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THE PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF INFERTILITY

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

The psychosocial consequences of being infertile or involuntarily childless are diverse and far-reaching, touching all areas of an individual's life. Seven interviews were carried out to examine individuals' and couples' experiences of trying to conceive. The transcripts were qualitatively analysed using a grounded theory approach. The range of feelings and experiences reported confirmed the findings of earlier research. For some participants, indirect-effects included alcoholism, depression and a suicide attempt. For others, the experience strengthened their marriage and their resolve to lead a fulfilling life. The people who experienced less distress were those who had received strong support from family and friends, had a career commitment and alternative life goals. Most participants related negative experiences with the medical profession. Insensitive and inappropriate comments from people generally were also reported. Analysis produced a model which illustrates the experience of trying to conceive as a process, with all participants experiencing a degree of sorrow and then finally moving to acceptance, new goals and growth. The study highlights the importance for people trying to conceive of having appropriate support, an empathic medical practitioner, a commitment to a career, outside interests, a strong marital relationship and alternative goals for the future.

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**This thesis is dedicated to my son
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