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## BECOMING A FATHER: AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON TRANSITION TO FATHERHOOD<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT.** This study aims to conduct an integrative review of national and international articles on the subject of the transition to fatherhood published between 2006 and 2014. EBSCO, PsycINFO, SciELO Regional and PEPISIC databases were consulted resulting in 25 indexed articles, which were analyzed in relation to year of publication, country, methodology, thematic and results. The findings were grouped in four major groups, entitled: "the father with himself", "the father, the mother and the baby", "the father and formal support network" and "the father, the work and the society". In the group "the father with himself", there is fatherhood experience as an internal revolution, accompanied by intense emotional overload, ambivalence, solitude and idealization of the parent-child relationship. In the group "the father, the mother and the baby" is perceived an intense transformation in married life, where the father tends to be more active in relation to the baby, but modulated by the maternal presence. In the group "the father, and the formal support network", we see the lack of preparation of professionals to deal with parental demands, and the absence of social and health policies for the parent-child relationship. In the group "the father, the work and the society", we highlight the use of informal support networks and the emergence of horizontal patterns of paternal identification. We discussed the main trends and gaps in the research on transition to fatherhood, towards the constitution of a new father.

**Keywords:** Paternity; literature review; contemporary.

## TORNANDO-SE PAI: UMA REVISÃO INTEGRATIVA DA LITERATURA SOBRE A TRANSIÇÃO PARA A PATERNIDADE

**RESUMO.** Este estudo tem como objetivo realizar uma revisão integrativa de artigos nacionais e internacionais sobre o tema da transição para a paternidade publicados entre 2006 e 2014. Foram consultadas as bases de dados EBSCO, PsycINFO, SciELO Regional e PEPISIC, resultando em 25 artigos indexados, que foram analisados em relação ao ano de publicação, país, metodologia, temática e resultados. Os resultados foram agrupados em quatro grandes grupos, intitulados: "o pai consigo mesmo", "o pai, a mãe e o bebê", "o pai e a rede de apoio formal" e "o pai, o trabalho e a sociedade". No grupo, "o pai consigo mesmo", destaca-se a vivência da paternidade como uma revolução interna, acompanhada de intensa sobrecarga emocional, ambivalência, solidão e idealização da relação pai-bebê. No grupo "o pai, a mãe e o bebê", percebe-se uma intensa transformação na vida conjugal, no qual o pai tende a ser mais ativo na relação com o bebê, porém modulado pela presença materna. No grupo "o pai, o trabalho e a sociedade", percebemos a falta de preparo dos profissionais para lidar com as demandas paternas, bem como a inexistência de políticas sociais e de saúde voltadas à relação pai-bebê. No grupo "o pai, o trabalho e a sociedade", destacamos o uso de redes informais de apoio e o surgimento de modelos horizontais de identificação paterna. Foram discutidos tendências e hiatos nas pesquisas atuais no campo da transição para a paternidade, no sentido da constituição de um novo pai.

**Palavras-chave:** Paternidade; revisão de literatura; contemporaneidade.

## CONVERTIRSE EN PADRE: UNA REVISIÓN INTEGRADORA DE LA LITERATURA SOBRE LA TRANSICIÓN A LA PATERNIDAD

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**RESUMEN.** Este estudio tiene como objetivo llevar a cabo una revisión integradora de los artículos nacionales e internacionales sobre el tema de la transición a la paternidad publicados entre 2006 y 2014. Hemos consultado las bases de datos EBSCO, PsycINFO, SciELO regional y PePSIC, dando como resultado 25 artículos indexados, que fueron analizados en relación con el año de publicación, país, metodología, el tema y los resultados. Los resultados fueron agrupados en cuatro grandes grupos, titulado: "el padre mismo", "padre, la madre y el bebé", "el padre y la red de apoyo formal" y "el padre, el trabajo y la sociedad". En el grupo "el padre mismo", hay una experiencia de la paternidad como una revolución interna, acompañada por una intensa sobrecarga emocional, ambivalencia, soledad y idealización de la relación padre-hijo. En el grupo "el padre, la madre y el bebé" se percibe una intensa transformación en la vida conyugal, donde el padre tiende a ser más activo en relación con el bebé, pero moduladas por la presencia materna. En el grupo "padre, el trabajo y la sociedad", vemos la falta de preparación de los profesionales para hacer frente a las demandas de los padres, y la ausencia de políticas sociales y de salud para la relación padre-hijo. En el grupo "padre, el trabajo y la sociedad", destacamos el uso de las redes informales de apoyo y la aparición de patrones horizontales de identificación paterna. Las tendencias y las lagunas en la investigación actual se discutieron en el campo de la transición a la paternidad, hacia el establecimiento de un nuevo padre.

**Palabras-clave:** Paternidad, revisión de literatura, contemporaneidad.

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## Introduction

Among the transformations through which the contemporary western society passes, we highlight those that refer to family structure. The extended notion of family, composed of parents, children, aunts/uncles, cousins and grandparents in closer coexistence, is no longer sustained by contemporaneity. In addition to the structural changes in family configurations, the roles that each member plays within the family dynamics are in deep transformation (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). It is necessary to consider that the conceptions about conjugality, fatherhood and motherhood, as well as the practices that are arising from them, are modulated by both the affective experiences of each individual and the cultural and social expectations, forming an amalgam often contradictory, but certainly polysemous (Fåggerskiöld, 2008). It seems that there is no longer a pattern or a model to be followed, but roles and multiple identities that overlap and are interchanged, still in the process of creation.

The cultural and social changes initiated in the 20th century, among them feminism and consequent insertion of women in the labor market, globalization of market and information, and political defense of gender equity, create new expectations regarding the role of the father, previously responsible for the financial support of the family (Eerola & Huttunen, 2011). Today it is expected from the father a greater affective and effective involvement with his children, in which he begins to share the housework and child care, and be divided between the demands of work and home, being outlined an entire "culture of father" (Pleck, 2004). It is also observed the emergence of studies about "the new father" that seek to redefine the current father's role in the family and in the world, starting from the assumption that the world, societies, families and, consequently, the parents are in the complex process of reworking of identities and conducts, from which will arise differentiated forms of exercise and experience of fatherhood (Krob, Piccinini, & Silva, 2009).

Although parenthood is organized as social construction, assuming cultural variations, it is observed a core of common care that seems to be kept, such as the baby's physical care, the provision of an affective support and the economic provision to the family, whereas the parental figure who will address these functions may vary (Pleck, 2004; Fåggerskiöld, 2008). By taking the economic provision of the family as an example of this oscillation, we observe families that are organized around the father figure as the sole financial provider, others in which the mother plays this role, and still others in which the material support is shared by the couple.

With regard to the studies on fatherhood, in face of the social demand for effective and affective participation of men in the family, reconnecting him to the daily care with the children (Pleck, 2004), it is observed an increase of researches during the 1980s. However, what we observe at the clinical practice is that such transformations in the exercise of parenthood suffer a delay in relation to the speed with which these changes are socially expected and propagated in the academic environment and in the various media of communication.

Still within the scope of the researches about parenthood, we observed a gap regarding the issue of transition to fatherhood (Krob et al., 2009), while it is vast the scientific literature on the transition to motherhood. Traditionally relegated to a secondary role, the father would be only effectively perceived by the baby months after his/her birth, which would justify a greater emphasis of the studies on the initial mother-baby relationship. However, recent studies point out that the baby since very young perceives the paternal presence as being different from the maternal and that his presence as an active subject in the relationship with the baby opens up greater possibilities for the mental health of children (McKenzie & Carter, 2013). Bornholdt, Wagner and Staut (2007) suggest that a satisfactory transition to fatherhood promotes the strengthening of the bonds with the wife and, consequently, of the support given to her, a condition that we might call the good enough father, in analogy with the good enough mother of Winnicott (1948/1993).

Studying the process by which the man becomes a father today is essential, given the family and social implications arising from these transformations; mainly, the personal transformations that are specific to the paternal condition, their joys and anguishes throughout the deep change in their functions. To give a voice to these first time fathers, allows us to rethink the child care practices, but also the support of family or social network offered (or not) to fathers in the contemporaneity.

In face of the relevance that the issue of parenthood reaches in this time of deconstruction of the traditional model and proposition of new family configurations, the present study proposes an integrative review (Mendes, Silveira, & Galvão, 2008) of national and international literature on the transition to fatherhood, enabling a comprehensive and rigorous approach about what is being produced in the field of scientific research.

## Methods

We opted for using the integrative review by the fact that this modality is supported by rigorous criteria for the selection of articles, including both empirical and theoretical studies, in order to understand a particular phenomenon, from previous studies, expanding the vision of the reader about certain research field. Besides, this type of review propitiates a proximity to the "state-of-the-art" of scientific research on a particular topic, pointing out current tendencies and gaps that may prove to be fertile for future studies. This review encompassed scientific publications produced between January 2006 and May 2014.

Regarding the international literature, the databases EBSCO and PsycINFO were consulted using as descriptors 'transition to fatherhood', 'fatherhood', 'fathering' and 'first-time fathers', which were intersected one-by-one, resulting in a database. Although such descriptors are consecrated in international databases, this does not apply to Brazil. In the consultation with the bases SciELO Regional and PEPSIC it was used only the descriptor 'fatherhood', since among the terms listed in the Portal of the Virtual Health Library there was not any descriptor that referred to the transition to fatherhood, which lead us to a second search for articles from the reading of the abstracts of the studies already surveyed.

As for the inclusion criteria, articles published in indexed and peer-reviewed journals and that were drafted in English, Portuguese or Spanish, and articles that were studying primiparous fathers and mothers in stable heterosexual relationship, without children of previous relationships, were selected. Finally, articles focusing on the paternal experience since the beginning of the woman's pregnancy until at least the baby is one year old, were selected.

As for the exclusion criteria, editorials, books, book chapters, dissertations and theses were discarded, as well as the articles published in paid journals. Articles referring to foster parents or that intended to the topic of the transition to fatherhood, addressing other issues, were discarded.

The survey in the databases occurred in May 2014, being found 125 articles on EBSCO, 299 on PsycINFO, totaling 424 articles obtained from international databases. On SciELO Regional, 119 articles were found and on PEPSIC, 32 articles, totaling 151 national articles. From this amount, many articles were excluded as a function of their thematic focus, such as the biological components of paternity, post-traumatic stress disorder of parents, clinical assistances, multiple families, problems of father with the justice and imprisonment, autism, mental disorder of father, different type of clinical

assistances, separation of parents, and paternity and rights. In addition, repeated articles were excluded, that is, those found in more than one database.

After being applied the exclusion criteria, remained 25 articles, 14 published in international journals and 11 resulting from the national literature, which were read and analyzed in depth, seeking to highlight the main points mentioned by the literature, as well as to elaborate a critical reflection about them, in order to contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge in the area of transition to fatherhood.

## Results

As for the year of publication, we noticed a higher concentration of publication in the international journals in the years 2008 (four articles), 2009 (three articles) and 2011 (four articles). As to national journals, the highest concentration of publications occurred in the year 2009 (four articles).

Regarding the country of origin of the researchers and institution of pertinence, we noticed that in the topic of the transition to fatherhood there is a higher concentration of researches published in Great Britain, United States, Australia, Sweden and Finland. As to Brazil, in terms of geographical location, there is an almost exclusivity of publications of researchers from the south of the country, with predominance of researches created at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. An exception was the study carried out by the PUC-RS in partnership with the São Judas Tadeu University (SP). We stress that some articles were written in collaboration between authors from more than one country or Institution of Higher Education, which explains a higher number of researchers, when compared with the number of researches.

Among the international journals, stand out the *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, with three articles published and the *Fathering*, with two articles published about the transition to fatherhood. The *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences* has as focus studies linked to the care, whether of patient, family or community, giving emphasis to researches that promote interdisciplinarity. On the other hand, *Fathering* has as scope the research, theory and practice of man as father, being the transition to fatherhood one of the topics in its interests.

Among the national journals, three journals stand out: *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa*, *Psicologia: Teoria e Prática*, e *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, with two articles published in each of them, being the remaining publications diluted among the other journals.

As for the methodology employed in the researches, it is perceptible at both national and international level, a higher production of articles of a qualitative nature, achieving a little more than half in the publications assessed in Brazil (seven articles) and half in the international literature (seven articles). The quantitative approach supports the production of articles involving more numerous populations, fundamental for socio-demographic surveys. The preference for qualitative approach can be associated with the purpose of giving a voice for the fathers themselves to understand the paternal experience, making it polysemous.

Among the qualitative studies, eight of them used the audio recording of interviews and subsequent transcription of the speeches in the form of narratives. Most studies made use of a trigger question to initiate the contact, generally in the form of semi-structured interviews.

As for the samples, the age of the fathers varied between 16 and 48 years, with higher concentration between the ages of 20 and 40. For international articles, the number of participants in the studies of qualitative nature varied from 9 to 20 fathers, while in the two quantitative researches, the samples were of 115 and 827 fathers. As for national articles, the number of participants varied from 4 to 20 fathers, which can be attributed to the fact that they are all qualitative or mixed studies, situation that is repeated in the international journals.

Regarding the period of data collection, we noticed that in the international literature there is a trend to perform one or two interviews with the participants, being the first carried out at the end of pregnancy or after delivery and the second after delivery (from 3 to 9 months). The study of Thomas, Bonér and Hildingsson (2011), conducts the first interview, linked to the first ultrasound, conducting two more interviews, one at the end of the third trimester of gestation and another two months after delivery. As to

national articles, the option for a single interview, at the end of pregnancy or during the first months in the baby's life, predominates.

However, Krob et al. (2009) propose the execution of two meetings with the father, being one at the end of the 3rd trimester of pregnancy and the other in the 2nd month after delivery, while in the study of Levandowsky, Picinnini & Lopes (2009), four meetings with teenage fathers were performed: in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy, in the 3rd month after delivery, at the end of the 1st year of the child's life and, finally, when the child completed two years of age.

As for the method of data analysis, there is a significant difference between national and international articles. In these we observe various approaches, such as the descriptive statistics (Thomas, Bonér, & Hildingsson, 2011; Habib & Lancaster, 2006; Halle et al, 2008), the content analysis (Deave & Johnson, 2008; Höfner, Schadler, & Richter, 2011), the comparative methods based on the Grounded Theory (Fägerskiöld, 2008; Sansiriphun et al, 2010), the phenomenological methods (Premberg, Hellström, & Berg, 2008) and the narrative analysis (Eerola & Huttunen, 2011). In all the national studies is adopted the content analysis, whether qualitative or quantitative approach. Among these, the study of Gonçalves, Guimarães, Silva, Lopes and Picinnini (2013) stands out by using a software (NVivo) to perform the content analysis.

In the international literature, it is observed an element absent from the Brazilian articles: the a posteriori validation. In the studies of Deave and Johnson (2008) and de Premberg et al. (2008) some of the participants were contacted, after the finalization of the results, in order to verify if the conclusions of the researchers corresponded to the narratives of the participating fathers. On the other hand, the study of Sansiriphun et al (2010) appealed to subsequent participation of four experts in Grounded Theory to obtain the validation of the analysis process. In short, it is clear the need to complement and confront the interpretation of the researcher, proposing the triangulation of data (Stake, 2011) with the help of the participants themselves or external consultants.

There is another peculiarity to be highlighted. Despite the two international studies referred to the participation of the partners during the research (Deave & Johnson, 2008; Höfner et al., 2011), none of them used the female narratives in their final results, thus excluding an important and integrative element of the transition to fatherhood. Although this methodological approach that excludes, from the sample, the female standpoint on the process of fatherhood may be justified by the objectives of each study, we noticed that the focus of fatherhood while solitary experience ends up reproducing the way the maternal experience is being addressed in the field of research.

## Discussion

Next, we present the aspects of the transition to fatherhood addressed and discussed in the articles consulted, with the objective of pointing out trends in the current researches on fatherhood, in the national and international scenario. We stress that our objective is to accomplish a qualitative synthesis of the results obtained with this review, grouping them, for didactic purposes, into four large fields, according to the focus of the investigations:

- a. *the father with himself*, which is relative to studies that explore the personal experiences and feelings relating to the transition to fatherhood, through paternal narratives;
- b. *the father, the mother and the baby*, where relational aspects are focused, such as father-baby, mother-baby, father-mother and mother-father-baby relationship;
- c. *the father and the formal support network*, where the relationship between the father and the formal networks of professional support, including public and medical policies in the assistance to paternity is emphasized;
- d. *the father, the work and the society*, alluding to studies about the relationships between men and work, with other fathers or with their families of origin.

In the field "the father with himself", there is prevalence of studies that emphasize pregnancy as a transforming event in life, similar to an internal revolution (Deave & Johnson, 2008; Fägerskiöld, 2008; Premberg, Hellström & Berg, 2008). Anguish aspects of this experience, where the man intends to feel emotionally overloaded (Bornholdt, Wagner & Staudt, 2007; Krob, Picinnini & Silva, 2009) are stressed,

because the change imposed by pregnancy is permanent. On the other hand, fathers emphasize feeling of completeness by imagining the baby before birth and the care with him/her after birth (Bornholdt et al., 2007; Premberg et al., 2008). The studies suggest that this paternal ambivalence accompanies the entire pregnancy and the postpartum period (Krob et al., 2009), many times bringing a feeling of personal growth, maturity and sensitivity as consequences of the transition to fatherhood (Eerola & Huttunen, 2011). Two articles in particular highlight the difficulties of fathers to express feelings that they consider as negative, being them fathers of ordinary children (Gonçalves et al., 2013), or fathers of children with special needs (Henn & Sifuentes, 2012), indicating a demand of social order on the father towards hiding his fears and difficulties and the adoption of a position of greater consistency and confidence, which would allow the woman a trustworthy environment to express difficulties of practical or affective order.

This positioning suggests an alignment with the Winnicott's perspective about the father's role in being to propitiate a safe environment for the development of the mother-baby relationship, in a way that mother and child feel the protection of the father, who would be an affective support to the mother and provider of the concrete needs of the mother-baby pair. How could a father who demonstrates insecurity, fears and ambivalence, provide this type of support? Being a good enough father, that is, one that provides care to the mother and baby, without the pretense of being a perfect father, as he will also be more vulnerable to emotional instabilities, since he participates effectively of the care, which is physical and emotional at the same time.

However, we would like to point out just as Ferreira and Aiello-Vaisberg (2006) that, the statements of Winnicott reflected the prevailing thought of his time, when male and female roles were disconnected and complementary, being necessary to rethink these statements in the light of contemporary transformations, at the risk of taking the theory as dogma, and not as temporary knowledge.

Another interesting element cited is the feeling of unreality of the father in relation to the baby during pregnancy (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009), which can often be mitigated or overcome with the accomplishment of the ultrasound that makes the baby more tangible for the new father (Picinnini, Levandowski, Gomes, Lindemeyer, & Lopes, 2009), since he does not experience the body changes of pregnancy. On the other hand, the study of Gonçalves et al. (2013) points to an idealization of the father-child relationship, describing that the negative aspects of paternity are less or almost never narrated by fathers, whose tendency is to highlight positive aspects. This dual perspective in relation to pregnancy – the woman starting from important body changes, and the man from the observation of the female changes, help us to understand why, to the father, the baby “comes later”. Could we say that the father is less apt to baby care for being more subject to the questions of social and psychological order, while the biological would mark the maternal experience? Alternatively, could we say that the way with which each member of the couple emotionally manages the child depends on a complex combination of factors that is not restricted to the biological? This mismatch in the perception and acceptance of the baby's reality is also observed in the transition to fatherhood in teenage fathers, as point out the studies of Levandowski, Piccinini and Lopes (2009) and de Levandowski and Picinnini (2006).

Among the articles selected, some studies point out the feeling of paternal solitude (Höfner et al., 2011), whose expression is often manifested only on the occasion of the birth, although it can be tracked, throughout the pregnancy in the consultations and medical interurrences (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). At birth, the father tends to lose his function (Chin, Hall & Daiches, 2011), since most health systems are centered in the care of the mother and baby (Fägerskiöld, 2008; Thomas et al., 2011; Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009; Halle et al., 2008; Picinnini, Silva, Gonçalves, Lopes, & Tudge., 2012). Many men narrate the moment that they are at the surgical center as the most distressing of the whole pregnancy (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009). The father tends to feel helpless, deepening the same feeling of loneliness that he experiences as the mother-baby relationship develops.

It is worth mentioning the highlight that one of the theoretical articles (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009) gives to the existence of triggers within the transition to parenthood process, highlighting that this is developed throughout the development of the baby and then throughout the development of the child, being what we call as “transition to fatherhood”, only a first stage of changes that accompany man in his path to fatherhood.

There are still two aspects in this field to be highlighted. It is perceived an emotional overload of the father in the role of economic provider of the home (Chin et al., 2011), by having to cope with the demands to which he is subject, within and outside the home, which requires of him an almost total dedication to the life of his wife and baby, causing a change in himself and in the marital relations (Chin et al., 2011) and a growth of the father in his parental involvement (Eerola & Huttunen, 2011). To this is added the challenge of taking care of himself despite the paternity (Premberg et al., 2008), as if the father had to waive his own interests, including the self-care and social life, in favor of the family. Should not he question here the possibility of integration of his family life with his personal life? Alternatively, does a father affectively involved would necessarily have to waive of his personal life in favor of caring for children?

The field "the *father, the mother and the baby*" encompasses studies about the interaction between the constituents of the new family. According to Habib (2012), the marital relationship is the most studied variable in the field of the transition to fatherhood, perhaps for being the one that is most modified before the coming of the baby. Among the marital changes mentioned by the participants is the decrease of the couple's sexual life (Chin et al., 2011; Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009), which tends to extend from pregnancy to the first few months after delivery. It is worth noting that in the national literature we did not find references to the couple's sexual life, being mentioned the paternal concerning with wife and baby (Krob et al., 2009) and the perception that the marital life has changed (Jager & Bottoli, 2011).

As some articles point out, the man is active in building his relationship with the baby (Jager & Bottoli, 2011); however, this approximation process is often modulated by the mother (Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009; Halle et al., 2008; Eerola & Hutunnem, 2011; Picinnini et al., 2009; Gonçalves et al., 2013). The mother's ambivalence before the father-baby relationship is often expressed in this modulation: if the father is more absent, the mother claims his presence and participation; on the other hand, if the father has a strong bond with the baby and is participative, he tends to be neglected by the mother, who considers him inappropriate or excessive. In one way or another, the mother controls the development of the father-baby relationship as a "guardian of the portal" (Eerola & Huttunen 2011, p. 220) who sometimes allows the father's involvement and sometimes prevents. In this sense, it is assumed an association between the attitude of the mother and the feelings of exclusion or intrusion expressed by the father in the process of approximation and connection with his child.

This role of the mother reminds us of a of Freudian postulate about the need for someone who exerts a capacity of para-excitation for the newborn, restricting the arrival of the stimuli to the baby before he can absorb them, reducing the traumatic effects of the external environment on the child development. We assume that the question raised is not about the validity of this modulation exerted by the mother, which is necessary for the baby; what we question is whether this capacity ends up not being affected by the maternal ambivalence, hindering or delaying the development of the father-baby relationship.

On the other hand, as pointed out by the study of Fägerskiöld (2008), it is common for the mother to notice poorly the paternal needs, possibly for being more focused on her relationship with the baby, a situation that might trigger the paternal feeling of exclusion, referred to in several articles. In addition, the literature points to the centrality of the woman and her view of the man on the establishment of paternity, since the way she lives and expresses her feelings about the father-baby relationship may help or hinder the partner in building his paternal identity.

In some studies accessed, we found the paternal conception that the task of caring for the baby should be exclusively or predominantly of responsibility of the mother (Chin et al., 2011; Eerola & Huttunen, 2011; Höfner et al., 2011; Bornholdt et al., 2007; Gonçalves et al., 2013). The argument presented by the parents involved concerns the biological apparatus that the mother possesses and that places her in a position to meet the needs of the baby, that is, she could gestate the baby inside herself, she has physiological conditions to breastfeed him/her, as well to rely on an alleged "maternal instinct" or "sensitivity" as basic tools for the child care. According to this view, the father would have the function of mere auxiliary of the mother, whose skills would be innate, therefore being possible to teach the art of caring to the partner. This ideology leaves aside the idea that maternity and paternity

would be established in the relationship of each one with his/her personal history, with the cultural and social values of the society in which he/she lives (Staudt & Wagner, 2008).

Some authors recognize the emergence of a new father in contemporaneity, who seeks to be more present and participative, investing in his relationship with the baby and the partner (Premberg et al., 2008; Sansiriphun et al., 2010; Chin et al., 2011; Genesoni & Tallandini, 2009; Habib & Lancaster, 2006; Eerola & Huttunen, 2011; Bornholdt et al., 2007; Gonçalves et al., 2013). In one study, we found an interesting expression that refers to the new father as “approachable provider” (Chin et al., 2011, p. 13), the one who remains in the role of provider, taking care of the livelihood and security of the family, but who is also sensitive and accessible, getting involved emotionally with the baby and the partner. However, this father seeks own ways of involvement with his baby, whose characteristics differ from the mother-baby relationship (Premberg et al., 2008; Picinnini et al., 2009).

In this sense, the father is not a simulacrum of the mother (Gonçalves et al., 2013) it is up to him to construct new ways of relationship with the child. The literature supports this idea when highlights, for instance, that the mother prefers to take care of the little baby and keep a controlled routine. In short, the participation of the father is seen as essential to the physical and emotional development of the baby (Fägerskiöld, 2008).

If, on the one hand, there is the perception of a greater paternal involvement, on the other hand, the study of Palkovitz and Palm (2009) points to the need to expand the public policies in the United States with regard to paternity. If the government interference is fundamental to stimulate the fatherly care practices, we are led to believe that the propagated affective involvement of the new father does not correspond to what is observed in practice.

Another element of the paternal care highlighted in several articles is the fact that the father plays the role of protector of the baby since pregnancy. Although the literature on the transition to fatherhood often points out this feature, it is interesting to notice an unfolding of this type of care to the relationship that the father establishes with the mother (Sansiriphun, 2010). Sensitive with the changes imposed on the mother by the arrival of the baby, the father would start to handle his relationship with the partner, as well as the routine of the house (Jager & Bottoli, 2011), so as not to overburden her. We stress, therefore, the preservation of a marital relationship that is not only marked by the relationship of both with the child, which can strengthen the couple in the confrontation of parental ambivalence and marital changes that they are subjected.

The field of studies on “*the father and the formal support network*” dwells on the lack of professional training and deficiency of father care services during pregnancy and postpartum period, which expands the feelings of exclusion of the father who sees all care centered in the empowerment of the mother to welcome and care the newborn. Many fathers complain about the lack of information during pregnancy (Deave & Johnson, 2008) and their resulting inability as a caregiver, which could be minimized by support groups for fathers and by the support of the healthcare team (Thomas et al., 2011). It is also emphasized the need for fathers to be heard (Bornholdt et al., 2007) and be developed services of psychological support to the father as a preventive measure; when this does not occur in the formal support network, for unpreparedness of the professionals (Fägerskiöld, 2008; Halle et al., 2008), the father starts to seek this welcome with friends and family. Premberg et al. (2008) emphasize the need for health professionals to pay attention to the uniqueness of each gender, may accompany men in the transition to parenthood. Some studies point to the importance of rethinking public and social policies strictly focused on the mother-baby relationship (Thomas et al., 2011; Palkovitz & Palm, 2009), suggesting its expansion to meet the paternal demands. It is worth mentioning here that this type of reflection is present only in foreign studies, and still little explored in the field of the national research.

In the group “*the father, the work and the society*”, the emphasis of the work lies on the search for new models of paternity. There is a strong movement in the social imaginary about what it is to be a good father (Picinnini et al., 2012), models that are not yet consolidated, but in full transition (Souza & Benetti, 2009). In short, the exercise of parenthood is being redefined, surpassing the old hegemonic model. New standards are being sought through the exchange of experiences with other fathers (Chin et al., 2011), who experience the same transformations (Höfner et al., 2011), thus creating an informal network of support. The father brings the need for expression and sharing with other fathers, enabling the formation of a hybrid model of fatherhood from his references of life, from models culturally



predominant, and also by the use of the so-called horizontal models of paternity, where the paternal identity is constituted mainly by the processes of identification with fathers of his own generation, instead of the predominant identification with his own father.

It is also mentioned the influence of the paternal model, brought from the childhood of those who become fathers, leading them to rethink and integrate the positive and negative aspects of the old relationship with their own fathers (Krob et al., 2009). As fatherhood is in the process of redefinition (Picinnini et al., 2009), we can assume a new structuration of the father's relationship with his own father, now grandfather.

Regarding the formal work, many fathers described a great difficulty to return to work, claiming to be losing closer contact with the baby and failing to monitor closely his/her development. Others mention a feeling of guilt for the intense dedication to the work, feeling excluded from the family everyday life, although they are aware of the need to return to work (Finn & Henwood, 2009). Some authors argue that despite the current discourse about the new father, this feels pressured by the financial demand to assume the traditional role of provider, which increases the gap between the discourse and the current practices in the field of paternity.

We also highlight, mainly in the international articles (Fägerskiöld, 2008), the issue of the renunciation of the father of the single life as a triggering factor of the feeling of paternal ambivalence. It is expected from the father that he renounces his personal needs and starts to worry solely with his family, compensating for the loss of freedom with the affective gains derived from a closer contact with his partner and baby.

## Final Considerations

Although the selected articles present objectives, methods, analysis and their own conclusions, enriching and problematizing the field of research on the transition to fatherhood, we would like to make some notes from this proposal of integrative synthesis of the scientific literature in the area of fatherhood.

Some authors do not leave evident their theoretical perspective throughout their reports, accumulating results without a theory of human development as a basis that supports their methods or that interprets their findings, which would allow dialogue with the theory itself, including questioning it. In another perspective, we see articles that seem to bring in their core the belief in the possibility that a single theory or a great unifying theory would account for the phenomenon investigated, as if different methodological approaches could not give rise to diverse phenomena, which in turn would be accessed by equally different methods.

We know that the transition to fatherhood is a complex and unique multidimensional process (Mckenzie & Carter, 2013) and therefore hardly understandable by a single study. For this reason it is common that the researches in this area emphasize only one or two dimensions of a phenomenon that is multidetermined, which brings the risk of taking the part for the whole, without a more integrative look at the phenomenon of constitution of fatherhood. As an example, we can highlight those studies in which the socio-economic dimension does not seem to have been considered as a participating element of the process of transition to fatherhood, giving primacy to the internal and emotional dimension of the paternal experience.

Another important finding was in relation to the data analysis methodology. In the international literature, we find several forms of qualitative analysis, and the quantitative analysis was restricted to the descriptive statistics. As for the national literature, it was clear the priority use of the content analysis for data analysis, despite the existence of other qualitative methods that allow rigorous and scientific analysis, showing perhaps a preference of Brazilian researchers.

It should be highlighted that the transition to fatherhood is given in this intricate process that comprises internal, relational, marital and social aspects. As for the emotional experiences of the father during the transition to parenthood, their intensity operates profound changes in the way he sees himself and the world around him. Perhaps one of the great challenges faced by the man, similar to

what happens with the woman, is to integrate the different aspects of a personality that becomes ever more complex to meet the demands of contemporaneity.

Another aspect to address is the modulation exerted by the mother in the father-baby relationship. Help her to realize the needs of the father and encourage the development of a deeper father-baby relationship may be the way to mitigate the maternal ambivalence and, therefore, the suffering, in addition to facilitating the rescue of the marital relationship.

There is an important gap to be considered with regard to the public policies aimed at the father in the performance of his duties. We have to rethink the training of the health professionals and the lack of devices that take into account the paternal needs during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum, including from the point of view of child development.

This review study also points to the expansion of the informal network of support to the father, composed of friends, colleagues and family members, especially the horizontal identification models that start to articulate themselves with the traditional model, transmitted vertically. On the other hand, despite the discourse about the "new father", a strong social and economic pressure has led the father to occupy the traditional place of provider of home, which denotes fluctuations in the social expectations on the young father.

As for the possible limitations of this review, we highlight that the selection of the articles did not intend to encompass the vast range of researches about the transition to fatherhood, and it was necessary for reasons of methodological approach, to disregard those studies that referred to populations with differentiated characteristics and those about new family configurations. Therefore, it would be reckless and ingenuous to generalize this discussion to all parents who are living the transition to fatherhood, whether in a context of social precariousness or in the presence of some pathology, as examples of researches excluded from this review.

Finally, this review had the function of signaling a new field of research in Psychology, which is aligned with the contemporary social demands towards the establishment of a new father. In a scenario in which the individual needs are prioritized and encouraged by the high competitiveness in the labor market and by the rapid changes proposed by technology, it has been challenging to compose family arrangements that meet the personal, marital and social needs that are organized around the demands of the childhood and its long development.

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