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Couples' decisions on having a first child Comparing pathways to early and late parenthood

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Abstract

We investigate the decision-making process of having a first child, using theories on individualisation, lifestyle choices and negotiating partnerships as a starting point. We compare couples who had their first child at a relatively young age with those who had their first child at an older than average age, using data from semi-structured interviews with 33 couples, selected from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS). Although expecting more explicit decision-making among older parents, our qualitative analyses show that decision-making preceding both early and postponed first childbirth is often implicit. Disagreement between partners does not necessarily lead to discussion. Factors that result in the postponement of childbearing, such as higher education, do not always play a conscious role in people's decision-making processes.

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