are engaged or have expertise in the area can be considered adequate if through the authority of the reading, the text is viewed as comprehensive and compelling. In addition to strategies that facilitate rigour in data analysis, reflexive processes that have been included in data collection include: ethnicity matching and the debriefing with facilitators.

Findings

Skilled migrant fathers from China and India drew on two discourses to describe their reproductive decision-making. The first was fatherhood as a financial calculation and the second was fatherhood as 'natural' and inevitable.

Fatherhood as a financial calculation

Participants described fatherhood using the discourses of project planning, incorporating family planning and reproductive choice as a rational or calculated action informed by financial security.

The financial discourse constructs a good father as one with the capacity to economically provide for one's family:

Joseph: We can talk about the importance of being a father from several aspects. Traditionally a father is the main earner of family income. The whole family rely more on a father. Now the situation is different

Joseph speaks about fatherhood in a broad way, but focuses on the long-held idea of a father as a breadwinner. He takes seriously the idea of responsibility and being relied on, which appears individualized, but he notes that things are changing. He describes a traditional patriarchal definition of masculinity, where fathers have defined gender roles of economic responsibility.

Continuing the theme of tradition, Ivan locates his family in a Chinese cultural context more explicitly:

Ivan: I think it is very important. In the traditional Chinese culture we have to get married and start a career. After we get married we have many family responsibilities: for example, buying a house; paying the rent; a series of responsibilities follow this. After a baby is born you have to pay tuition fee for the child. I think it (the role of a father) is very important

Ivan identifies a developmental process in fathering that follows a pre-determined and coercive cultural script, where maturity is attained by being able to financially provide. The appropriate trajectory is to provide a materially 'secure' base for a child with an educational fulcrum. Ivan's excerpt shows how fatherhood is an expected phase in the heterosexual life course where becoming a father is a marker of adulthood and maturity, a step towards fulfilling a normal life (Morison 2013).

This coercive cultural script has life-changing consequences for families, such as leading to the termination of a pregnancy:

Lincoln: We had our first baby in New Zealand. I came to New Zealand 4 years ago. When I was in China I felt the pressure was great so my wife aborted her first baby

What is this pressure and where does it come from? Who is imposing the pressure and what is the responsibility he is talking about? He continues:

Lincoln: Since I felt my pressure at that time was too great and I wasn't able to assume the responsibility of supporting a family we didn't give birth to our first child. Moreover, it is very expensive to deliver a baby in China. I think the advantage in New Zealand is the government gives you benefits after you have a child. This is quite good. Although it isn't so good but it isn't that bad. It is much better than no benefits, like in China. Before we had our first baby we also calculated according to the Chinese tradition when was the best time for my wife to get pregnant. I also asked my wife

to take nutrients and dietary supplements and had calculated when was the best time to give birth to the child

Lincoln positions himself as bearing individual responsibility for social pressure and unable to assume the responsibility of having a baby at the time, for financial or cultural reasons. Lincoln monitors his wife's diet and consults Chinese tradition, working to ensure his child is conceived and born at the 'best' time, although it isn't clear what 'best' means.

In the following excerpt, Partha talks about parenthood not as a choice but natural and expected:

Partha: I got married age of 27, so I said I wanted to have a baby within one and a half years, the reason is if you are 30 at the age of 30, if you have a boy as soon as he becomes at the age of 25 you are 55 so that the gap between the father and son grows bigger in terms of how you are thinking. And also at the age of [the] example I am giving you, is 27 and 30, 3 years difference, but if you count the years between when he is young, when he is having education in maybe Masters or so at University, at the same time you are thinking to retire. So the thing is in your retirement you want to be financially secure, at the same time he is studying. Financially... (inaudible) ...But I don't want to give him pressure to say 'Oh I want you to settle down..' Study properly, whatever he wants. I want to have retirement early, so I can spend more time with the family. At the age of 28 I should have a baby at least...

Like Lincoln, Partha's excerpt shows how fatherhood is a calculation where long term financial security and flexibility factor in reproductive decision-making. The discourse of father as provider is also juxtaposed with the desire to be father who is emotionally engaged, he wants to be connected across the generation gap, to be close to his child (who he assumes is a male) but not put 'pressure' on them. His planned projection of fatherhood into his would-be son's bright future shows how neoliberalism shapes the calculation of reproduction in terms of finance and rational productivity.

In the next excerpt Lincoln again frames fatherhood as a collaborative planned project requiring careful financial management to ensure that things are secure and everything is in place:

Lincoln: Why did I decide to have a child at that time? We lived together for 8 years before we got married. After we were married we migrated to New Zealand. Since we arrived here we have made a lot of preparations. We didn't have enough money. Then we opened a shop and made some money. After we made money we felt we were ready to a baby. It was at this time of last year we felt we were ready. We had bought a house and felt we were completely settled down. When everything was ready we decided to have a baby

The issue of readiness and parenthood as a question are also identified in Joseph's excerpt:

Joseph: I don't know how to put it. For many years I had been thinking about whether I should have a child or not. Generally speaking, I thought I should have a baby. I knew I would have a lot of responsibilities after I had a baby. I asked myself, 'Are you able to take good care of the child after he/she is born?' This isn't simply about keeping a baby alive. You have to take into account mental issues and character development of the child. So I had been putting off having a baby. We were married in 1990. We put it off till now. This child is a planned baby. We had calculated the date. My wife had worked for one year and it was time for us to have a child. When my wife knew she was pregnant she was very, very happy because she loves children and she loves to have many children

Joseph positions himself as a rational choice making subject, however, this choice appears in the context of obligation. He decides he 'should' because in the context of compulsory heterosexual reproduction it is what you do. Joseph takes the decision seriously: the baby isn't a pleasure or a delight for him as it is for his wife, it is an individual responsibility as a father to shape the child. Joseph interrogates himself for readiness and identifies the moral, emotional and character-development responsibilities that fathers need to take on in addition to being breadwinners. It is about doing things in the right order. Women are typically viewed as having primary responsibility for the cultural reproduction of the next generation, through the communication of cultural and family values. Men view themselves as the ones who define those values, although it is generally seen as women's responsibility to teach and enforce these values (Park 2006, Finn & Henwood 2009).

However, being prepared for childbirth financially and materially does not mean men are prepared emotionally as this excerpt shows:

Lincoln: The role of a father is quite important. But before I had babies I didn't know what it would be like to be a father. I didn't know what it was to be a father until I had a baby. Before we had a baby, the life of the couple, I mean I and my wife, were very good. But as I haven't become a father I didn't have any idea yet that I would have responsibilities after I had a baby. This is me

Lincoln's excerpt is interesting as it reflects the gap between his earlier financial readiness and the limits of preparation. Nothing can actually prepare you for fatherhood until you become a father. Lincoln's discussion also emphasizes patrilineality whereby having children contributes to his development as an adult and being a father

makes him able to contribute to his child's development (Datta 2007). Being 'ready' or mature enough to be a parent is echoed in other research (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist & Lövgren 2013).

Several men experienced this sense of continuity and history, as they become biological fathers:

Ajay: We haven't seen our childhood. So, like when we have a baby, a little girl a little boy, at least we can see our childhood how, like, we were when we were born. Our father mother are telling us you are doing like this, you are doing like this, but after a baby we can see how we were

Fatherhood connects men to the past and the future, inculcates a sense of responsibility for the next generation and provides an opportunity to examine their own childhoods (Park 2006). However, for Ajay, there's also a desire to ensure that the family being created is complete:

Ajay: If you have a girl and boy then you feel more complete, because girl means like you...feel that part of your what you call responsibility...girl at home...both the roles...100%...each and every role of your life

Paternal planning extends to the gender balance of the family, with sons and daughters having culturally defined roles that should be balanced for completeness.

Parents mediated many participants' reproductive decision-making. This Indian participant identifies parental and cultural pressures of reproductive continuity, which led him to decide it was the 'right time':

Murali: Me and my wife were married in 2004, then in 2005 we came over here and like after 2 years my parents like they were saying you should plan your family. But we were aware at what point we want our child...Still they were pressurising us...And suddenly what happened, my wife, she got redundancy from her job and then I thought like this is the time ... and I don't want you to work during the pregnancy so that's why we decided now we will go for a baby and then we planned accordingly...Everything was OK in the end

The excerpt shows that rather than family planning being a private matter discussed with their partners, many participants were also obliged to consider the desires of their parents in their reproductive decision-making. In this case, the family and cultural pressure to reproduce combined with a changed financial status for his wife, leading him to decide it was the right time. As with earlier participants, he separates production and reproduction, framing the maternal body as vulnerable, while also positioning himself as provider, breadwinner and protector.

Cultural and family pressures in terms of gender preference of sons over daughters also shape reproductive decision-making:

Ivan: For traditional Chinese families a boy is still preferred. This is very important, for the purpose of producing a male heir to carry on the family line. In my own family I have an elder brother and a younger sister. My sister has two daughters and my brother also has a daughter. So for my father he really hopes he could have a grandson. This would make him satisfied

Ivan's excerpt shows how father's fathers can be sources of pressure to have male children. Having a son has social implications for inheritance and continuing the family name or bloodline. Sons also play culturally specific roles in taking care of parents, whereas girls marry into other families (Puri *et al.* 2011).

Naresh's reproductive decision-making took into account the need for his daughter to have a sibling in the absence of extended family:

Naresh: For me, we were planning. The reason being, since we are out of India, we don't have anybody at home to take care of the kids. The reason we decided like for the daughter like she'll have some company in home of her age. That's why we wanted to have a baby in here. For us also it's very, everything is so smooth. She's also happy. She has got some activity at home. If she is on her own, then she will look around or she will just do some naughty things. But because everyone's pretty busy in their life you can't depend on your neighbour also...So we have a couple of Indian neighbours but still like, because of modern life it is difficult...OK. For her at least we need to try

Having a second child was influenced by a desire to meet the social needs of the elder child – who might misbehave in the absence of a sibling – in a nuclear family context with two working parents, where even other Indians could not be expected to assist with childcare.

Typically, the idea of 'choosing' when to have a baby assumes a rational unified subject, who makes conscious decisions which enable self-actualization and success (Lupton 1995). However, the self-mastery implied in restraining impulses and bodily processes to carefully manage conception, disguises how reproductive decision-making is also shaped by societally accepted scripts about financial independence and extended family pressure.

Fatherhood as natural process

The second discourse identified in the participants' talk was the 'naturalness' or inevitability of parenthood as being central to the heterosexual life course where being pregnant

'just happened'. Parenthood was viewed as inevitable, spontaneous and automatic as a prescribed stage of the heterosexual life course and an essential feature of being a mature adult (Morison 2013).

In the first excerpt, Parikshit freely admits that the pregnancy was unplanned rather than chosen:

Parikshit: And in my case I realized I never planned my parenthood because it happened. And then once I got this message and then I, sudden realization you know, that everything is not in our control. You know, you plan and you do some set of activities that you like to and then I used to tell my wife OK, let's settle down and then we'll plan. You know, really nature has its own control over every human being. It does its job

He contrasts planning with nature, as biological. Parenthood is implicitly presented as a natural consequence of being a (heterosexual) human. This disclosure in a group context is unusual as it exposes him to being viewed as failing to be mature, responsible and rational given that typically an unplanned pregnancy is seen as reflective of being a bad citizen (Morison 2013).

The following excerpt similarly positions conception as something that just happened:

Alistair: I have two kids so I want to share my experience first. When my wife became pregnant with the first baby she was very happy because both of us were quite old and we got married late. Most of our classmates had a child earlier than us so we were quite happy when my wife got pregnant

Alistair states his authority to speak as the father of two children. By using the word 'became' he refers to a passive process, automatic reproduction. There is an expected cultural timeline for procreation and they caught up with everyone else, because they were behind. In the context of procreative heteronormativity, childbearing (as biological reproduction) can occur spontaneously and be left to chance.

In contrast with the previous participants who were pragmatic about their unplanned pregnancy, Farid and his wife felt unprepared and stressed:

Farid: When we had the second child in New Zealand the feeling wasn't that good. This is because we just arrived in New Zealand and our English was still poor. Moreover, we were pressed by family life, job hunting and finance. The second child wasn't a planned baby. That's to say my wife got pregnant naturally. It wasn't a planned pregnancy. Since my wife got pregnant we found we have had a lot of pressure mentally and psychologically because we were not familiar with the environment at that time, our English was still poor and we still had problems to communicate with our GP and obstetricians, though the welfare here is very good. This is what I felt

Farid's excerpt reflects how having a baby requires having certain material resources and kinds of cultural capital. There is an ostensibly right time to have a baby (when you are a migrant) which requires being financially secure, employed, familiar with the environment and a competent communicator. He invokes norms that reflect the recognized and acceptable routes through which parents should have a child.

Discussion

This study shows how migrant men negotiate reproductive decision-making in New Zealand in the context of changing paradigms of fatherhood. It adds to a growing body of knowledge about fathering in New Zealand (Gage *et al.* 2009) and about how migrant men produce masculine identities in English-speaking nations more generally (Tautolo *et al.* 2009, Kilkey *et al.* 2014). Other work has shown how fathers are discursively produced through societal discourses, which shape how they orient themselves to families, children and others (Marsiglio *et al.* 2013). In this research, two dominant discourses emerged with regard to reproductive decision-making. The first was fatherhood as a planned project and the second was fatherhood as a natural process, both of which highlight how family planning is more than a private intimate matter, but is shaped through broader institutional structures and societal norms.

The 'willed' pregnancy is the dominant procreative ideology of liberal states (Wall 2001). Planning and controlling one's fertility to have a baby is proof of one's status as a responsible and free citizen. The migrant fathers in this study positioned themselves as neoliberal people who were hyper-responsible and choice making. Financial readiness as criteria for reproductive decision-making meant that liberal assumptions of choice and control were invoked and self-mastery and regulation of the intimacies of conception made pregnancy a planned project.

Fathers in this study viewed parenting in stereotypically gendered ways, framing the maternal body as vulnerable and positioning themselves as breadwinners, moral guardians and protectors. Fathers saw their role as disciplined individuals as the locus of control in reproductive matters. Their planning was strategic and lifelong, evocative of neoliberal rationality but also reflecting dominant discourses of hegemonic masculinity, which construct the father as authoritarian and provider (Connell 1995, Barclay & Lupton 1999, Este & Tachble 2009). This separation of production and reproduction reflects a gender binary that is a continuing legacy of the Fordist model of family life with male breadwinner and full-time mother (Weeks 2011) that also reinforces

patriarchal masculinity (White 2006, Datta 2007). For migrants, the compelling forces of acculturation and the growing financialization of private life requiring two-wages could challenge these gender binaries (Walsh 2011).

Limitations

The fathers who took part, were upper-middle-class migrants who entered New Zealand through the skills category and had access to financial and professional resources. They were self-selected and actively engaged in community organizations, so represent a unique sample. The focus of this research, however, was not to provide a statistically significant sampling of the migrant father population, but to describe the structure of discourses employed by the participants and to link this to other qualitative research. As always in discourse analysis, how people talk about their reproductive decision-making does not necessarily reflect how they behaved and so further research is needed to understand how the behaviour of migrant fathers relates to their description of the fathering process and to examine institutional factors that enhance migrant fathers participation in the perinatal period.

Conclusion

The key implication for nurses of this research centres on the concept of 'choices' made by migrant families. For nurses to provide more supportive care, they need to problematize the notion of choice in the context of broader economic relations into which migrant men are inserted in white-settler societies. The expectation that migrant men combine breadwinning with active fathering can pose pressures on families that are exacerbated by gendered institutional arrangements. The default hetero-normative family form of the male breadwinner/female caregiver nuclear family form is reflected in migrant fathers' discourses, but their speech also indicates a different relation to the nuclear family, potentially leading to new practices, identities and meanings of fatherhood. Many participants in accounting for their reproductive decision-making appeared to be making 'choices' in hetero-normative, patriarchal and neoliberal frameworks to reproduce as an expected phase of the heterosexual life course. The 'choices' made by migrant fathers to base reproduction on financial capability furthers state goals of making individuals responsible for themselves and assumes that active fathering can be engaged in without resourcing or support. Nurses are placed at the primary interface to provide reproductive information and support for migrant families. Nurses need to consider how the culturally specific gender and class-focused

norms of their institutions might prevent/exclude migrant fathers from being able to achieve the norms of active fathering in the absence of broader familial support and familiarity with local support systems. To that end, nurses can work to enhance migrant fathers' involvement and capability and provide fathers with knowledge and support, which will ultimately enable migrant families to flourish.

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Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the author.

Author contributions

All authors have agreed on the final version and meet at least one of the following criteria [recommended by the ICMJE (http://www.icmje.org/ethical_1author.html)]:

- substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data;
- drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content.

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