

Robin Hadley: MSc Summary
(The University of Manchester, 2009).

Dissertation: *Navigating in an Uncharted World: How does the desire for fatherhood affect men?*

The rationale for this study originates from the researcher's previous study, which explored the yearning for parenthood in men (broodiness). Included in the effects were depression, anxiety, and social isolation. One of the central issues raised from the previous study was to find the prevalence of male broodiness. This led to an investigation to assess the level of the desire for parenthood in childless men compared to non-parents and parents - 'Navigating in an Uncharted World: How does the Desire for Fatherhood affect Men?' There is little research on this desire for fatherhood. What exists is mostly derived from studies of couples in infertility treatment, fathers to be, or those who are already fathers. Therefore literature surrounding fatherhood, masculinity, intention to parent, and the few works on childless, were examined.

In order to examine the issues surrounding the desire for parenthood a sequential mixed-methods quantitative-qualitative approach was selected. This approach allows the verification of results, generation of new areas of interest, and provides generalisability of results. An on-line questionnaire was designed to measure the influences, motivations, and reasons that may affect the decision to parent. Included was a unique item attempting to measure the reactions associated with broodiness. Open questions were integrated into the survey to provide detail of the respondent's life experience and, in addition, aid validity by providing feedback on the survey. Respondents were recruited by a snowball technique and over two hundred completed replies ($n=232$) were analysed using descriptive, univariate, and bivariate techniques. The profile of the sample data gave a mode of female with the majority of respondents being White-British, degree educated, professional, and heterosexual.

The results revealed that a higher number of childless men desired parenthood (51.9%) than did not (25.9%). Non-parents showed similar levels of desire for parenthood, with females indicating slightly more than males. Female and male parents demonstrated an equal desire not to repeat parenthood. The decision against parenthood for non-parents showed economic and social factors as the main influences. For the parent group, health, and age were the main influences. Cultural and family expectations were common influences, for both non-parents and parents, as influences on parenthood. Females indicated personal desire against the male's cultural and societal expectations. Similarities between the two groups included the items 'feel parent-child bond' and 'give love and affection'. Parents highlighted 'receive love and affection' and 'improve on my childhood experience'. Non-parents reported 'I do want a child' and 'children complete a relationship' as reasons. 'Yearning' was the item most associated with the broodiness item. Non-parents were more affected by 'Yearning', 'Sadness', and 'Depression' compared to parents. Females from both groups had mostly similar response levels, with non-parent females indicating higher responses in 'Isolation' and 'Sadness'. Male non-parents had the highest reactions to 'isolation' and 'depression'.

The study has shown that not only do some childless men indicate a desire for parenthood comparable to childless women, but that they may also suffer similar or higher levels of depression and isolation as a consequence.